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GODS, KINGS AND BENEFACTORS:

RESISTING THE RULING POWER IN EARLY JUDAISM

AND PAUL'S POLEMIC AGAINST ICONIC SPECTACLE

IN ACTS 17:16-32

A Thesis by

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Submitted to
The Department of New Testament Studies
Faculty of Theology
University of Pretoria

In Fulfillment
Of the Requirements for the degree

Philosophiae Doctor (PhD)

Promoter: Prof. Dr. Gert J. Steyn

September 2015

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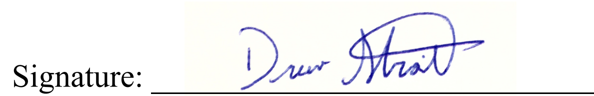
DECLARATION

I declare that this dissertation, which I hereby submit for the degree "Doctor of Philosophy in Theology" at the University of Pretoria, is my own work and has not previously been submitted by me for a degree at this or any other tertiary institution.

Signature: 

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ABSTRACT

Paul's speech on the Areopagus represents the most developed narrative portrayal of Paul's missionary preaching to a gentile audience in the New Testament. As such, it provides indispensable data for interpreting the relationship between Paul's Gospel and the religions of the Roman Empire. This study sets out to interpret the political referents of the Areopagus speech by investigating (1) the relationship between the Hellenistic Jewish icon parody and deified political authority; (2) the hybrid media of gods and kings; and (3) the art of safe speech in Greco-Roman antiquity. Put another way, this study interprets the Areopagus speech's attitude toward empire by investigating its strategies of resistance along with its objects of resistance.

New Testament Scholars have long noted the influence of the Isaianic icon parody upon the composition of Paul's speech on the Areopagus. The relationship between Paul's idol polemic and the Hellenistic Jewish icon parody, however, remains poorly understood: when the literary culture of early Judaism re-contextualized Isaiah's polemic amid the hybrid iconography of ruler cults, the referent(s) did not remain static or politically innocuous. This study animates the political dimension of the Hellenistic and Roman Jewish icon parodies' allusive objects of resistance through a detailed analysis of the dynamic relationship between gods and kings in the epigraphic record, the *peri basileias* literature and the system of benefaction underlying visual honors conferred on gods and kings. The integration of gods and kings in shared cult media and anthropomorphic representation placed the Hellenistic and Roman Jewish icon parodies in a new hermeneutical context—one that did not critique religion *sensu stricto* but simultaneously resisted the iconic spectacle underlying the deification of political authority.

In order to classify the icon parody as a type of Jewish resistance literature, a correlative concern of this study is to interpret the Hellenistic- and Roman-Jewish icon parodies within the broader contours of Jewish literary resistance movements that sought to polemically and apologetically defend Jewish conceptions of monotheism, monarchy and representation. In contrast to scholars who appeal to synthetic rhetorical devices to discern so-to-speak "anti-imperial rhetoric" in the New Testament, this study suggests that Luke's composition of the Areopagus speech reflects a stronger relationship with the Wisdom of Solomon's polemic against gods and kings (Wis 13:1-15:19) than has heretofore been recognized, along with Greco-Roman orators' conviction that critiquing the ruling power with blunt speech (παρρησία) was both unacceptable and artless, especially in contexts where the speaker's safety was in doubt.

The conclusion of this study suggests descriptors for the political attitude of the Areopagus speech and presents Paul's polemic against idols as an alter-cultural—rather than anti-imperial—confrontation with the philosophy of religion. This confrontation has implications for gods, kings and benefactors, whose visual honors are incompatible with the worship of the one God incarnated in Israel's crucified Messiah.

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The work undertaken in this project has not been done in a corner. I am grateful to the many people and institutions that have helped shape my thinking on the topic of Paul and politics. Pursuing a Ph.D. in an economic climate with limited jobs is an admittedly frightening endeavor. My hope is that this dissertation represents the ongoing importance and contribution that New Testament studies holds for both higher education and the life of the church.

The impetus to pursue a Ph.D. in South Africa was initially fostered by my friend and academic mentor Dr. Scot McKnight. Upon return from Scot's own trip to Pretoria in the summer of 2010, he immediately encouraged me to study in South Africa for the following reasons: the scholars are wonderful people, the mountains are beautiful and the Stellenbosch wine is spectacular. Indeed, this was true. I want to thank Scot for his friendship and generous investment in me over the past seven years.

My thesis first materialized in Dr. Hans-Josef Klauck's Wisdom of Solomon seminar at the University of Chicago. I am grateful to Dr. Klauck and the University of Chicago Divinity School for pushing my thinking further into the respective literary cultures of early Judaism and Greco-Roman antiquity. I am also grateful for the opportunity to share my research with friends and colleagues at the Early Christian Studies Workshop. The feedback stimulated helpful thinking in my research.

My *Doktorvater* Prof. Dr. Gert Steyn embodies all the best characteristics of what a New Testament scholar should be. I am grateful for his guidance, encouragement and insights along the way. I also want to thank Prof. Steyn and his wife Esther for graciously hosting my wife and me for four months in Pretoria when my studies first commenced. Our time in South Africa will forever remain some of our favorite memories together.

My wife, Dana, has gone above and beyond what should be deemed acceptable in supporting this project. Every Saturday for five years she awoke to a husband hard at work. I am grateful not only for her unwavering support but also for first encouraging me to take New Testament Greek (and tutoring me through my first semester!). Without her encouragement and support this project would not have been possible.

August, 2015 — Drew J. Strait
Washington D.C., USA

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ABBREVIATIONS

Unless otherwise noted, the abbreviations in this book follow *The SBL Handbook of Style for Ancient, Near Eastern, and Early Christian Studies* (2nd. ed.; Atlants: SBL Press, 2014).

ANRW	*Aufstieg und Niedergang der Römischen Welt.* Ed. Hildegard Temporini and Wolfgang Haase
CIL	*Corpus Inscriptionum Latinarum* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1863–).
IGRR	*Inscriptiones Graecae ad Res Romanas Pertinentes*
LCL	Loeb Classical Library
LSJ	*A Greek-English Lexicon*, ed. Liddell, H. G., Scott, R., Jones, H. S.
NovT	*Novum Testamentum*
NovTSupp	*Novum Testamentum Supplements*
OCD	*Oxford Classical Dictionary*
OGIS	*Orientis graeci inscriptions selectae.* Edited by W. Dittenberger. 2 vols. Leipzig, 1903-1905
RB	*Revue Biblique*
RGDA	*Res Gestae Divi Augustus*
RIC	*The Roman Imperial Coinage*. Ed. H. B. Mattingly, et al.
SEG	*Supplementum Epigraphicum Graecum* (Amsterdam: Giebon, 1923–). *Sylloge Inscriptionum Graecarum*
SIG	*Select Papyri: Non-Literary Papyri,* eds. Arthur S. Hunt and Campbell C. Edgar. LCL.
WUNT	*Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament*

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English Translations of the Bible

NRSV	New Revised Standard Version
NETS	New English Translation of the Septuagint

General Abbreviations

AD	*anno Domini*
B.C.E.	before the Common Era
c.	century
ca.	*circa*, about
C.E.	Common Era
cf.	*confer,* compare
ch(s).	chapter(s)
ed.	edited by
e.g.	*exempli gratia*, for example
f(f).	and the following one(s)
fig(s).	figure(s)
ibid.	*ibidem*, in the same place, i.e. the same literary work
idem	*idem*, from the same author
i.e.	*id est*, that is
inscr.	inscription
LXX	Septuagint
ms., mss.	manuscript(s)
n(n).	note(s)
no(s).	number(s)
NT	New Testament
OT	Old Testament
pap.	Papyri
Pl(s).	Plate(s)
trans.	translated by
v(v).	verse(s)
vol(s).	volume(s)

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

DECLARATION iii

ABSTRACT iv

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS v

ABBREVIATIONS vi

TABLE OF CONTENTS viii

CHAPTER 1. THE ACTS OF THE APOSTLES AND EMPIRE 1
- 1.1 Introduction 1
- 1.2 Research Problem: The Icon Parody, Allusive Referents and Hybrid Iconography 3
- 1.3 Research History 9
- 1.4 Methodological Considerations for Subversive Speech and Hidden Polemic 18
- 1.5 Thesis Stated 22
- 1.6 Outline of the Study 23

CHAPTER 2. THE MECHANICS OF RULER WORSHIP AND THE HELLENISTIC AND ROMAN TREATISES ON KINGSHIP 26
- 2.1 Introduction 26
- 2.2 Ruler Worship and the Traditional Gods 29
- 2.3 A New Kind of Power: The Hellenistic Cult of Rulers and Early Judaism 34
  - 2.3.1 The Anthropomorphic Narrative of Greco-Roman Religion and Hellenistic Kingship 44
  - 2.3.2 The System of Benefaction and the Visibility of Gods and Kings 51
- 2.4 The Hellenistic and Roman Treatises on Kingship and the Traditional Gods 66
  - 2.4.1 Gods and Kings in the Hellenistic Treatises on Kingship 67
  - 2.4.2 Gods and Kings in the Roman Treatises on Kingship 72
    - A. The Ideal King in Dio Chrysostom 73
    - B. The Ideal King in Aelius Aristides 74
    - C. The Ideal King in Pliny the Younger's Panegyricus 76
    - D. The Ideal King in Seneca's De Clementia 78
- 2.5 Summary and Conclusion 80

CHAPTER 3. THE RULING POWER AND THE TRADITIONAL GODS IN THE EPIGRAPHIC RECORD 82
- 3.1 Introduction 82
- 3.2 Gods and Kings in the Epigraphic Record 83
- 3.3 The Antigonids of Macedon and the Traditional Gods 88
- 3.4 The Ptolemies and the Traditional Greco-Egyptian Gods 93
  - 3.4.1 Gods and Kings in the Canopus Decree 94
  - 3.4.2 Gods and Kings in the Rosetta Stone 100
- 3.5 The Seleucids and the Traditional Gods 109
  - 3.5.1 Gods and Kings in the Tean Decree 110

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YUNIBESITHI YA PRETORIA

3.5.2 Gods and Kings in the Ilion Decree 115
3.6 The Attalids of Pergamon and the Traditional Gods 118
3.7 The Kingdom of Commagene and the Traditional Gods 122
3.8 The Roman Imperial Cults and the Traditional Gods 126
3.8.1 Augustan Rome and the Traditional Gods 128
A. Augustus and the Imperial Image 129
B. The Res Gestae Divi Augustus and the Euergetic Pietas of Augustan Rome 131
3.8.2 Polemical Parallelism and the Traditional Gods 134
A. Imperial Epithets and Functional Polytheism 135
B. Εὐαγγέλιον and Polemical Parallelism 138
3.9 Summary and Conclusion 142

CHAPTER 4. POLITICAL IDOLOTRY AND GENTILE KINGSHIP 144
4.1 Introduction 144
4.2 Political Idolatry: Weapons, Wealth and Strange Gods 147
4.3.1 The Heterogeneous Nature of Jewish Resistance 156
A. Summa 166
4.3.2 Imperial Domination and the Traditional Gods 168
4.3.3 The Art of Safe Criticism 177
A. Safe Speech and Greco-Roman Rhetoric 178
B. Safe Speech and Philo of Alexandria 183
4.4 The Political Metaphor of Idolatry and Israelite Kingship 188
4.5 The Political Metaphor of Idolatry and Early Judaism 198
4.5.1 Philo of Alexandria on Monotheism, Monarchy and Ruler Cults 200
A. The Political Metaphor, Gods and Kings in Philo's Cosmology 204
B. Monotheism and Monarchy in Philo's Legatio ad Gaium 215
4.5.2 The Political Metaphor of Idolatry and Jewish Criticism of Regal Hubris 223
A. The Reception and Interpolation of the Law of the King in Early Judaism 224
B. Deuteronomy 17:20 and the Exalted Tyrant 231
C. 3 Maccabees and the Exalted Tyrant 239
D. Ps-Solomon's Literary Paragon of the Ideal Ruler 245
E. Summa: Resisting the Exalted Tyrant in Early Judaism 251
4.6 Summary and Conclusion 251

CHAPTER 5. THE JEWISH ICON PARODY AND THE ICONIC SPECTACLE OF GODS AND KINGS 253
5.1 Introduction 253
5.2 The Second Commandment, Empire and Idolatry 255
5.2.1 Philo of Alexandria on Representation and Imperial Power 263
A. The Second Commandment and Philo's Exposition of the Law 265
B. The Second Commandment in the Legatio ad Gaium 275
5.2.2 Josephus on Representation and Imperial Power 284
5.3 The Hellenistic- and Roman-Jewish Icon Parodies and the Iconography of Empire 290
5.3.1 The Wisdom of Solomon and Alexandrian Judaism 300
5.3.2 The AEGVPTO CAPTA and Alexandrian Judaism 309
5.3.3 Excursus: Apocalyptic Cosmology: Resisting Unjust Rule in Wisdom 5:17-23 320
5.4 Summary and Conclusion 329

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CHAPTER 6. EARLY JUDAISM, RULER CULTS AND PAUL'S POLEMIC AGAINST IDOLS IN THE AREOPAGUS SPEECH 331
6.1 Introduction 331
6.2 Acts and the Roman Imperial Cults 333
6.2.1 The Ascension of Jesus and Imperial Apotheosis Rituals 336
6.2.2 The Political Metaphor of Idolatry and Luke-Acts 346
A. Luke's Presentation of Roman Rulers and Officials 347
B. The Death of Herod and Luke's Critique of Deification 350
C. Summa 352
6.2.3 Confrontation: Iconic Spectacle and the Missionary Preaching of the Apostles 353
A. Polemical Parallelism and the Preaching of the Apostles 354
B. Peter's Missionary Speech in Cornelius's Household 357
C. Paul's Missionary Speeches 360
D. Paul's Critique of Anthropomorphism and Deification at Lystra 363
6.3 The Roman Imperial Cults and Athens 370
6.4 Resisting Idolatry: The Wisdom of Solomon and the Areopagus Speech 379
6.4.1 The Areopagus Speech and Politics in Recent Research 380
6.4.2 Ps-Solomon's Polemic Against Gods and Kings 383
6.4.3 Critical Motif 1: Cultic Objects on σέβασμα 389
6.4.4 Critical Motif 6: The Critique of Precious Materials 393
A. The Representation of Imperial Authority with Precious Materials 395
B. Ps-Solomon's Polemic Against Precious Materials 400
C. Ps-Solomon's Polemic Against Anthropomorphic Images 404
D. The Philosophical Critique of Precious Material 406
E. Summa: What is Divinity Like? 409
6.5 Paul the Philosopher? Confronting Superstition and Figured Speech 411
6.6 Summary and Conclusion 416
CHAPTER 7. CONCLUSION: THE AREOPAGUS SPEECH AND POLITICAL IDOLATRY 419
7.1 Introduction 419
7.2 Synthesis: Idols, Cosmology and Resistance Literature 420
7.2.1 Objects of Resistance: Hybrid Iconography and the Icon Parody 422
7.2.2 Strategies of Resistance: Early Judaism, Safe Speech and the Critique of the Angry Tyrant 425
7.2.3 Ps-Solomon and Comparative Analysis 427
A. Amit's Criterion 1 for a Hidden Polemic 428
B. Amit's Criterion 2 for a Hidden Polemic 429
C. Amit's Criterion 3 for a Hidden Polemic 430
D. Amit's Criterion 4 for a Hidden Polemic 433
7.3 On Describing The Areopagus Speech's Political Attitude 435
BIBLIOGRAPHY 438

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CHAPTER 1.

THE ACTS OF THE APOSTLES AND EMPIRE

> Denunciation of 'idols' and 'idol worship' had new force and point when linked with the vanity of rulers in a period in which manifestations of the imperial cult impinged on everyone.
>
> —Tessa Rajak[1]

1.1 Introduction

The study of Paul in his Roman imperial context has been labeled one of "the most exciting developments today" in Pauline scholarship.[2] Among a growing movement of scholars, Paul is no longer viewed as preaching a politically innocuous Gospel, but one that is carefully crafted to subvert and counter the idolatry and hegemony associated with the Roman Emperor and his socially stratified society.[3] The impact of this movement is now felt in the area of Luke-Acts,

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[1] Tessa Rajak, *Translation and Survival: The Greek Bible of the Ancient Jewish Diaspora* (Oxford: Oxford University, 2009), 11.

[2] N. T. Wright, "Paul's Gospel and Caesar's Empire," in *Paul and Politics: Essays in Honor of Krister Stendahl* (ed. by Richard Horsley; Harrisburg: Trinity Press, 2000), 160. For what is, perhaps, *the* seminal study on Paul and empire, see: Richard Horsley ed., *Paul and Empire: Religion and Power in Roman Imperial Society* (Harrisburg: Trinity Press, 1997). See also, J. Crossan and J. Reed, *In Search of Paul: How Jesus' Apostle Opposed Rome's Empire with God's Kingdom* (New York: Harper, 2005); Justin Hardin, *Galatians and the Imperial Cult* (*WUNT* 237; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2008); Bridgitte Kahl, *Galatians Re-Imagined: Reading with the Eyes of the Vanquished* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2010)**.** For an overview of studies on Paul and empire, see Judith A. Diehl, "Empire and Epistles: Anti-Roman Rhetoric in the New Testament Epistles," *Currents in Biblical Research* 10 (2012): 217-63.

[3] Here I take Michael Gorman's definition of "empire" to be helpful: "An entity that has come to widespread (global or near global) dominance through deliberate expansion by means of the extreme exercise of some form(s) of power—economic, political, military, and/or religious—resulting in the creation of colony-like clients of the entity and of enemies who perceive the entity as oppressive" (*Reading Revelation Responsibly* [Eugene: Cascade Books, 2011], 46-47. Three elements of empire, in particular, have consumed the energy of recent scholarship: (1) the hegemonic devices and *dominio* of empire; (2) strategies of resistance to empire's hegemony and *dominio*—especially among the poor and oppressed; and (3) the the imperial cults as a point of contrast and/or conflict with the divinity and worship of Jesus. While the focus of this dissertation is on point three, here I take it as axiomatic that hegemony and domination (point 1) could be communicated and advanced through imperial propaganda and architecture (point 2). See Simon Price, *Rituals and Power: The Roman Imperial Cult in Asia Minor* (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 1984), 15-16. Postcolonial criticism and liberation theologians, in particular, have awakened scholars to the hegemonic *Weltanschauung* of Western culture, and the important place of agrarian peasant society in the world behind the New Testament. See Edward Said's seminal study on the cultural hegemony of Western thought, which, in many ways, inspired

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where the three-century scholarly consensus that Luke is the most pro-Roman author in the New Testament has been challenged.[4] Despite attempts to read Luke-Acts as subverting Roman imperial ideology and power, the Areopagus speech in Acts 17:16-34 remains politically elusive. If Luke understood Paul's Gospel anti-imperially, then one would expect to find anti-imperial motifs in Paul's Missionsreden, especially in Athens where imperial cult media existed and Luke most explicitly criticizes the "temple culture" of Greco-Roman religion.[5] Recent work by the classicist Nancy Evans has shown that Paul's distress over Athens's forest of idols (κατείδωλος) could include images of Roman emperors embedded in the Agora or the Stoa of Zeus Eleutherios.[6] Yet Luke's polemic against idols is directed universally—toward idols (Acts 17:16),

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postcolonial critical theory: *Orientalism* (New York: Vintage Books, 2003). For an overview of postcolonialism as a methodology in Biblical studies, see: Stephen D. Moore, *Empire and Apocalypse: Postcolonialism and the New Testament* (Sheffield: Sheffield Phoenix, 2006). For liberation theology, see: *The Cambridge Companion to Liberation Theology* (ed. Christopher Rowland; New York: Cambridge University, 2007) and Leonardo Boff, *Introducing Liberation Theology* (trans. Paul Burns; Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1987). On the strategies of peasant resistance, see: James C. Scott, *Weapons of the Weak: Everyday Forms of Peasant Resistance* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985). On imperial hegemony, see the seminal work of Antonio Gramsci, *Selections from Prison Notebooks* (ed. and trans. Quintin Hoare and Geoffrey Nowell Smith; London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1971). For a recent critique of theoretical versus historical approaches to anti-imperial readings of the New Testament, see: Michael G. Smith, “The Empire Theory and the Empires of History – A Review Essay,” *CSR* 39.3 (Spring, 2010): 305-322. Smith provocatively asserts that, “…if one takes account of the differences that history conveys, then the theory begins to dissolve, and its power as a tool for opposition, resistance, and revolution in service to bring forth a new order, is vitiated. History is the enemy of theory; but it may be the strongest ally of truth” (321-22). Smith’s observation that history can paint a different portrait than theory may be an overstatement; however, the notion that theory needs to be held accountable to history is in agreement with the methodology of this study. See also Seyoon Kim’s recent critique of anti-imperial readings of Acts in *Christ and Caesar: The Gospel and the Roman Empire in the Writings of Paul and Luke* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2008). Kim rightly accuses anti-imperial interpreters of parallelomania, deductions from assumptions, proof-texting and appeal to coding (28-33). However, Kim does not take into account the literary culture of early Judaism and the Greco-Roman world as an important influence upon New Testament authors' literary strategies for negotiating empire.

[4] For a critical evaluation of recent anti-imperial readings of Acts, see: Drew J. Strait, "Another King Named Jesus? The Acts of the Apostles and the Roman Imperial Cult(s)," in *Jesus is Lord, Caesar is Not! Evaluating Empire in New Testament Studies* (ed. Scot McKnight and Joseph B. Modica; Downers Grove: IVP Academic, 2013), 130-45.

[5] The phrase "temple culture" is from Walter Burkert, *Greek Religion* (trans. John Raffan; Harvard: Harvard University, 1984), 88. Gerhard Schneider provides a classic delineation of what constitutes a missionary speech in Acts as follows: Acts 2:14-36, 38-39; 3:12-26; 4:8-12, 19-20; 5:29-32; 10:34-43; 13:16-41; 14:15-17; 17:22-31. See Gerhard Schneider, *Die Apostelgeschichte* (Freiburg: Herder, 1980), 1:95-103.

[6] See Nancy Evans, "Embedding Rome in Athens," in *Rome and Religion: A Cross-Disciplinary Dialogue on the Imperial Cult* (ed. Jeffrey Brodd and Jonathan L. Reed; Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2011), 83-

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objects of worship (17:23), altars (Acts 17:23), epigraphy (Acts 17:23), temples made with human hands (Acts 17:24), the *τέχνη* of the artisan (Acts 17:29) and allusive precious materials for image making (17:29). In a world where the boundary between human and divine was porous, does Luke's denunciation of idols in Athens include a hidden polemic against the emperor cult?

1.2 Research Problem: The Icon Parody, Allusive Referents and Hybrid Iconography

It is widely accepted that Isaiah's polemic against idols influenced the composition of the Areopagus speech.[7] What is less understood is the relationship between Paul's polemic against idols in Athens and Hellenistic Jewish sources that re-contextualized Isaiah's polemic to confront the material culture of the ruling power. To answer this research question one needs to take seriously Luke's immersion in the thought world of the Hebrew Bible and Hellenistic Judaism. Indeed, a viable reading of Acts in its imperial context cannot neglect Luke's rootedness in the story of Israel and its history of negotiating imperial hegemony and idolatry. The cultural survival of Second Temple Jews hinged on their ability to resist the idols and ideologies of the dominant imperial culture. The crises of exile, in particular, brought the need for "resistance literature" to the fore.[8] Although Jewish polemic against idols is not typically associated with the concept of resistance literature, this study suggests that the Jewish icon parody was not an apolitical literary device. Under the hegemony of Babylonian captivity, Isaiah developed the icon

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98. For the translation of κατείδωλος as "forest of idols" see: R. E. Wycherly, "St. Paul at Athens," *JTS* 19 (1968): 619.

[7] See especially David Pao, *Acts and the Isaianic New Exodus* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2000).

[8] For a history of the term in Palestinian literature, see Barbara Harlow, *Resistance Literature* (New York: Methuen, 1987), 2-3.

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parody to resist Jews' assimilation to colonial power.[9] By deriding the rituals, media and artisans associated with Babylonian iconic spectacle, Isaiah's icon parodies sought to (1) maintain Jewish boundaries and Law regarding monotheism, monarchy and representation; and (2) to classify the ideology and representation of political authority and the gods that underlie their power as inanimate and idolatrous. In so doing, the icon parody legitimated Jewish conceptions of divine identity, especially Jews' allegiance to one God whose image and rule over the nations is incompatible with the worship of other gods and their material representation. The icon parody, therefore, was in part a response to Jewish Law and the need to polemically defend the first and second commandments within an overtly gentile environment.

The utility of the icon parody as a form of resistance literature is evident in its adoption and adaptation in the "cultural and religious equipment" of early Judaism and Christianity.[10] The Wisdom of Solomon's *digressio* on pagan idolatry (Wis 13:1 – 15-19), in particular, represents the most sophisticated use of the *topoi* in early Judaism. Maurice Gilbert observes, "Trois chapitres du livre de la Sagesse (13-15) forment le dévelopement le plus important que l'Ancien Testament consacre à la critique des manifestations reigieuses du paganisme. Cet ensemble fournit probablement le dernier jugement de la foi d'Israël su les dieux des païens avant la proclamation du message chrétien."[11] Ps-Solomon's re-contextualization of the icon parody in

[9] See Isaiah 40:19-20; 41:6-7; 42:17; 45:16, 20; 41:6-7; 42:17; 44:9-20; 45:16-17, 20; 46:1-7; 48:5. M. W. Roth observes that "Idol parodies clustered in one literary context are found only in Isa 40-55" ("For Life He Appeals to Death (Wis 13:18): A Study of Old Testament Idol Parodies," *CBQ* 37 [1975]: 21-47). Other post-exilic examples surface in Hab 2:18-19; Jer 10:3-5; and Ps 115:4-8; 135:15-18.
[10] James C. Scott suggests: "The imaginative capacity of subordinate groups to reverse and/or negate dominant ideologies is so widespread—if not universal—that it might be considered part and parcel of their standard cultural and religious equipment" (James C. Scott, *Weapons of the Weak*, [New Haven: Yale University, 1985], 331).
[11] Maurice Gilbert, *La critique des dieux dans le Livre de la Sagesse (Sg 13-15)* (Rome: Biblical Institute Press, 1973), xiii. Translation: "Three chapters of the book of Wisdom (13-15) constitute the most important development that the Old Testament devotes to the criticism of the religious practices of paganism. This group probably proves the last judgment of the belief of Israel with respect to the gods of pagans before the proclamation of the Christian message."

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Augustan Egypt is innovative: for the first time in the tradition, the icon parody is employed to censure the origins and representation of deified political authority (Wis 14:16-21). Ps-Solomon's explicit critique of the Roman imperial cults raises unexplored questions about the allusive political referents inherent to the bulk of Jewish and Christian icon parodies. Indeed, when early Jews and Christians parodied the hybrid material culture used to honor gods and kings without giving the referents identification, as Paul does in Athens, what was the object of resistance?

Two points of contact in Greco-Roman antiquity demand consideration in order to investigate the Hellenistic- and Roman-Jewish icon parody's objects of resistance. First, the impact of early Jewish and Greco-Roman sources upon Luke's persuasion strategies must be considered. In contrast to scholars who employ synthetic rhetorical devices to identify anti-imperial rhetoric in the New Testament, this study seeks to understand Luke's resistance strategies in conversation with (1) early Judaism's variegated resistance strategies against the angry and/or deified tyrant; and (2) the art of safe speech according to Greco-Roman rhetorical handbooks and Philo of Alexandria. Second, the cityscape of Diaspora Judaism and the first urban Christians demands careful consideration.[12] Early Jews and Christians largely resided in the urban spaces of empire, wherein anthropomorphic images of gods and the ruling power were concretized side by side to honor their benefactions over subjects.[13] The relationship between the traditional gods and deified political authority remains poorly understood among New Testament

[12] On the challenges and payoff of bringing archaeological evidence into conversation with literary texts, see the seminal study of Laura Salah Nasrallah, *Christian Responses to Roman Art and Architecture: The Second-Century Amid the Spaces of Empire* (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 2010). Nasrallah observes that "The study of art, architecture, and early Christianity should encompass not only catacomb paintings or the first churches, but also the earliest Christian responses to the built environments of the Roman Empire" (8). Nasrallah's study, however, is predominantly focused on the Second Sophistic.
[13] On the social location of early Christianity in urban space, see the seminal study of Wayne A. Meeks, *The First Urban Christians: The Social World of the Apostle Paul* (New Haven: Yale University, 2003).

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scholars, especially among studies that create an overly stringent dichotomy between the cult of Caesar and that of Christ.[14] As Karl Galinsky recently warned Biblical scholars, deified rulers were not stand-alone deities.[15] Rather, Alexander the Great's Successors (the Διάδοχοι) and the Roman imperial cults were embedded in Greco-Egyptian gods' media with honors like the gods (ἰσόθεοι τιμαί; *SEG* 41.75), as temple-sharing gods (σύνναος θεός; *OGIS* 332) and, in at least one case, as σύνθρονος with the gods (*OGIS* 383).[16] Imperial iconography associated the emperor with the numinous through its intentional placement and design, creating what Robert Turcan calls a "hybrid iconography."[17] Of the six traditional gods that Luke explicitly mentions in Acts, all six can be illustrated, in one way or another, associated with the Roman imperial family through role

[14] But see John M. G. Barclay's important and nuanced comments on this point in "Paul, Roman Religion and the Emperor: Mapping the Point of Conflict" in *Pauline Churches and Diaspora Jews* (WUNT 275; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2011), 354; and "Why the Roman Empire Was Insignificant to Paul," in *Pauline Churches and Diaspora Jews* (WUNT 275; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2011), 363-387.
[15] Karl Galinsky, "The Cult of the Roman Emperor: Uniter or Divider?" in *Rome and Religion: A Cross-Disciplinary Dialogue on the Imperial Cult* (ed. Jeffrey Brodd and Jonathan L. Reed; Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2011), 4-5. In his critique of N. T. Wright's anti-imperial reading of Paul's letters, John M. G. Barclay also makes this point: "The reason why the imperial cult sits firmly within a larger context of religious tradition and practice is that the emperors were not independent deities, but were enmeshed in a cosmic order that preserved the balance of the universe" (John M. G. Barclay, "Paul, Roman Religion and the Emperor: Mapping the Point of Conflict" in *Pauline Churches and Diaspora Jews* [WUNT 275; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2011], 354). See also Barclay's criticism of N. T. Wright's anti-imperial interpretation of Paul's Letters in "Why the Roman Empire Was Insignificant to Paul," 363-387). Barclay rightly attempts to situate emperor worship within the larger cosmic context of Greco-Roman polytheism; however, he does not sufficiently develop this theme within a diachronic framework starting with the Hellenistic cult of rulers.
[16] Aside from Antiochus I Commagne (cf. 3.7 of this study), Alexander's father, Philip, was considered σύνθρονος with the Olympia gods: "Along with lavish display of every sort, Philip included in the procession statues of the twelve gods wrought with great artistry and adorned with a dazzling show of wealth to strike awe in the beholder, and along with these was conducted a thirteenth statue, suitable for a god, that of Philip himself, so that the king exhibited himself enthroned (σύνθρονος) among the twelve gods" (Diod., 16.92). The joint honors conferred on gods and kings is observed by John Scheid in his introduction to Roman religion: "by the Roman period, the deified emperors were honoured *at the same time* as the patron deities of other temples: such associations were expressed by the construction of secondary shrines and altars in most cult sites" (*An Introduction to Roman Religion* [trans. Janet Lloyd; Bloomington: Indiana University, 2003], 159). For further discussion, see Duncan Fishwick, *The Imperial Cult in the Latin West: Studies in the Ruler Cult of the Western Provinces of the Roman Empire* (Leiden: Brill, 1987), 32-45. See also S. R. F. Price, *Rituals and Power*, 233. On the emperor's sharing space in sacred temples, see especially the important study of Arthur D. Nock, Σύνναος θεός, *Harvard Studies in Classical Philology* 41 (1930): 1-62; and B. Schmidt-Dounas, "Statuen hellenistischer Könige als Synnaoi Theoi" *Egnatia* 4 (1993-4): 71-141. On divine associations more broadly, see Julien Tondriau, "Comparisons and Identifications of Rulers with Deities in the Hellenistic Period," *Review of Religion* 131 (1949): 24-47.
[17] Robert Turcan, *The Cults of the Roman Empire* (trans. Antonia Nevill; Oxford: Blackwell, 1996), 27.

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playing recorded in literary sources or concrete form recorded in the archaeological, numismatic or epigraphic record.[18] It is amid such hybrid media that Paul employs the icon parody allusively without recourse to naming a referent in Athens, thereby leaving a space for the auditor to fill in the referents with their own imagination. Against this backdrop, Galinsky's question during the Society of Biblical Literature's "Cross-Disciplinary Dialogue on the Imperial Cult" remains largely unexplored: "If you were an enemy of the Roman order … what was the real target—the imperial cult per se or the imperial cult as a representative of the cult of the traditional gods in which it was embedded?"[19]

This study aims to move beyond (1) a static, one-dimensional view of the Roman imperial cults, as if they were a coherent system of thought apart from the ritual and material infrastructure of the traditional gods or, in the words of N. T. Wright, "the dominant cult in a large part of the empire"; and (2) the imposition of modern synthetic non-literary forms of resistance to imperial domination onto the text of Acts.[20] Beyond working with a more nuanced understanding of the imperial cults, this dissertation seeks to understand how early Judaism transformed Israel's polemic against idols into a rhetorical strategy for resisting deified political authority and, in turn, how Luke adopts and adapts these literary patterns and motifs as a strategy

[18] On Zeus in Acts 14:12, see *IGR* 4.72; on Hermes in Acts 14:12, see *NSER*, 466; on Python in Acts 16:16, see *IG* II^{2} 3262+4725, Schmalz, no. 127, and Suetonius, *Aug.* 98.2; on Artemis of Ephesus in Acts 19:28, see *IvE* 2.404; on Justice in Acts 28:4, see Livia as Justice on coins (e.g. *RIC* Tiberius 46 – Marvin Tameanko, "Livia the First Augusta of Rome," *The Journal of Ancient Numismatics* 4.1 [2009]); on Castor and Pollux in Acts 28:11, see especially Suetonius, *Cal.* 22.2f. Also, Augustus appears like the Dioscuroi on early coins in the Republic as no ordinary Roman general but as a superhuman savior (Zanker, *The Power of Images,* 38-40).
[19] Karl Galinsky, "The Cult of the Roman Emperor: Uniter or Divider?" 7. I borrow the phrase "web of power" from Simon Price, *Rituals and Power,* 247-48. John M. G. Barclay also draws attention to the importance of the traditional gods in his criticism of N. T. Wright's anti-imperial reading Paul. See "Paul, Roman Religion and the Emperor," 354. See also idem. "Why the Roman Empire Was Insignificant to Paul," 363-88.
[20] *Pace* N. T. Wright, "Paul's Gospel and Caesar's Empire," in *Paul and Politics*, 160. Our sources on the imperial cults are largely fragmentary, spanning an array of iconographic, epigraphic, numismatic, archaeological and literary sources. In the case of Acts, the diversity of imperial cults presents a major obstacle for interpreters, since we do not know with any certitude what city or cities in the Roman Empire Acts was written to, nor the exact year of its composition. For the traditional dating of Acts, which I adopt here, see: Darrell L. Bock, *A Theology of Luke and Acts* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2012), 38-41.

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for resisting false worship in its variegated religious and political manifestations.[21] To be clear from the outset, this study does not attempt to adjudicate the political attitude of Luke-Acts as a whole. Rather, this study focuses on the narratological function of the Areopagus speech as an articulation of Luke's larger theological convictions about false worship: namely, that the one God of Israel has acted eschatologically through Israel's Messiah to call both Jews and gentiles "everywhere to repent" (πανταχοῦ μετανοεῖν, Acts 17:30). The particular component of empire—that is, the *object of resistance*—this study focuses on are the material representations of gods and kings that encroach on Jews and early Christians' aniconic-monotheism.[22] The form of resistance that this study focuses on is the Hellenistic and Roman-Jewish icon parodies, and their employment by Luke as a strategy for reorienting his audience away from Rome's idolatry and power, toward an alternative cosmology oriented around the resurrected and ascended Christ.[23]

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[21] On the influence of Hellenism upon Luke, see *Jesus and the Heritage of Israel: Luke's Narrative Claims Upon Israel's Legacy* (ed. David Moessner and David Tiede; Harrisburg: Trinity Press International, 1999).

[22] By focusing on the visual theology of the imperial cult, this study does not aim to turn a blind eye to how these imperial representations served to support and undergird the hegemonic structure(s) of Roman imperial society. It is notable that imperial hegemony is often associated with non-violent forms of control. Timothy Mitchell, for example, helpfully summarizes Antonio Gramsci's definition of hegemony as "non-violent forms of control exercised through the whole range of dominant cultural institutions and social practices, from schooling, museums, and political parties to religious practice, architectural forms, and the mass media" ("Everyday Metaphors of Power," *Theory and Society* 19 [1990]: 553). See also, Anathea Portier-Young, *Apocalypse Against Empire: Theologies of Resistance in Early Judaism* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2011), 11. In accord with this definition, the imperial cult served as a mechanism for distributing the theo-political image of Caesar, but also the hegemony and *dominio* of Rome over the Mediterranean basin. Thus, criticizing the cultic infrastructure of the imperial cult is to simultaneously have something to say about its theology and its hegemony, which are inextricably bound to one another.

[23] I take the phrase "alternative cosmology" from Anathea Portier-Young, *Apocalypse Against Empire,* 27. In this study, I follow J. Edward Wright's definition of cosmology as: "the systematic analysis of the ordered universe in an effort to understand and perhaps influence its operations in ways that benefit humans. Cosmology also reveals a society's understanding of itself as an entity within the cosmos" ("Cosmology" in *The Dictionary of Early Judaism,* 487-89). For a helpful discussion of cosmology in Jewish and Greco-Roman thought, see Edward Adams, "Graeco-Roman and Ancient Jewish Cosmology," in *Cosmology and New Testament Theology* (LNTS 355; ed. Jonathan Pennington and Sean M. McDonough; New York: T&T Clark, 2008), 5-27.

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1.3 Research History

The Acts of the Apostles is the only book in the New Testament that provides a narrative framework for the expansion of the early Christian movement into the Roman Empire. As such, it provides a unique window into the relationship between early Christianity and the Roman Empire. Since the time of C. A. Heumann in 1721, numerous scholars—including Henry Cadbury, F. F. Bruce and Hans Conzelmann—argued that Luke wrote a politically innocuous *apologia pro ecclesia* on behalf of the church to the Roman Empire.[24] This interpretation is based on Luke's positive portrayal of Roman officials and Paul's purported innocence in the trial narratives. With the arrival of post-colonial studies in the 1990s, however, scholars began to re-think how the Roman Empire and, the Roman imperial cults, in particular, impacted the political perspective(s) of the New Testament authors. This shift in emphasis resulted in anti-imperial interpretations of Paul and Revelation in the mid-1990s and, by 2002, started to influence scholarship on Luke-Acts.[25] Raymond Picket addresses the significance of these events when he writes, "Scholarly interest in the relationship between the New Testament and the Roman Empire

[24] For the *apologia pro ecclesia* approach, see: C. A. Heumann, "Dissertatio de Theophilo: Cui Lucas Historiam Sacram Inscripsit," *BHPT* classic IV, Bremen (1720): 483-505; Henry J. Cadbury, *The Making of Luke-Acts*, (New York: Macmillan, 1927), 308-15; Hans Conzelmann, *The Theology of St. Luke* (London: Faber, 1960), 137-49; Ernst Haenchen, *The Acts of the Apostles: A Commentary* (trans. Bernard Noble et al.; Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1971), 106; and F. F. Bruce, *The Book of Acts* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1988), 8-13. The political apology approach, however, was rejected by C. K. Barret in his oft-quoted dismissal: "No Roman official would ever have filtered out so much of what to him would be theological and ecclesiastical rubbish in order to reach so tiny a grain of relevant apology … So far as Acts was an apology, it was an apology addressed to the Church…" (*Luke the Historian in Recent Study* [London: Epworth, 1961], 63). See also Paul Walaskay's unsuccessful attempt to argue that Luke wrote an *apologia pro imperio*: *And So We Came to Rome: The Political Perspective of St. Luke* (SNTS 49; Cambridge: Cambridge University, 1983). For a full research history on the *apologia pro ecclesia* approach, see Phillip Esler, *Community and Gospel in Luke-Acts: The Social and Political Motivations of Lucan Theology* (SNTSMS, 57; Cambridge: Cambridge University, 1987), 201-217.

[25] A seminal and highly influential overview of the importance of the Roman imperial cults for the study of the New Testament was developed by Justin Meggit, titled, "Taking the Emperor's Clothes Seriously," in *The Quest for Wisdom: Essays in Honour of Philip Budd* (ed. Christine E. Joynes; Cambridge: Orchard Academic, 2002), 143-68. For an overview of anti-imperial readings of Revelation, see Judith A. Diehl, "'Babylon': Then, Now and 'Not Yet': Anti-Roman Rhetoric in the book of Revelation," *Currents in Biblical Research* 11.2 (2013): 168-95; and Richard Bauckham, *The Climax of Prophecy: Studies on the Book of Revelation* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1993). On Paul, see n. 2 above.

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is quite recent and has acquired enough momentum in the past decade or so to be regarded as a paradigm shift."[26] In accord with this paradigm shift, scholars have begun to move away from the nearly three hundred year scholarly consensus that Luke-Acts is politically innocuous and toward a more sophisticated political perspective on Luke-Acts.[27] The primary inspiration for this dissertation stems from this paradigm shift in scholarship; consequently, the research history that follows will primarily focus on situating this study in the stream of scholarship flowing from this movement.

Investigating the New Testament for anti-imperial motifs is an exercise in hermeneutical discipline. The spectrum of interpretive options encompasses a diverse set of data, extending from Paul's submissive stance to the empire in Rom 13:1-7, to the demonization of Rome as the "whore" in Rev 17:1-6. Consequently, a temptation for interpreters is to choose passages in the

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[26] Raymond Picket, "Luke and Empire: An Introduction," in *Luke-Acts and Empire: Essays in Honor of Robert L. Brawley* (ed. by David Rhoades, David Esterline and Jae Won Lee; Eugene: Pickwick, 2011), 1. When recently asked to evaluate this paradigm shift, the prodigious classicist of imperial Rome, Karl Galinsky, provocatively writes: "I have to admit I was amazed to see that this [anti-imperial] orientation in New Studies … has been hailed as a genuinely new departure—after some two thousand years" (Karl Galinsky, "The Cult of the Roman Emperor: Uniter or Divider?" 1. David Horrell, on the other hand, in the 2005 *Journal for the Study of the New Testament* devoted to empire and the New Testament, is less cautious: "Any who suspect, therefore, that the current interest in the New Testament and Empire is a fad, driven more by contemporary political interests than by historical substance, should find those suspicions thoroughly laid to rest" (*JSNT* 27.3 [2005]: 251-55). But see Adolf Deissman's comments as early as 1908: "There can be no question of any kind of Christian borrowings from the language of the Imperial Cult, because both the cult of Christ and the cult of the emperor derive their divine predicates from the treasure-house of the past" (*Light from the Ancient East: The New Testament Illustrated by Recently Discovered Texts of the Graeco-Roman World* [trans. Lionel Strachan; New York: George H. Doran, 1927], 343).

[27] There are four studies worth noting prior to the "paradigm shift." The first is Richard Cassidy who challenged the notion that Luke-Acts is politically innocuous by arguing that Luke is writing to equip Christians who stand on trial and experience persecution. See Richard Cassidy, *Jesus, Politics, and Society: A Study of Luke's Gospel* (Maryknoll: Orbis, 1978); *Society and Politics in the Acts of the Apostles* (Maryknoll: Orbis: 1987**)**. Focusing more on Luke's Gospel, John Howard Yoder also anticipated the shift toward anti-imperial readings of Luke by arguing that Jesus inaugurated a Messianic ethic in *The Politics of Jesus* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1972). Klaus Wengst provides a reading of the New Testament "from below" under the *Pax Romana*. Wengst, however, employs the *apologia pro ecclesia* approach, suggesting that Luke "painted over" the violence of the *Pax Romana*. See *Pax Romana and the Peace of Jesus Christ* (trans. John Bowden; London: SCM Press, 1987), 89-105. Finally, Vernon Robbins argues that Luke-Acts is a narrative map of territoriality that characterizes Christians who are building alliances with local leaders in his essay, "A Mixed Population Seeks a Home in the Roman Empire," in *Images of Empire* (JSOT 122; ed. Loveday Alexander; Sheffield, Sheffield Academic, 1991), 202-221.

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New Testament that support one's *a priori* sentiments toward empire and draw conclusions from that set of data alone. In other words, interpreters can manipulate data *to meet desired political results.* This hermeneutical danger is also present in the Acts of the Apostles, where a diversity of data depicting both pro and anti-imperial motifs can be discerned. On the one hand, we find Paul acting contrary to the decrees of the emperor in Thessalonica (Acts 17:1-9) yet, on the other hand, Paul appeals to Caesar and the Roman justice system (Acts 25:1-12).[28] As one might expect, the *Forschungsgeschichte* on Luke's relationship to the Roman Empire comports with the breadth of political perspectives within Luke-Acts. Kavin Rowe lucidly characterizes this situation,

> What is remarkable about the exegetical basis for these diametrically opposed interpretations of Acts is that all the different texts to which appeal is made are part of the same narrative. It is difficult, therefore, to avoid the suspicion that for both the majority and minority views, a limited set of textual data is employed in service of a one-sided thesis—switch the texts, and a different picture emerges. The interpretive result … is thus something of a pendulum effect, in which the reader of the scholarly literature swings to and fro between passages of putative political innocuousness and purported social disruption.[29]

The "pendulum effect" among interpreters—best illustrated by the *apologia pro ecclesia* and the *apologia pro imperio* dichotomy—can only be explained, as Rowe puts it so well, by scholars' analysis of a limited set of textual data. As Beverly Gaventa has argued, "Lukan theology is intricately and irreversibly bound up with the story he tells and cannot be separated from it. An attempt to do justice to the theology of Acts must struggle to reclaim the character of Acts as a

[28] Luke also characterizes the attitude of some Roman officials positively toward Christians, which has inspired numerous studies that suggest Luke wrote a political apology on behalf of the church to the Roman Empire. See the centurion Cornelius (10:1–11:18); Sergius Paulus (13:12); the Philippian Praetors (16:39); the city officials who release Jason on bail (17:9); the proconsul Gallio (18:14-16); the Ephesian Asiarchs who protect Paul (19:31-41); Claudias Lysias (21:31-2, 37-40; 23:29); Felix who does not listen to Tertullus's accusation that Paul is an insurrectionist (24:5-6, 22); Festus who says that Paul is innocent of political charges (25:25); and Agrippa (26:32). For an overview of political apology readings, see: Alexandru Neagoe, *The Trial of the Gospel: An Apologetic Reading of Luke's Trial Narratives* (*SNTS* 116; Cambridge: Cambridge University, 2002), 4-21.
[29] Kavin Rowe, *World Upside Down*, 55.

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narrative."[30] It is not until recent years that a more nuanced approach to Luke's relationship to the Roman Empire has emerged that takes into account Acts as narrative. The work of Steve Walton and Kavin Rowe, in particular, have paved a new way forward by acknowledging the diversity of data in Luke-Acts and, therefore, the complex theological tension that exists in Luke's narrative.[31]

Before reviewing recent studies on Luke's view of the Roman Empire, it is important to acknowledge that the speeches of Acts have inspired a massive research history in both English and German. Oddly, publications on Lukan Christology and the speeches of Acts have waned over the past fifteen years and, for the most part, pre-date the paradigm shift toward reading the New Testament anti-imperially.[32] Moreover, the defense speeches of Paul have overshadowed

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[30] Beverly Gaventa, "Toward a Theology of Acts: Reading and Rereading," *Interpretation* 42 (1988): 150.

[31] See especially Steve Walton's summary in "The State They Were In: Luke's View of the Roman Empire" where he argues that Luke falls at both ends of the political spectrum (p. 41).

[32] The only published monographs on the speeches in the last ten years focus on the speeches of outsiders in Acts (Osvaldo Padilla, *The Speeches of Outsiders in Acts: Poetics, Theology and Historiography* [*SNTS* 144; Cambridge: Cambridge Unviversity, 2008]), the speech of Steven (Todd Penner, *In Praise of Christian Origins: Stephen and the Hellenists in Lukan Apologetic Historiography* [ESEC 10; New York: T&T Clark, 2004]) and Septuagintal Midrash in the speeches (Luke T. Johnson, *Septuagintal Midrash in the Speeches of Acts* [Milwaukee: Marquette University, 2002]). For recent studies on the Christology of Luke-Acts, see: Peter Doble, *The Paradox of Salvation: Luke's Theology of the Cross* (SNTS 87; Cambridge: Cambridge University, 1996); Douglas Buckwalter, *The Character and Purpose of Luke's Christology* (SNTS 89; Cambridge: Cambridge University, 1996); Mark Strauss, *The Davidic Messiah in Luke-Acts: The Promise and Fulfillment of Luke's Christology* (JSNTSup 110; Sheffield: Sheffield University, 1995); Darrell Bock, *Proclamation from Prophecy and Pattern: Lucan Old Testament Christology* (JSNTSup12; Sheffield: Sheffield University, 1987); David Moessner, *Lord of the Banquet: The Literary and Theological Significance of the Lukan Travel Narrative* (Harrisburg: Trinity International Press, 1998); Christopher Tuckett, "The Christology of Luke-Acts," in *The Unity of Luke-Acts* (ed. J. Verheyden; Leuven: Leuven University, 1999), 133-164. The most recent monograph on Lucan Christology is Robert O' Toole's 2004 book, *Luke's Presentation of Jesu*s (Roma: Editrice Pontificio Istituto biblico, 2004). O'Toole employs composition criticism to analyze Christological titles in Luke-Acts, yet, like other studies on Luke's Christology, he is not interested in the correlation between Luke's presentation of Jesus and the imperial cult. In 2005, however, Howard Marshall published a book chapter on the Christology of Luke-Acts where he devotes two sentences to Roman ideology in the Christological title "King" in Acts 17:7. Marshall dismisses the possible correlation when he writes, "There is, incidentally, no obviously 'non-Jewish' element in the Christology of Acts, though it is plausible that the concepts of lordship and saviorhood were more transparent to a Gentile" (I. Howard Marshall, "The Christology of Luke's Gospel and Acts," in *Contours of Christology in the New Testament* [ed. Richard N. Longenecker; Eerdmans: Grand Rapids, 2005], 144-45). Christopher Tucket briefly discusses the influence of ruler cults on Jesus as savior in *Christology and the New Testament: Jesus and His Earliest Followers* (Louisville: Westminster, 2001), 19-20; 141.

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research on Paul's *Missionsreden*.[33] This phenomenon is significant since Paul's defense speeches have influenced the idea that Luke wrote an *apologia pro ecclesia* depicting Paul's innocence before Roman officials.[34] It is the contention of this study that Paul's *Missionsreden* comprise an equally valuable component of Luke's political perspective. One exception is Christoph Stenschke's recent article, titled, "The Presentation of Jesus in the Missionary Speeches of Acts and the Mission of the Church."[35] Stenschke acknowledges at the outset that, "The strong emphasis on the speeches of Acts in the seventies and eighties of the last century has given way to a neglect of the speeches in more recent research."[36] Stenschke's study, however,

[33] Paul's speech on the Areopagus is an exception. For the most important studies, see: Martin Dibelius, *Studies in the Acts of the Apostles* (ed. H. Greevens; trans. M. Ling; London: SCM Press, 1956), 26-83; E. Norden, *Agnostos Theos: Untersuchungen zur Formengeschichte Religiöser Rede* (Stuttgart: Teubner, 1913); B. Gärtner, *The Areopagus Speech and Natural Revelation* (trans. C. H. King; ASNU 21; Uppsala: Gleerup, 1955); Hans Conzelmann, "The Address of Paul on the Areopagus," in *Studies in Luke-Acts* (ed. L. Keck and J. L. Martyn; Philadephia: Fortress, 1966), 217-230; Ned B. Stonehouse, *Paul Before the Areopagus and Other New Testament Studies* (London: Tyndale, 1957), 1-40; Colin J. Hemer, "The Speeches of Acts: the Areopagus Address," *TynBul* 40.2 (1989): 239-259; David L. Balch, "The Areopagus Speech: An Appeal to Stoic Historian Posidonius Against Later Stoics and the Epicureans," in *Greeks, Romans, and Christians: Essays in Honor of Abraham Mahlerbe* (ed., David Balch, Everett Ferguson, and Wayne Meeks; Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1990), 52-79; C. Kavin Rowe, "The Grammar of Life: The Areopagus Speech and Pagan Tradition," *NTS* 57 (2011): 31-50.

[34] For the defense speeches, see Acts 22:1-21; 23:1-6; 24:10-21; 25:6-12; 26:2-32; 28:25-28**.** It is striking that the five volume series, *The Book of Acts in its First Century Setting* devotes an entire volume to Paul in Roman custody and does not devote a volume to Paul as a missionary in Acts (*The Book of Acts and Paul in Roman Custody* [ed. Bruce W. Winter & Andrew Clarke; vol. 1 of *The Book of Acts in its First Century Setting,* ed. Bruce W. Winter; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1994]). Other notable studies on Paul's defense speeches are H. W. Tajra, *The Trial of St. Paul: A Juridicial Exegesis of the Second Half of the Acts of the Apostles* (WUNT 2.35; Tübingen: Mohr-Siebeck, 1989); Matthew Skinner, *Locating Paul: Places of Custody as Narrative Settings in Acts 21-28* (Boston: Brill, 2003). Walter Hansen's article on Paul's speeches is one of the few recent studies (1998) to deal with Paul's missionary and defense speeches. See Walter Hansen, "The Preaching and Defense of Paul," in *Witness to the Gospel* (ed. I. Howard Marshall; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), 296-394. Writing after the "paradigm shift," Steve Walton recently re-evaluated Paul's defense speeches, arguing that they function to try Rome and not exclusively Paul. See Steve Walton, "Trying Paul or Trying Rome? Judges and Accused in the Roman Trials of Paul in Acts," in *Luke-Acts and Empire: Essays in Honor of Robert Brawley* (Eugene: Pickwick, 2011), 122-141. For a similar view, see Loveday Alexander, "Luke's Political Vision," *Interpretation* 66 (2012): 283-93. Alexander, like others, suggests that Paul's defense on trial "is fundamental to understanding Luke's political vision" (283).

[35] Christoph Stenschke, "The Presentation of Jesus in the Missionary Speeches of Acts and the Mission of the Church," *Verbum et Ecclesia* 35.1 (2014): 1-18. See also, "The Biography of Jesus in the Mission Speeches of Acts" (paper presented at the School of Mission and Theology, Stavanger, Norway, 19-20 May 2010).

[36] Christoph Stenschke, "The Presentation of Jesus," 1 n. 1.

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does not show any interest in investigating the *Missionsreden* to understand Luke's political perspective.

The first major re-assessment of Luke-Acts and empire after the so-to-speak "paradigm shift" in New Testament scholarship is Steve Walton's 2002 essay, "The State They Were in: Luke's View of the Roman Empire."[37] Walton critiques five previous perspectives on Luke's view of the Roman Empire, concluding that Luke falls at "both ends of the political spectrum," which, according to Walton, provides a strategy for early Christians to remain at a "critical distance" to the empire.[38] Walton evaluates "troubles caused by Paul," but fails to provide any detailed analysis of the content of Paul's preaching. Taking a more subversive approach than Walton, Gary Gilbert, in a 2003 article, argues that Luke-Acts is explicitly anti-imperial due to Luke's imitation of Roman political propaganda as a rhetorical strategy for communicating that Jesus is the rightful ruler of the world.[39] In one sentence, Gilbert briefly discusses Jesus as σωτήρ in Paul's speech at Pisidian Antioch (Acts 13:23), but he does not adequately take into account the LXX influence upon the word σωτήρ nor why Paul would use the word anti-imperially within a Jewish synagogue. The Areopagus speech is notably missing from this study.

The most sophisticated study on Acts and the imperial cults is C. Kavin Rowe's 2005 article, titled, "Luke-Acts and the Imperial Cult: A Way Through the Conundrum?"[40] Rowe

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[37] Steve Walton, "The State They Were in," 1-41.
[38] Walton, "The State They Were in," 40-41.
[39] Gary Gilbert, "Roman Propaganda and Christian Identity in the Worldview of Luke-Acts," in *Contextualizing Acts: Lukan Narrative and Greco-Roman Discourse* (ed. Todd C. Penner and Carline Vander Stichele; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 2003), 233-256.
[40] C. Kavin Rowe, "Luke-Acts and the Imperial Cult: A Way Through the Conundrum?" *JSNT 213* (2005): 279-300. See Justin Howell's critique of Rowe's article, "The Imperial Authority and Benefaction of Centurions and Acts 10.34-43: A Response to C. Kavin Rowe," *JSNT* 31.1 (2008) 25-51.

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acknowledges the difficulties of evaluating Luke's political perspective given that we do not know the location of Acts' composition or its intended destination, which makes reconstructing its contact with the Roman imperial cults difficult due to the variegated manifestations of the cult in different parts of the empire.[41] In spite of these hermeneutical problems, Rowe argues that the demonstrative pronoun οὗτός in Acts 10:36 functions anti-imperially by highlighting that "this one," being Jesus of Nazareth, is Lord of all rather than Caesar. Rowe's use of Greco-Roman sources shares much with the methodology of this dissertation project, yet Rowe fails to evaluate Paul's polemic against idols in Athens.

Bridgitte Kahl, in her 2008 essay, "Acts of the Apostles: Pro(to)-Imperial Script and Hidden Transcript," represents the anti-imperial Paul coalition of New Testament scholars in a volume edited by Richard Horsley.[42] Kahl sets out to challenge political apology readings of Acts, arguing that these approaches are a "major stumbling block" for those who wish to read Paul's letters anti-imperially.[43] Employing James Scott's theory of resistance, called "hidden transcripts," Kahl proceeds to argue that, in a post-70 CE context, Luke rewrites history from below. Luke's safe storytelling, according to Kahl, still manages to evoke "half-hidden transcripts" to portray that "God, not Caesar rules the world."[44] In the same year that Kahl published her essay, Seyoon Kim published *Christ and Caesar* in reaction to the proliferation of anti-imperial readings of the New Testament.[45] Kim critiques some of the methodological problems of anti-imperial

[41] Rowe, "Luke-Acts and the Imperial Cult: A Way Through the Conundrum?" 279-84.
[42] Bridgitte Kahl, "Acts of the Apostles: Pro(to)-Imperial Script and Hidden Transcript," in *In the Shadow of the Empire: Reclaiming the Bible as a History of Faithful Resistance* (ed. Richard Horsley; Westminster John Know, 2008), 137-56.
[43] Kahl, "Acts of the Apostles: Pro(to)-Imperial Script and Hidden Transcript," 137.
[44] Kahl, "Acts of the Apostles: Pro(to)-Imperial Script and Hidden Transcript," 149.
[45] Seyoon Kim, *Christ and Caesar: The Gospel and the Roman Empire in the Writings of Paul and Luke* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2008).

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readings, such as proof-texting and coded language.[46] For over one hundred pages, Kim provides a solid exegesis of politically contentious passages in Luke-Acts. Kim argues that, in both Luke and Acts, the mission of Jesus and his apostles is not directed at subverting the empire, but rather to undermine the kingdom of Satan.[47] Kim's exegesis, however, primarily focuses on Luke's Gospel with limited attention to Acts and no exegesis of Paul's speeches.[48]

To date, the most comprehensive study on Luke's relationship to the Roman Empire is C. Kavin Rowe's 2009 book, *World Upside Down.*[49] Rowe's project is industrious in scope as he sets out, like Steve Walton and Bridgitte Kahl, to critique the nearly three hundred year scholarly consensus that Luke wrote a politically innocuous *apologia pro ecclesia.* To achieve this goal, Rowe evaluates four passages in Acts that depict a clash between gentile religiosity and the Christian view of God at Lystra (Acts 14:8-19), Philippi (16:16-24), Athens (17:16-34) and Ephesus (19:18-40). Thereafter, Rowe exegetes four passages depicting the potential for politically and culturally destabilizing behavior by Christians before Roman authorities (i.e. Gallio [Acts 18:12-17], Claudius Lysias [21:27 – 23:30], Felix [24:1-27] and Festus and Herod Agrippa II [25:1 – 26:32]). The brilliance of Rowe's study is that he acknowledges the theological tension in Luke's narrative; that is, passages that depict both pro and anti-imperial motifs.

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[46] Kim, *Christ and Caesar,* 32.
[47] Kim, *Christ and Caesar,* 155.
[48] Kim does, however, spend time critiquing Kavin Rowe's work on Acts 10. Like Rowe's study, Kim would do well to expand his research into the other speeches (Kim, *Christ and Caesar,* 81-84).
[49] C. Kavin Rowe, *World Upside Down: Reading Acts in the Graeco-Roman Age* (New York: Oxford University, 2009). See the important reviews by John M. G. Barclay, "Pushing Back: Some Questions for Discussion," *JSNT* 33 (2011): 321-26; Matthew Sleeman, "The Vision of Acts: World Right Way Up," *JSNT* 33 (2011): 327-32; and Rowe's response in "Reading World Upside Down: A Response to Matthew Sleeman and John Barclay," *JSNT* 33 (2011): 335-46.

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Rowe's study, however, is focused on ecclesiology rather than the icon parody.[50] Although Rowe treats the Areopagus speech (cf. 6.4.1), like other studies, Rowe does not sufficiently evaluate the hybrid iconography of gods and kings, the art of safe criticism among Greco-Roman orators and strategies for resisting the angry tyrant in early Judaism.

The next study worth noting is Kazuhiko Yamazaki-Ransom's 2010 monograph, titled, *The Roman Empire in Luke's Narrative.*[51] Ransom takes an innovative approach by examining Jewish portrayals of gentile rulers in the Old Testament and Second Temple Literature in order to better understand Luke's narrative portrayal of Roman Officials. With regard to Luke's attitude to the imperial system, Ransom concludes that Luke's characterization of eight rulers—with the exception of Sergius Paulus—are negative.[52] Thus, according to Ransom, Luke's attitude to the empire is negative because of ruler's "failure to acknowledge God's sovereignty and Christ's lordship."[53] Ransom's study is commendable in that he does two things that are often absent from other studies: first, he spends a chapter engaging current scholarship on the imperial cult by classicists. And second, he utilizes Jewish texts rather than modern theory as a heuristic model for understanding Luke's relationship to the Roman Empire. In Ransom's conclusion, he writes, "Further study of Second Temple literature with a point of view similar to this study will be a fruitful field for future scholarship."[54] Attention to Second Temple sources comports with the methodology of this dissertation project, yet like other studies, Ransom does not take into consideration Paul's speech on the Areopagus.

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[50] The purpose of Rowe's study is made clear from the outset when he writes, "To date there has not been a sophisticated, critically constructive reappraisal of Acts' ecclesiological vision. The time is long overdue for such a study" (Rowe, *World Upside Down*, 4).
[51] KazuhikoYamazaki-Ransom, *The Roman Empire in Luke's Narrative* (LNTS 404; New York: T&T, 2001).
[52] Yamazaki-Ransom, *The Roman Empire in Luke's Narrative,* 201.
[53] Yamazaki-Ransom, *The Roman Empire in Luke's Narrative*, 202.
[54] Yamazaki-Ransom, *The Roman Empire in Luke's Narrative*, 203.

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Interest in Luke's view of the Roman Empire does not show any signs of slowing down.[55] In 2011, a *Festschrift* on Luke-Acts and Empire was published for Robert Brawley. Strikingly, of the eight essays written by different scholars, not a single essay addresses the missionary preaching of Paul.[56] This research gap is particularly striking given the popularity of reading Paul's Letters anti-imperially, *and* a resurgence of interest in the reception of Paul in Acts.[57] Luke, as interpreter of Paul, provides an important witness to the political dimensions of Paul's Gospel; this point is especially relevant for the study of the Areopagus speech, since it represents Luke's most sophisticated attempt to present Paul preaching the Gospel to a gentile audience.

1.4 Methodological Considerations for Subversive Speech and Hidden Polemic

The methodology of this study is admittedly eclectic. In accord with the shift away from source and form critical studies on the speeches of Acts, my analysis will focus on the communicative intention of the final form of the Areopagus speech, along with the speech's embeddedness in Luke's larger narrative confrontation with idolatry in Luke's Gospel and Acts. The primary concern is not with the historicity of the speeches *per se*, but with Luke's narratological

[55] Other studies include: Gary Gilbert, "Luke-Acts and Negotiation of Authority and Identity in the Roman World," in *The Multivalence of Biblical Texts and Theological Meanings* (ed. Christine Helmer and Charlene T. Higbe; Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2006), 83-104; idem. "The List of Nations in Acts 2: Roman Propaganda and the Lukan Response," *JBL* 121.3 (2002): 497-529; Ilze Kezbere, *Umstrittener Monotheismus: Wahre und falsche Apotheose im lukanischen Doppelwerk* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2007); Laura Nasrallah, "The Acts of the Apostles, Greek Cities, and Hadrian's Panhellenion," *JBL* 127.3 (2008): 533-566; Loveday Alexander, "Luke's Political Vision," *Interpretation* 66 (2012): 283-293; Richard Pervo, "(Not) 'Appealing to the Emperor': Acts (and the *Acts of Paul*)," in *Paul and the Heritage of Israel* (ed. David Moessner et al.; New York: T&T Clark, 2012), 165-179; Steve Walton, "What Does Mission in Acts Mean in Relation to the 'Powers that Be'"? *ETS* 55.3 (2012): 537-556; Laurie Brink, *Soldiers in Luke-Acts: Engaging, Contradicting, and Transcending the Stereotypes* (WUNT 2.362; Tübingen: Mohr-Siebeck, 2014); Joshua Yoder, *Representatives of Roman Rule: Roman Provincial Governors in Luke-Acts* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2014); and Karl Allen Kuhn, *The Kingdom according to Luke and Acts: A Social, Literary, and Theological Introduction* (Grand Rapids, Baker Academic, 2015).
[56] David Rhoades, David Esterline and Jae Won Lee eds., *Luke-Acts and Empire: Essays in Honor of Robert L. Brawley* (Eugene: Pickwick, 2011).
[57] See Daniel Marguerat ed., *Reception of Paulinism in Acts* (Leuven: Peeters Press, 2009); and *Paul and the Heritage of Israel: Paul's Claim upon Israel's Legacy in Luke and Acts in the Light of the Pauline Letters* (ed. David Moessner et al.; New York: T&T Clark, 2012). For political readings of Paul's Letters, see n. 2 above.

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presentation of Paul's confrontation with idolatry at Athens within the final form of Acts set in its own Jewish and Greco-Roman literary and cultural milieu. Attention to the idea of Luke's extra-text will serve as a fundamental informing principle for reading Paul's *Missionsreden* within their historical contexts. Similar to the work of John Darr, but adapted for the imperial focus of this study, three extra-texts will be taken into account: (1) early Jewish and Greco-Roman literary strategies for critiquing the angry tyrant and deified political authority; (2) intertextual allusions to the Septuagint (LXX); and (3) the icon parody's objects of resistance in the archaeological and epigraphic record.[58] Intertextual correlation between the Areopagus speech and the above extratexts will serve as a major point of research.[59]

Investigating Luke-Acts for subversive speech deserves some further methodological considerations. Scholars searching Paul's letters for anti-imperial motifs have commonly appealed to James C. Scott's theory of "hidden "transcripts" and/or Richard Hays's seven criteria for identifying intertextual echoes.[60] In a recent perceptive study, Christoph Heilig, drawing on Bayes's theory of probability, suggests that the use of Hays's criteria to identify counter-imperial subtexts in Paul's letters is "prone to subjective influences."[61] Heilig suggests that scholars need

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[58]John Darr, *Herod the Fox: Audience Criticism and Lukan Characterization* (JSNTS 163; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1998), 62. Similarly, KazuhikoYamazaki-Ransom also uses a "historically informed narrative criticism" in, *The Roman Empire in Luke's Narrative* (LNTS 404; New York: T&T, 2001).
[59] For the seminal work on intertextuality, see: Richard B. Hays, *Echoes of Scripture in the Letters of Paul* (New Haven: Yale Univeristy, 1989). Hays defines intertextuality as "the imbedding of fragments of an earlier text within a later one" (Hays, *Echoes of Scripture in the Letters of Paul,* 14). In this thesis, intertextuality will be employed to analyze lexical and thematic echoes with the Wisdom of Solomon that critique the Roman imperial cults explicitly and/or implicitly. For a recent application of intertextuality to Luke-Acts, see: Kenneth Litwak, *Echoes of Scripture in Luke-Acts: Telling the History of God's People Intertextually* (New York: T&T Clark, 2005).
[60] Richard B. Hays, *Echoes of Scripture in the Letters of Paul* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989). Scholars who appeal to Hays's criteria include, Nicholas T. Wright, *Paul: In Fresh Perspective* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2005), 61-62; Neil Elliot, *The Arrogance of Nations: Reading Romans in the Shadow of Empire* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2008), 22; and, more recently, James R. Harrison, *Paul and Imperial Authorities*, (WUNT 273; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2011), 37-38.
[61] Christoph Heilig, "Methodological Considerations for the Search of Counter-Imperial 'Echoes' in Pauline Literature," in *Reactions to Empire: Sacred Texts in their Socio-Political Contexts* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2014), 91; and idem. *Hidden Criticism?* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2015).

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more specification with regard to "(a) the object of criticism; (b) the kind/degree of criticism, and (c) the motivation for choosing the subtext as the level of communication of this criticism."[62] Heilig's study makes an important contribution; however, in the search for methodological purity, Heilig neglects the criteria laid out by Quintilian, Demetrius and Philo of Alexandria for critiquing imperial authority, especially the concept of figured speech (see 4.3.3 of this study). As will be discussed below, for Quintilian, hidden polemic (i.e., figured speech) is especially useful under three circumstances: (1) "if it is unsafe to speak openly"; (2) "if it is unseemly to speak openly"; and (3) if it provides more elegance and pleasure than "straightforward language" (*Inst.* 9.2.66). Demetrius, on the other hand, observes that the proper mode for speaking before tyrants is "allusive verbal innuendo" (*ἐσχηματισμένον ἐν λόγῳ*, *Eloc.* 287). For Demetrius, when speaking before the angry tyrant, "Flattery is shameful, open criticism is dangerous, and the best course lies in the middle, namely innuendo" (*Eloc*. 294). The rhetorical strategy of speaking before the angry tyrant with "allusive innuendo" comprises our concern here; the icon parody, however, demands special consideration since it represents an intrinsically subversive rhetorical device (a point that strengthens the expectation for hidden polemics).

It is important to recognize that ancient Judaism had a precedent for allusive rhetoric within its own literary corpus. Yairah Amit draws attention to the role of hidden polemics—both implicit and explicit—in the Hebrew Bible. Amit defines a hidden polemic as follows:

> A polemic is hidden when its subject is not explicitly mentioned, or when it is not mentioned in the expected, conventional formulation. Through various hints, the reader is left with the feeling that *a double effort has been made within the text*: on the one hand—to conceal the subject of the polemic, that is, to avoid its explicit mention; on the other—to leave certain traces within the text (referred to below as "signs") that through various means will lead the reader to the hidden subject of the polemic.[63]

[62] Heilig, "Methodological Considerations," 92.
[63] Yairah Amit, *Hidden Polemics in Biblical Narratve* (trans. Jonathan Chipman; Leiden: Brill, 2000), 93.

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According to Amit, the purpose of hidden polemic is threefold: (1) to "remove initial opposition" for readers who an author is seeking to win over; (2) to go "underground" due to censorship; and (3) to conceal a subject so as to incite readers toward its discovery.[64] The concealment of subversive ideas through hidden polemic was aided by the idiolect of the Septuagint during the Hellenistic and Roman periods. Tessa Rajak points to the "esoteric nature" of the Septuagint and its "highly allusive and idiosyncratic vocabulary" as a medium for covertly articulating discontentment.[65] The Septuagint created an "enclosed environment" for its implied audience that "denies easy access by virtue of its intertextuality" for the outsider looking in.[66] What Adolf Deissmann called the "treasure house of the past," then, provided Jews and early Christians with a veritable index of allusive signs and intertextual echoes for critiquing the ruling power covertly. The question, then, is how can one identify these subversive motifs without creating hidden polemics that are the figment of one's imagination?

Amit's study focuses predominantly on intra-Jewish polemic rather than inter-cultural polemic against the gentile world. Even so, Amit provides helpful hermeneutical criteria for identifying hidden polemics. For Amit, a viable hidden polemic consists of:

a. Refraining from explicit mention of the subject, which the author is interested to condemn or to advocate.
b. The evidence of other biblical materials regarding the existence of a polemic on the same subject.
c. The presence of a number of signs by whose means the author directs the reader toward the polemic so that, despite the absence of explicit mention of the polemical subject, the reader finds sufficient landmarks to uncover it.
d. Reference to the hidden subject of the polemic in the exegetical tradition concerning the text in question.[67]

[64] Yairah Amit, *Hidden Polemics,* 97-98.
[65] Tessa Rajak, *Translation and Survival: The Greek Bible of the Ancient Jewish Diaspora* (Oxford: Oxford University, 2009), 207.
[66] Tessa Rajak, *Translation and Survival*, 207.
[67] Yairah Amit, *Hidden Polemics*, 97.

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Although Amit applies her considerations to the Hebrew Bible, her criteria hold equal relevance for the identification of hidden polemics in the New Testament and early Jewish sources (especially since the New Testament authors draw from a rich inter- and extra-textual repertoire). Amit's emphasis on pre-existing exegetical traditions that employ the hidden polemic in a similar way overlaps with our purposes here: namely, to (1) compare Ps-Solomon's re-contextualization of the icon parody to critique the Roman imperial cults with the Areopagus speech; and (2) to compare Paul's allusive persuasion strategies in the Areopagus speech with the art of safe criticism according to Quintilian, Demetrius and Philo of Alexandria. Moreover, in accord with Heilig's suggestion that we need more specification about "the object of criticism," our investigation into the hybrid iconography of gods and kings in the Mediterranean basin—and the built environment of Roman Athens—will amass a thick description of the icon parody's polyvalent referents (a method of investigation that has heretofore been neglected).

1.5 Thesis Stated

This study argues that Paul's polemic against idols in the Areopagus speech is not politically innocuous. In the Areopagus speech, Luke confronts the iconic spectacle of gods and imperial authorities with the Gospel of the Lord of all—a worldview that is incompatible with the worship and material representation of imperial authority. Luke stands in continuity with his Jewish heritage, upholding a mode of worship that is both monotheistic and aniconic. Rather than appeal to synthetical rhetorical devices to substantiate this thesis, this study investigates (1) early Judaism's literary strategies for resisting the iconic politics of the angry tyrant; (2) Greco-Roman rhetorical strategies of double innuendo and safe speech in settings where it is unsafe to speak openly; and (3) the visual theology of gods and kings in the built environment of the Greco-

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Roman city. This study, therefore, aims to understand Luke's resistance strategies by appeal to his own literary, rhetorical and material cultures.

This study makes two important arguments. First, it argues that to classify the Greco-Roman city's euergetic visual honors as inanimate and lifeless is to engage discourses of power and material referents that underlie gods and imperial authority. Second, it argues that Luke's composition of the Areopagus speech reflects a stronger relationship with the Wisdom of Solomon's *digressio* on pagan idolatry (Wis 13:1 – 15:19) and polemic against imperial cult media (Wis 14:16-21) than has heretofore been recognized. Although this study does not argue direct dependence, Luke's re-contextualization of the icon parody in an overtly philosophical and apologetic context is not something he learns from the prophets of the Hebrew Bible (e.g., Isaiah). Rather, Luke learns this *topoi* from Hellenistic Judaism and Greco-Roman philosophy.

The conclusion of this study provides descriptors for how one might articulate the political attitude of the Areopagus speech. Here it is suggested that Paul's polemic against idols in Athens is an alter-cultural—rather than anti-imperial—confrontation with alien religion, wherein the *Weltanschauung* of early Christianity draws on Hellenistic Judaism and Greco-Roman rhetoric to confront the iconic material culture underlying gods, imperial power and ideology. This confrontation has implications for gods and kings, whose euergetic visual theology is incompatible with the worship of the one God's exclusive cosmic benefaction and salvation incarnated in and through the Son of God—Jesus of Nazareth.

1.6 Outline of the Study

Chapter two of our study evaluates the dynamic relationship between gods and kings in the Hellenistic and Roman worlds through an analysis of the anthropomorphic narrative of Greco-

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Roman religion, the system of benefaction and the *peri basileias* literature. The chapter provides the theoretical and historical basis for our investigation of early Jewish and Christian negotiation of the ruling power in the rest of the study.

Chapter three tests the dynamic relationship between gods and kings in the epigraphic record. The hybrid iconography and shared cult spaces of gods and imperial families are evaluated in eight inscriptions from the Antigonids of Macedon, the Ptolemies, the Seleucids, the Attalids of Pergamon and the Kingdom of Commagene at Nemrud Dagh. The chapter investigates the epigraphic record as a means to understand the political dimensions of the icon parody's allusive referents against temples, statuary, precious materials and artisans. The chapter concludes with a discussion of the relationship between the traditional gods and the Roman imperial cults, along with a critical evaluation of Adolf Deissmann's idea of lexical "polemical parallelisms" between the cult of Caesar and that of Christ.

Chapter four discusses the relationship between Jews' exclusive monotheism and gentile kingship. The chapter opens with a discussion of three hermeneutical cautions related to (1) the heterogeneous nature of Jewish resistance, (2) the important role of the traditional gods in the imperial domination system and (3) the art of safe criticism in Greco-Roman rhetoric and Philo of Alexandria. The chapter proceeds to investigate how Jews' allegiance to one God created the potential for tension with deified political authority. To evaluate the potential for tension, Moshe Halbertal and Avishai Margalit's concept of the political metaphor of idolatry is discussed, wherein Israel's God can transfer power to an Israelite king or gentile ruler in a subordinate position of power. The relationship between the one God, subordinate rulers and Jewish subjects is then investigated in the writings of Philo of Alexandria. The chapter concludes with a discussion of Jewish resistance literature that sought to manage and critique the angry tyrant who

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breaks the boundaries of the political metaphor of idolatry.

Chapter five discusses the relationship between Jews' aniconic worship and the material representation of gentile imperial authority. After a discussion of contemporary debates about the second commandment and Jewish responses to art, the chapter investigates the relationship between representation and imperial power in the writings of Philo of Alexandria and Josephus. The chapter concludes with a longer discussion of the Hellenistic- and Roman Jewish icon parodies and their relationship to the iconography of empire. This section focuses particularly on reconstructing the social setting of the Wisdom of Solomon, including an excursus on Ps-Solomon's attitude toward empire in the mini-apocalypse (Wis 5:17-23).

Chapter six investigates the relationship between Ps-Solomon's polemic against images and the Areopagus speech. The chapter opens by considering three aspects of Luke's political vision: (1) the ascension of Jesus to heaven; (2) the political metaphor of idolatry and Luke's presentation of Roman rulers and officials; and (3) the missionary preaching of the apostles. Thereafter the hybrid iconography of gods and kings in the built environment of Roman Athens is investigated. The chapter concludes with a critical analysis of lexical and thematic parallels between the Wisdom of Solomon and the Areopagus speech, along with Paul's "allusive verbal innuendo" in a judicial setting where it is unsafe to speak openly (Demetrius, *Eloc.* 287).

The conclusion of this study suggests descriptors for how one can articulate the political vision of the Areopagus speech and makes suggestions for further study.

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CHAPTER 2.

THE MECHANICS OF RULER WORSHIP AND THE HELLENISTIC AND ROMAN TREATISES ON KINGSHIP

ΓΝΥΘΙ ΣΑΥΤΟΝ ΚΑΙ ΜΗΔΕΝ ΑΓΑΝ

—Pausanias, *Descr.* 10.24.1

2.1 Introduction

The famous maxim on the *pronaos* of the temple at Delphi was a public reminder of the boundary between the human and divine realms in classical Greece: "Know thyself" and "Nothing in excess." The transition from the Delphic maxim of anthropological modesty to the deification of human warrior kings was influenced by a variety of converging factors. Martin P. Nilsson considers this transition "Die Entstehung des Herrscherkults ist das dunkelste und umstrittenste Problem der griechischen Religion in geschichtlicher Zeit."[1] A number of factors influenced the rise of ruler cults from the fourth to third centuries BCE including—but not limited to—hero cults, cults of benefaction, the public cults of Greek citizens and, most importantly, the relationship of power between subject and ruler.[2] Discerning how these expressions of public

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[1] Quoted from Hans-Josef Klauck, *The Religious Context of Early Christianity: A Guide to Graeco-Roman Religions* (trans. Brian McNeil; Minneapolis: Fortress, 2003), 252. For original, see Martin P. Nilsson, *Geschichte der griechischen Religion. Zweiter Band: Die hellenistische und römische Zeit* (Münich: C. H. Beck'sche Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1950), 128.

[2] In this way, the cult of heroes and benefactors in classical Greece were a precursor to Hellenistic ruler worship. Indeed, some scholars have gone so far as to argue that we should speak of a cult of benefactors rather than a cult of rulers. So M. P. Charlesworth: "it may be said that there is in a sense no ruler-cult but only the cult of benefactors … Hellenistic kings were worshipped because they were donors, saviours from danger, founders, and not primarily because they were kings" ("Some Observations on Ruler Cult, Especially in Rome," *HThR* 28 [1935], 5-44). While the diction of honors conferred on benefactors overlaps in form and content with ruler cults, it is important to recognize that the Hellenistic and Roman ruler cults eclipsed the cult of benefactors simply by their overwhelming supra-regional power. Moreover, honors associated with the cult of benefactors focused on dead individuals, whereas ruler cults could focus on living individuals. See Klauck, *Religious Context,* 264; S. R. F. Price, *Rituals and Power: The Roman Imperial Cult in Asia Minor*

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honor gave way to the deification of humans cannot be determined in perfect linear or theoretical detail.[3] However, in the sources available to us, it is clear that, in the aftermath of Alexander the Great's conquests, the Hellenistic cult of rulers became a veritable system of public honors that operated with its own "rationality and internal logic" within the older system of benefaction.[4] Indeed, it is crucial to recognize that the Roman imperial cults did not merge onto the stage of world history *ex nihilo*—rather, they followed in the wake of the distinctive typologies and cultic precedents created by the Hellenistic cult of rulers, especially the paradigmatic figure of

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(Cambridge: Cambridge University, 1984), 23-52; and Duncan Fishwick and Alastair M. Small eds., *Subject and Ruler: The Cult of the Ruling Power in Classical Antiquity: Papers Presented at a Conference Held in the University of Alberta on April 13-15, 1994, to Celebrate the 65th Anniversary of Duncan Fishwick* (Ann Arbor: Journal of Roman Archaeology, 1996). On power relations see also the exceptional essay of Richard Gordon, "The Roman Imperial Cult and Questions of Power," in *The Religious History of the Roman Empire: Pagans, Jews and Christians* (ed. J. A. North and S. R. F. Price; Oxford: Oxford University, 2011), 37-70. On power relations between ruler and subject, Stephen Mitchell's comments are apt: "Emperor worship was not a political subterfuge, designed to elicit the loyalty of untutored provincials, but was one of the ways in which Romans themselves and provincials alongside them defined their own relationship with a new political phenomenon, an emperor whose powers and charisma were so transcendent that he appeared to them as both god man and god" (Stephen Mitchell, *Anatolia: Land, Men and Gods* [vol 2; Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993], 103).

[3] In current scholarship on ruler cult, there is a renewed interest to understand the Roman imperial cult within a broader cultural framework than the Hellenistic period alone (in contrast to Simon Price et al.). On pre-Hellenistic Mesopotamian forms of ruler cult, see the important conference proceedings in *Religion and Power: Divine Kingship in the Ancient World and Beyond* (ed. Nicole Brisch; Chicago: University of Chicago, 2008). On the emergence of ruler cult during the Hellenistic period, see the important conference proceedings published in Panagiotis P. Iossif, Andrezej S. Chankowski and Catharine C. Lorber, eds., *More than Men, Less Than Gods: Studies on Royal Cult and Imperial Worship: Proceedings of the International Colloquium Organized by the Belgian School at Athens (November 1-2, 2007)* (Leuven: Peeters, 2011). See also the unpublished dissertation by B. B Rubin, *(Re)Presenting Empire: The Roman Imperial Cult in Asia Minor, 31BC-AD63* (unpub. PhD thesis University of Michigan Ann Arbor, 2008). Rubin argues for a more robust Anatolian influence on the imperial cult than has been acknowledged in contemporary scholarship with the result that "…the ideological program of the Roman imperial cult in Asia Minor was neither truly Greek nor Roman, but rather a hybrid synthesis of multiple cultural systems" (27). Rubin is certainly correct that the imperial cult is a hybrid synthesis of multiple cultural systems, however, one needs to exercise tremendous caution when adjudicating *which* cultural systems are influencing a given component of ruler cult in a particular region. The hybridization of ruler cult is especially evident in Ptolemaic Egypt, where the Egyptian tradition of honoring the Pharaoh as the earthly manifestation of the sun god Ré was transferred to the Ptolemies and Roman Emperors in cultic media and art. See Fritz Blumenthal, *Der ägyptische Kaiserkult AfP* 5 (1913): 317-345; Gregory Steven Dundas, *Pharaoh, Basileus and Imperator: The Roman Imperial Cult in Egypt* (Los Angeles: University of California, 1994); Frederike Herklotz, *Prinzeps und Pharao: Der Kult Des Augustus in Ägypten* (Frankfurt: Verlag Antike, 2007).

[4] Price, *Rituals and Power,* 47.

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Alexander the Great.[5]

The purpose of this chapter is to flesh out the conceptual framework and material infrastructure for honoring gods and kings in Hellenistic and Roman antiquity, with the aim of better understanding Jewish resistance literature's objects of resistance. The first section of this chapter discusses the Hellenistic military apparatus and its impact upon the aura of power that surrounded the Hellenistic monarch. In the second section the impact of the anthropomorphic narrative of Greco-Roman religion and the system of benefaction upon the hybrid media of gods and kings will be discussed.[6] The hybrid media of gods and kings in the Hellenistic and Roman worlds created new hermeneutical potential for interpreting the icon parody's allusive objects of resistance. Put another way, when Hellenistic Jews employed the icon parody to allusively oppose art, statuary, temples and precious metals for material representation, were the opposing a god, a king or both at the same time? The chapter concludes with an investigation of the

[5] Eduard Meyer argued that Alexander the Great himself employed divine kingship to assert his rule in Egypt. See "Alexander der Grosse und die absolute Monarchie," in *Römischer Kaiserkult* (ed. Antonie Wlosok; Halle: Niemeyer, 1924), 203-7. Hans-Josef Klauck, on the other hand, cautions one from attributing the evolution of ruler cults to Alexander's own initiative: "one can call Alexander the Great a precursor of the Hellenistic-Roman cult of rulers and emperors, less because of what he himself did in this direction than because of the myths and legends which quickly formed around his person and served later rulers as a model for the way in which they portrayed themselves" (Klauck, *Religious Context*, 274). In a similar vein as Klauck, Angelos Chaniotis rightly concludes that one should treat Alexander in a different interpretive category as the Successors: "In order to understand the historical significance of Hellenistic royal cult one should rather exclude the cult of Alexander from the discusson; his exceptional achievement and his personal idiosyncracies probably confuse the general picture" (Angelos Chaniotis, "The Divinity of Hellenistic Rulers," in *A Companion to the Hellenistic World* [ed. Andrew Erskine; Malden: Blackwell, 2005], 431-446, here 439). On Alexander's divinity, see also E. Badian, "Alexander the Great Between Two Thrones and Heaven: Variations on an Old Theme," in *Subject and Ruler: The Cult of the Ruling Power in Classical Antiquity: Papers Presented at a Conference Held in the University of Alberta on April 13-15, 1994, to Celebrate the 65th Anniversary of Duncan Fishwick* (eds., Duncan Fishwick and Alastair M. Small; Ann Arbor: Journal of Roman Archaeology, 1996), 11-26. On the primary sources related to Alexander's life and death, see the two volume work of Charles Alexander Robinson, Jr., *The History of Alexander the Great* (Providence: Brown University, 1963); Robin Lane Fox, *Alexander the Great* (London: Dial Press, 1974); and Andrew Stewart, *Faces of Power: Alexander's Image and Hellenistic Politics* (Berkeley: University of California, 1993).

[6] I use the word "media" throughout this study as a reference to symbolic communication through architecture and written communication in inscriptions. On this topic, see Jörg Rüpke, "Roman Religion and the Religion of Empire: Some Reflections on Method," in *The Religious History of the Roman Empire: Pagans, Jews, and Christians* (eds. J. A. North and S. R. F. Price; Oxford: Oxford University, 2011), 26-27.

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Hellenistic and Roman treatises on kingship, with the aim of further fleshing out how auditors conceptualized the ruling power's divine associations in Greco-Roman antiquity.

2.2 Ruler Worship and the Traditional Gods

Despite Simon Price becoming a household name among New Testament scholars, his key thesis deserves serious reconsideration within the field of New Testament studies: namely, that imperial subjects in the Greek East made sense of the external military power of the Hellenistic cult of rulers by absorbing them into the cultic media and rituals of the traditional gods.[7] When the Mediterranean basin experienced the transition from the *Herscherkult* to the *Kaiserkult* it followed suit, transposing Augustus's image and power into this preexisting model.[8] Price's conclusion is worth quoting in full:

> The Greeks were faced with the rule first of the Hellenistic kings and then of Roman emperors which was not completely alien, but which did not relate to the traditions of the self-governing cities. They attempted to evoke an answer by focusing the problem in ritual. Using their traditional symbolic system they represented the emperor to themselves in the familiar terms of divine power. The imperial cult, like the cults of other traditional gods, created a relationship of power between subject and ruler. It also enhanced the dominance of local élites over the populace, of cities over other cities, and of Greek over indigenous cultures. That is, the cult was a major part of the web of power that formed the fabric of society. The imperial cult stabilized the religious order of the world. The system of ritual was carefully structured; the symbolism evoked a picture of the relationship between the emperor and the gods.[9]

For Price, the emperor was integrated into a "web of power" that was closely bound up with the "symbolic system" of rituals associated with the traditional gods—especially sacrifice, prayer

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[7] See Simon Price throughout, *Rituals and Power: The Roman Imperial Cult in Asia Minor*. Other important studies on the Roman imperial cults that pre-dates Price's work are L. R. Taylor, *The Divinity of the Roman Emperor* (Middletown: American Philological Association, 1931); G. W. Bowersock, *Augustus and the Greek World* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1986); and idem., "The Imperial Cult: Perceptions and Persistence," in *Jewish and Christian Self-Definition* (ed. B. F. Meyer and E. P. Sanders; London SCM, 1982), 171-82.

[8] So Hans-Josef Klauck, "The inhabitants of Greece and Asia Minor reacted to the new rulers in their accustomed manner: they transposed the varied cult of ruler, which by now had a lengthy tradition, to the Romans" (*Religious Context,* 283).

[9] Simon Price, *Rituals and Power,* 247-48, but see also 29-30.

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and calendrical festivals. This integration placed the Roman emperor into the cosmic hierarchy of the universe, thus placing his image and power alongside the traditional gods at both the ritual and material level (often, as will be discussed below, within or appended to the gods' pre-existing infrastructure).[10] Price's thesis is significant for our purposes here, showing that ruler cults were not abstracted from the larger polytheistic system of Greco-Roman religion as if the emperor stood on his own apart from the traditional gods.

It is also important to recognize that, aside from a few mad-emperors during the first century, no living Roman emperor claimed to be a god during their lifetime.[11] The ascription of divinity was given posthumously by senatorial vote based on an emperor's behavior during their lifetime (Appian, *Bell. Civil.* 2.148). Even then, for emperors who did not experience the *damnatio memoriae,* the nomenclature used for their divinity in the Roman West was generally *divus* rather than *deus.*[12] As scholars like Steven Friesen and Daniel Schowalter have pointed out, questions of the emperor's ontological status were of lesser importance in antiquity.[13] "The

[10] Price, *Rituals and Power,* 248.
[11] Domitian, for example, referred to himself as *Dominus et deus noster* "Our lord and god" (Suetonius, *Dom.* 13.2). Caligula, on the other hand, who Suetonius calls a "monster" (*Cal.* 22.1) tried to transplant the statue of Olympian Zeus in Greece to Rome and replace its head with his own (Suetonius, *Cal.* 22.2f). Vespasian comes close to self-deification on his deathbed according to Suetonius: "Alas! I think that I am becoming a god!" (Suet., *Vesp.* 23:4).
[12] G. W. Bowersock, "Greek Intellectuals and the Imperial Cult," in *Le Culte Des Souverains Dan L'Empire Romain* (ed. Willem den Boer; Genève: Fondation Hart,1973), 177-206, here 198. In the Greek East, matters are more complex since there was no cognate in Greek to translate *divus.* The closest lexical association was *theos,* which, of course, evoked a more lucid conception of divinity during the emperor's lifetime. The proliferation of cultus for the Roman emperors during their lifetime in the Greek East is, in small part, a product of this lexical subtlety. But it is important to recognize that the Roman imperial cults' proliferation in the Greek East is largely due to native Greek traditions—especially the precedent of the Hellenistic cult of rulers. For further discussion, see: Price, *Rituals and Power,* 75-77. On the religious and political background of the word *divus* and its application to Julius Caesar as an evocation of archaic Roman religious law, see David Wardle, "*Deus or Divus:* The Genesis of Roman Terminology for Deified Emperors and a Philosopher's Contribution," in *Philosophy and Power in the Graeco-Roman World: Essay in Honor of Miriam Griffin* (ed. Gillian Clark and Tessa Rajak; Oxford: Oxford University, 2002), 181-192.
[13] The debates over the emperor's ontological status are well beyond my purposes here. A few comments here will suffice. Simon Price interprets the emperor's status as standing "at the focal point between human and divine" (Price, *Rituals and Power,* 233). Price's argument is based on what he deems ambiguity in the figurative representation and rituals of the imperial cults. Price writes, "there was generally concern to avoid

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crucial issue was the role of imperial authority in creating the kind of society which pleased the gods."[14] The Pan-Hellenic pantheon was hardly a rigid system of compartmentalized divinities—rather, auditors could invoke more than one god at the same time for their unique qualities of euergetism (Dio Chrysostom, *Rhod.* 31.11).[15] John Scheid best articulates this nuance: "Very

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elevating the emperor too high. His statues did not rival or displace those of the traditional deities. We know from other sources that, at the ritual level, sacrifice and prayer were often directed to the traditional gods on behalf of the emperor, and only rarely to the emperor alone" (Price, *Rituals and Power,* 147). Price's argument that the emperor was somewhere between human and divine is largely based on the twofold sacrifice and prayer formulas to the gods on behalf of the emperor. For example, Price quotes Aelius Aristides: "No one is so arrogant that he could remain unmoved when he hears even only the name of the ruler. He stands up, praises and honours him and speaks two prayers, one to the gods for the ruler and one to the ruler himself for his own well-being" (*Or.* 26.32). Steven Friesen rightly argues that Price relies too much on ontological categories and misreads the quote in its historical and literary context: Aristides is delivering an encomium before Antoninus Pius, a context that would hardly flatter the imperial court if Aristides is, in fact, trying to communicate "ambiguity" regarding the emperor's ontological status (*Twice Neokoros: Ephesus, Asia and the Cult of the Flavian Imperial Family* [Leiden: Brill, 1993], 151). Rather, argues Friesen, "the twofold prayer accurately reflected imperial theology: the gods looked after the emperors, who in turn looked after the concerns of the gods on earth to the benefit of humanity" (Friesen, *Twice Neokoros,* 152). Friesen, however, downplays the hegemony of the sacrificial system as a means of transferring the emperor's power from the imperial center to the periphery through elites' acquisition of the imperial cult priesthoods. See Richard Gordon, "The Veil of Power: Emperors, Sacrificers and Benefactors," in *Pagan Priests: Religion and Power in the Ancient World* (ed. Mary Beard and John North; New York: Cornell University, 1990), 177-198. This study is in full agreement with Friesen that the twofold prayer reflects the emperors' collaboration with the gods in a relationship of mutual interdependence. However, exceptions exist in our sources, especially in the case of mad emperors. Philo records that when his embassy met with the megalomaniacal Gaius Caligula, Gaius accused the Jews as follows: "You are haters of God, inasmuch as you do not think that I am a god, I who am already confessed to be a god by every other nation, but who am refused that appellation by you" (*Legat.* 353). The ontological significance of the twofold prayer for Gaius' self-understanding is then revealed in a striking passage after Philo's embassy defends the Jewish tradition of offering sacrifice to Yahweh on behalf of Caesar: "'Grant,' said he, 'that all this is true, and that you did sacrifice; nevertheless you sacrificed to another god and not for my sake (τεθύκατε ἀλλ' ἑτέρῳ, κἂν ὑπὲρ ἐμοῦ); and then what good did you do me? Moreover you did not sacrifice to me (οὐ γὰρ ἐμοὶ τεθύκατε [*Legat.* 357])."' This passage clearly shows that Gaius interpreted the twofold prayer in ontological terms, but one needs to be cautious of making objective generalizations about the twofold prayer from a mad emperor. Daniel Schowalter's study of the relationship between Trajan and the gods in Pliny the Younger's *Panegyricus* draws similar conclusions to that of Friesen. Schowalter cautions the interpreter from making generalizations, showing that the relationship between Trajan and the gods was "complex" and that "there was not any single portrayal of the relationship between the emperor and the gods, but several" (*The Emperor and the Gods: Images From the Time of Trajan* [Minneapolis: Fortress, 1993], 125). Despite these complexities, Schowalter argues that Pliny attempts to persuade Trajan to think of himself in "a balanced power relationship" with the gods, the Senate, and thereby with the people (Schowalter, *The Emperor and the Gods,* 75). On the function of twofold prayers addressed to the emperor and the civic gods, see also: Duncan Fishwick, "Votive Offerings to the Emperor," *ZPE* 80 (1990): 131-30.

[14] Friesen, *Twice Neokoros,* 152.

[15] So Dio Chrysostom: "some do maintain that Apollo, Helius, and Dionysus are one and the same … and many people even go so far as to combine all the gods and make of them one single force and power" (*Rhod.* 31.11).

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rarely does one come across a ritual or a sanctuary in which a deity is invoked in isolation. *In the functional polytheism of the Romans, the gods stand side by side and collaborate with one another* (emphasis mine)."[16] One strategy making imperial cosmology visible to subordinate subjects was to literally sculpt the ruling power into a posture of piety and functional collaboration with the gods, a point we will see repeatedly in the epigraphic record. To take one example, this point is well-illustrated at the dawn of the Roman period when Antiochus I of Commagene (c. 70 – c. 35 BCE) built a ἱεροθέσιον (monumental tomb) on the summit of the Nemrud Dagh in the Taurus Mountains to assert his power under Rome's encroaching power. Most impressive are the four colossal *dexiosis* stelae depicting Antiochus shaking hands with the goddess Commagene (Goell, fig. 277), Apollo-Mithras (Goell, fig. 279), Zeus Oromasdes (Goell, figs. 281-289) and Heracles (Goell, figs. 293-297).[17] The *dexiosis* reliefs are perhaps the best iconographic commentary we have on ruler cults: gods and kings were collaborators in a partnership of power.[18]

Before looking at the primary sources in more detail, some hermeneutical cautions are in

[16] See John Scheid, *An Introduction to Roman Religion* (trans. Janet Lloyd; Bloomington: Indiana University, 2003), 159. Scheid's point is not difficult to illustrate: one only has to think of the Capitoline triad in Rome where Jupiter, Juno and Minerva shared a temple; it is this trio that played a pivotal role in the religious life of Rome's military around the Mediterranean. See Mary Beard, John North and Simon Price, *Religions of Rome*, 1.360. For the emperor's image embedded in the midst of the military standards and traditional gods, see: Tacitus, *Ann.* 4.2.

[17] Theresa B. Goell et al., *Nemrud Daği: The Hierothesion of Antiochus I of Commagene: Volume 1: Text* (ed. Donald H. Sanders; Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 1996).

[18] The reliefs flank both the East and West sides of the Nemrud Dagh's tumulus, evoking a vivid visual theology of divine collaboration. Above the reliefs on both the East and West terrace stands a colossal statue of Antiochus as σύνθρονος with the colossi of traditional Greco-Persian gods: Tyche-Commagene (Goell, figs. 113, 114, 117, 121), Zeus-Oromasdes (Goell, figs. 50, 104, 110), Apollo-Mithras-Helios-Hermes (Goell, figs. 95, 101) and Artagnes-Heracles-Ares (Goell, figs. 88, 94). Appropriately, the statue of Zeus overshadows the others and is placed in the center, with a height of 3.02 meters (Goell et al., 187). The statue of Antiochus, on the other hand, placed on the far left side of the monument, stands at 2.60m, giving it a divinized aura, yet subtly subordinate to the heavenly King Zeus (Goell et al., 181). The physiognomic design of Antiochus's colossal includes sun-rayed headgear with the diadem, a motif that evokes the iconography of Helios and the concept of radiating light (and, hence, Antiochus et al. royal epithet ἐπιφανής) (Goell et al., 102). For pilgrims travelling to the towering tumulus from the East or West sides, the *dexiosis* reliefs and the colossal image of Antiochus as enthroned among the gods communicated a striking image of ruler cult's collaboration with the gods.

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order. As Paul Veyne memorably wrote, "The cult of the monarch is a subject on which it is easier to write 200 pages than twenty, for the documentation is enormous and has been well studied."[19] For instance, the sheer volume and diversity of sources related to ruler worship in antiquity, spanning an array of iconographic, epigraphic, numismatic, archaeological and literary sources, cautions against making simplistic generalizations.[20] Indeed, piecing together the primary sources for the purpose of reconstructing the rule of a particular emperor during the composition of a particular New Testament book is riddled with historical complexities, and demands that one pay careful attention to the provincial and civic nuances of ruler cult from one city to another (in so far as these nuances are discernible).[21] To account for this diversity, Mary Beard, John North and Simon Price make the provocative statement that there "was no such thing as *the* imperial cult."[22] For Beard, North and Price, the imperial cult was variegated depending on local religious traditions, the Roman status of the community—as a *coloniae, municipia* or *peregrini*—and the degree of Roman involvement in establishing the cult.[23] To account for the diversity of emperor worship, Steven Friesen recently called on scholars to quit speaking of *the* imperial cult and adopt the more nuanced phrase imperial cults; a nuance adopted here to reflect the imperial cults' diversity from Latin West to the Greek East, from one emperor to the next and from one city to another depending on funding by local elites in the bid

[19] Paul Veyne, *Bread and Circuses: Historical Sociology and Political Pluralism* (trans. Brian Pearce; New York: Penguin Press, 1990), 306.
[20] As Duncan Fishwick sagaciously warns, "Generalizations are always risky and a piecemeal analysis clearly provides the soundest approach..." (Duncan Fishwick, *The Imperial Cult in the Latin West: Studies in the Ruler Cult of the Western Provinces of the Roman Empire* [Leiden: Brill, 1987], 2.1.616).
[21] Duncan Fishwick, *The Imperial Cult in the Latin West*, 2.1.616.
[22] Mary Beard, John North and Simon Price eds., *Religions of Rome: A History* (vol. 1; Cambridge: Cambridge University, 1998), 1.318. Duncan Fishwick criticizes Beard, North and Price for expanding pre-existing definitions of the imperial cult to include cultic activities "for" rather than exclusively "to" the emperor. Here I agree with Beard, North and Price since sometimes the dative can be elusive and we know from the epigraphic record (see below) that honoring gods and kings alongside one another was normal cult practice. See Duncan Fishwick, "A Critical Assessment: On the Imperial Cult in *Religions of Rome*" *Religious Studies and Theology,* 28.2 (2009): 129-74.
[23] Mary Beard, John North and Simon Price eds., *Religions of Rome: A History,* 1.318.

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for the elite civic title *νεωκόρος*.[24] In the case of Acts, the diversity of imperial cults presents a major obstacle for interpreters, since we do not know with any certitude what city or cities in the Roman Empire Acts was written to, nor the exact year of its composition.[25] This chapter proceeds in the spirit of caution, with the aim of identifying tendencies rather than generalizations about the phenomenon of emperor worship.

2.3 A New Kind of Power: The Hellenistic Cult of Rulers and Early Judaism

The impact of Alexander the Great was not lost on the cultural memory of subordinate subjects. As Erich Gruen observes, Jews literally "wrote themselves into the campaigns of Alexander the Great."[26] Josephus, for example, records a legendary tale detailing Alexander's visit to Jerusalem and his purported worship of the name Yahweh on a golden bowl (*Ant.* 11.326-38). The account reflects Jews' apologetic interests: by re-casting Alexander in the guise of a protector of Jewish ancestral tradition, Jews attempted to legitimate their political autonomy under the Successors from below.

From above, the intoxicating power of Alexander provided a typology of conquest and kingship for Hellenistic and Roman rulers. The influence of Alexander the Great on Augustus's self-understanding is evident in a telling passage from Suetonius. After Augustus's annexation of Egypt in 30 BCE, Suetonius records that Augustus honored the body of Alexander the Great with

[24] See Steven J. Friesen, "Normal Religion, or, Words Fail Us: A Response to Karl Galinsky's 'The Cult of the Roman Emperor: Uniter or Divider?'" in *Rome and Religion: A Cross-Disciplinary Dialogue on the Imperial Cult* (eds. Jeffrey Brodd and Jonathan L. Reed; Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2011), 23-26, here 24.
[25] The dating of Acts is notoriously difficult to pin down. The traditional view dates Luke-Acts within a decade after the fall of the Temple in 70 CE. On this view, see Darrell L. Bock, *A Theology of Luke and Acts* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2012), 38-41. The traditional view has been called into question by Richard Pervo who argues that Luke was written ca. 115 CE during the time of the Apostolic Fathers. See Richard Pervo, *Dating Acts: Between the Evangelists and the Apologists* (Santa Rosa: Polebridge: 2006); and idem. *Acts: A Commentary* (ed. Harold Attridge; Minneapolis: Fortress, 2009), 5-7. Here I date Acts to the mid-80s or early 90s.
[26] Erich S. Gruen, *Heritage and Hellenism: The Reinvention of Jewish Tradition* (Berkeley: University of California, 1998), 189.

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a golden crown and flowers in the famous *Sema* tomb in Alexandria that held the bodies of Alexander and the Ptolemaic royal families. When asked if Alexander would like to see the bodies of the Ptolemaic kings, Suetonius records Augustus saying, "I wish to see a king, not dead men" (*Aug.* 18.1).[27] Augustus belittles the Ptolemaic kings as "dead men" in contrast to Alexander the Great's superior model of kingship, which may indicate Augustus's aspirations to imitate the intra-continental conquests of Alexander. The reality on the ground, however, is more complex: although Alexander modeled a typology of hegemonic conquest for Augustus, it is under Alexander's Successor kings (the *Diadochoi*) that subjects crystallized the ritual and material framework for honoring Hellenistic kings with "honors like the gods" (ἰσόθεοι τιμαί). Plutarch (c. 50-120 CE), who served as a priest in Delphi under the shadow of the Delphic maxim, criticizes the ascription of the title "king" to Alexander's initial successors Antigonus I Monophthalmus (306-301 BCE), Demetrius I Poliorcetes (306-283 BCE) and the Successors who imitated their example. "Such was the power of a single word (i.e., king) spoken by a flatterer, and so great was the revolution it brought about in the world" (Plutarch, *Demetr*. 18). Although Plutarch attributes the development of ruler cults to flattery, he does not deny that the development of Greek kingship brought about a revolution in the world.[28]

The revolution that took place was closely bound up with the Successor kings' megalomaniacal power. The work of Simon Price, as discussed above, has revolutionized our understanding of ruler cults, showing that they were not—as a previous generation of scholars thought—a political act of superficial public flattery or *Staaträson*, but a veritable system of

[27] Cassius Dio records a similar story, adding only that Augustus felt Alexander's body so forcefully that "a piece of his nose was broken off!" (Dio 51.16:5).
[28] On Plutarch's opposition to ruler cults, see: Kenneth Scott, "Plutarch and the Ruler Cult," *TPAPA* 60 (1929): 117-135. Although, see Glen W. Bowersock's criticism of Scott's handling of ruler cult and the primary literature. Glen W. Bowersock, "Greek Intellectuals and the Imperial Cult," in *Le culte des souverains dans l'Empire romain* (ed. Willem den Boer; Geneva: Fondation Hardt, 1973): 177-212, here 187.

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ritual funded by subjects' "attempt to come to terms with a new type of power."[29] The new type of external power presented to subjects from without was, in large part, a form of overwhelming military domination that was reflected in the power of the Hellenistic military machine itself, but also embodied in the ruler's own persona. Major advances in the technology of the Macedonian military machine had already taken place in the fourth century BCE leading up to Alexander's conquests.[30] Alexander's tutor, Aristotle, comments that strong fortifications are necessary in order to defend against the new inventions of missiles and siege apparatuses (Aristotle, *Pol.* 7.10.6, 8).[31] During the Hellenistic period, the Successor kings expanded the size and number of these technological advances for the purpose of inflicting psychological trauma on their opponents. The author of 1 Maccabees reflects the Seleucid military machine's gigantism when

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[29] Simon Price, *Rituals and Power,* 29. The *Tendenz* to caricature the imperial cults is pervasive in older scholarship. Kenneth Scott caricatures the imperial cults as a religion suited only for the lower classes: "True religious belief in the divinity of the king or emperor is to be sought among the more ignorant or lower classes" ("Humor at the Expense of the Imperial Cult" *CPh* 27 (1932): 322-28, here 328. Scott's hermeneutical framework is tainted by the Christianizing assumption that feeling and emotion constitute a core or primary concern of religious experience. On contemporary views of Roman religion that avoid Christianizing assumptions, see John Scheid, *An Introduction to Roman Religion* (trans. Janet Lloyd; Bloomington: Indiana University, 2003); Janet Huskinson ed., *Experiencing Rome: Culture, Identity and Power in the Roman Empire* (London: Routledge, 2000); J. B. Rives, *Religion the Roman Empire* Oxford: Blackwell, 2007); and especially the often neglected work of Mary Beard et al. ed. *Religions of Rome. Volume 1: A History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 1998); idem. *Religions of Rome. Volume 2: A Sourcebook* (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 1998). On the difficulty of defining what we mean by "religion" when interpreting ruler cult, see Jeffrey Brodd, "Religion, Roman Religion, Emperor Worship," in *Rome and Religion: A Cross-Disciplinary Dialogue on the Imperial Cult* (ed. Jeffrey Brodd and Jonathan L. Reed; Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2011), 35-48. On the intersection of Greco-Roman religion and early Christianity, I know of no better introduction to the primary literature than Hans-Josef Klauck, *The Religious Context of Early Christianity: A Guide to Greco-Roman Religions*. But see also James S. Jeffers, *The Greco-Roman World of the New Testament Era: Exploring the Background of Early Christianity* (Downers Grove: Intervarsity Press, 1999).

[30] For an overview of military technology during the Hellenistic period, see: Glenn R. Bugh, "Hellenistic Military Developments," in *The Cambridge Companion to the Hellenistic World* (ed. Glenn R. Bugh; Cambridge: Cambridge University, 2006), 265-294. Since major advances in military technology occurred before Alexander, Bugh cautions against speaking of a "Hellenistic" military as if major technical innovations took place during this period. For fuller discussion, see A. Chaniotis, *War in the Hellenistic World: A Social and Cultural History* (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2006)**.** On the centrality of the Roman emperor as military commander, see: J. B. Campbell, *The Emperor and the Roman Army 31 B.C.-A.D. 235* (Oxford: Oxford University, 1984).

[31] Diodorus Siculus eulogizes Demetrius Poliorcetes for his military contributions: "For it was in his time that the greatest weapons were perfected and engines of all kinds far surpassing those that had existed among others; and this man launched the greatest ships after this siege and after the death of his father" (20.92.3-4).

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Antiochus IV's heir, Philip, marches upon Judas for attacking the citadel in Jerusalem with "one hundred thousand foot soldiers, twenty thousand horsemen, and thirty-two elephants accustomed to war" (1 Macc 6:30).[32] The subsequent verses paint a lucid portrait of the power and terror that the Seleucid military machine could evoke:

> (37) καὶ πύργοι ξύλινοι ἐπ᾽ αὐτοὺς ὀχυροὶ σκεπαζόμενοι ἐφ᾽ ἑκάστου θηρίου ἐζωσμένοι ἐπ᾽ αὐτοῦ μηχαναῖς, καὶ ἐφ᾽ ἑκάστου ἄνδρες δυνάμεως τέσσαρες οἱ πολεμοῦντες ἐπ᾽ αὐτοῖς καὶ ὁ Ἰνδὸς αὐτοῦ. (38) καὶ τὴν ἐπίλοιπον ἵππον ἔνθεν καὶ ἔνθεν ἔστησεν ἐπὶ τὰ δύο μέρη τῆς παρεμβολῆς κατασείοντες καὶ καταφρασσόμενοι ἐν ταῖς φάλαγξιν. (39) ὡς δὲ ἔστιλβεν ὁ ἥλιος ἐπὶ τὰς χρυσᾶς καὶ χαλκᾶς ἀσπίδας, ἔστιλβεν τὰ ὄρη ἀπ᾽ αὐτῶν καὶ κατηύγαζεν ὡς λαμπάδες πυρός. (40) καὶ ἐξετάθη μέρος τι τῆς παρεμβολῆς τοῦ βασιλέως ἐπὶ τὰ ὑψηλὰ ὄρη καί τινες ἐπὶ τὰ ταπεινά· καὶ ἤρχοντο ἀσφαλῶς καὶ τεταγμένως. (41) καὶ ἐσαλεύοντο πάντες οἱ ἀκούοντες φωνῆς πλήθους αὐτῶν καὶ ὁδοιπορίας τοῦ πλήθους καὶ συγκρουσμοῦ τῶν ὅπλων. ἦν γὰρ ἡ παρεμβολὴ μεγάλη σφόδρα καὶ ἰσχυρά (1 Macc 6:37-41).
>
> (37) And there were wooden towers on them, on each beast, sturdy, covered, tied on it with devices, and on each one were four men of strength, who fought upon them, and its Indian handler (38) And he stationed the rest of the cavalry on the sides at both flanks of the army as raiders and as guards for the phalanxes. (39) Now as the sun shone on the gold and copper shields, the mountains glittered with them and glowed as lamps of fire. (40) And a certain part of the army of the king spread out on the high mountains and some of the lower ones, and they were advancing securely and in order. (41) And everyone trembled who heard the sound made by the multitude of them and by the marching of the multitude and the clashing of the weapons, for the army was very great and mighty (1 Macc 6.37-41; trans. NETS).[33]

It does not take much imagination to envision the psychological trauma that such a sight would elicit—hence, Judas and his troops "trembled" (v. 41). The passage accurately reflects the Seleucids' use of Indian elephants in the military, which functioned in a similar fashion as the modern armored tank. Having available such powerful engines of war undergirded the aura of

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[32] The numbers are likely embellished, but accurately reflect the inner-workings of the Seleucid military: foot soldiers, cavalry, engines of war and elephants (notably, the important role of mercenary troops is also referenced in v. 29). Mercenary troops were usually placed with a non-throwing spear in the phalanx during the Hellenistic period. The wealth of the Successor kings afforded them the ability to bribe or pay soldiers of the opposing military. For example, when Antigonus and Demetrius invaded Egypt in 306 BCE, Ptolemy successfully bribed the invading soldiers to defect (Diod. 20.75.1-3). See Bugh, "Hellenistic Military Developments," 267.

[33] Unless otherwise noted, all English translations of the Septuagint are from Albert Pietersma and Benjamin G. Wright, eds., *New English Translation of the Septuagint* (Oxford: Oxford University, 2007).

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power that surrounded the Hellenistic kings, yet the Successors' iconography and persona incarnated images of power, religious piety and military domination in ways that were equally important for the development of the Hellenistic cult of rulers.[34] Notably, the elephant was a common image of military domination on Seleucid iconography, and numismatic images of Alexander the Great often depicted him wearing an elephant scalp on his helmet that may have evoked an allusion to Dionysus's conquests toward India (Smith, pl. 74.1-2).[35] Such manifestations of divine power can be illustrated in the Successors' royal epithets: for example, the epithet ἐπιφανής—"god manifest"—was used for Antiochus IV, who minted coins with the title ΘΕΟΣ ΕΠΙΦΑΝΟΗΣ.[36] Likewise, Polybius writes that Antiochus IV was "the one called Epiphanes" (ὁ κληθεῖς ἐπιφανής [Pol. 3.3.8, 26.1]).[37] The meaning of Antiochus's royal titulature was not left for subjects to interpret on their own initiative. Rather, the ἐπιφάνεια of Antiochus was clarified through visual theology on art, where he was depicted wearing headgear with the

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[34] Michel H. Austin reminds that one should be cautious of getting sidetracked by the technology of ancient warfare, without thinking through the Hellenistic monarch's motives and purposes in going to war in the first place to conduct "a booty raid on an epic scale and the permanent conquest of vast tracts of territory together with dependent, tributary peoples" (Michel M. Austin, "Hellenistic Kings, War and the Economy," *Classical Quarterly* 36 (1986): 450-66, here 454). Austin points out that in the history of scholarship on Alexander the Great, the initial purpose of Alexander's conquests as one of economic gain is rarely considered (pp. 444-45). The character of Alexander as a plunderer in comparison to a pirate is recorded by St. Augustine: "For it was an elegant and truthful reply that was made to Alexander the Great by a certain pirate he had captured. When the king asked the fellow, what did he think he was doing when he tormented the sea, he replied with defiant outspokenness: 'The same as you when you torment the world! I do it with a little ship, so I am called a pirate. You do it with a large fleet, and so you are called a king (*Imperator*)'" (Augustine, *City of God,* 4.4). The sheer power of the military machine in the Hellenistic world, then, was funded, first and foremost, by the king's economic vision.

[35] Idem. "Hellenistic Military Developments," 277-80. The author of 1 Macc also notes that the elephant keepers "offered the elephants the juice of grapes and mulberries, to arouse them for battle" (1 Macc 6:34). It was not uncommon for elephants to proceed in battle undeterred by the opposing military, but it was also possible that they could turn and flee—especially if, for example, the African elephants did not like the smell of the Indian elephants (Polybius, 5.84.2-7).

[36] See Peter Van Nuffelen, "The Name Game: Hellenistic Historians and Royal Epithets," in *Faces of Hellenism: Studies in the History of the Eastern Mediterranean (4th Century B.C. – 5th Century A.D.)* (ed. Peter Van Nuffelen; Leuven: Peeters, 2009), 93-112.

[37] Other Seleucid kings who employed the epithet ἐπιφανής were Antiochus VI, VII, XI, XII and Seleucus VI. See R. R. R. Smith, *Hellenistic Royal Portraits* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1988), 50 n. 34.

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radiate diadem emanating rays of light akin to the god Helios.[38] Within the contours of this Seleucid tradition, Philo records that Gaius Caligula attempted to rename the Jerusalem temple under the title "Gaius, the new Zeus made manifest" (ἵνα Διὸς Ἐπιφανοῦς Νέου χρηματίζῃ Γαΐου, *Legat.* 346).

The period after Alexander's death created a convenient *Lebenswelt* for the Successors to develop "a royal monopoly of military glory."[39] Plutarch writes that the Successors "are perpetually at war" (Plutarch, *Pyrrh.* 12). The culture of pervasive war after Alexander's death created endless war games out of which victors were crowned kings. According to Michel M. Austin, the acquisition of the title *basileus* during the age of the Successors was always "acquired in a military context after a victory in battle."[40] Military triumph, then, was part and parcel with the acquisition of kingship. To borrow a modern phrase, "the military industrial complex" of the Hellenistic kings created a highly mobile apparatus for spreading ruler cults from the center to periphery. Indeed, life in the Hellenistic and Roman military was profoundly religious, where images of gods and the royal family were carried side-by-side and worshipped simultaneously. Within the mobile culture of the Hellenistic and Roman military apparatus, religion legitimated the military domination of colonial power. Cicero claims that it is due to "piety and religion" that Rome is "superior to all other countries and nations" (Cicero, *Har. Resp.* 19). The piety and religion of the Roman military is reflected in a prayer spoken by the general Scipio Africanus before departing with his sailors as they set out toward Carthage in 204 BCE. Livy (ca. 59 BCE to 17 CE) records Scipio's utterance as follows:

> You gods and goddesses of sea and land, I pray and beseech you to vouchsafe a favourable issue to all that has been done or is being done now or will be done hereafter

[38] R. R. R. Smith, *Hellenistic Royal Portraits*, 42**.** Similarly, Philo ridicules Gaius's self-deification (cf. *Legat.* 103).
[39] Austin, "Hellenistic Kings, War and the Economy," 458.
[40] Austin, "Hellenistic Kings, War and the Economy," 457.

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> under my command. May all turn out happily for the burghers and plebs of Rome, for our allies of the Latin name, for all who have the cause of Rome at heart, and for all who are marching beneath my standard, under my auspices and command, by land or sea or stream. Grant us your gracious help in all our doings, crown our efforts with success. Bring these my soldiers and myself safe home again, victorious over our conquered foes, adorned with their spoils, loaded with booty and exulting in triumph. Enable us to avenge ourselves on our enemies and grant to the people of Rome and to me the power to inflict exemplary chastisement on the city of Carthage, and to retaliate upon her all the injury that her people have sought to do to us (Livy, *Rom. Hist.* 29.27).[41]

In a striking way, the prayer of Scipio reflects how religion undergirded the safety and success of the military apparatus. In addition, it communicates how imperial domination could be perceived in tandem with the favor of the gods, which reminds us that those oppressed by empires were understood by the ruling power as objects of both political and religious forces. By the Augustan era, the Roman military was a veritable mobile parade of religious propaganda that mirrored the infrastructure of Rome itself with images of the imperial family and the gods, along with spaces for sacrifice in accord with Rome's religious-calendrical festivals.[42] Moreover, coin hoards stamped with the king's image alongside motifs and images of traditional gods were first distributed to soldiers and thereafter to their families and local communities.

Aside from the aura of power communicated through iconography, the very presence of the king embodied motifs of power and military domination. For example, Austin notes that the vast majority of Hellenistic kings fought at the head of their troops in battle, which had "a decisive psychological effect on his troops."[43] That the Seleucid kings fought alongside their troops can be corroborated by 1 Maccabees in a *digressio* that depicts a certain Jewish warrior named Eleazar—called Avaron—who courageously broke through the Seleucids' phalanx in

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[41] For further comment on this prayer, see Frances Hickson-Hahn, "A Prayer of Scipio Africanus: Livy 29.27.2-4," in *Prayer from Alexander to Constantine: A Critical Anthology* (ed. Mark Kiley; New York: Routledge, 1997), 149-54.
[42] On the function of religion in the Roman military, see Mary Beard, John North and Simon Price eds., *Religions of Rome: A History,* 1.324-28.
[43] Austin, "Hellenistic Kings, War and the Economy," 458. Austin notes that this tradition was true of all of the Successors except for the Ptolemies after Ptolemy IV (p. 458).

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Judea to confront King Philip on his royal elephant only to have the elephant collapse and crush Eleazar while spearing it from underneath (1 Macc 6:43). The story is related in order to eulogize Eleazar's courageous attempt to avenge the Hellenistic king at the head of his troops. However, Eleazar's heroic act can also be understood as an attack on the idolatry of the Hellenistic king, whose military hubris infringed upon the autonomy of the people of God and whose divine aura was supplemented by soldiers who carried images of the traditional gods during royal processions (Athenaeus, *Deipn.* 5.194a-203).

Off of the battlefield, the Successor kings embodied "a royal monopoly of military glory."[44] The bid for power that broke out among the Successors after Alexander's death created a convenient *Lebenswelt* in which to develop this image. Plutarch alludes to the bid for power among the Successors as a time of perpetual war: "They are perpetually at war, because for them plotting and being envious of each other is second nature, and they use the words war and peace just like current coin, to serve their present needs, but in defiance of justice" (*Pyrrh.* 12). The notion of perpetual war between the Successor kings was perhaps nowhere more felt than in Judea, where seemingly endless violence between the Seleucids and the Ptolemies resulted in six Syrian wars between 274–168 BCE.[45] In a historical panoramic of the Hellenistic cult of rulers, the proemium of 1 Maccabees summarizes the events from 336 BCE leading up to the antics of Antiochus IV in 175 BCE, providing key insight into the military domination associated with Alexander and his Successors, along with the roots of ruler worship from the perspective of Hellenistic Judaism:

> (1) καὶ ἐγένετο μετὰ τὸ πατάξαι Ἀλέξανδρον τὸν Φιλίππου Μακεδόνα, ὃς ἐξῆλθεν ἐκ γῆς Χεττιιμ, καὶ ἐπάταξεν τὸν Δαρεῖον βασιλέα Περσῶν καὶ Μήδων καὶ ἐβασίλευσεν ἀντ' αὐτοῦ, πρότερον ἐπὶ τὴν Ἑλλάδα. (2) καὶ συνεστήσατο πολέμους πολλοὺς καὶ ἐκράτησεν

[44] Idem. "Hellenistic Kings, War and the Economy," 458.
[45] On the Seleucids' domination of Judea, see the exceptional discussion in Anathea Portier-Young, *Apocalypse Against Empire,* 49-216.

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> ὀχυρωμάτων καὶ ἔσφαξεν βασιλεῖς τῆς γῆς· (3) καὶ διῆλθεν ἕως ἄκρων τῆς γῆς καὶ ἔλαβεν σκῦλα πλήθους ἐθνῶν. καὶ ἡσύχασεν ἡ γῆ ἐνώπιον αὐτοῦ, καὶ ὑψώθη, καὶ ἐπήρθη ἡ καρδία αὐτοῦ. (4) καὶ συνῆξεν δύναμιν ἰσχυρὰν σφόδρα καὶ ἦρξεν χωρῶν ἐθνῶν καὶ τυράννων, καὶ ἐγένοντο αὐτῷ εἰς φόρον. (5) καὶ μετὰ ταῦτα ἔπεσεν ἐπὶ τὴν κοίτην καὶ ἔγνω ὅτι ἀποθνήσκει. (6) καὶ ἐκάλεσεν τοὺς παῖδας αὐτοῦ τοὺς ἐνδόξους τοὺς συνεκτρόφους αὐτοῦ ἐκ νεότητος καὶ διεῖλεν αὐτοῖς τὴν βασιλείαν αὐτοῦ ἔτι αὐτοῦ ζῶντος. (7) καὶ ἐβασίλευσεν Ἀλέξανδρος ἔτη δώδεκα καὶ ἀπέθανεν. (8) καὶ ἐπεκράτησαν οἱ παῖδες αὐτοῦ, ἕκαστος ἐν τῷ τόπῳ αὐτοῦ. (9) καὶ ἐπέθεντο πάντες διαδήματα μετὰ τὸ ἀποθανεῖν αὐτὸν καὶ οἱ υἱοὶ αὐτῶν ὀπίσω αὐτῶν ἔτη πολλὰ καὶ ἐπλήθυναν κακὰ ἐν τῇ γῇ. (1 Macc 1:1-9).

> (1) And it happened after the triumph of Alexander the Macedonian the son of Philip, who came out of the land of Chettiim and defeated Darius, king of the Persians and Medes, and became king in his place, formerly being king of Greece— (2) and he conducted many wars and seized fortresses and slaughtered the kings of the earth. (3) And he penetrated to the ends of the earth and took the spoils of a multitude of nations. And the earth became quiet before him, and he was exalted, and his heart was uplifted. (4) And he gathered a very powerful force and ruled over countries, nations and tyrants, and they became tributary to him. (5) And after this he fell upon his bed and knew that he was dying. (6) And he called his distinguished servants, who had been raised with him from their youth, and divided his kingdom among them while he was still living. (7) And Alexander ruled for twelve years and died. (8) And his servants took control, each in his own place. (9) And they all put on crowns after he died, as did their sons after them for many years, and they multiplied evils on the earth (1 Macc 1:1-9; trans. NETS).

The motif of military domination is central throughout, characterizing Alexander as one who fought, conquered, put to death the kings of the earth, advanced to the ends of the earth and plundered many nations (vv. 2-3). The "royal monopoly of military glory" is on full display in these passages, albeit from the perspective of an imperial subject whose political and religious autonomy is threatened by the ruling power. In accord with the system of benefaction, Alexander is "exalted and lifted up" (ὑψώθη καὶ ἐπήρθη ἡ καρδία αὐτοῦ [1 Macc 1:3]). Although Alexander's deification is not explicitly mentioned, the verbal motifs of elevation blur the distinction between human divine, evoking a subtle charge of idolatry for the reader immersed in the thought world of Israel's exclusive monotheism. But the indictment goes further: Alexander's hubris is adopted

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by the Successors, who follow the idolatrous pattern of Alexander by putting on royal diadems[46] (διαδήματα) and "they multiplied evils on the earth" (πολλὰ καὶ ἐπλήθυναν κακὰ ἐν τῇ γῇ [1 Macc 1:9]).[47]

For the author of 1 Maccabees, the evils multiplied by the Hellenistic kings are two-fold. First, the Successors partake in unjust military domination exemplified by conquering and plundering. And second, the Successors embody a "superhuman arrogance" represented in their royal persona and iconography that blurs the distinction between human and divine (1 Macc 1:3; 2 Macc. 9:8-12; Wis 7; 14:16-22). In one word, the former "evil" can be summarized as hegemony and the latter as idolatry, yet we need to be careful to not legalistically bifurcate the two imperial vices as if Jews understood them in separate categories. In chapters two and three of this study, it will be argued that imperial images could communicate a hegemonic discourse from above. Thus, for the Jew living under empire at home or abroad, opposition to idolatry could be against non-cultic (i.e., hegemonic military domination) and/or cultic (i.e., ruler worship) forms of false worship or, as in the case of 1 Maccabees, both forms at the same time. Indeed, both forms of idolatry inappropriately evoked deification—the former of the imperial political system over against Israel's national-political identity and the latter of a powerful ruler over against the exclusive kingship of Yahweh.

Before evaluating how the literary culture of early Judaism negotiated the power and idolatry of ruler cults, it is necessary to first understand how the anthopomorphic narrative of

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[46] The royal diadem was the "main exclusive symbol of Hellenistic kingship" (R. R. R. Smith, *Hellenistic Royal Portraits*, 34-35). It was typically a folded or tubular cloth arranged around the head. For numerous numismatic examples, see Smith Pl. 74-80. It is also striking to note that Sirach reflects upon King David's military accomplishments by writing that "the glorious diadem was given to him" (Sir 47:6). The Wisdom of Solomon, on the other hand, depicts the righteous as receiving a royal diadem in contrast to wicked rulers (the unrighteous) in an apocalyptic scenario (Wis 5:16).

[47] Notably, the proemium prepares the reader for the unprecedented "evils" of Antiochus IV (175-163 BCE) later in the narrative, thus communicating how self-deification could result in military domination over the people of God.

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Greco-Roman religion and the system of benefaction created an interpretive framework for imperial subjects to conceptualize and freeze the image and power of kings in stone and precious material. It is this art—or, what Luke calls τέχνη (Acts 17:29)—that early Jews and Christians resisted as a visible manifestation of false worship.

2.3.1 The Anthropomorphic Narrative of Greco-Roman Religion and Hellenistic Kingship

The relationship between the traditional gods and kingship in antiquity was an important one. And for good reason: both offices exercised a type of power over the inhabited world that not only benefited humanity, but influenced the cosmic order in direct and, at times, transcendent ways. In Dio Chrysostom's *Olympic Discourse*, he writes that humanity's knowledge of god comes from four primary sources: nature, the poets, lawgivers and artists (*Or.* 12.44).[48] The epics of Hesiod and Homer, in particular, shaped Greek polytheism into an anthropomorphic narrative where the traditional gods took on human shape and lived in a cosmic hierarchy of interlocking divine and human realms (*Od.* 304).[49] Herodotus articulates the impact: "Hesiod and Homer created the genealogy of the gods in Greece and gave them their sobriquets, distributing offices and honours among them and shaping their figures" (*Hist.* 2.53.2). The influence of Homer is felt on imperial artists' imaging of the gods. Dio Chrysostom, for example, employs the rhetorical device *prosopoiia* to allow the famous sculptor Phidias (c. 465-45 BCE) to defend his anthropomorphic chryselephantine colossal of Zeus in Athens by telling his detractors that they

[48] Similarly, Varro, in Augustine, records three kinds of gods: "one introduced by the poets, another by the philosophers, another by the statesmen" (*Civ.* 4.27). See also the extended comment on seven types of gods in the first century CE Aetius (*Plac.* 1.6.1-16 = SVF 2.1009). For English translation of this passage, see *Hellenistic Philosophy: Introductory Readings* (trans. Brad Inwood and L. P. Gerson; Indianapolis: Hackett, 1997), 161, II.24

[49] To take one example, Homer understood Castor and Pollux as heroic humans who "have won honor like unto that of the gods" (*Od.* 304). On the representation of gods in human form, see Richard Gordon, "The Real and the Imaginary: Production and Religion in the Graeco-Roman World," in *Image and Value in the Graeco-Roman World: Studies in Mithraism and Religion Art* (Brookfield: Ashgate, 1996), 5-34.

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should "be angry with Homer first" (*Or.* 12.62).[50] As Phidias's interlocutors indicate, the representation of the divine in human form was provocative. Yet the human body, for "lack of a better illustration," provided artists with a dynamic medium through which to communicate what is "invisible and unportrayable" (*Or.* 12.59). For Dio, Greeks' anthropomorphic representation of the gods stands in contrast to the Barbarians, who lacked artistic means and thus represented the gods as mountains, unhewn trees and unshapen stones (*Or.* 12.62).

The representation of the gods in human form created a dangerous platform for powerful human benefactors to exploit their ontological status. In Pliny the Elder's account of the first gilded statues made of bronze, he provides important insight into the Greek era when artists began representing powerful humans with anthropomorphic statuary (in contrast to reserving this practice for the gods alone). Pliny writes:

> But after some time the artists everywhere applied themselves to representations of the gods. I find that the first brass image, which was made at Rome, was that of Ceres … *The practice, however, soon passed from the gods to the statues and representations of men, and this in various forms*. The ancients stained their statues with bitumen, which makes it the more remarkable that they were afterwards fond of covering them with gold. I do not know whether this was a Roman invention; but it certainly has the repute of being an ancient practice at Rome. It was not the custom in former times to give the likeness of individuals, except of such as deserved to be held in lasting remembrance on account of some illustrious deed; in the first instance, for a victory at the sacred games, and more particularly the Olympic Games, where it was the usage for the victors always to have their statues consecrated. And if any one was so fortunate as to obtain the prize there three times, his statue was made with the exact resemblance of every individual limb; from which circumstance they were called "iconicæ." I do not know whether the first public statues were not erected by the Athenians, and in honour of Harmodius and Aristogiton, who slew the tyrant; an event which took place in the same year in which the kings were expelled from Rome. *This custom, from a most praiseworthy emulation, was afterwards adopted by all other nations; so that statues were erected as ornaments in the public places of municipal towns, and the memory of individuals was thus preserved, their various honours being inscribed on the pedestals, to be read there by posterity, and*

[50] For commentary on this passage in Dio, see Peter Stewart, *Statues in Roman Society: Representation and Response* (Oxford: Oxford University, 2003), 66. On the construction and extant chryselephantine statuary, see Keneth D. Lapatin, *Chryselephantine Statuary in the Ancient Mediterranean World* (Oxford: Oxford University, 2001).

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> *not on their tombs alone.* After some time, a kind of forum or public place came to be made in private houses and in our halls, the clients adopting this method of doing honour to their patrons (*Nat.* 34.9).[51]

Although we need to treat the historicity of Pliny's claims with caution, Pliny captures well the caution with which artists undertook the task of representing powerful human benefactors. For example, no less than three times did an athlete have to achieve victory at the Olympic games in order to receive a statue with an "exact resemblance." This caution, however, changed to *temeritas* in 510 BCE when the tyrant slayers Harmodius and Aristogiton freed Athens of tyrannical kings.[52] Artistically speaking, the result was transformative: for the first time in Greek art, political rulers were represented anthropomorphically in public space, creating what Peter Stewart calls the "potential for elision" between gods and powerful humans.[53]

The potential for elision went beyond visual theology during the Hellenistic period. In an etiological tradition attributed to Euhemerus of Messene at the dawn of the Hellenistic period, it is claimed that the gods Uranus, Chronus and Zeus descended from powerful human kings on the island of Panchaea. Because we will return to this passage in a later chapter, the tradition is quoted here in full (Diodorus VI.1.2-10):

> (2) Περὶ θεῶν τοίνυν διττὰς οἱ παλαιοὶ ὦν ἀνθρώπων τοῖς μεταγενεστέροις παραδεδώκασιν ἐννοίας. τοὺς μὲν γὰρ αἰδίους καὶ ἀφθάρτους εἶναί φασιν, οἷον ἥλιόν τε καὶ σελήνην καὶ τὰ ἄλλα ἄστρα τὰ κατ᾽ οὐρανόν, πρὸς δὲ τούτοις ἀνέμους καὶ τοὺς ἄλλους τοὺς τῆς ὁμοίας φύσεως τούτοις τετευχότας· τούτων γὰρ ἕκαστον ἀίδιον ἔχειν τὴν γένεσιν καὶ τὴν διαμονήν· ἑτέρους δὲ λέγουσιν ἐπιγείους γενέσθαι θεούς, διὰ δὲ τὰς εἰς ἀνθρώπους εὐεργεσίας ἀθανάτου τετευχότας τιμὴς τε καὶ δόξης, οἷον Ἡρακλέα, Διόνυσον, Ἀρισταῖον, καὶ τοὺς ἄλλους τοὺς τούτοις ὁμοίους. (3) περὶ δὲ τῶν ἐπιγείων θεῶν πολλοὶ καὶ ποικίλοι παραδέδονται λόγοι παρὰ τοῖς ἱστορικοῖς τε καὶ μυθογράφοις· καὶ τῶν μὲν ἱστορικῶν Εὐήμερος ὁ τὴν ἱερὰν ἀναγραφὴν ποιησάμενος ἰδίως ἀναγέγραφεν, τῶν δὲ μυθολόγων Ὅμηρος καὶ Ἡσίοδος καὶ Ὀρφεὺς καὶ ἕτεροι τοιοῦτοι τερατωδεστέρους μύθους περὶ θεῶν πεπλάκασιν· ἡμεῖς δὲ τὰ

[51] Italics mine (*DJS*).

[52] For commentary on book 34, see: Jacob Isager, *Pliny on Art and Society: The Elder Pliny's Chapters on the History of Art* (London: Routledge, 1991), 80-108. On the larger context of Pliny's *Natural History*, see Roy Gibson and Ruth Morello, eds., *Pliny the Elder: Themes and Contexts* (Leiden: Brill, 2011).

[53] Peter Stewart, *Statues in Roman Society*, 33.

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παρ᾽ ἀμφοτέροις ἀναγεγραμμένα πειρασόμεθα συντόμως ἐπιδραμεῖν, στοχαζόμενοι τῆς συμμετρίας. (4) Εὐήμερος μὲν οὖν, φίλος γεγονὼς Κασσάνδρου τοῦ βασιλέως καὶ διὰ τοῦτον ἠναγκασμένος τελεῖν βασιλικάς τινας χρείας καὶ μεγάλας ἀποδημίας, φησὶν ἐκτοπισθῆναι κατὰ τὴν μεσημβρίαν εἰς τὸν ὠκεανόν· ἐκπλεύσαντα γὰρ αὐτὸν ἐκ τῆς Εὐδαίμονος Ἀραβίας ποιήσασθαι τὸν πλοῦν δι᾽ ὠκεανοῦ πλείους ἡμέρας, καὶ προσενεχθῆναι νήσοις πελαγίαις, ὧν μίαν ὑπάρχειν τὴν ὀνομαζομένην Παγχαίαν, ἐν ᾗ τεθεᾶσθαι τοὺς ἐνοικοῦντας Παγχαίους εὐσεβείᾳ διαφέροντας καὶ τοὺς θεοὺς τιμῶντας μεγαλοπρεπεστάταις θυσίαις καὶ ἀναθήμασιν ἀξιολόγοις ἀργυροῖς τε καὶ χρυσοῖς. (5) εἶναι δὲ καὶ τὴν νῆσον ἱερὰν θεῶν· καὶ ἕτερα πλείω θαυμαζόμενα κατά τε τὴν ἀρχαιότητα καὶ τὴν τῆς κατασκευῆς πολυτεχνίαν, περὶ ὧν τὰ κατὰ μέρος ἐν ταῖς πρὸ ταύτης βίβλοις ἀναγεγράφαμεν. (6) εἶναι δ᾽ ἐν αὐτῇ κατά τινα λόφον ὑψηλὸν καθ᾽ ὑπερβολὴν ἱερὸν Διὸς Τριφυλίου, καθιδρυμένον ὑπ᾽ αὐτοῦ, καθ᾽ ὃν καιρὸν ἐβασίλευσε τῆς οἰκουμένης ἁπάσης ἔτι κατὰ ἀνθρώπους ὤν. (7) ἐν τούτῳ τῷ ἱερῷ στήλην εἶναι χρυσῆν, ἐν ᾗ τοῖς Παγχαίοις γράμμασιν ὑπάρχειν γεγραμμένας τάς τε Οὐρανοῦ καὶ Κρόνου καὶ Διὸς πράξεις κεφαλαιωδῶς. (8) Μετὰ ταῦτά φησι πρῶτον Οὐρανὸν βασιλέα γεγονέναι, ἐπιεικῆ τινα ἄνδρα καὶ εὐεργετικὸν καὶ τῆς τῶν ἄστρων κινήσεως ἐπιστήμονα, ὃν καὶ πρῶτον θυσίαις τιμῆσαι τοὺς οὐρανίους θεούς· διὸ καὶ Οὐρανὸν προσαγορευθῆναι. (9) υἱοὺς δὲ αὐτῷ γενέσθαι ἀπὸ γυναικὸς Ἑστίας Τιτᾶνα καὶ Κρόνον, θυγατέρας δὲ Ῥέαν καὶ Δήμητρα. Κρόνον δὲ βασιλεῦσαι μετὰ Οὐρανὸν, καὶ γήμαντα Ῥέαν γεννῆσαι Δία καὶ Ἥραν καὶ Ποσειδῶνα. τὸν δὲ Δία διαδεξάμενον τὴν βασιλείαν γῆμαι Ἥραν καὶ Δήμητρα καὶ Θέμιν, ἐξ ὧν παῖδας ποιήσασθαι Κουρῆτας μὲν ἀπὸ τῆς πρώτης, Περσεφόνην δὲ ἐκ τῆς δευτέρας, Ἀθηνᾶν δὲ ἀπὸ τῆς τρίτης. (10) ἐλθόντα δὲ εἰς Βαβυλῶνα ἐπιξενωθῆναι Βήλῳ, καὶ μετὰ ταῦτα εἰς τὴν Παγχαίαν νῆσον πρὸς τῷ ὠκεανῷ κειμένην παραγενόμενον Οὐρανοῦ τοῦ ἰδίου προπάτορος βωμὸν ἱδρύσασθαι. κἀκεῖθεν διὰ Συρίας ἐλθεῖν πρὸς τὸν τότε δυνάστην Κάσιον, ἐξ οὗ τὸ Κάσιον ὄρος. ἐλθόντα δὲ εἰς Κιλικίαν πολέμῳ νικῆσαι Κίλικα τοπάρχην, καὶ ἄλλα δὲ πλεῖστα ἔθνη ἐπελθόντα παρὰ πᾶσιν τιμηθῆναι καὶ θεὸν ἀναγορευθῆναι.

Historians and mythographers have handed down many varied stories about the earthly gods; of the historians, Euhemerus the author of the *Sacred Record* has written a separate account of them […] Euhemerus, then, was a friend of King Cassander, and so had to carry out a number of royal missions and undertake long journeys abroad. He says he travelled south to the ocean; starting from Arabia Felix he sailed for many days through the ocean, and came to islands in the sea. One of these was called Panchaea; there he saw the Panchaeans who inhabit the island, men of great piety *who honour the gods with the most lavish sacrifices and remarkable dedications of silver and gold*. The island is sacred to the gods, and there are many other objects in it remarkable for their antiquity and the excellence of their craftsmanship; of these we have written severally in previous books. There is in the island, on a very lofty hill, a temple of Zeus Triphylius, founded by himself at the time when he was still among men and was king over the whole world. In this temple there is a golden stele on which are inscribed in Panchaean characters the main achievements of Uranus, Cronus and Zeus. *Euhemerus then says that Uranus was the first king, an honourable man, beneficent and versed in the movement of the stars and who was the first to honour the heavenly gods with sacrifices; that is why he was called Uranus.* By his wife Hestia he had two sons Titan and Cronus, and two daughters Rhea

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> and Demeter. After Uranus Cronus was the king; he married Rhea and has as children Zeus, Hera and Poseidon. Zeus succeeded Cronus in the monarchy and married Hera, Demeter and Themis; his children by the first wife were the Curetes, Persephone by the second and Athena by the third … He then went to Cilicia and defeated in war Cilix the governor, visited many other peoples and was honoured by all of them and proclaimed a god (Translation, Austin, no. 46).[54]

The tradition critiques Greek myth, but simultaneously justifies the logic undergirding the Hellenistic cult of rulers: *powerful kings can become powerful gods.*[55] The concept would not be lost on the Successors, rooting the Hellenistic king's divinity in a rationalizing hermeneutic that interprets myth as history, a method of interpretation that scholars now call euhemerism.[56] Whether we can take Euhemerus's etiology as historical or not is beside the point for our purposes here.[57] What is significant about Euhemerus's etiology is that it illustrates the porous boundary between gods and kings, a point that is further highlighted when Euhemerus observes the Panchaeans honoring the kings Uranus, Chronus and Zeus as gods with ritual (sacrifice and temples) and material representation (silver and gold). Notably, the motifs of sacrifice and material representation with silver and gold are frequent objects of resistance in the Hellenistic icon parody, a motif that also surfaces in Paul's polemic against idols on the Areopagus (Acts 17:24, 29). One can sense here how the icon parody's objects of resistance could include an intrinsically religious *and* political referent.

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[54] Italics mine (*DJS*). Michel Austin, *The Hellenistic World from Alexander to the Roman Conquest*: *A Selection of Ancient Sources in Translation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 2006).
[55] Euhemerus served Cassander from 311-298 BCE. See Hans-Josef Klauck, *Religious Context,* 261. Pliny the Elder also employs euhemerism to explain the gods' evolution from human regal-like beings: "For the names of other gods, too, and the above-mentioned names of the constellations, have arisen from the meritorious deeds of human beings" (*Nat.* 2.5).
[56] Notably Euhemeristic interpretations were utilized by Christians to caricature pagans' admission that their gods were not real. Thus, in a euhemeristic interpretation of Jupiter, the early Christian Lactantius argues that Jupiter was once an earthly king who travelled around the earth five times, distributing his rule to his friends and bestowing corn on his subjects (*Inst.* I.11.44).
[57] See the critical remarks in Marc Winiarczyk, *The Sacred History of Euhemerus of Messene* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2013), 27-28.

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The doctrine of Euhemerus shows how Hellenistic kingship fit comfortably within the system of Greek religion. Honoring powerful kings with sacrifice and images was not a big intellectual jump from honoring powerful gods with sacrifice and images: both exercised power over the city, both provided important benefactions for the city and both were represented anthropomorphically. Put another way, gods and kings had overlapping vocations in antiquity: namely, "to ensure the safety and the well-being of those who rely on their services."[58] The interrelated and overlapping vocation of gods and kings created a porous boundary between the realms of mortality and immortality.[59] As Manfred Clauss observes, in Greco-Roman religion, "Die Trennlinie zwischen Gottheit und Mensch war unscharf."[60] This point is well illustrated in Acts when Luke records the locals of Lystra honoring Paul and Barnabas for their benefaction toward a crippled man with the acclamation: "οἱ θεοὶ ὁμοιωθέντες ἀνθρώποις κατέβησαν πρὸς ἡμᾶς!" (Acts 14:11). The Lystrans' readiness to deify Paul and Barnabas cuts against the grain of Jewish-Christian monotheism, yet the notion of powerful beings achieving the status of demigods (ἡμίθεος) was an integral line of thinking in Greek theological thought (Cicero, *Nat. d.,* II.60-2).[61] But the material representation of objects of benefaction was sculpted in human form, since "the human figure is superior to the form of all living things" (Cicero, *Nat. d.,* I.46-49).

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58 Danker, *Benefactor: Epigraphic Study of a Graeco-Roman and New Testament Semantic Field* (St. Louis: Clayton, 1982), 26.
59 For the Roman dichotomy between mortality and immortality, as opposed to gods and humans, see the helpful discussion in Jörg Rüpke, *Religion of the Romans* (trans. Richard Gordon; Cambridge: Polity Press, 2007), 68-69.
60 Manfred Clauss, *Kaiser und Gott: Herrscherkult im römischen Reich* (Stuttgart: Teubner, 1999), 30.
61 Notably, the tendency to deify elements of nature is illustrated by Augustus, who built a temple to the winds, which he understood as a god (Seneca, *Nat.* 5.17.5). On the Roman tendency to deify elements of nature, see Harold L. Axtell, *The Deification of Abstract Ideas in Roman Literature and Inscriptions* (New York: Aristides D. Caratzas, 1987). On the origins of the gods, see: Simon Price, *Religions of the Ancient Greeks* (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 1999), 11-46. For the classic mythical genealogy of the Greek gods, see Hesiod's *Theogony.*

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The anthropomorphic narrative of Greco-Roman religion provided a dynamic narrative and material culture for subjects to interpret and honor powerful human benefactors. We have evidence of Jews employing the icon parody to critique images in human form as early as Babylonian exile (ὡς μορφήν ἀνδρός, Isa 44:13).[62] But when Hellenistic and Roman Jews re-contextualized Isaiah's polemic against images in human form under the shadow of ruler cults, what were the objects of resistance—a traditional god, a human benefactor, or both at the same time? (e.g., *Let. Aris.* 134-36; Wis. 13:13; 14:15; 15:16; Bar. 6:11; *Sib. Or.* 3.29-34, 721-23; Philo, *Prov.* 2.15; *Spec*. 1:10; Josephus, *C. Ap.* 2.167). Moreover, the philosophical critique of Greco-Roman polytheism included condemnation of anthropomorphic images. Xenophanes (c. 570-475 BCE) was the first to sound the alarm: "Men think that the gods are born as they are, and dress as they do, and speak and look the same … but if oxen, horses, and lions had hands or could draw with their hands or create works of art like men, the horses would make pictures and statues of gods like horses, and oxen like oxen" (frag. B14-15, Dielz-Kranz).[63] The critique of mimesis finds a counterpart in Aristotle, who writes that humans create gods that "are similar to people or other animals, and they add other things, which derive from them or resemble them closely" (*Metaph.* 12.8).[64] But like the Jewish icon parody, such criticism tended to be universal in focus, leaving space for the auditor to identify the anthropomorphic referent (e.g. Posidonius in Strabo, *Geogr.* 16.2.35-39; Plutarch, *Num.,* 8.7-8, Cicero, *Nat. d.* 1.77; Seneca, in Augustine,

[62] Klaus Baltzer suggests that Deutero-Isaiah's parody of the wood worker who constructs anthropomorphic images refers to Adam to evoke a comical parody: Adam was not God; therefore, images are not-gods. An Adamic referent, however, would take a different meaning during the Hellenistic period. For example, under the shadow of the Augustan colossal *Sebasteion* complex in the harbor of Alexandria (Philo, *Legat.* 149), Ps-Solomon writes: "But a cast-off piece from among them, useful for nothing, a stick crooked and full of knots, he takes and carves with care in his leisure, and shapes it with skill gained in idleness; he forms it in the likeness of a human being" (Wis 13:13). *A Commentary on Isaiah 40-55* (trans. Margaret Kohl; Minneapolis: Augsburg, 2001), 200 n. 341.

[63] H. Diels and W. Kranz, *Die Fragmente der Vorsokratiker* (Berlin: Weidmann, 1952). For comment and English translation, see Mario Vegetti, "The Greeks and their Gods," in *The Greeks* (ed. Jean-Pierre Vernant; trans. Charles Lambert and Teresa Lavender Fagan; Chicago: University of Chicago, 1995), 278-79.

[64] English translation from Mario Vegetti, "The Greeks and their Gods," 278.

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Civ. 6.10; Oenomaos of Gadara in Eusebius, *Praep ev.* 5.36). We will return to this point in chapter six of this study; here it is contended that the allusive nature of such polemic imbued Jewish discourses of resistance against idols with a political dimension during the Hellenistic and Roman periods. Because the system of benefaction provided the theoretical framework for honoring gods and kings with a hybrid material culture in antiquity, it is incumbent upon us to evaluate the logic of euergetism and its system of visual honors in more detail.

2.3.2 The System of Benefaction and the Visibility of Gods and Kings

In their study of royal images in the Ancient Near East, Olivier Hekster and Richard Fowler note that, "Visibility lies at the heart of power. The ability to create and manipulate images is itself an indication of power and (arguably) a means to accumulate greater power."[65] Within an overtly visual culture, Hellenistic and Roman rulers cultivated their omnipresence and patronage intra-regionally by means of art. The "sculptural environment" of the Greco-Roman city created multiple avenues to visualize and honor objects of power. Yaron Z. Eliav et al. well define the impact that this visual environment held over subjects as a mechanism for communicating religious and political reality:

> Like the billboards that are ubiquitous along the main streets of our cities, each communicating a fragment of the politics and culture of the era, public sculptures functioned as the 'mass media' of the Roman world. Populating city centers and enhancing local landscapes both topographically and intellectually, they served as 'plastic language' that communicated political, religious, and social messages. Sculptural displays evoked a complex spectrum of emotions and ideas, ranging from fear and loathing to aesthetic admiration, and from reflections on the nature of the divine to the implications of social hierarchy, patronage, and power.[66]

[65] Olivier Hekster and Richard Fowler, eds., "Imagining Kings: From Persia to Rome," in *Imaginary Kings: Royal Images in the Ancient Near East, Greece and Rome* (eds. Olivier Hekster and Richard Fowler; München: Franz Steiner Verlag, 2005), 9.
[66] Yaron Z. Eliav et al. eds., "Introduction," in *The Sculptural Environment of the Roman Near East: Reflections on Culture, Ideology, and Power* (Leuven: Peeters, 2008), 2. The sculptural environment of the Roman world does not preclude numismatics. Paul Zanker highlights the impact of coins as powerful forms of

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Unlike our modern world of massive electronic media, the Greco-Roman city was sculpted to communicate a language of signs that concretized empire's "web of power" in stone and precious materials.[67] The iconological impact of art on the eye of the subject was significant, holding the power to induce honor, subjection and, of course, even resistance from subordinate subjects. Lest we think that the plastic language of the city was dead or passive, Paul Zanker helpfully reminds us that the "shape of a city may affect its inhabitants even at the subconscious level by its constant presence."[68] Whether at the subconscious or cognitive level, the sculptured environment of the Greco-Roman city communicated social order and hierarchy, or what this author would call the "cosmology of empire." Against this communicative material culture of gods and kings, what did it mean when Jews mocked temples, art, statuary and other media as iconic spectacle and hence idolatry? In order to dig into this question, the purpose of this section is to investigate the relationship between objects of benefaction (εὐεργεσία; *beneficium*) and the visibility of gods and kings in Greco-Roman thought.

The absorption of the Hellenistic cult of rulers and the Roman imperial cults into the cults of traditional gods created a robust material framework for disseminating the image of Roman Emperors throughout cities in the Mediterranean basin.[69] As Simon Price has shown, the Greeks invented ruler cults, but the Romans standardized and perfected the imperial image as a medium for articulating Roman cultural hegemony and power.[70] Like the statues of other Greco-Roman

media for the Roman emperor: "These coins undoubtedly attracted widespread attention. Compared with the flood of visual stimuli with which we are nowadays bombarded, new images were relatively rare at this time. Here was a whole new repertoire of beautiful images impressed on precious metal" (*The Power of Images,* 57).
[67] Price, *Rituals and Power,* xi.
[68] Paul Zanker, *The Power of Images,* 18.
[69] On the relationship between imperial images and Roman imperial ideology, see: Clifford Ando, *Imperial Ideology and Provincial Loyalty in the Roman Empire* (Berkeley: University of California, 2000), 206-73.
[70] Price, *Rituals and Power,* 171.

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gods, Roman imperial statues were places of asylum, healing and divine portents.[71] For the Greco-Roman auditor of antiquity, cultic images evoked an experience of visual and physical stimulation. Statues did not represent an impotent form but, rather, could function as an animated receptacle of the numinous. The power and visual stimulation of imperial images is criticized in an etiological reflection on the origins of idolatry in the Wisdom of Solomon 14:12-21, a passage we will examine in much more detail in chapter five. Remarkably, Ps-Solomon criticizes the erotic stimulation of images by arguing that idolatry was "the beginning of *porneia"* (ἀρχὴ γὰρ πορνείας; Wis 14:12a).[72] Numerous examples from Greek and Latin literature recall statues that sweat, bleed, spit and, in some cases, need to be chained due to violent behavior.[73] In Otto Weinrich's important study on animated statues, he concludes: "Häufig werden Lebensäusserungen von Standbildern berichtet."[74] The visual animation of statues could even elicit subversive political portents. In Athens, for example, to resist Augustus' rise to power, the statue of Athena on the Acropolis turned from the East to face West toward Rome and spat blood (Dio Cassius 54.7.2-3). Plutarch, resisting such superstition, explains the animation of statues

[71] In the *The Acts of Peter,* a demon-possessed boy kicks an imperial statue of Tiberius into pieces. The Roman senator Marcellus, who provides hospitality to Simon Magus, gives a telling response that illustrates the gravity of defacing imperial media: "A great crime has been committed, for should Caesar hear of it through one of his spies he will greatly punish us" (*Acts Pet.* 11). With a touch of irony, Peter proceeds to heal the statue through Marcellus's sprinkling of water over the broken pieces. On the animation of imperial statues, see Simon Price's discussion in *Rituals and Power,* 191-95. On asylum, see: Tac., *Ann.* III.36.1; 63:3; IV.67.6; Suet., *Aug.* 17.5; *Tib.* 53.2; 58; Dio *Hist.* LI.15.5. (cf., Hardin, *Galatians and the Imperial Cult,* 31).
[72] For further commentary, see Jason von Ehrenkrook, *Sculpting Idolatry in Flavian Rome*, 55-58; idem. “Image and Desire in the Wisdom of Solomon,” *Zutot* 7 (2011): 41-50.
[73] On the citizens of Orchomenos of Boetia who eradicate a ghost by chaining its ἄγαλμα, see: Pausanias, *Descr.* 9.38.5. Though Lucian is critical of animated statues, he acknowledges a statue of Apollo that leaps from one priest to another (*Syr. d.,* 36-37). Ovid records Pygmalion fashioning an image of a woman who he then falls in love with (*Metam.* 10.243-97). For a more complete list of the primary sources, see: Jason von Ehrenkrook, *Sculpting Idolatry in Flavian Rome,* 46, n. 121.
[74] Otto Weinreich, *Antike Heilungswunder: Untersuchungen zum Wunderglauben der Griechen und Römer* (Giessen: Töppelman, 1909), 149.

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through natural causes (Plutarch, *Cor.* 38.1-2), which suggests that his interlocutors took seriously statue's animation through crying, bleeding and emitting noises.[75]

In contrast to Plutarch's skepticism, Dio Chrysostom provides the most detailed defense of images from an elite member of society, suggesting that human knowledge of the divine is an intrinsic part of human experience and its encounter with nature (*Or.* 12.27-32).[76] On human longing and desire for images, Dio writes, "…all men have a strong yearning to honour and worship the deity from close at hand, approaching and laying hold of him with persuasion by offering sacrifice and crowning him with garlands. For precisely as infant children when torn away from father or mother are filled with terrible longing and kinship, and being eager in every possible way to be with them and to hold converse with them" (*Or.* 12.60-61). As Dio's logic runs, images filled the void between the human and divine realms, creating a space for humans to literally "touch" the gods.[77] Similarly, imperial images functioned to not only associate the ruling power with the numinous, but also to incarnate the power of the king over colonized subjects in distant lands. The Wisdom of Solomon, written in the aftermath of Augustus's annexation of Egypt (ca. 30 BCE), makes this point in a polemical context: "When people could not honor monarchs in their presence, since they lived at a distance, they imagined their appearance far away, and made a visible image (ἐμφανῆ εἰκόνα) of the king (βασιλέως) whom they honored, so that by their zeal they might flatter the absent one as though present" (Wis 14:17). In this sense,

[75] Plutarch writes: "For the statues have appeared to sweat, and shed tears, and exude something like drops of blood, is not impossible; since wood and stone often contract a mould which is productive of moisture, and cover themselves with many colours, and receive tints from the atmosphere … It is possible also that statues may emit a noise like a moan or a groan, by reason of fracture or a rupture, which is more violent if it takes place in the interior. But that articulate speech, and language so clear and abundant and precise, should proceed from a lifeless thing, is altogether impossible (Plut., *Cor.* 38.1-2). On the religious dimensions of cultic visual imagery, see further: Jas' Elsner, "Image and Ritual: Reflections on the Religious Appreciation of Classical Art," *CQ* 46:2 (1996): 515-531.

[76] Klauck, *Religious Context,* 27.

[77] On the physical interaction of the auditor with cult statues, see: Polly Weddle, "Touching the gods: Physical Interaction with Cult Statues in the Roman World" (PhD diss., Durham University, 2010).

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like the material representation of the traditional gods, imperial statuary incarnated the presence of the ruling power—to honor "the absent one as though present."

The system of benefaction provided the conceptual framework for honoring gods and kings with visual honors. Like the traditional gods, and the cult of heroes and benefactors well before them, Hellenistic kings were honored with the royal epithet Σωτήρ and Εὐεργέτης for rescuing subjects from tyranny (e.g., Polybius, IX 36.5), and especially for bestowing benefits on subjects (e.g., Stob. 4.7.62; Philo, *Legat.* 86).[78] As Paul Veyne argues in his monumental study on euergetism, imperial economies thrived on the concept of gift exchange—the ideal king provided bread, building projects and circuses in exchange for loyalty.[79] The ability to confer *euergesia* on subordinates in an asymmetrical relationship of reciprocity between ruler and subject was a minimum prerequisite for the acquisition of kingship in the Greco-Roman world. Aristotle, for example, observes that the Greeks "appointed their kings on the grounds of their benefits" (ἔτι δ᾽ἀπ᾽εὐεργεσίας καθίστασαν τοὺς βασιλεῖς, Aristotle, *Pol.* 1286b). Aristotle further argues, "For in every instance this honor [i.e., kingship] fell to men after they had conferred benefit or because they had the ability to confer benefit on their cities or their nations, some having prevented their enslavement in war" (*Pol*. 5.1310b). An inscription honoring Antiochus III the Great (223-187 BCE) after his liberation of Iasos in Asia Minor makes the point even more

[78] For a classical philological analysis of these epithets in light of Hellenistic and Roman kingship, see: A. D. Nock, "Soter and Euergetes," in *Essays on Religion and the Ancient World* (ed. Z. Stewart; Cambridge: Cambridge University, 1972), II.720-35. On the ubiquity of the epithet "benefactor" conferred on powerful humans, Adolf Dessmann observes, "It would not be difficult to collect from inscriptions, with very little loss of time, over a hundred instances, so widespread was the custom" (Adolf Deissmann, *Light from the Ancient East: The New Testament Illustrated by Recently Discovered Texts of the Graeco-Roman World* [trans. Lionel Strachan; New York: George H. Doran, 1927], 253. Deissmann contends that Luke may have learned the epithet from Syrian and Phoenician coins bearing the title (253).
[79] Paul Veyne, *Bread and Circuses: Historical Sociology and Political Pluralism* (trans. Brian Pearce; New York: Penguin Press, 1990).

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bluntly: "kingship is established in order to bestow benefactions on mankind…"[80] The independent wealth of the Hellenistic king is reflected in portrayals of the ideal ruler in the Hellenistic treatises on kingship (henceforward, the *peri basileias* literature). According to Diotogenes, recorded in Stobaeus, "a king ought to be wealthy so as to benefit his friends" (δεῖ γὰρ ἐξ τοῦτο πεπᾶσθαι τὰ χρήματα, ὥστε φίλως εὐεργετὲν; Stob. 4.7.62; Thesleff 72.30-73.1). Moreover, like the beneficence of the gods, Diotogenes argues:

> A good king must extend assistance to those in need of it and be beneficent, and this assistance should be given not in one way only, but in every possible manner… Good kings, indeed, have dispositions similar to the Gods, especially resembling Zeus, the universal ruler, who is venerable and honorable through the magnanimous preeminence of virtue. He is benign because he is beneficent (εὐεργετικός), and the giver of good" (Stob. 4.7.62; Thesleff 75.1-11).

The identity of the king in a beneficent relationship of mimesis with Zeus reflects the overlapping purpose of gods and kings in antiquity: both offices protect citizens and provided them with benefits. The result is that the ruler's ἀρετή was honored alongside that of the gods as *soter* and *euergetes*, sometimes at the level of civic honors and sometime at the level of full-blown cultic honors (but almost always in spatial relation to the gods' cultic media, making the king or queen's ontological status sometimes ambiguous). In terms of the material benefits that the Successor kings bestowed upon their subjects, Klaus Bringmann has identified 460 extant testimonia detailing the Successors' donations of cash toward various civic projects. Strikingly, Bringmann notes that 270 of the transactions relate to cult and religion, which comprises the bulk of the testimonia.[81] In accord with the Hellenistic treatises on kingship, cash donations toward the traditional gods' cultic media undergirded the king's identity as the exemplar worshipper of

[80] Lines 41-48 published by G. Pugliese Carratelli, *ASAA* 45/46 (1967/68): 445ff. English translation from Klaus Bringmann, "The King as Benefactor: Some Remarks on Ideal Kingship in the Age of Hellenism," in *Images and Ideologies: Self-Definition in the Hellenistic World* (ed. Anthony Bulloch et al.; Los Angeles: University of California, 1993), 7-24, here 9.
[81] Klaus Bringmann, "The King as Benefactor," 7-24 here 12.

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the gods and super-benefactor of their media, which, as we will see in the epigraphic record, could result in religious revival during the king's accession to power (Stob. 4.7.61). For example, Antiochus IV's euergetic *pietas* was put on public display when he built a massive temple of Olympian Zeus at Athens along with embellishing "magnificent altars and numerous inscriptions" (Livy XLI.20).

The ruling power's identity as super-benefactors carried over from the Hellenistic cult of rulers to the Roman imperial cults. Similar to the Hellenistic *peri basileias* literature, Plutarch observes that the ideal ruler provides benefits redolent of the gods: "Rulers serve god for the care and preservation of men in order that, of the excellent gifts which god bestows on mankind, they may distribute some and safeguard others" (*Princ. iner.* 3.780d). According to Plutarch, rulers function as a mediator between the gods and humanity, distributing the gods' benefits upon their subjects. Dio Chrysostom, on the other hand, writes of the ideal king's voluntary benefactions in his *First Oration on Kingship*:

> Therefore he [i.e., the ideal king] finds greater pleasure in conferring benefits than those benefitted do in receiving them, and in this one pleasure he is insatiable. For the other functions of royalty he regards as obligatory; that of benefaction (εὐεργεσίας) alone he considers both voluntary and blessed. Blessings he dispenses with the most lavish hand, as though the supply were inexhaustible; but of anything hurtful, on the contrary, he can no more be the cause than the sun can be the cause of darkness (*Or.* 1.23-24).

Dio portrays the ideal king as voluntary and generous benefactor, which creates the scenario in which the king functions like a god. To be sure, Dio observes that the ideal king's divine nature stems from their *euergesia*: "above all, [the king is] one that takes delight in bestowing benefits (χαίροντα εὐεργεσίαις)—a trait which approaches most nearly to the nature divine" (καὶ μάλιστα δὴ χαίροντα εὐεργεσίαις, ὅπερ ἐστιν ἐγγυτάτω τῆς τῶν θεῶν φύσεως; *Or.* 2.26). Pliny the Elder takes this theme further, interrupting his caricature of the gods to suggest that meritorious

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humans (i.e., Vespasian, 69-79 CE) who provide benefits receive posthumous apotheosis. Pliny writes:

> To be a god means that a mortal human being helps another mortal, and this is the path to eternal glory. This was the path taken by the most noble of the Romans, and now Vespasian Augustus, the greatest ruler of all times, takes this path along with his children, coming to the help of the enfeebled world. The oldest customs whereby gratitude is shown to highly meritorious men is to give such helpers a place among the gods (*Nat*. 2.5).[82]

Pliny's definition of a god is succinct: simply put, a god is one who helps mortals. For Pliny, Vespasian's path to apotheosis is paved with benefactions toward humans. Put another way, the emperor is given a "place among the gods" in accord with the "oldest customs" (i.e., the cult of benefactors) because he behaves like the gods—that is, as benefactor. The logic of the system of benefaction is clear: objects of power (εὐεργέτης) + benefits (εὐεργεσία) = honors (τιμή) and/or deification (ἀποθέωσις). Philo employs this equation when he explains the honors conferred on the demigods, which Gaius Caligula seeks to imitate through role-playing: "All these demi-gods, O Gaius! were admired on account of the benefits (διὰ τὰς ὑπηργμένας εὐεργεσίας ἐθαυμάσθησαν) which they had conferred on mankind, and they are admired for them even up to the present time, and they were deservedly though worthy of veneration and the very highest honors (τῶν ἀνωτάτω τιμῶν)" (*Legat.* 86). For Philo, the demi-gods receive the highest honors because of their *euergesia*.

Euergetism played a significant role in Augustus's rise to power. Tacitus, for example, observes that Augustus rose to power by winning over "his soldiers with gifts, the populace with

[82] English translation from Klauck, *Religious Context*, 263. The path toward apotheosis by way of virtue is also reflected in Seneca's *Octavia* during the reign of Nero: "It is glorious to tower aloft amongst great men, to have care for one's native land, to spare the downtrodden, to abstain from cruel bloodshed, to be slow to wrath, give quiet to the world, peace to one's time. This is virtue's crown, by this way heaven is sought. So did the first Augustus, his country's father, gain the stars, and is worshipped in temples as a god" (*Oct.* 472-8). For Seneca, Augustus provides the exemplar model of rule, which resulted in his apotheosis.

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cheap corn, and all men with the sweets of repose" (*Ann.* 1.2.2). But in continuity with Roman traditions of regal *moderatio*, Augustus initially refused ἰσόθεοι τιμαί, especially statues in precious metals (*Res. Ges.* 24, for further comment, cf. 3.8.1).[83] Livy highlights Roman criticism of divine honors when he caricatures Alexander the Great for acting like a Persian king through role-playing and *proskynesis* (IX.18). Despite Augustus's refusal of divine honors at Rome, the typology of the Hellenistic cults of rulers was too ingrained in the civic culture of the Greek East to create continuity with the Augustus's *moderatio* in the Western imperial center. Consequently, in the winter of 30/29 BCE, Augustus permitted divine honors in the Greek East (with the expectation that his image be set up alongside Roma and he not be worshiped as a god [Suetonius, *Aug.* 52]). The gravitation toward divine honors is evident also in Roman Egypt. For example, a papyrus records an edict in 19 CE by Germanicus, the adopted son of Tiberius, when he visited Egypt and Greco-Egyptian subjects attempted to heap divine honors on him, a gesture that Germanicus repudiates. Lines 31-45 of the decree read as follows:

> Germanicus Caesar, son of Augustus grandson of the divine Augustus (θεοῦ Σεβαστοῦ), proconsul says. Your goodwill which you always exhibit whenever you see me, I accept; your personally invidious and godlike (ἰσοθέους) acclamations I altogether deprecate. For they are fitting only to the saviour in reality and benefactor of the whole race of mankind (πρέπουσι γὰρ μόνῳ τῶι σωτῆρι ὄντως καὶ εὐεργέτη τοῦ σύνπαντος τῶν ἀνθρώπων γένους), my father and his mother, my grandmother. Your actions are a denial of the divinity of those persons, so that if you are not persuaded by me, you force me to show myself infrequently to you.[84]

Germanicus deflects the divine honors, reminding Greco-Egyptian subjects that Tiberius alone is worthy of ἰσόθεοι τιμαί—indeed, the emperor alone is the "savior" and "benefactor" of the inhabited world. The divine associations of the emperor, however, were not justification for

[83] On Roman Emperor's refusal of divine honors, see the important article by M. P. Charlesworth, "The Refusal of Divine Honours: An Augustan Formula," *Papers of the British School at Rome* 15 (1939): 1-10.
[84] Greek text and English translation from S. R. Llewelyn, *New Documents Illustrating Early Christianity* (Marricksville: Southwood Press, 1994), 65. See also no. 211 in *Select Papyri*, vol. 2 (ed. A. S. Hunt and C. C. Edgar; LCL; Cambridge: Harvard University, 1938).

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religious hubris. When mad emperors attempted to elevate themselves above the gods, as Caligula did when he replaced his head on hoarded statues and stood between the Dioscuroi in Rome, it was considered highly offensive (Suetonius, *Cal.* 22.2f). This point also surfaces in Pliny the Younger's *panegyric* speech to Trajan who, in contrast to Domitian's iconographic hubris, only erects his statues "outside the temples, on guard before the doors" (*Pan.* 52). Consequently, "This is why the gods have set you [Trajan] on the pinnacle of human power: they know that you do not covet their own" (*Pan.* 52.3). For Pliny, Trajan's election by the gods is ratified based on his *pietas* toward the gods, which is exemplar compared to Domitian, whose gleaming statues of precious material cast pollution on the gods (*Pan.* 52.3). To rule as *imperator*, then, was to rule as a benefactor in collaboration and piety toward the traditional gods; it is out of this nucleus of power that divine honors were conferred on the imperial family.

As A. D. Nock well pointed out long ago, our modern distinction between human honors (*Ehrung*) and divine honors (*Kultus*) "did not exist with anything like comparable sharpness in antiquity."[85] That is to say, imperial subjects employed the words τιμή and προσκύνησις toward gods and the ruling power without any sense of cognitive dissonance.[86] Nock's point reminds us that gods and kings were an integrated and interdependent matrix of power, cautioning against reducing Jewish polemic against material culture—that is, idols—to a censure of religion *sensu stricto*. Aristotle provides the most lucid explanation of the system of euergetic honors at the dawn of the Hellenistic period. Of the eight honors Aristotle mentions in his definition of benefaction, five relate to material culture: sacrifice (i.e., temples), monuments in verse and in prose (i.e., epigraphic honors), first seats (in theatres), tombs and statues (*Rhet.* 1.5.9). Aristotle writes:

[85] Arthur Darby Nock, Σύνναος θεός, 50.
[86] Idem. 51.

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> *Τιμὴ δ᾽ἐστὶ μὲν σημεῖον εὐεργετικῆς δόξης, τιμῶνται δὲ δικαίως μὲν καὶ μάλιστα οἱ εὐεργετηκότες, οὐ μὴν ἀλλὰ τιμᾶται καὶ ὁ δυνάμενος εὐεργετεῖν· εὐεργεσία δὲ ἤ εἰς σωτηρίαν καὶ ὅσα αἴτια τοῦ εἶναι, ἤ εἰς πλοῦτον, ἤ εἰς τι τῶν ἄλλων ἀγαθων, ὧν μὴ ῥαδία ἡ κτῆσις ἤ ὅλως ἤ ἐνταῦθα ἤ ποτέ· πολλοὶ γὰρ διὰ μικρὰ δοκοῦντα τιμῆς τυγχάνουσιν, ἀλλ᾽οἱ τόποι καὶ οἱ καροὶ αἴτιοι. Μέρη δὲ τιμῆς θυσίαι, μνῆμαι ἐν μέτροις καὶ ἄνευ μέτρων, γέρα, τεμένη, προεδρίαι, τάφοι, εἰκόνες, τροφαὶ δημόσιαι, τὰ βαρβαρικά, οἷον προσκυνήσεις καὶ ἐκστάσεις, δῶρα τὰ παρ᾽ ἑκάστοις τίμια.*
>
> Honours are rightly paid in most cases to those who have de facto provided benefits, although honours are also paid to the one who has the potential of providing benefits. This 'benefit' consists either in rescue (*σωτηρία*) or the preservation of life or wealth, or any of those other good things that are not so easily acquired, either now at this precise moment or in the past. It is the case that honours are paid to many persons on account of apparently trivial things, since the situation of time and place was favourable. The honours consist in sacrifices, monuments in verse and in prose, an honorary public office, first seat [in theatres], tombs, statues, public banquets, a pieces of land, or—as the barbarians do—prostrations to the ground (*προσκυνήσεις*) and ecstatic acclamations (*ἐκστάσεις*)—in short, gifts that the individuals concerned consider to be valuable (*Rhet.* 1.5.9).[87]

Aristotle's definition of benefaction highlights the difference between Roman and Christian conceptions of religion, a point made adroitly by Manfred Claus: "Antike Religion ist Handlung nicht Haltung."[88] That is to say, worshiping a benefactor, whether a god or a king, had little to do with feeling and sensation, and everything to do with ritual and actions of homage. For Aristotle, honors are given to those who have "provided benefits" to humans in the form of rescue (*σωτηρία*) or the preservation of life and wealth (e.g. in Roman terms—*Securitas*, *Felicitas* and *Pax*). In response to acts of benefaction and salvation, the auditor engages in a *quid pro quo* relationship with the benefactor, offering honors (i.e., *Handlung*) through rituals and/or material representation: sacrifice, monuments, inscriptions, honorary public offices, first seats, festivals, tombs, statuary, public banquets and, in a more rustic form, ecstatic speech and prostrations.[89]

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[87] English translation from Hans-Josef Klauck, *Religious*, 263.
[88] Manfred Clauss, *Kaiser und Gott: Herrsherkult im römishcen Reich* (Stuttgart: Teubner, 1999), 23.
[89] Aristotle's list of public honors follows his simple definition of honor: *Τιμὴ δ᾽ἐστὶ μὲν σημεῖον δε εὐεργετικῆς δόχης* (*Rhet.* 1.5.9). For Aristotle, honor and benefaction went hand in hand. For comment on the relationship

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Against this list, it is worth comparing the referents of Paul's polemic against idols in the Areopagus speech: idols (Acts 17:16), objects of worship (17:23) altars (17:23), epigraphy (17:23), temples (17:24), precious materials of gold, silver and stone for figurative representation (17:29) and, not least, the *τέχνη* of the artisan's hands (17:29). Although these motifs are typical referents of the Jewish icon parody, the ritual and material culture that Paul criticizes closely parallels Aristotle's definition of benefaction, reminding us that such polemic was hardly a critique of religion in the strict sense. Rather, Paul's polemic is a discourse of resistance that sought to undermine euergetic cult honors for objects of power—both gods, demi-gods and kings—that distracted the auditor from the worship of the one true God. Moreover, the allusive nature of such discourse could evoke multiple referents, thereby creating a space for the speaker's safety.

What is striking about the system of benefaction is that it could be easily adapted to honor the traditional gods and/or imperial rulers (and their families). On the other hand, it could be used to honor *both at the same time*.[90] The contextual flexibility of the system of benefaction allowed rulers (and local elites) to exploit the pre-existing infrastructure of the traditional gods as a vehicle for disseminating rulers' image and power, giving subjects a sense of the emperor's omnipresence and association with the gods.[91] Conversely, it allowed imperial subjects to influence the cosmic order by honoring the emperor directly from the provincial, civic and

between ruler cult and Aristotle's definition of honor, see Christian Habicht, *Gottmenschentum und Griechische Städte* (Münich: Oscar Beck, 1956), 164-65.

[90] See John Scheid, *An Introduction to Roman Religion,* 159.

[91] On the significance of emperor worship in the household, Ittai Gradel, *Emperor Worship and Roman Religion* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2002), 198-212. Severianus of Gabala (ca. 400 CE) highlights the ubiquity of the emperor: "Since the emperor cannot be present everywhere, it is necessary to set up a portrait of the emperor at tribunals, in marketplaces, at meetings, and in theatres. In fact, a portrait must be present in every place in which a magistrate acts, so that he might sanction whatever transpires" (*In Cosmogiam* 6.5; trans. Clifford Ando, *Imperial Ideology and Provincial Loyalty,* 233).

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domus level through ritual and art (Aristotle, *Part. an.* 1.5).[92] So as early as 307 BCE the populace of Athens hailed Demetrius Poliorcetes as σωτήρ and εὐεργέτης for liberating Athens from tyrants and for bestowing benefits of grain and lumber on the populace (Plutarch, *Demetr.* 8-10; *OGIS* 6, lines 10-34).

Although it was rare, it was possible for imperial statuary to stand alone apart from the traditional gods such as the colossal of Domitian at Ephesus (Pl. VI-VII Friesen 1993: 59-62) or that of Hadrian in Athens (Paus., *Descr.* 1.18.6). The design of the colossi, however, imitated the architectural patterns of the traditional gods in order to associate the emperor with the numinous, making imperial sanctuaries, in the words of Paul Zanker, "otherwise indistinguishable in their outward appearance."[93] Josephus well-reflects how the aesthetic design *and* location of imperial statuary could associate the emperor with the numinous. In his description of the temple of Augustus and Roma at Caesarea, Josephus writes that Augustus's colossal "was in no way inferior to [Phidias's] Olympian Zeus, *which it was designed to resemble*" (*War* 1.414). Likewise, in accord with Augustan policy, his statue was set up alongside Roma (Suetonius, *Aug.* 52; Cassius Dio 51.20.6). Herein lies our hermeneutical problem: if a Hellenistic Jew or early Christian employed the icon parody to critique idols under the shadow of Augustus's colossal in Caesarea, would the referent be Augustus, Olympia Zeus or Roma? The hybridity of imperial art is also reflected in Philo, who observes that Gaius's colossal statue intended for the Jerusalem

[92] For other examples, see: David Potter, "Helenistic Religion," in *A Companion to the Hellenistic World*, 407-430. On patron client relations and the system of benefaction, see K. C. Hanson and Douglas E. Oakman, *Palestine in the Time of Jesus: Social Structures and Social Conflicts* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1998), 70-86. On the primary sources, see Frederick Danker, *Benefactor: Epigraphic Study of a Graeco-Roman and New Testament Semantic Field* (St. Louis: Clayton, 1982).
[93] Paul Zanker, *The Power of Images,* 298. Notably, all of the extant colossal statues of Roman emperors are constructed as acroliths—that is, they have a core made of wood, which was encased with marble for visible extremities and painted wood for clothing. Using a wooden core was both cost-effective and reduced the weight of the colossi for mobility. The use of wood and stone for constructing colossi illustrates the political overtones that are associated with criticism of images in precious metals, wood and stone in the Wisdom of Solomon ch's 13-15 and Acts 17:29. See Barbara Burrell, *Neokoroi: Greek Cities and Roman Emperors* (Boston: Brill, 2004), 318.

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Temple did not stand-alone—rather, it was designed in the character of Jupiter (ἐμοῦ κελεύσαντος ἐν τῷ ἱερῷ Διὸς ἀνδριάντα ἀνατεθῆναι, *Legat*. 265), and included epigraphic associations with Jupiter (*Leg.*188; 346). This point reminds one that the colossi are not always justification for interpreting the imperial cults as a phenomenon abstracted from the artistic representation and cosmic framework of the traditional gods, as if the emperor stood on his own as a stand-alone deity or demigod over the city apart from the larger polytheistic system of Greco-Roman religion.[94]

Clifford Ando observes that during the Principate, "Imperial portraits were ubiquitous."[95] Notwithstanding the ubiquity of imperial images, it is crucial to recognize that imperial images did not supplant or render irrelevant the popularity of local gods.[96] Indigenous religious traditions around the Mediterranean were profoundly porous, allowing for their diffusion and widespread popularity in other parts of the inhabited world. An inscription in Ephesus, for example, celebrates the diffusion of Artemis "everywhere":

> …the goddess Artemis, patron of our city, is honoured not only in her native city, which she has made more famous than all other cities through her own divinity, but also by Greeks and barbarians, so that everywhere sanctuaries and precincts are consecrated for her, temples are dedicated and altars are set up for her because of her manifest epiphanies… (*IvE,* 24).[97]

Aside from Artemis, the temple of Apollo in Delphi attracted auditors from all over the

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[94] Furthermore, it can be difficult to tell what the motivation is behind a colossal—is it local elites' bid for the *neokorate?* Or, on the other hand, at the dynastic level, was a colossal constructed from above as a culturally subversive symbol of forced Romanization or imperial domination? If the latter is the case, then the sheer size of the statue may not necessarily reflect locals' homage and allegiance but, rather, a visual symbol of hegemony. On Romanization as a process of cultural replication outside of Italy, see Ramsay Macmullen, "Romanization in the Time of Augustus," in *Roman Imperialism: Readings and Sources* (ed. Craige B. Champion; Oxford: Blackwell, 2004), 215-230.

[95] Clifford Ando, *Imperial Ideology and Provincial Loyalty,* 232.

[96] So Beard, North and Price: "…cults of the emperor were not an independent element of religious life: sometimes the emperor was placed under the protection of the Olympian pantheon or linked with the traditional gods" (*Religions of Rome: Volume 1: A History*, 348).

[97] English translation from Beard, North and Price, eds., *Religions of Rome: A History,* 1.360.

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Mediterranean and, as early as the fourth century BCE, Isis crossed over the Mediterranean from Egypt into Athens.[98] The migration of regional gods to distant locales can be illustrated within the text of Acts. When Paul and his travelling companions arrive in Philippi they meet a girl possessed by the spirit of Python whose cultic temple in Delphi stood nearly five hundred miles away (Acts 16:16). Likewise, on the island of Malta, Paul boards a ship built in Alexandria with the famous Greek twin brothers Castor and Pollux carved into the stern (Acts 28:11; Wis 14:1).[99] Although the image of Caesar was diffused widely, the same can be said of other Greco-Egyptian gods, cautioning one from arguing that the imperial cult was the "dominant" or "pervasive" cult in the empire.[100]

The dependence of gods and kings' web of power upon the system of benefaction and its accompanying visual honors creates a context that is not devoid of political connotations when Luke portrays the protagonist of early Christianity confronting the sculptural environment of Athens and its underlying euergetic visual culture in the mid-first century. Given the integration of politics and religion into the built environment of Athens, how is one to interpret Paul's criticism of the system of euergetic visual honors that gods and kings shared? Although it is

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[98] On Isis, see Robert M. Grant, *Gods and the One God* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1986), 34; Hans-Josef Klauck, *Religious Context,* 128-38. Fascination with Egyptian religion was widespread in the Greek world. Around ca. 200 BCE an inscription in Delos records a priest named Apollonius honoring Serapis, who was brought to Delos by Appolonius's grandfather (*IG* XI.4.1299). After building a temple for the god, a group of men are said to have filed a lawsuit against Apollonius and the god. When Apollonius won the lawsuit, the inscription was erected to repay adequate thanks for Sarapis's protection and benefaction. The inscription lucidly shows how local leaders could introduce foreign gods to the Greek city, but could meet resistance among locals. For English translation, see Austin, no. 151.

[99] On Luke's evocation of Castor and Pollux in Acts 28:11 as subversive irony for Luke's Greco-Roman audience, see Lynn Kauppi, *Foreign but Familiar Gods: Greco-Romans Read Religions in Acts* (*LNTS* 277; London: T&T Clark, 2006), 112-14.

[100] *Pace* N. T. Wright, "Paul’s Gospel and Caesar’s Empire,” in *Paul and Politics: Ekklesia, Israel, Imperium, Interpretation: Essays in Honor of Krister Stendahl* (Harrisburg: Trinity, 2000), 191-215, here 160; and John Dominic Crossan and Jonathan L. Reed, *In Search of Paul: How Jesus's Apostle Opposed Rome's Empire with God's Kingdom: A New Vision of Paul's Words and World* (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 2004), 142-43. It is also important to recognize that unlike some hegemonic empires—for example, the Incas or Hitler's Third Reich—the Roman Empire did not force its religion onto imperial subjects or erase local customs. See Mary Beard, John North and Simon Price eds., *Religions of Rome: A History,* 1.317.

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difficult to answer this question definitively, further evaluation of the iconographic and epigraphic record during the Hellenistic period will help to illuminate Paul's allusive speech. Before evaluating this material in chapter three, however, it is necessary to first ask how Hellenistic and Roman authors conceptualized the relationship between gods and kings in the *peri basileias* literature.

2.4 The Hellenistic and Roman Treatises on Kingship and the Traditional Gods

During the age of the Successors, Pythagorean philosophers developed a new genre of popular literature called "On Kingship" (Περὶ Βασιλείας). The purpose of the *peri basileias* literature was to create a philosophical paragon of the ideal ruler.[101] In E. R. Goodenough's programmatic study on the *peri basileias* literature, he suggests that the "philosophy of royalty will, I think, prove to have been the official political philosophy of the Hellenistic age."[102] The popularity of this literature is attested in Plutarch, who records the governor of Athens, Demetrius of Phalerus (317–307 BCE), advising Ptolemy I "to buy and read books on kingship and on political leadership. For those things which the king's friends are not bold enough to recommend to them, are written in those books" (Plutarch, *Reg. imp. Apophth.* 189d). A full discussion of the political theory behind these texts is beyond the scope of our purposes here; however, the Hellenistic treatises on kingship, though fragmentary, provide key insight into how the educated elite could conceptualize the ideal ruler's relationship to the gods.

[101] Bruno Blumenfeld suggests that this literature was "an attempt to ward off sycophancy or intended as an antidote to its corrupting effects" (*The Political Paul: Democracy and Kingship in Paul's Thought* [Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 2001], 190).

[102] E. R. Goodenough, "The Political Philosophy of Hellenistic Kingship," *Yale Classical* Studies 1 (1928): 102; R. R. R. Smith, *Hellenistic Royal Portraits,* 46-53. See also James R. Harrison, *Paul and the Imperial Authorities at Thessalonica and Rome* (WUNT 273; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2011), 279-290. On Hellenistic Jewish perspectives on kingship, see: James M. Reese, *Hellenistc Influence on the Book of Wisdom and Its Consequences* (Rome: Biblical Institute Press, 1970), 71-87; and the collection of essays in Tessa Rajak et al. (eds.), *Jewish Perspectives on Hellenistic Rulers* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007).

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2.4.1 Gods and Kings in the Hellenistic Treatises on Kingship

Before the Hellenistic period, Socrates understood the ideal ruler—in contrast to the angry tyrant—as one who rules according to civic law (Xenophon, *Mem.* 4.6.12). Plato, on the other hand, popularized the idea that the ideal ruler must be a philosopher who administered natural law (Plato, *Rep.* 487c).[103] During the Hellenistic period the Socratic concept of the ideal ruler as a philosopher administering law was nuanced to encompass the very persona of the ruler himself, who was understood as the embodiment of civic and divine law (i.e., "animate law" νόμος ἔμψυχος).[104] Although only a few philosophical treatises on kingship from the Hellenistic period are extant, Stobaeus preserves a treatise on kingship from Diotogenes (ca. II-I cent. BCE).[105] On the ideal Hellenistic king, Diotogenes identifies three primary offices: leadings an army, administering justice and worshipping the gods (ἔργα δὲ βασιλέως τρία, τό τε στραταγὲν καὶ δικασπολὲν καὶ θεραπεὺειν θεώς [Stob. 4.7.61; Thesleff, p. 71 lines 23-25]).[106] Put more simply, Stobaeus writes that the good king is a "general, judge and priest" (Stob. 4.7.61; Thesleff, p. 72 lines 4-5). On the third office, Diotogenes expands on the king's role as priest:

> The third characteristic of a king's dignity is the worship of the Gods. The most excellent should be worshipped by the most excellent, and the leader and ruler by that which leads

[103] Even Philo honors Augustus as "this great ruler, this philosopher second to none" (*Legat.* 318). See C. D. C. Reeves, *Philosopher-Kings: The Argument of Plato's Republic* (Princeton: Princeton University, 1988). Strikingly, Homer understood the ideal government as ruled by one king who is chosen by Kronos: "… we cannot all be kings; it is not well that there should be many masters; one man must be supreme - one king to whom the son of scheming Kronos has given the scepter and divine laws to rule over you all" (Homer, *Iliad* 2.200).

[104] E. R. Goodenough, "The Political Philosophy of Hellenistic Kingship," 62. Goodenough helpfully summarizes the concept of animate law during the Hellenistic period as follows: "So we have, perhaps, at last grasped the meaning which lies behind the conception of the Animate Law; it means that the king is personally the constitution of his realm, that all the laws of localities under him must be ultimately moulded by and express his will. But more, he is the saviour of his subjects from their sin, by giving them what the Hellenistic world increasingly wanted more than anything else, a dynamic and personal revelation of deity" (91).

[105] On the dating of Diotogenes during the Hellenistic period, see the arguments in Holger Thessleff, *An Introduction to the Pythagorean Writings of the Hellenistic Period* (Åbo: Åbo Akademi, 1961), 46-116.

[106] For English translations of the Pythagorean fragments, see: Kenneth Sylvan Guthrie, *The Pythagorean Sourcebook and Library* (Grand Rapids: Phanes Press, 1988). For Greek translations, see Holger Thesleff, *The Pythagorean Texts of the Hellenistic Period*.

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> and rules. Of naturally most honorable things, God is the best, but of things on the earth and human, a king is the supreme. As God is to the world, so is a king to his kingdom; and as a city is to the world, so is a king to God. For a city, indeed, being organized from things many and various, imitates the organization of the world and its harmony; *but a king whose rule is beneficent, and who himself is animated by law, exhibits the form of God among men … Good kings, indeed, have dispositions similar to the Gods, especially resembling Zeus, the universal ruler, who is venerable and honorable through the magnanimous preeminence of virtue.* He is benign because he is beneficent, and the giver of good; hence, by the Ionic poet [Homer], he is said to be father of men and Gods. He is also eminently terrible, punishing the unjust, reigning and ruling over all things. In his hand he carries thunder, as a symbol of his formidable excellence. *All these particulars remind us that a king is something resembling the divine* (ἐπι πᾶσι δὲ τούτοις μναμονεύεν δεῖ ὅτι θεόμιμόν ἐντι πρᾶγμα βασιλεία [Stob. 4.761; Thessleff, p. 72 lines 15-24; p.75 lines 8-16]).[107]

Diotogenes interprets the ideal king within a Homeric cosmology where humanity is subordinate and ontologically distinct from the pantheon of gods, and Zeus stands as the immortal king of the natural and social-order.[108] But Diotogenes nuances this cosmology in order to accommodate the ideal king as an intermediary between the divine and human realms. Through benefaction and justice the king "exhibits the form of God among men" (θεὸς ἐν ἀνθρώποις παρεσχαμάτισται [Thessleff, p. 72 lines 24]). Though remarkable, this statement is less about the ontological status of the king and more about his pragmatic function in effecting a just world that mirrors the beneficence of Zeus Basileus.[109] In a similar vein, Plutarch picks up on this theme when he writes that rulers are "the image of God who orders all things" (ἄρχων δ' εἰκὼν θεοῦ τοῦ πάντα

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[107] Italics mine (*DJS*).

[108] On the relationship between kingship and Zeus, see Jennifer Larson, *Ancient Greek Cults: A Guide* (trans. Janet Lloyd; New York: Routledge, 2007), 15-28; and Jean-Pierre Vernant, *Myth and Society in Ancient Greece* (New York: Zone Books, 1988), 104-15.

[109] The importance of "order" as a primary function of ruler cult is best articulated by Steven Friesen. He argues that cosmology was "the primary religious concern of imperial cults … in various ways, imperial cult institutions defined how space and time were to be experienced" (See Steven Friesen, *Imperial Cults and the Apocalypse of John,* 124). Friesen's study, however, does not interact with the Hellenistic cult of rulers. With regard to the conception of cosmology, here I follow the definition of J. Edward Wright: "the systematic analysis of the ordered universe in an effort to understand and perhaps influence its operations in ways that benefit humans. Cosmology also reveals a society's understanding of itself as an entity within the cosmos" ("Cosmology," in *The Dictionary of Early Judaism,* 487-89).

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κοσμοῦντος, *Princ. iner.* 780E).[110] For Diotogenes, the cosmic structure of the divine and human realms are interrelated and overlapping spheres; it is the king's primary duty to create a just society that imitates the sacred order of the divine realm as animate law on earth (Stob. 4.761; Thessleff, p. 72 lines 16).

It is worth observing that Diotogenes considers the physicality of the king's public image as an imitation of the divine. Simply put, the king is to look "worthy of power" in his "social intercourse, in his physical image, and in his benefactions" (εὐεργεσίας, Stob. 4.7.62; Thessleff 73).[111] In this way, the king's physical presence imitates the divine:

> For majesty is a kind of imitation of the divine (σεμνότας θεόμιμον) and can rouse the wonder and awe of the masses; goodness can win him loyalty and love … he must separate himself from the passions of ordinary mortals and draw near to the gods, taking himself … a conspicuous and encompassing eminence in his appearance (ὄψις), thoughts, desires, disposition of soul, actions, and in his very physical movements and posture; thus he will influence those who look on him, who will be struck by his awesome manner, his restraint, and by his prominent bearing. For no less than by the harmony of the flute, ought the souls of those who look on him to be affected by the appearance of the good king (Stob. 4.7.62; Thessleff 73).[112]

According to Diotogenes, the ideal king's visual presence (ὄψις) is an imitation of the divine (σεμνότας θεόμιμον) for the purpose of incarnating the law and piety of the gods before subjects. The importance of the visual stature of the ideal king is reflected in Diodorus Siculus's description of Demetrius Poliorcetes before the siege engines of the Rhodians. Diodorus writes, "Both in stature and in beauty he displayed the dignity of a hero (ἡρωικὸν), so that even those strangers who had come from a distance, when they beheld his comeliness arrayed in royal

[110] On Plutarch's conception of the ideal ruler, see Geert Roskam, "A ΠΑΙΔΕΙΑ for the Ruler. Plutarch's Dream of Collaboration Between Philosopher and Ruler," in *Sage and Emperor: Plutarch, Greek Intellectuals, and Roman Power in the Time of Trajan (98-117 A.D.)* (eds. Philip A. Stadter and Luc Van der Stockt; Leuven: Leuven University, 2002), 175-89; and C. P. Jones, *Plutarch and Rome* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1971), 110-121.
[111] For English translation, see R. R. R. Smith, *Hellenistic Royal Portraits*, 51.
[112] Idem, 51.

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splendour, marvelled at him and followed him as he went abroad in order to gaze at him" (θαυμάζειν καὶ παρακολουθεῖν ἐν ταῖς ἐξόδοις ἕνεκεν τῆς θέας, 20.92.3). Plutarch, likely relying on Diodorus's source for the life of Demetrius, goes even further when he writes that Demetrius had rare features in which "no painter or sculptor ever achieved a likeness of him" (*Dem.* 2.2). Indeed, Demetrius inhabits a body with "a certain heroic look and kingly majesty that were hard to imitate" (δυσμίμητος ἡρωϊκή τις ἐπιφάνεια καὶ βασιλικὴ σεμνότης, Plutarch *Dem.* 2.2). When Demetrius was off of the battlefield, Diodorus observes that Demetrius imitated Dionysus through role-playing: "in time of peace he devoted his time to winebibbing and to drinking bouts accompanied by dancing and revels, and in general he emulated the conduct said by mythology to have been that of Dionysus among men; but in his wars he was active and sober" (20.92.4). Plutarch also reflects this tradition: "of all the gods he modeled himself especially on Dionysos, since he was the most ferocious in war, and in peace the most concerned for joy and happiness" (*Dem*. 2.3).

Acts of role-playing and divine associations did not imply that subjects literally worshiped the ruler as, for example, Dionysus (cf. also Barnabas as "Zeus" and Paul as "Hermes" in Acts 14:11 for their *euergesia* upon a crippled man).[113] Rather, the association indicated the ruler's self-understanding or locals' interpretation that the ruler functioned like the god, received

[113] This point is made well by Peter Green in his comments on the Hellenistic cult of rulers: "Much confusion has been caused by scholars who, having seen that certain humans were given honors that gods also received, drew the conclusion (by a famous logically fallacy) that the kings must have been deified, rather than simply sharing, as a high compliment, some of the gods' prerogatives. Sacrifices, sacred enclosures, tombs, statues, prostration, hymns, altars, and other such divine appanages are all, as Aristotle specifically states, simply marks of honor: the gesture itself, not its recipient (whether god or man), is the important thing" (Peter Green, *Alexander to Actium: The Historical Evolution of the Hellenistic Age* [Berkeley: University of California, 1993], 402). Green's comments are wise: one needs to be cautious of adjudicating the ruler's ontological status based on their embedding in the cultic media of traditional gods; the point is, rather, that the ruler served as a dynamic patron who paid benefactions in ways that reflected the gods in which they were associated.

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its protection or heaped benefits on its media.[114] Elsewhere, Plutarch criticizes role-playing as theatricality: "Have not many kings been told they were Apollo just because they could hum a tune, or Dionysus because they got drunk, or Heracles because they had distinguished themselves in battle…?" (Plutarch, *Adul. Amic.*12.56f). Philo, too, ridicules the mad emperor Gaius Caligula for theatrical role-playing, which impinged on Jewish monotheism:

> For he began at first to liken himself to those beings who are called demigods, such as Bacchus, and Hercules, and the twins of Lacedaemon … In the next place, like an actor in a theatre (ὥσπερ ἐν θεάτρῳ), he was continually wearing different dresses at different times, taking at one time a lion's skin and a club, both gilded over; being then dressed in the character of Hercules; at (another time he would wear a felt hat upon his head, when he was disguised in imitation of the Spartan twins, Castor and Pollux; sometimes he also adorned himself with ivy, and a thyrsus, and skins of fawns, so as to appear in the guise of Bacchus" (*Legat.* 78-79).

Although Gaius received *damnatio* for his excessive hubris, Suetonius records Augustus holding a banquet called "the twelve gods" where he dressed as his patron deity Apollo and his guests like other gods and goddesses (Suet., *Aug.* 70). Numerous other examples of role-playing could be cited; the point is that the ideal Hellenistic monarch was expected to manifest the cosmic template of the divine in his own persona, mirroring divine law and piety—which could result in role-playing, but at the least it was internalized in the character and physical presence of the king. When a ruler's physical presence became mad through injustice or excessive hubris, it is striking that their madness could be interpreted as having a cosmic influence on the order of things. Philo, for example, suggests that Gaius's madness was not "that of the body alone, but the universal malady which was oppressing all men every where … for men began to remember how numerous and how great are the evils which spring from anarchy, famine, and war, and the destruction of trees, and devastations, and deprivation of lands, and plundering of money, and the intolerable fear of slavery and death" (*Legat.* 16-17). For Philo, there is "but one remedy,

[114] See Elias Bickerman, "Consecratio," in *Le Culte Des Souverains Dan L'Empire Romain* (Genève: Fondation Hart, 1973), 4.

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namely, the recovery of Gaius" (*Legat.*17). Within the cosmology of empire, the ideal king functioned as a public mediator and animator of the gods' rule and beneficence over society.

2.4.2 Gods and Kings in the Roman Treatises on Kingship

The role of mimesis between the ideal Hellenistic king and the gods is well attested during the Hellenistic period.[115] This motif also surfaces during the Roman era, where we find the most developed extant treatises on kingship during the second century.[116] What follows draws attention to the ideal ruler's relationship to the gods in Dio Chrysostom, Aelius Aristides, Pliny the Younger and Seneca.

[115] Aside from Diotogenes, two other Pythagorean fragments preserved by Stobaeus illuminate the relationship between the ideal Hellenistic king and the gods. Sthenidas the Locrian writes, "A king should be a wise man; thus will he be honored in the same manner as the supreme divinity, whose imitator he will be. As the Supreme is by nature the first king and potentate, so will a king be by birth and imitation … He therefore who is both a sage and a king will be an imitator and legitimate minister of God" (Stob. 4.7.63; Thessleff, p.187 l. 10 and p. 188 l. 10). Ekphantus the Crotonian (II-I cent. BCE), on the other hand, focuses on subjects imitating the king who, in turn, imitates god: "But a king, who associates with men should be undefiled, realizing how much more divine than other things are both himself and his prerogatives; and from the divine exemplar of which he is an image, he should treat both himself and his subjects worthily. When other men are delinquents, their most holy purification causes them to imitate their rulers, whether laws or kings. But kings who cannot on earth find anything better than their own nature to imitate should not waste time in seeking any model other or lower than God himself" (Stob. 4.7.64). Both Sthenidas and Ekphantus are in agreement with Diotogenes that a primary duty of the ideal ruler is to function in the role of priest, and to imitate the character and beneficence of the gods.

[116] The most developed treatises on kingship come from the second century CE during the Roman era. On Greek elites' interpretation of the imperial cult, see the seminal work of Glen W. Bowersock, "Greek Intellectuals and the Imperial Cult," 177-212. On the concept of divine election, see especially J. Rufus Fears, "*PRINCEPS A DIIS ELECTUS: The Divine Election of the Emperor as a Political Concept at Rome* (Rome: American Academy, 1977). Fears argues that "Divine election … is an absolutist doctrine. The ruler is above human laws because god rather than any mortal institution has bestowed power upon him" (306). Fears's thesis, however, is scrutinized by P. A. Brent who argues that the relationship between the emperors and the gods does not amount to a full-blown doctrine. See "Divine Elements of the Imperial Office," *The Journal of Roman Studies* 69 (1979): 168-175. Daniel Schowalter provides what is, in my mind, the most balanced overview of the emperor's relationship to the gods. Schowalter is also critical of Fears's study, arguing against Fears' interpretation of Pliny's *Panegyricus* as the pinnacle of Jovian theology. In contrast to Fears, Schowalter convincingly argues that the *Panegyricus* represents Pliny's senatorial perspective and suspicion toward the office of *princeps* (Schowalter, 13-30). Scholwalter's study, however, focuses narrowly on the second century, but the conclusions are disciplined: "The main discovery of this research has been that there was not any single portrayal of the relationship between the emperor and the gods, but several" (*The Emperor and the Gods: Images From the Time of Trajan* [Minneapolis: Fortress, 1993], 125).

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A. The Ideal King in Dio Chrysostom

The kingship orations of Dio Chrysostom (ca. 40-115 CE) provide unique insight into how an elite philosopher conceptualized the ideal emperor during the Second Sophistic, in this case the emperor Hadrian. For Dio, Zeus is the "supreme king and ruler" who provides the model for earthly kings to conform "their ways *as far as possible to his pattern*" (*Or.* 1.37). Dio proof-texts his position by reminding his audience that Homer understood the ideal king as "Zeus-nurtured" (e.g. *Iliad*, 2.196) and "like Zeus in counsel" (e.g. *Iliad,* 2.169). Like Diotogenes, Dio understands the relationship between the ideal king and the gods as mimetic; the ideal king is first and foremost to be regardful of the gods and hold the divine in honor, which, in turn provides a model for subjects to imitate (*Or.* 1.16). But what does it look like to uphold the divine in honor and conform oneself to the pattern of Zeus? Dio answers this question by highlighting the personified divine qualities of Zeus reflected in his royal epithets (*Or.* 1.39-41). The personified abstract qualities associated with Zeus as Father and King center on his benefactions in their various manifestations—protection, wealth, hospitality, cosmic order, etc. But for Dio, Zeus's royal epithets are more than mere titulature; they are, rather, a "royal function" that the ideal king is to conform to and emulate.[117] According to Dio, kings "derive their powers from Zeus" (*Or.* 1.45) and are the embodiment on earth of the "laws and ordinances of Zeus" (*Or.* 1.45).

[117] Seneca also interprets the epithet as a representation of the ideal ruler's actions: "…and it is also the duty of a prince, whom not in empty flattery we have been led to call 'Father of the Country.' For other designations have been granted merely by way of honour; some we have styled 'Great,' 'the Fortunate,' and 'the August,' and have heaped up pretentious greatness all possible titles as a tribute to such men; but to the "Father of his Country' we have given the name in order that he may know that has been entrusted with a father's power, which is most forbearing in its care for the interests of his children and subordinates his own to theirs" (*Clem.* 9.2-3). It is important to recognize that the employment of royal epithets for the king's benefactions models the epithets given to the gods (Cicero, *Nat. d.* II.60-2).

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B. The Ideal King in Aelius Aristides

Aside from imitating the character and rule of the gods, the ideal ruler was understood as an important collaborator with the gods toward a just world. The importance of the emperor's collaboration with the gods is strikingly elucidated in an encomium by Aeulius Aristides (117-181 CE) to the emperor Antoninus Pius in late 155 CE. Aristides evokes the myth of primordial chaos in order to compare the order brought about by Zeus Basileus with that of Antoninus Pius.[118] Aristides writes,

> Indeed, the poets say that before the rule of Zeus everything was filled with faction, uproar, and disorder, but that when Zeus came to rule, everything was put in order and the Titans were banished to the deepest corners of the earth, driven there by him and the gods who aided him. So too, in view of the situation before you [ie., before Antoninus Pius] and under you, one would suppose that before your empire everything was in confusion, topsy-turvy, and completely disorganized, but that when you took charge, the confusion and faction ceased and there entered in universal order and a glorious light in life and government and the laws came to the fore and the altars of the gods were believed in. *And it seems that the gods, watching from above, in their benevolence join with you in making your empire successful and that they confirm your possession of it.* Zeus, because you well care for the inhabited world … Hera, because of the marriages which take place under law. Athena and Hephaestus, since the arts are honored. Dionysus and Demeter, because their fruits are not injured. Poseidon, since his sea is cleansed of fighting and he has exchanged merchant vessels for warships [see other gods that end quote including Athena]" (Aristides, *Or.* 26.103-105).[119]

[118] Like many cultures in antiquity, the Greeks thought of the origins of the world as a state of primordial chaos where the gods emerged to tame the cosmic disorder (Apollonius Rhodus*, Argonautica* I.494-511; Aristophanes, *Birds,* 688-702; esp. Hesiod, *Theogony*). For the Greeks, primordial chaos was conceptualized in the combat myth of Apollo defeating Python at Delphi. Adela Yarbough Collins defines the pattern of combat myth as follows: "The pattern depicts a struggle between two divine beings and their allies for universal kingship. One of the combatants is usually a monster, very often a dragon. This monster represents chaos and sterility, while his opponent is associated with order and fertility" (Adela Yarbro Collins, *The Combat Myth in the Book of Revelation* [Missoula: Scholars Press, 1976], 57). For references to the myth see the appendix in Collins (*The Combat Myth in the Book of Revelation,* 63-65 and 245ff). Also, see Hermann Gunkel, *Schöpfung und Chaos in Urzeit und Endzeit: Eine religionsgeschichtliche Untersuchung über Gen. 1 and Ap. Jon 12* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1895; repr., Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2006).

[119] Italics mine (*DJS*). Translation is from Charles A. Behr, *P. Aelius Aristides: The Complete Works: Volume II. Orations XVII-LIII* (Leiden: Brill, 1981), 2.96.

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Steven Friesen rightly draws attention to this passage as evidence of how "the emperors accomplished the work of the gods in an unparalleled manner."[120] But more commentary on this passage is necessary. According to Aristides, Zeus tamed the primordial chaos with "the gods who aided him" (*Or.* 26.103). Thus, Zeus did not act alone in subduing "faction, uproar and disorder"—rather, he acted with other gods who were, in essence, co-regents (*Or.* 26.103).

Aristides then goes on to compare the chaos myth with the rule of Antoninus Pius (86-161 CE). In a similar fashion as the gods, Antoninus was able to subdue the chaos of the empire and restore it to "universal order" (*Or.* 26.103). What is most striking about this passage is that the Emperor Antoninus does not work alone. Like the rule of Zeus, the gods "join" with him to make his empire successful and to confirm its possession (*Or.* 26.104).[121] Antoninus's restoration of cosmic order is accompanied by the establishment of law and religious revival where the "altars of the gods were believed in" (*Or.* 103).[122] Respect for the gods as an indication of the vitality of empire is made acute when Aristides explains how Antoninus's rule mirrors the divine function of each deity in the Olympic pantheon on earth (Aristides, *Or.* 26.105). As Aristides attests, the office of *princeps* was not a stand-alone religious and political office. The ideal emperor was one who collaborated with the gods to restrain cosmic disorder and maintained the *pax deorum*.

[120] Steven Friesen, *Twice Neokoros,*151.
[121] The motif of divine ordination also surfaces in a pseudonymously written speech to an unknown emperor that was placed in Aristides' corpus. The author writes, "But the gods so cared for him, so that he would lawfully and piously take over affairs, that they assigned to others the deeds of madness and folly, but reserved for him those of justice, generosity, and other acts of piety (*Or.* 35. See Behr, *P. Aelius Aristides: The Complete Works*, 2.186). According to the author, the gods reserved the office of emperor for a certain individual, and the deeds of justice, generosity and piety were given to the emperor by the gods. For comment, see Behr, 399 n. 1.
[122] The ideal ruler's accession to power was often accompanied by religious revival, which reflected the ruler's piety and respect for the gods. Augustus, for example, claims to have restored eighty-two temples of the gods upon his accession to power (*Res Gestae,* 20). This point can also be made during the Hellenistic period, when Antiochus IV shows generosity toward the gods by building a massive temple of Olympian Zeus at Athens along with embellishing "magnificent altars and numerous inscriptions" (Livy XLI.20).

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Appeal to Rome's election by the gods was not an uncommon trope in Roman literature.[123] For example, in Pliny the Elder's encyclopedia called *Natural History,* which was a gift to the emperor Titus, Pliny writes:

> Rome is a land nourished by all, and yet parent of all lands, *chosen by the power of the gods to make even heaven more splendid*, to gather together the scattered realms and to soften their customs and unite the discordant wild tongues of so many people into a common speech so they might understand each other, and to give civilization to mankind, in short to become the homeland of every people in the entire world" (Pliny, *Nat. Hist.* 3.39).[124]

According to Pliny, Rome was "chosen by the power of the gods" to re-map the Mediterranean basin as a homeland for its diverse ethnicities. Despite the inevitable social stratification and cultural hegemony that ensued from this imperial vision, the spread of *Romanitas* was understood as ordained—indeed, aided—by the traditional gods. The divine impetus for re-mapping the world around Rome made its militaries, athletic contests and imperial cults a meeting point for the divine and human realms, where the dissemination of a distinctively Roman soteriology and cosmology was most vividly articulated. The important role of the gods' approval and ordination of the emperor is also evident in Aristides, who writes of Antoninus: "And it seems that the gods, watching from above, in their benevolence join with you in making your empire successful and *that they confirm your possession of it"* (Aristides, *Or.* 26.104). The passage is telling: for Aristides, the success of Antoninus's empire is dependent on the gods' collaboration, and Antoninus's possession of power is confirmed and ordained by the gods.

C. The Ideal King in Pliny the Younger's Panegyricus

The role of an emperor's divine election is also evident in Pliny the Younger's (61-112 CE)

[123] Notably, the tradition can be traced back to Greek conceptions of the monarch: "Our Lord Zeus first ordained … that one ruler should bear sway over all Asia with its flocks and wield the scepter of its government" (Aeschylus, *Pers.* 762ff).
[124] Italics mine (*DJS*).

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panegyrical speech to the freshly appointed Trajan before the Roman Senate.[125] In the prologue of the *Panegyricus*, Pliny writes that Trajan was elected by Jupiter, "who chose and revealed him (Trajan) in the sight and hearing of us all, among the many altars of the Capitol" (Pliny, *Pan.* 1.1.3-5). For Pliny, however, the divine election of Trajan is not justification to embellish the emperor's ontological status: "Nowhere should we flatter him as a divinity and a god; we are talking of a fellow citizen, not a tyrant, one who is our father not our over-lord. He is one of us—and his special virtue lies in his thinking so, as also in his never forgetting that he is a man himself (*Pan.* 1.2.3-5). The praise of Trajan stands in contrast to Domitian, who Pliny denunciates as a "brutal tyrant" whose statue brought sacrificial victims "as freely as the human blood he shed" (*Pan.* 52.7). What sets Trajan apart from Domitian is the gods' divine favor (*Pan.* 5.3), election (*Pan.* 8.2) and his benevolent rule as a "lover of peace" (*Pan.*16.1), setting the stage for his certain apotheosis (*Pan.* 10.3-6; 35.4).

In accord with the Hellenistic treatises on kingship, Trajan sets a god-like example for his subjects to imitate (*Pan.* 45.5-6) and functions like a god as benefactor "to settle rivalry between cities, to soothe the passions of angry peoples … to intervene where there has been official injustice … and be present at once with aid wherever your help is sought" (*Pan.* 80.3). Because Trajan fulfills the beneficent role of the gods so dutifully, Pliny proceeds to argue that Zeus has been freed "to devote himself to heavenly concerns" (*Pan.* 80.5). Pliny's *Panegyricus* provides invaluable insight into the relationship between gods and kings during the Roman era, and much more could be said here on this important work. Suffice it to say that Trajan's rule, according to Pliny, is portrayed as a "picture of the relationship of power between the emperor and the gods,

[125] On the significance of Pliny's *Panegyricus* for our understanding of the last years of Domitian and the early years of Nerva and Trajan, see the edited volume by Paul Roche ed., *Pliny's Praise: The Panegyricus in the Roman World* (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 2011); Daniel Schowalter, *The Emperor and the Gods: Images From the Time of Trajan* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1993); and Hans-Josef Klauck, *Religious Context*, 300.

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and between himself (as a representative of his fellow senators) and the emperor."[126] This triangulated relationship of power lay at the center of ruler cults where subjects, imperial representatives and gods comprised the social hierarchy of empire. Indeed, to intentionally remove oneself from this hierarchy of power was to voluntarily remove oneself from the imperial center to its periphery on the margins of society.

D. The Ideal King in Seneca's De Clementia

One final author deserves our attention: the Roman Stoic philosopher Seneca (c. 4 BCE-65 CE). Seneca wrote a full-blown treatise on kingship to the emperor Nero within the genre of the "Mirror for Princes" (*specula principum)*. The treatise is titled, "On Mercy" (*De clementia*). Seneca opens the treatise by placing an encomiastic speech in the mouth of Nero. Again, the motif of divine ordination is present in the opening line of Nero's speech: "Have I of all mortals found favour with Heaven and been chosen to serve on earth as vicar of the gods?" (*Clem.* 1.2). Nero proceeds to praise the sheer power that he holds over the cosmos, a power that reflects the soteriological beneficence of the gods:

> I am the arbiter of life and death for the nations; it rests in my power what each man's lot and state shall be; by my lips Fortune proclaims what gift she would bestow on each human being; from my utterance peoples and cities gather reasons for rejoicing; without my favour and grace no part of the wide world can prosper; all those many thousands of swords which my peace restrains will be drawn at my nod; what nations shall be utterly destroyed, which banished, which shall receive gifts of liberty, which have it taken from them, what kings shall become slaves and whose heads shall be crowned with royal honour, what cities shall fall and which shall rise—this is mine to decree (*Clem.* 1.2-3).

Nero's megalomanical power is well articulated in these passages, which, as is well known, grew out of control over the course of his rule (including matricide, Tacitius, *Ann.* 14.1-4).[127] But what

[126] Daniel Schowalter, *The Emperor and the Gods,* 55.
[127] Despite the ways Nero is caricatured as the angry tyrant in ancient and modern literature, it is important to remember that, like most new monarchs, Nero received praise at the beginning of his reign. This is best

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is interesting for our purposes here is that Nero acknowledges that his power as benefactor holds sway over the dichotomy between cosmic order and disorder: "this is mine to decree" (*Clem.* 1.2.3). Seneca proceeds to provide a check and balance to Nero's power by comparing it with the mercy of the gods as the standard by which Nero should conduct himself. Seneca writes,

> Since I have made mention of the gods, I shall do very well to establish this as the standard after which a prince should model himself—*that he should wish so to be to his subjects, as he would wish the gods to be to himself*. Is it, then, desirable to have deities that cannot be moved to show mercy to our sins and mistakes? Is it desirable to have them our enemies even to the point of our complete destruction? And what king will escape the danger of having the soothsayers gather up his riven limbs? But if the gods, merciful and just, do not instantly avenge with the thunderbolt the shortcomings of the mighty, how much more just is for a man, set over men to exercise his power in gentle spirit and to ask himself which condition of the world is more pleasing to the eye and more lovely—when the day is calm and clear, or when all nature quakes with crash upon crash of thunder, and hither and yonder the lightning flash? And yet the spect of a well-ordered empire is not different from that of a calm and shining sky. A reign that is cruel is stormy and overcast with gloom, and, while men tremble and grow pale at the sudden uproar, even he who is the cause of all the turmoil does not fail to shudder" (*Clem.* 1.7.1-3).

According to Seneca, a well-ordered empire is predicated on the emperor's mercy, which is to reflect the mercy of the gods. An emperor who does not mirror the gods' mercy evokes the wrath of nature—that is, the empire becomes "stormy and overcast with gloom" (*Clem.* 1.7.3) To illustrate the concept of a well-ordered empire, Seneca draws an example from nature—the beehive, which, for Seneca, illustrates the cosmic hierarchy of empire ingrained in the law of nature. Seneca writes,

> For nature herself conceived the idea of king, as we may recognize from the case of bees and other creatures; the king of the bees has the roomiest cell, placed in the central and

illustrated from a papyrus: "The Caesar who had to pay his debt to his ancestors, god manifest, has joined them, and the expectation and hope of the world has been declared emperor, the good genius of the world and source of all good things, Nero, has been declared Caesar. Therefore ought we all wearing garlands and with sacrifices of oxen to give thanks to all the gods. The first year of the emperor Nero Claudius Caesar Augustus Germanicus, the twenty-first month Neos Sebastos" (*P. Oxy.* 1021). It is striking that the subjects expressing honors and flattery to the new emperor offer sacrifice to all the gods. This reaction to the emperor's accession to power illustrates how the auditor could conceptualize the ruler as a physical mediator on behalf of the gods' blessings on the empire. On the figure Nero, see: Edward Champlin, *Nero* (Cambridge: Harvard University, 2003).

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> safest spot; besides, he does no work, but superintends the work of the others, and if they lose their king, they all scatter; they never tolerate more than one at a time, and they discover the best one by means of a fight; moreover the appearance of the king is striking and different from that of the others both in size and beauty. His greatest mark of distinction, however, lies in this: bees are most easily provoked, and, for the size of their bodies, excellent fighters, and where they wound they leave their stings; but the king himself has no sting. Nature did not wish him to be cruel or to seek a revenge that would be so costly, and so she removed his weapon, and left his anger unarmed (*Clem.* 1.19.2-3).

The analogy cautiously justifies the autocratic rule of the emperor based on the laws of nature. Like the king bee, Nero lives in the wealthiest quadrant of society, his appearance is set apart in size and beauty and he provides benefaction for his subordinate authorities and imperial subjects. But the analogy comes with a twist: according to the law of nature, like the king bee, Nero was not given a stinger, lest he take revenge on his enemies and/or subjects. Seneca understands this as "nature's way" of holding the ideal king accountable to clemency and, ultimately, reflecting the character and beneficence of the gods as mediums through which cosmic order is achieved.

2.5 Summary and Conclusion

Three observations about the relationship between gods and kings can be discerned from the *peri basileias* literature: first, the ideal ruler is to imitate the beneficence and power of the gods as a mediator between the divine and human realms; second, the traditional gods could be understood as electing a particular ruler to power; and third, the ideal ruler collaborates with the gods toward a just and ordered society (reflected in law and piety toward the gods). These points caution against abstracting the Hellenistic cult of rulers and the Roman imperial cults from the conceptual and cosmic setting in which imperial subjects honored the traditional gods alongside deified rulers. As Jean-Pierre Vernant, the prodigious French scholar of ancient Greece has shown, one cannot treat Greek religion as if the traditional gods were "separate and isolated

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figures."[128] The identity of each god was only given shape and meaning within the cosmic pantheon of the Olympic gods as a means of "conceptualizing the universe, distinguishing between multiple types of force and power operating within it."[129] The same phenomenon is at work in the deification of powerful rulers. The ruler represented a particular type of force and power to subjects; in turn, subjects interpreted the emperor through the lenses of power available to them—namely, the anthropomorphic narrative of Greco-Roman religion and the system of euergetism. The elision of gods and kings in Greco-Roman urban spaces created a new hermeneutical context for early Judaisms' re-contextualization of the icon parody—one that was not abstracted from the political. Before evaluating Jewish sources in more detail in chapters four and five, it is necessary to evaluate our strongest sources of evidence pertaining to the relationship between gods and kings, which surfaces in the epigraphic record.

[128] Jean-Pierre Vernant, *Myth and Society in Ancient Greece* (New York: Zone Books, 1988), 109.
[129] Idem. 104-107.

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CHAPTER 3.

THE RULING POWER AND THE TRADITIONAL GODS IN THE EPIGRAPHIC RECORD

> It is epigraphy which provides our most direct access to ancient society and culture, and which shows every sign of being able to add indefinitely to the stock of available texts.
> —Ramsay MacMullen[1]

3.1 Introduction

The "epigraphic habit" of the Roman Empire provides a crucial witness for reconstructing ruler worship. Notably, it is the epigraphic record that has, in large part, contributed to anti-imperial readings of the New Testament by appeal to Christological titles that parallel royal imperial epithets inscribed in stone.[2] Through a detailed evaluation of the epigraphic record, this chapter sets out to better define the hybrid material honors conferred on gods and kings in honorific inscriptions and the iconographic representations attested in such inscriptions. The inscriptions evaluated span a wide swath of time, dynasties and geography in order to show that the diction employed to honor gods and kings with joint media was a culturally normative epigraphic *topoi* within the built environment of the Mediterranean basin. At the risk of tackling an admittedly large corpus of literature—spanning different centuries, decades and regions—it is contended that such an analysis is justified in order to situate the Hellenistic cult of rulers and the Roman imperial cults within a broader socio-political framework and, not least, to better understand how Diaspora Jews negotiated ruler cults before the Augustan era. While this approach is admittedly piecemeal, identifying tendencies in the literature is a crucial step toward understanding the

[1] Ramsay MacMullen, "The Epigraphic Habit in the Roman Empire," *AJPh* 103 (1982): 233-46, here 233.
[2] See Joseph D. Fantin, *The Lord of the Entire World: Lord Jesus, a Challenge to Lord Caesar?* (Sheffield: Sheffield Phoenix, 2011).

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Hellenistic and Roman icon parody's religious *and* political objects of resistance.

3.2 Gods and Kings in the Epigraphic Record

The modern adage that "image is everything" applies well to the politics and religion of ruler cults.[3] Aside from functioning in the role of liberator, protector and savior, the ideal ruler in the Hellenistic world was expected to bring an aesthetic visual vibrancy to the city as patron benefactor.[4] Suetonius, for example, famously records the impressive building campaigns of Augustus in Rome as follows: "Since the city was not adorned as the dignity of the empire demanded, and was exposed to flood and fire, he so beautified it that he could justly boast that he had found it built of brick and left it in marble" (Suet., *Aug.* 28.3). In accord with Aristotle's definition of benefaction, the urban topography of the Greco-Roman city was engineered around the praxis of ritual, with various outlets constructed in the center of the city for demonstrating one's gestures of communication and/or honors toward benefactors (divine or human).[5] A

[3] On the influence of Alexander the Great upon the Hellenistic royal image, see: Andrew Stewart, *Faces of Power: Alexander's Image and Hellenistic Politics* (Berkeley: University of California, 1993). On the royal portrait in statuary throughout the Hellenistic period, see: R. R. R. Smith, *Hellenistic Royal Portraits* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1988). On images and the Roman imperial cults, see Simon Price, *Rituals and Power,* 170-206; Paul Zanker, *The Power of Images*; Clifford Ando, *Imperial Ideology and Provincial Loyalty,* 206-276; John Pollini, "The Imperial Cult in the East: Images of Power and the Power of Intolerance," in *The Sculptural Environment of the Roman Near East: Reflections on Culture, Ideology, and Power* (Yaron Z. Eliav et al.; Leuven: Peeters, 2008), 165-196; and J. M. C. Toynbee, *Roman Historical Portraits* (Ithaca: Cornell University, 1978). On numismatics, see Larry J. Kreitzer, *Striking New Images: Roman Imperial Coinage and the New Testament World* (JSNT 134; Sheffield Academic, 1996), idem. "Apotheosis of the Roman Emperor," *BA* 53 (1990): 211-17.

[4] See Paul Zanker, "The City as Symbol: Rome and the Creation of an Urban Image," in *Romanization and the City* (ed. Elizabeth Fentress; Portsmouth: Journal of Roman Archaeology, 2000), 25-41; and A. Leone, R. Witcher, E. Thomas and Ted Kaizer, eds., *Cities and Gods: Religious Space in Transition* (Leuven: Peeters, 2013). On early Christian negotiation of Roman art and statuary in the "spaces of empire", see the important contribution of Laura Nasrallah, *Christian Response to Roman Art and Architecture: The Second-Century Church Amid the Spaces of Empire* (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 2010).

[5] The work of Walter Burkert in particular has influenced the idea that communication comprises a basic function of ancient ritual. Burkert argues that communication is the primary concern of ritual, while its pragmatic value is only secondary. See Walter Burkert, *Structure and History in Greek Mythology and Ritual* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1979), 35-58. For discussion and critique of Burkert, see: Jörg Rüpke, *Religions of the Romans,* 86-116. For general introduction to the sacrifice, see John Scheid, *An*

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minimum prerequisite for the worship of a god was an altar for the ritual of sacrifice. Often times, the altar was surrounded by a sacred enclosure (*temenos*) that could include a cult statue or image of the patron deity. As Aristotle attests, sacrifice and statuary were typical honors for a benefactor (*Rhet.* 1.5.9); the physiognomic design of a statue itself, however, was not the only medium for expressing honors toward gods and kings. Aristotle and Pliny note that the pedestal on which statues stood was equally valuable for expressing honors through dedicatory inscriptions detailing the benefactor's achievements. Because kings could fall out of favor and receive *damnatio*, their statues could be vandalized or melted down by new regimes or bandits for their precious materials, leaving behind only the statue base.[6] Consequently, inscriptions have an "archival character" and are far more voluminous than statues.[7]

Frederick Danker rightly notes that epigraphy provides a unique public window into life in the ancient Mediterranean. In contrast to the private transactions between individuals found in the papyri, epigraphy expresses a so-to-speak "public data base" of shared knowledge.[8] Danker

Introduction to Roman Religion (trans. Janet Lloyd; Bloomington: Indiana University, 2003), 79-110; idem. "Sacrifices for Gods and Ancestors," in *A Companion to Roman Religion* (ed. Jörg Rupke; Malden: Blackwell, 2007), 263-272; Simon Price, *Rituals and Power,* 207-233; and Hans-Josef Klauck, *Religious Context*, 12-41. For a lucid description of the sacrificial process, see Dionysius of Halicarnassus, *Roman Antiquities,* 7.72.15-17. Notably, Dionysius attributes the form of sacrifice in Roman religion to the Greeks.

[6] Pliny the Younger gleefully writes of the destruction of Domitian's statuary: "It was our delight to dash those proud faces to the ground, to smite them with the sword and savage them with the axe, as if blood and agony could follow from every blow. Our transports of joy—so long deferred—were unrestrained; all sought a form of vengeance in beholding those bodies mutilated, limbs hacked in pieces, and finally melted down, so that from such menacing terror something for man's use and enjoyment should rise out of the flames" (*Pan.* 52). Alternatively, Dio Chrysostom, in his oration to the Rhodians, notes that clients on the Greek island of Rhodes were honoring their benefactors by erasing preexisting inscriptions on statue bases and re-inscribing them with honors toward a new benefactor, a practice that Dio calls "absurd" (*Rhod.* 31.9-10). On the destruction of statuary, see Charles Brian Rose, "Iconography," in *The Oxford Handbook of Roman Studies* (eds. Alessandro Barchiesi and Walter Scheidel; Oxford: Oxford University, 2010), 69.

[7] Frederick Danker, *Benefactor,* 28. On epigraphy, see also John Bodel, "Epigraphy," in *The Oxford Handbook of Roman Studies* (eds. Alessandro Barchiesi and Walter Scheidel; Oxford: Oxford University, 2010), 107-22; Fergus Millar, "Epigraphy," in *The Sources of History: Studies in the Uses of Historical Evidence* (ed. G. R. Elton; Cambridge: Cambridge University, 1983); Ramsay MacMullen, "The Epigraphic Habit," 233-46.

[8] Danker, *Benefactor,* 28. Fergus Millar makes the important point that, aside from being predominantly private documents, the papyri represent a marked geographical bias in comparison to inscriptions due to their need for unique climate conditions for preservation. Consequently, Millar concludes that "For these reasons it

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writes: "…When such a communication appears on stone, everyone knows that Rome means business. An inscription is meant to be read or heard—there's always someone around to clue illiterate folk on the latest—by every citizen, temporary resident, slave, or tradesperson."[9] In a world far removed from mass media through printing presses and digital technology, inscriptions constituted the core literary form that peoples from every strata of society would have been most familiar with.[10] Familiarity with the content of inscriptions, however, presupposes the literacy of passersby.[11] Studies on literacy rates in the Greco-Roman world estimate that roughly 10% of the population could read.[12] The articulation of imperial contracts and ideology through inscriptions, however, was not limited to the actual grammar of the inscription itself. Rather, the location of the inscription on a statue base or on a stele in a "prominent public place" (to quote Pliny, *Nat.* 34.9) juxtaposed the content of the inscription with media (statues, temples, etc.) that

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is the reading of inscriptions, even more than of papyri, which will provide the essential direct acquaintance, the 'feel' for ancient society, without which the formulation of precise historical questions or hypotheses is an empty exercise, indeed cannot properly proceed at all" (Fergus Millar, "Epigraphy," 82). Ramsay MacMullen draws similar conclusions: "It is epigraphy which provides our most direct access to ancient society and culture, and which shows every sign of being able to add indefinitely to the stock of available texts" (MacMullen, "The Epigraphic Habit in the Roman Empire," 233).

[9] Frederick Danker, "On Stones and Benefactors," *CurTM* (1981): 351-56, here 352.

[10] Although no one knows the exact number of Greek and Latin inscriptions available to us, Fergus Millar estimates that over five hundred thousand inscriptions exist from sepulchral tombs, ostraca, graffiti and monumental inscriptions are extant. See Fergus Millar, "Epigraphy," 80; and idem. *Rome, the Greek World, and the East Volume 1: The Roman Republic and the Augustan Revolution* (ed. Hannah M. Cotton and Guy M. Rogers; London: University of North Carolina, 2002), 39-84. The classic collections are W. Dittengerger's *Orientis Graeci Inscriptiones Selectae I-III* (1903-5); *Sylloge Inscriptionum Graecarum I-IV*^{3} (1915-24); R. Cagnat *Inscriptiones Graecae ad Res Romanas Pertinentes;* and H. Dessau, *Inscriptiones Latinae Selectae* I-III (1892-1916).

[11] On the literacy of imperial subjects and their ability to comprehend imperial theology, see the exceptional discussion in James R. Harrison, *Paul and the Imperial Authorities*, 19-27; and, more recently, Manfred G. Schmidt, "Inscriptions and Literacy," in *The Oxford Handbook of Roman Epigraphy* (eds. Christer Bruun and Jonathan Edmondson; Oxford: Oxford University), 745-63.

[12] See W. V. Harris, "Literacy and Epigraphy, I," *ZPE* 52 (1983): 87-111; Mary Beard et al. eds., *Literacy in the Roman World* (*JRAS* 3; Ann Arbor: University of Michigan, 1991); W. A. Parker, *Ancient Literacies: The Culture of Reading in Greece and Rome* (Oxford: Oxford University, 2009). While most scholars argue that only 10-20% of Greco-Roman society was literate, N. Horsfall has called these figures into question through his analysis of inscriptions that surface in civic locations where one would expect illiteracy (e.g., among construction workers, brothels and gladiator academies). See Nicholas Horsfall, "Statistics or States of Mind?" in Beard et al. (eds.), *Literacy in the Roman World,* 59-76. For further discussion of Horsfall, see James R. Harrison, *Paul and the Imperial Authorities at Thessalonica,* 20-21.

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transcended literacy. To be sure, in Dio Chrysostom's mock trial of the famous sculptor Phidias, Phidias claims that he could concretize the royal epithets of Zeus in stone "without the help of words" (Dio Chrysostom, *Or.* 12.75-77).[13] Quintilian, on the other hand, notes that Phidias's Olympian Zeus "magnified the awe with which the god was already regarded" (Quintilian, *Inst.* 12.10.9). Even Philo notes that the dilettante viewer of art could recognize the work of Phidias by its style and design (*Ebr.* 89). The "plastic language" of the city's sculptural environment allowed the illiterate to maintain a high degree of knowledge pertaining to empire's social hierarchy, along with its politics and religion. Even for those who could not read, translation could be accessed through installation ceremonies of monuments (e.g. Dan 4:3), public readings at festivals, elite contacts and it is noteworthy that Plutarch attests to the presence of tour guides who could expound the content of inscriptions on statue bases (Plutarch, *Pyth. orac.* 395a).[14] The result is that illiterate auditors could understand the bigger picture of empire's socially stratified society—for example, who was in charge, the characteristics of a deity, or the relationship between a god and a king—based on the sculptural environment of the Greco-Roman city they inhabited.

Although there are numerous directions one could go in their evaluation of the epigraphic material, here the focus will be on inscriptions that illuminate the relationship between gods and kings within the visual environment of the Hellenistic city. Although powerful kings could receive an altar and sacred enclosure, it was not uncommon for a king to be embedded within the preexisting cult structure of a traditional god as a "temple-sharing god" (σύνναος θεός). In Nock's

[13] For commentary, see: Hans-Josef Klauck and Balbina Bäbler, *Dion von Prusa: Olympische Rede oder Über die erste Erkenntnis Gottes* (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 2002). See also Peter S. Perry's discussion of empire in Dio's Olympic Discourse in "Critiquing the Excess of Empire: A *Synkrisis* of John of Patmos and Dio of Prusa," *JSNT* 29.4 (2007): 477-82.
[14] I am indebted to James R. Harrison for this reference to Plutarch. See *Paul and the Imperial Authorities at Thessalonica*, 21 n. 99.

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seminal study on Hellenistic and Roman temple sharing, he identifies the following examples of temple sharing from the Hellenistic and Roman imperial cults:

- Theoi Adelophoi in life by 271 BCE and their successors in the cult of Alexander at Alexandria.
- Arsinoe II (posthumous) in all temples of Egypt in 270 BCE.
- Ptolemy Euergetes, Berenice, and their daughter Berenice in all temples of Egypt in 239/8 BCE.
- Ptolemy Philopator and Arsinoe in all temples of Egypt in 217 BCE.
- Ptolemy Epiphanes in all temples of Egypt in 196 BCE.
- Cleopatra, his wife, in all temple of Egypt in 185/4 BCE.
- Theoi Adelphoi, Arariathes V, and Emperors with Dionysus in titulature, Arariathes V in cult of actors' guild.
- Attalus III in temple of Asclepios at Elaea (in lifetime): sacrifices, possibly to him on altars of Zeus Soter, Zeues Boulaios, Hestia Boulaia.
- Julius Caesar in temple of Quirinus at Rome, 45 BCE. His statue in all temples at Rome and in (Italian) cities, 44 BCE.
- Augustus (posthumous) in cult of Hercules at Tibur.
- Augustus possibly in cult of Artemis Kindyas at Bargylia in Caria.
- Livia (in lifetime) in temple of Athena Polias at Cyzicus.
- Successors of Augustus in his temples at Alexandria, Philae, etc.
- Livilla in temple of Athena Nikephoros at Pergamon, between 37 and 39 CE.
- Drusilla (posthumous) in temple of Venus in forum at Rome, 38 CE.
- Claudius possibly with Dionysus at Aphrodisias.
- Nero in temple of Mars Ultor at Rome in 54 CE.
- Successors of Hadrian in his temple at Alexandria.
- Julia Domna (in lifetime) in Parthenon.
- Caracalla possibly in temple of Askleopios at Pergamon.[15]

The phenomenon of temple sharing could manifest itself in a variety of ways. Most commonly, the king's image or statue was embedded within the precincts of a traditional god's temple. Below the statue, an epigraphic stele often opened with a preamble detailing the ruler (or family's) benefactions, followed by a consideration, the city's hortative resolution to venerate the king with an honorific *eikon* or cultic *agalma* and, finally, resolutions.[16] In epigraphic honors, a

[15] Arthur Darby Nock, Σύνναος θεός, 50.
[16] The terminology for a portrait or statue in reference to a ruler was usually *andrias, eikon* or *agalma.* On the semantic difference between these words, see Simon Price, *Rituals and Power,* 176-79. The word *agalma* was typically reserved for an image in a religious context inside of a temple; however, as Price points out, exceptions exist in the literary and epigraphical record, cautioning one from making too sharp of a distinction.

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stele could be set up within the temple precincts of a traditional god without an accompanying statue or image.[17] The latter phenomenon is not reflected in Nock's list, which would quickly run the number of data up to unmanageable proportions. What follows is an evaluation of eight inscriptions from five Successor kingdoms—the Antigonids of Macedon, the Ptolemies, the Seleucids, the Attalids of Pergamon and the Commagenians. The selection of inscriptions from different dynasties in different regions is justified in order to show that the elision of gods and kings was a culturally normative practice in the Hellenistic world.

3.3 The Antigonids of Macedon and the Traditional Gods

The earliest epigraphic account of a Greek city offering honors during the lifetime of a Successor king occurs in the city of Scepsis in Asia Minor after the peace of 311 BCE. The king honored in the decree is Antigonus I Monophthalmus (306-301 BCE). The bid for power between Alexander's generals—namely, Cassander, Lysimachus, Ptolemy, Seleucus and Antigonus—created a tense environment of pervasive war, yet simultaneously created ample opportunity for the generals to bestow benefits on cities as rescuers and saviors. The infighting between the generals was exacerbated when Cassander had Alexander's wife and son assassinated in 311/10 BCE. The successful assassination plot eliminated any possibility that Alexander's son would become heir of the empire. Diodorus Siculus writes that the assassination relieved the generals of fears about the rise of Alexander's son to power, but freed them to pursue kingship: "For now

On the literary structure of epigraphic honors, see John Ma, *Antiochos III and the Cities of Western Asia Minor*, 261; and F. W. Walbank, *The Hellenistic World* (Sussex: The Harvester Press, 1981).

[17] Between 334 and 332 BCE, for example, the historian Kallisthenes and Aristotle were honored with a decree placed in the temple of Apollo at Delphi (*SIG*[3] 275); and in 332/31 BCE the Athenians ordered that a stone stele honoring the historian Phanodemos be erected in the temple of Athena (*SIG*[3] 285, 287). For further examples and comment, see David Potter, "Hellenistic Religion" in *A Companion to the Hellenistic World* (ed. Andrew Erskine; Oxford: Blackwell, 2005), 407-30, here 416.

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that there was no one to take over the empire, those who ruled peoples or cities could each entertain hopes of kingship and controlled henceforward the territory under their power like kingdoms that had been conquered in war (literally "won by the spear" [δορίκτητον])" (Diodorus, XIX.105.1-4; trans. Austin no. 37).[18] The result of the assassination plot was the supposed peace of 311 BCE.[19] In the soteriological diction of euergetism usually reserved for the gods, the city of Scepsis responded to its newfound freedom and autonomy (ἐλεύθεροι καὶ αὐτόνομοι) with a stele honoring Antigonus:

> "[...since Antigonus has sent] Acius who … has also sent / news of the agreement concluded by him with Cassander, Ptolemy and Lysimachus, copies of the oath, and news of what has been done concerning the peace and the autonomy of the Greeks; be it resolved/by the people: since Antigonus has been responsible for great benefits (μεγάλων ἀγαθῶν) to the city and the other Greeks, to praise Antigonus and to rejoice with him in what has been accomplished; let the city also rejoice / with the other Greeks that they shall live in peace henceforward enjoying freedom and autonomy (ἐλεύθεροι καὶ αὐτόνομοι); and so that Antigonus may receive honours worthy of his achievements and the people should be seen to be returning thanks / for the benefits (ἀγαθῶν) it has received, let it mark off a sacred enclosure (τέμηνος) for him, build an altar (βωμὸν ποῆσαι) and set up a cult statue as beautiful as possible (ἄγαλμα στῆσαι ὡς κάλλιστον),

[18] For the Hellenistic motif of winning over subjects "by the spear," see Austin, nos. 4, 7, 44, 183 and 196. Strikingly, the author of 3 Maccabees evokes the tradition in a review of salvation history in the prayer of Eleazar: "Sennacherib exulting in his countless forces, oppressive king of the Assyrians, who had already gained control of the whole world by the spear (δόρατι τὴν πᾶσαν ὑποχείριον ἤδη λαβόντα γῆν) and was lifted up against your holy city, speaking grievous words with boasting and insolence, you, O Lord, broke in pieces, showing your power to many nations" (3 Macc 6:5).

[19] The peace of 311 is best understood through letters that Antigonus sent to cities under his jurisdiction. Only one of these letters written to Scepsis has survived, which was found with the Scepsis decree (cf. *OGIS* 5; Austin, no. 38). For commentary, see Habicht, *Gottmenschentum und Griechische Städte*, 42-44. An explanation for why Alexander's son did not inherit the empire is given as late as the tenth century CE in the Byzantine compendium known as "the Suda." According to the Suda, Alexander's son failed to inherit the empire because the Successors displayed superior military capabilities: "Monarchy. It is neither descent nor legitimacy which gives monarchies to men, but the ability to command an army and to handle affairs competently. Such was the case with Philip and the Successors of Alexander. For Alexander's natural son was in no way helped by his kinship with him, because of his weakness of spirit, while those who had no connection with Alexander became kings of almost the whole inhabited world" (Suda s.v. *Basileia* (2); trans. Austin no. 45). The common practice of nepotism in royal families is eclipsed by the superior military merits of Alexander's generals. Not even Alexander's own son has a place in the imperial inheritance. "Weakness of spirit" has no place in the new world order. On the epigraphic and literary sources for the rule of Alexander's first successors, see the fascinating article by Christian Habicht, "The Literary and Epigraphic Evidence of the History of Alexander and His First Successors," in *The Hellenistic Monarchies: Selected Papers* (trans. Peregrine Stevenson; Ann Arbor: University of Michigan, 2009), 74-84.

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> and let the sacrifice, the competition, the wearing of the wreath and the rest of the festival be celebrated every [year] / in his honour as they were before. Let it [crown] him with a gold crown [weighing] 100 gold [staters], and crown Demetrius and Philippus with crowns weighing each 50 drachmas; / and let it proclaim the crowns [at the] contest during the festival; let the city offer a sacrifice for the good tidings (ευαγγέλια) sent by Antigonus; let all the citizens wear wreaths, and let the treasurer provide the money / for this expense. Let friendly gifts be sent to Antigonus, and let there be inscribed on a stele the text of the agreement, the letter from Antigonus [cf. *OGIS* 5] and the oath which he sent, as he / instructed, and *place it in the sanctuary of Athena* (καὶ θεῖναι εἰς τὸ ἱερὸν τῆς Ἀθηνᾶς)…" (*OGIS* 6, lines 10-34; trans. Austin no. 39).

The diction of benefaction is clear throughout the decree. Antigonus is honored for great benefits, peace, freedom and the Greek cities' newfound autonomy. But the Scepsis decree surpasses the customary honors conferred upon benefactors by employing the diction of speech typically reserved for the gods. As Hans-Josef Klauck writes: "Antigonus was no longer a member of the *polis,* but stood above the *polis*."[20] The result is that the citizens of Scepsis interpreted the intrusion of external political power from without through the rituals of power available to them. All of the ingredients for a veritable ruler cult are present—temple, image (*agalma*), sacrifice and calendrical athletic festivals. Although the traditional gods play a minimal role in the Scepsis decree, the decree itself is to be placed within the sanctuary of Athena, along with Antigonus's letter, thereby associating Antigonus with a traditional god.

The peace of 311 BCE was short lived. In the immediate years following the Successors' agreement of peace, Antigonus and his charismatic son, Demetrius Poliorcetes ("conqueror of cities"), conspired to take control of Greece from Cassander and Ptolemy in 307 BCE.[21] The ensuing events surrounding Demetrius had a lasting impact on the cultural memory of Greek authors up until the first century CE. Plutarch, for example, records that through a brilliant military tactical move, Demetrius set out for Athens with a fleet of 250 ships and sailed quietly

[20] Klauck, *Religious Context*, 256.
[21] See Kenneth Scott, "The Deification of Demetrius Poliorcetes: Part I," *AJP* 49.2 (1928): 137-66; and Jon D. Mikalson, *Religion in Hellenistic Athens* (Berkeley: University of California, 1998), 75-104.

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into the harbor of Athens while the Athenian military supposed that he was Ptolemy (Plut., *Demetr.* 8). Upon nearing the shoreline, Demetrius announced to the Athenians through a herald that his father sent him with prayers to restore their ancestral democratic constitution (*Demetr.* 8). The events following Demetrius's announcement are remarkable: rather than resist Demetrius's arrival, the Athenians welcomed him as their "benefactor and savior" (*Demetr.* 9). Three years later when Demetrius returned to Athens in 304 BCE, Plutarch records that Demetrius promised to heap benefactions of corn and lumber upon the city; consequently, for the first time, the Athenians used the title king for Antigonus and Demetrius. Moreover, Plutarch reports that they were called the "Savior Gods" (θεοὶ σωτῆρες); they received their own priesthood; and an altar was constructed on the spot where Demetrius first stepped out of his chariot called "Demetrius Cataebates" (the descending god) (*Demetr.* 10).

That Demetrius's image did not stand alone on statuary in Athens is evident in a decree discovered in 1934 near the Academy of Plato that reflects events somewhere between 307-303 BCE.[22] The inscription reads as follows:

> [...ἐπειδὴ Δημήτριος] ὁ μέγας ἀφικόμενος είς τὴν [Ἀττικὴν ἐξήλασεν μετὰ δυνά]μεως τοὺς ὑπεναντίος τῆι δη[μοκρατίαι ἐλευθερῶν τήν] χώραν τὴν Ἀθηναίων καὶ τῶν ἄδ[δων συμμάχων, καὶ ηῦν δὲ πα]ραγέγονεν βοηθήσων μετὰ δυν[άμεως καὶ πάντων κρείτων] γενόμενος πολλὰς μὲν ἤδη πόλ[εις προσηγάγετο τῆι αὐτοῦ] βασιλείαι κίνδυνον καὶ πόν[ον ὑπομείνας μετὰ τοῦ στρα]τοῦ τιμῶν καὶ περὶ πλείστου [τὴν τῶν Ἑλλήνων ἐλευθερίαν] καὶ δεηθέντων ηγεῖσθαι τῆ[ς κοινῆς συμμαχίας καὶ τῶν] κατὰ Πεδοπόννησον πράξεων πο[λιορκήσας μηχαναῖς ἐπά]κτος ἐξέβαλεν ἐκ τῆς χώρας τοῦ[ς πολεμίους πάντας· δεδό]χθαι τοῖς ἐθελονταῖς ἐπιλέκτο[ις τιμῆσαι μὲν βασιλέα] [Δ]ημήτριον Ἀντιγόνου βασιλέα β[ασιλέως εἰκόνι χαλκῆι] [ε]φ᾽ ἵππου ἐν αγορᾶι παρὰ τὴν δημοκ[ρατίαν οὗ ἔστησαν καί] [τ]οὺς ἄλλους Ἕλληνας, ἱδρυσασθαι δ᾽[αγτῶι καὶ βωμὸν τοὺς πρ]οϊσταμένους εἰς τὰς θυσίας τὰς π[οιουμένας ὑπὲρ Δημητ]ρίου καὶ Δημητρίωι Σωτῆρι θύειν [κατ᾽ ἐνιαυτόν· (*IASIA* 261; lines 1-17).[23]

[22] Danker, *Benefactor,* 202.

[23] To better accommodate accents I've changed the uncial to miniscule script from Al N. Oilonomid*ēs and* Martin C. J. Miller, *Inscriptiones Atticae: Supplement Insriptionum Atticarum: Volume 1* (Chicago: Ares, 1976), 261.

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> Whereas [Demetrios] the Great, when he came to Attica, [drove out with force] those who were opposed to the democracy and [liberated] the Athenian territory and that of the other [allies, and has now] come to aid us with his might; and (whereas), being [more powerful than anyone else] he has already [added] many cities to his kingdom while, [together with his army, enduring] danger and trouble and honoring above all else [the liberty of the Greeks]; and (whereas), when they were asked to head [the alliance] and take care of affairs in the Peloponnesos, [he enforced a siege with machines] that he had brought in and drove [all the enemies] out of the country, (be it therefore) RESOLVED by the Mercenaries Extraordinary [to honor King] Demetrios, son of Antigonos, king and son of a king, with an equestrian [bronze statue] in the market place beside (the statue of) Democracy, [where stand] also the other honored Greeks; (and be it further resolved) that those who preside over the sacrifices made in behalf of Demetrios set up [an altar in his honor] and sacrifice [annually] to Demetrios Savior… (English trans. Danker, no. 30).

To honor Demetrius's military liberation of Athens from tyrants, a gilded statue is erected in the marketplace beside the statue of personified democracy and the other honored Greeks (likely the cult of heroes).[24] The location of the statue between Democracy and the civic heroes expresses the caution with which the Athenians took to not elevate Demetrius above the Olympic gods and other civic benefactors. Furthermore, that Demetrius's statue was offensive to some is evident in Diodorus, who writes that a council convened to remove the statue because "it was absurd to honour equally their besiegers and their benefactors" (Diod., 20.93.6).[25] Still, a cultic framework can be felt at the end of the decree when instructions are given to sacrifice to "Demetrius Savior" (Δημητρίωι Σωτῆρι θύειν, line 17). But when read within the context of the whole inscription, it is probably best to understand Demetrius as a type of demigod (like Asklepius and Dionysus) who is elevated above the city (but in no way above the gods as a stand-alone deity). Both Antigonus and Demetrius provide vivid examples of ruler cult early on in the age of the Successors. The expression of public honors given to Antigonus and Demetrius, however, are not bifurcated from the ritual and material framework of the traditional gods. Rather, their image is embedded in the cult of heroes in Athens and, of particular importance, woven into the robe of Athena.

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[24] On the personification of Democracy in Athens, see: Pausanias, 1.3.3.
[25] Quoted in Kenneth Scott, "The Deification of Demetrius Poliorcetes: Part I," 139.

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3.4 The Ptolemies and the Traditional Greco-Egyptian Gods

In Peter M. Fraser's monumental study on Alexandria, Egypt, he writes: "The dynastic cult nowhere found fuller and more complex expression than in Ptolemaic Egypt."[26] The complex expression of the Ptolemaic ruler cult was aided by the ancient tradition of deifying the Egyptian pharaohs as the earthly manifestation of the sun god Ré. Indeed, some scholars argue that native Egyptians interpreted the Ptolemies as a "hieroglyph of God."[27] The hieroglyphic lens through which the Egyptians interpreted the Ptolemies resulted in the infusion of native Egyptian concepts into the Hellenistic cult of rulers. Günther Hölbl argues that this infusion of ideas resulted in the Ptolemaic kings having two faces: "one that is pharaonic and another that is Greek-Macedonian."[28] The two faces of the Ptolemaic king, reflected in the iconographic record, thus served as a strategy for holding together the complex ethnic makeup of Ptolemaic Egypt.[29] The complex web of Egyptian power (represented by the clergy) and Greek-Macedonian power (represented by the king and sister-wife) demanded careful negotiation. One strategy of legitimating the Ptolemaic king to his subjects was to associate the royal family with native Egyptian traditional gods, including the Pharaohs, Ptah, Ré, Horus, Isis and Osiris et al.[30] Here the focus is on Ptolemaic Egypt's abundant evidence for the relationship between the Ptolemaic family and the gods. It is important to remember that Egypt housed the largest Diaspora Jewish community in the Mediterranean basin, along with the most industrious Jewish writing

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[26] Peter M. Fraser, *Ptolemaic Alexandria* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1972), 214.

[27] See Klauck, *Religious Context,* 261. R. Gundlach, "Der Pharao – eine Hieroglyphe Gottes: Zur 'Göttlichkeit' des ägyptischen Königs," in *Menschwerdung Gottes—Vergöttlichung des Menschen* (ed. D. Zeller; Göttingen: Fribourg University, 1988), 13-35.

[28] Günther Hölbl, *A History of the Ptolemaic Empire,* (New York, Routledge, 2001), 308. L. Koenen puts things slightly differently: "Under the Ptolemies it became the king's prerogative to unify Greek and Egyptian thought in the symbolism and reality of his office and person" ("The Ptolemaic King as Religious Figure," in *Images and Ideologies*, 115).

[29] On the complex ethnic makeup of Hellenistic Egypt, see: Per Bilde et al. eds., *Ethnicity in Hellenistic Egypt* (Aarhus: Aarhus University Press, 1992).

[30] The chameleon like qualities of the Ptolemaic rulers is evident in their adoption of Phaoronic dress in extant statuary. See R. R. R. Smith, *Hellenistic Royal Portraits,* 87-88.

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community outside of Israel in the city of Alexandria.[31] As will be discussed in chapter three of this study, Ptolemaic Egypt provides the backdrop for some of our most important Jewish literary sources that implicitly or explicitly critique the Hellenistic cult of rulers (i.e., the Ptolemies). We will revisit Alexandrian Judaism in more detail in chapter five. In what follows the focus will be on evaluating two decrees that illuminate the relationship between gods and kings in Ptolemaic Egypt: the Canopus decree and the Rosetta Stone.[32]

3.4.1 Gods and Kings in the Canopus Decree

On March 4, 238 BCE the elite Egyptian clergy gathered together in the temple of the Benefactor Gods (Ptolemy III with his wife Berenice) at Canopus on the North East coast of Alexandria.

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[31] Jewish emigration to Egypt occurred as early as the Babylonian exile in the sixth century BCE (Jer 41-44). The *Letter of* Aristeas provides a likely embellished report that Ptolemy I Soter (305-282) deported 100,000 Jews to Egypt—of whom 30,000 were armed and forced to serve in the king's army (*Let. Aris.* 12-13). On the other hand, Hecataeus of Abdera, as reported by Josephus, records that Jews emigrated freely after the battle of Gaza in 312 BCE (*C. Ap.* 1.186-89). See John J. Collins, *Jewish Wisdom in the Hellenistic Age* (Louisville: Westminster, 1997), 136.

[32] Here I omit the Raphia decree since the decree only survives in whole in Demotic, and translations into English are often considered by scholars to be an "approximation" (Michel Austin, *The Hellenistic World from Alexander to the Roman Conquest*, 482). The Raphia decree is the result of a synod of priests gathered in Memphis to honor Ptolemy IV Philopator for his victory over Antiochus III Soter at the Battle of Raphia (June 22nd 217 BCE). Ptolemy IV, along with his sister-wife Arsinoe and his Greco-Egyptian troops, displayed extraordinary courage commanding his army at Raphia when he fought at the head of his troops. Polybius records the scene as follows: "Suddenly Ptolemy, who earlier had retreated under the protection of his phalanx, came on the scene in the middle of his ranks and showed himself to both armies, spreading fear among his opponents and powerfully reviving the courage and lust for battle on his own side" (V.85.5). In response to Ptolemy's victory, the Egyptian clergy gathered in Memphis on Nov 15, 217 BCE to honor Ptolemy with a public decree. Because Ptolemy IV shows concern to confer benefits on the worship of the Egyptian gods, the gods, in turn, confer protection and victory upon Ptolemy in war. But the decree goes even further by claiming that the gods gave Ptolemy supernatural revelation and oracular visions. In contrast to the ithyphallic hymn honoring Demetrius by degrading the gods for their distance, the Raphia Decree honors the gods for their nearness to Ptolemy IV, which is evinced by his victories and ecstatic revelations. To be sure, the decree proceeds to eulogize Ptolemy IV by comparing how he slays his enemies like Horus, the son of Isis (Austin, no. 276.10ff). The remainder of the decree honors Ptolemy IV for his benefits and piety toward the gods. At one point, the decree says, "Many people brought him a gold crown, and announced that they would set up a royal statue in his honour and build him a temple, as the King was acting in a pious manner" (Austin, no. 276). The impulse to set up cultus for Ptolemy IV is driven by Ptolemy's benefactions and piety toward the gods through his nation-wide campaign to restore and expand cult images damaged in war. The Raphia Decree provides an epigraphic parallel to the Hellenistic treatises on kingship, albeit through the perspective of native Egyptian clergy rather than elite Greek philosophers. Both genres of literature share the same standard: the ideal king ought to express exemplar piety and benefits toward the gods.

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The meeting was an annual synod to discuss matters related to cult, festival and the Egyptian calendar. Like the Greek world, religion permeated every area of political life in Egypt, making the relationship between the clergy and the Ptolemaic kings a pivotal one for maintaining the peace and protection of its multi-ethnic inhabitants. At the end of the synod in Canopus, the content of the meeting was inscribed in trilingual form on a stele in Demotic, Greek and Hieroglyphic text. Notably, copies of the Stele—the Canopus decree—were then carried back with the clergy to their respective locales and erected in prominent public places in the temples.[33] The closing formula of the Canopus decree highlights the strategic placement of the steles: "The *epistates* in charge in each temple and the high priest and the scribes of the temple shall inscribe this decree on a stone or bronze stele in sacred letters (i.e. hieroglyphs), Egyptian letters (i.e. demotic), and Greek letters, and shall consecrate it / in the temples of the first, second and third rank, so that it may be seen that the priests in the country honour the Benefactor Gods and their children (τιμῶντες τοὺς Εὐερέτας θεούς)…" (*OGIS* 56 lines 134-39; Austin, no. 271). Notably, the stele is placed in temples of the first, second and third rank for the purpose of articulating to subjects that the priests themselves honor the Benefactor Gods, thus communicating a cosmic equilibrium between the king, queen and the clergy. That the transference of steles from the center of the empire to its periphery did, in fact, occur is evident from six copies of the Canopus decree that have been recovered by archaeologists.[34] The steles functioned to update the public on important religious events on the imperial calendar related to honoring the gods and the royal family.

Due to the sheer size of the Canopus decree, I have selected pericopes that highlight Ptolemy III and Berenice's relationship to the gods (although this motif can be found virtually

[33] Günther Hölbl, *A History of the Ptolemaic Empire,* 106.
[34] Only two copies, however, are fully intact.

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throughout). The opening of the Canopus decree is worth quoting in full in order to get a feel for the honors bestowed upon the Ptolemaic dynasty through their royal epithets. The opening also highlights the integration of the royal family into the Egyptian calendar, a calendrical system that operated in continuity with Egyptian religion.

> Βασιλεύοντος Πτολεμαίου τοῦ Πτολεμαίου καὶ Ἀρσινός, θεῶν Ἀδελφῶν, ἔτους ἐνάτου, ἐπὶ ἱερέως Ἀπολλωνίδου τοῦ | Μοσχίνος Ἀλεξάνδρου καὶ θεῶν Ἀδελφῶν καὶ θεῶν Εὐεργετῶν, χανφόρου Ἀρσινόης φιλαδέλφου Μενεκρατείας | τῆς φιλάμονος, μηνὸς Ἀπελλαίου ἑβδόμηι, Αἰγυπτίων δὲ Τυβὶ ἑπτακαιδεκάτηι· ψήφισμα· οἱ ἀρχιερεῖς | καὶ προφῆται καὶ οἱ εἰς τὸ ἄδθτον εἰσπορεύομενοι πρὸς τὸν στολισμὸν τῶν θεῶν καὶ πτεροφόραι καὶ ἱερογραμματεῖς καὶ || οἱ ἄλλοι ἱερεῖς οἱ σθαντήσαντες ἐκ τῶν κατὰ τὴν χώραν ἱερῶν εἰς τὴν πέμπτην τοῦ Δίου, ἐν ἧι ἄγεται τὰ γενέθλια τοῦ | Βασιλέως, καὶ εἰς τὴν πέμπτην καὶ εἰκάδα τοῦ αὐτοῦ μηνός, ἐν ἧι παρέλαβεν τὴν βασιλείαν παρὰ τοῦ πατρός, συνεδρεύσαντες | ταύτηι τῆι ἡμέραι ἐν τῶι ἐν Κανώπωι ἱερῶι Εὐεργετῶν θεῶν εἶπαν· ἐπειδὴ βασιλεὺς Πτολεμαῖος Πτολεμαίου καὶ Ἀρσινόης, θεῶν Ἀδελφῶν, | καὶ βασίλισσα Βερενίκη ἡ ἀδελφὴ αὐτοῦ καὶ γυνή, θεοὶ Εὐεργέται... (*OGIS* 56 lines 1-8).
>
> In the Reign of Ptolemy (III) son of Ptolemy (II) and Arsinoe, the Brother-Sister Gods *(theoi adelphoi*), in the ninth year, when Apollonides son of Moschion was priest of Alexander and of the Brother-Sister Gods and of the Benefactor Gods (*theoi euergetai*), when Mecratea was basket-bearer of Arsinoe Philadelphus, on the 7th of the month Apellaeus and the 17th of the Egyptian month Tybi (=4 March 238); decree; the high-priests, the prophets, those who enter the holy of holies for the roving of the gods, the *pterophoroi*, the sacred scribes and / the other priests who have assembled from the temples throughout the land for the 5th of Dios (=November), when the birthday of the king is celebrated, and for the 25th of the same month, when he received the monarchy from his father, and who held a session on that day in the temple of the Benefactor Gods at Canopus, declared: since King Ptolemy son of Ptolemy and Arsinoe, the Brothers-Sister Gods, and Queen Berenice his sister and wife, the Benefactor Gods, and Queen Berenice his sister and wife, the Benefactor Gods… (English trans. Austin, no. 271).

The royal titulature for Ptolemy III and Queen Berenice is rooted in the diction of divinity (*theoi adelphoi*) and euergetism (*theoi euergetai*).[35] These concepts, of course, are hardly a departure from Greco-Roman thought, allowing both native Egyptian and Greek-Macedonian subjects a common royal framework for understanding the Ptolemy's power. The repeated reference to

[35] On the imperial titulature of the Ptolemies, see Ludwig Koenen, "The Ptolemaic King as Religious Figure," in *Images and Ideologies: Self-Definition in the Hellenistic World* (ed. Anthony Bulloch et al.; Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993), 61-66.

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Ptolemy III and Queen Berenice as the "Brother-Sister Gods" reflects the sibling marriage of Isis and Osiris, thus associating the king and queen with native Egyptian popular religion.[36] Already in the opening of the Canopus Decree, then, the association of the royal family with the Egyptian traditional gods can be felt through their marital imitation of Isis and Osiris and their status as benefactors.

In accord with the Hellenistic treatises on kingship, the Canopus Decree records the Benefactor Gods heaping benefits on cult and religion. What is striking is that benefits are bestowed upon Greek *and* Egyptian theriomorphic deities such as Apis and Mnevis, illustrating the Ptolemy's willingness to honor gods that had little or nothing to do with their own cultural heritage. The motivation for such honors reflects the dictum in the Hellenistic treatises on kingship that a primary function of the ideal king is the "worship of the Gods" (Stob. 4.761; Thessleff, p. 72 *l.*15). Such piety is remarkably attested in the opening lines of the Canopus decree:

> θεοὶ Εὐεργέται, διατελοῦσιν πολλὰ καὶ μεγάλα εὐεργετοῦντες τὰ κατὰ τὴν χώραν ἱερὰ καὶ | τὰς τιμὰς τῶν θεῶν ἐπὶ πλεῖον αὔξοντες, τοῦ τε Ἄπιος καὶ τὰς τοῦ Μνηύιος καὶ τῶν λοιπῶν ἐνλογίμων ἱερῶν ζώιων τῶν ἐν τῆι χῶραι τὴι χώραι τὴν || ἐπιμέλειαν διὰ παντὸς ποιῦνται μετὰ μεγάλας δαπάνης καὶ χορηγίας, καὶ τὰ ἐξενεγχθέντα ἐκ τῆς χώρας ἱερὰ ἀγάλματα ὑπὸ | τῶν Περσων ἐξστρατεύσας ὁ βασιλεὺς ἀνέσωισεν εἰς Αἴγυπτον καὶ ἀπέδωκεν εἰς τὰ ἱερα, ὅθεν ἕκαστον ἐξ ἀρχῆς ἐξήχθη... (*OGIS* 56 lines 9-11).

> …[the] Benefactor Gods constantly confer many great benefactions on the temples throughout the land and increase more and more the honours of the gods, and show constant care for Apis and Mnevis and all the famous sacred animals in the country / at great expense and outlay, and (since) the king on a campaign abroad brought back to Egypt the sacred statues (*agalmata*) that had been taken out of the country by the Persians and restored them to the temples from which they had initially been taken… (English trans. (Austin, no. 271).

[36] On the sibling marriages of the Ptolemaic kings, see: Fraser, *Ptolemaic Egypt,* 214. Notably, the wives of some Roman emperors were deified through official apotheosis rituals. See Simon Price, "From Noble Funerals to Divine Cult: The Consecration of Roman Emperors," in *Rituals of Royalty* (ed. D. Canadine and S. Price; Cambridge: Cambridge University, 1987), 57-105. On the influence of Isis on the Wisdom of Solomon, see: John S. Kloppenborg, "Isis and Sophia in the Book of Wisdom" *HTR,* 75:1 (1982): 57-84.

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There are numerous points of interest here. The Benefactor Gods are portrayed as the ideal Hellenistic rulers through their benefactions upon and protection of the Egyptian gods. Indeed, the Benefactor Gods are portrayed as "increasing more and more the honor of the gods and showing constant care of Apis and Mnevis" (lines 8-9), with the result that "the gods have granted on them a stable rule / and will bestow all other blessings in the future" (οἱ θεοὶ δεδώκασιν αὐτοις εὐσταθοῦσαν τὴν βασιλείαν καὶ δώσουσιν τἆλλα ἀγαθὰ πάντα εἰς τὸν ἀεὶ χρόνον [lines 19-20]). The honor of Apis and Mnevis is striking when one takes into account that Greek elites' often mocked the Egyptians' gravitation toward theriomorphic worship (Dio Chrys., *Or.* 12.62). Here, however, Ptolemy III and Berenice are honored for showing benefaction and piety toward the Egyptian gods sculpted in animal form—even to the point of restoring statues that had been stolen by the Persians. Because of the Benefactor Gods' benefaction toward the gods and toward the "salvation of the population" during a time of famine, the clergy resolves to honor them with an eponymous priesthood in all the temples of Egypt (lines 21-26). Notably, the Benefactor Gods' royal epithet is to be inscribed in the priests' rings and a fifth tribe of priests is to be consecrated for the purpose of overseeing the honor of the Benefactor Gods in temples and at an annual festival (πέμπτη φυλὴ τῶν Εὐεργετῶν θεῶν [*OGIS* 56 lines 30-40]). For Jewish, Greek-Macedonian and Egyptian subjects, the integration of the Benefactor Gods into the religious media and calendar of the traditional gods of Egypt sent a provocative message of the Benefactor Gods' cultural hybridity.

The Canopus Decree closes with instructions for posthumous cultic honors given to the Benefactor Gods' recently deceased daughter Berenice. Günther Hölbl observes that the death of the princess occurred in the month of Tybi, just after the festival celebrating Osiris.[37]

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[37] Günther Hölbl, *A History of the Ptolemaic Empire,* 108.

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Consequently, the honors given to Berenice are closely related to the celebration of Osiris, including a boat funerary processional celebrating her apotheosis. Of particular interest is the decree's instruction to set up a golden cult image (ἄγαλμα χρυσοῦν) of Berenice in the holy place of each of the temples. During festivals, the priest is instructed to carry Berenice's cult image in his arms like a child in procession with the cult images of the other gods. The resolution opens with the typical δεδόχθαι formula:[38]

> Δεδόχθαι συντελεῖν τῆι ἐκ τῶν Εὐεργετῶν θεῶν γεγενημένηι βασιλίσσηι Βερενίκηι τιμὰς ἀϊδίους ἐν ἅπασι τοῖς || κατὰ τὴν χώραν ἱεροῖς, καὶ ἐπεὶ εἰς θεοὺς μετῆλθεν ἐν τῶι Τυβὶ μηνί, ἐν ὧιπερ καὶ ἡ τοῦ Ἡλίου θυγάτηρ ἐν ἀρχῆι μετήλλαξεν τὸν βίον, ἥν ὁ πατὴρ στέρξας ὠνό|μασεν ὁτὲ μὲν βασιλείαν ὁτὲ δὲ ὅρασιν αὑτου, καὶ ἄγουσιν αὐτῆι ἑορτὴν καὶ περίπλουν ἐν πλείοσιν ἱεροῖς τῶν πρώτων ἐν τούτωι τῶι μηνί, ἐν ὧι ἡ ἀποθέοσις αὐτῆς | ἐν ἀρχῆι ἐγενήθη, συντελεῖν βασσιλίσσηι Βερενίκηι τῆι ἐκ τῶν Εὐεργετῶν θεῶν ἐν ἅπασι τοῖς κατὰ τὴν χώραν ἱεροῖς ἐν τῶι Τυβὶ μηνὶ ἑορτὴν καὶ περίπλουν ἡμέρας Τέσσαρας ἀπο ἑπτακαιδεκάτης, ἐν ἧι ὁ περίπλους καὶ ἡ τοῦ πένθους ἀπόλυσις ἐγενήθη αὐτῆι τὴν ἀρχήν· συντελέσαι δ αὐτῆς καὶ | ἱερὸν ἄγαλμα χρυσοῦν διάλιθον ἐν ἑκάστωι τῶν πρώτων καὶ δευτέρων ἱερῶν καὶ καθιδρῦσαι ἐν τῶι ἁγίωι· ὅ ὁ προφήτης ἤ (τις) τῶν εἰς τὸ ἄδυτον εἰρημένων || ἱερέων πρὸς τὸν στολισμὸν τῶν θεῶν οἴσει ἐν ταῖς ἀγκάλαις, ὅταν αἱ ἐξοδεῖαι καὶ πανηγύρεις τῶν λοιπῶν θεῶν γίνωνται, ὅπως ὑπὸ πάντων ὁρώμενον | τιμᾶται καὶ προσκθνῆται, καλούμενον Βερενίκης ἀνάσσης παρθένων. εἶναι δὲ τὴν ἐπιτιθεμένην βασιλείαν τῆι εἰκόνι αὐτῆς διαφέρουσαν τῆς ἐπιτιθεμένης | ταῖς εἰκόσιν τῆς μετρὸς αὐτῆς διαφέρουσαν τῆς ἐπιτιθεμένης ταῖς εἰκόσιν τῆς μητρὸς αὐτῆς βασιλίσσης Βερενίκης ἐκ σταχύων δύο, ὧν ἀνα μέσον ἔσται ἡ ἀσπιδοειδὴς βασιλεία, ταύτης δ ὀπίσω σύμμετρον σκῆπτρον | παπυροειδές, ὅ εἰώθασιν αἱ θεαὶ ἔχειν ἐν ταῖς χερσίν, περὶ ὅ καὶ ἡ οὐρὰ τῆς βασιλείας ἔσται περειλημένη, ὥστε καὶ ἐκ τῆς διαθέσεως τῆς βασιλείας δια|σαφεῖσθαι τὸ Βερενίκης ὄναμα κατὰ τὰ ἐπίσμα τῆς ἱερᾶς γραμματικῆς (*OGIS* 56 lines 54-64).
>
> Be it resolved to perform everlasting honours for Queen Berenice, the daughter of the Benefactor Gods, in all the / temples in the land. And since she departed to the gods in the month of Tybi, in which the daughter of the Sun ended his life, whom her loving father called at one time his 'crown' and another his 'sight,' and they celebrate in her honour a festival and boat procession in the majority of temples of the first class in this month, in which her apotheosis originally took place, (be it resolved) to celebrate for Queen Berenice the daughter of the Benefactor Gods a festival and a boat procession in all the temples in the country in the month of Tybi for four days from the 17th, when the procession and the conclusion of the lamentation for her took place originally; and to make a sacred statue of her of gold inlaid with precious stones in each of the temples of

[38] On the literary structure of inscriptions, see Ma, *Antiochus III and the Cities of Western Asia Minor,* 183-84.

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> the first and second class and set it up in the holy place; the prophet or one of the priests who enter the shrine / for the robing of the gods shall carry it in his arms, at the time when the processions and festivals of the other gods take place, so that it may be seen by all and be honoured and receive obeisance under the name of Berenice the Mistress of Virgins. The crown placed on the head of her statue shall be different from those placed on the head of the statues of her mother Queen Berenice, and shall be made of two ears of corn with in the middle a serpent-shaped crown and behind it a scepter, shaped like papyrus and proportionate in size, such as is customary for goddesses to hold in their hands; round this scepter the tail of the crown shall be wound, so that from the arrangement of the crown the name of Berenice shall stand out according to the inscription in hieroglyphic writing (English trans. Austin, no. 271).

Although Berenice is not explicitly stated as σύνναος θεός, the embedding of her cult image made with "gold and precious stones" in all the temples of the first and second rank implies the concept. The honors conferred on Berenice provide a striking precursor to the imperial apotheosis rituals celebrating the Roman imperial family (see 6.2.1). Berenice's cult image is placed in all the temples of Egypt and paraded through the city by the clergy with the other images of the gods. Significantly, the physiognomic design of Berenice's image is distinct from her mother's, evoking motifs of a fertility goddess with ears of corn, the uraeus and a papyrus-shaped scepter (thus, associating her with Isis; or, in Greek thought, Persephone).[39] The design and placement of Berenice's golden image in temples around Egypt illustrates the porous boundary between gods and kings within the spaces of empire. Likewise, it illustrates how criticism of gold images in the Hellenistic city could evoke a criticism of gods or kings.

3.4.2 Gods and Kings in the Rosetta Stone

Aside from unlocking the linguistic code for deciphering Egyptian hieroglyphics, the Rosetta

[39] See Dee L. Clayman, *Berenice II and the Golden Age of Ptolemaic Egypt* (Oxford: Oxford University, 2014), 168-69. See also L. Koenen, "The Ptolemaic King as Religious Figure," 28-29. On posthumous coins honoring Ptolemy III, the king is pictured with rays, the leather aegis and a trident scepter. See Smith, *Hellenistic Royal Portraits,* 44; Pl. 75 no. 9. The motifs are carefully chosen to associate Ptolemy III with traditional gods—especially Zeus and Athena, who were known to wear the goat-skin garment to repel their enemies (Idem. *Hellenistic Royal Portraits*, 40-42).

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Stone provides our best example of Hellenistic ruler cults' contextual flexibility. That is, their dynamic ability to embed themselves in the preexisting infrastructure of Greco-Egyptian traditional gods' temples, images, sacrifices, priests, festivals and shrines inside of auditors' homes. Discovered in 1799 by the French, the Rosetta Stone is a decree in honor of Ptolemy V Epiphanes (204-180) after turbulent uprisings by native Egyptians.[40] The purpose of the Rosetta Stone was likely to wheedle the support of the Egyptian clergy, whose collaboration was critical for earning the allegiance of native Egyptians.[41] The preamble of the Rosetta Stone, presumably read out loud in the temple of Ptah in Memphis on March 27, 196 BCE (line 8), reveals a remarkable image of the fourteen year old Ptolemy V Epiphanes as a god who embodies the divinity of Zeus *and* the Egyptian sun-god Ré:[42]

> (1) βασιλεύοντος τοῦ νέου καὶ παραλαβόντος τὴν βασιλείαν παρὰ τοῦ πατρὸς κυρίου βασιλειῶν μεγαλοδόξου, τοῦ τὴν Αἴγυπτον καταστησαμένου καὶ τὰ πρὸς τοὺς | θεοὺς εὐσεβοῦς, (2) ἀντιπάλων ὑπερτέρου, τοῦ τὸν βίον τῶν ἀνθρώπων ἐπανορθώσαντος, κυρίου τριακονταετηρίδων, καθάπερ ὁ Ἥφαιστος ὁ (3) μέγας, βασιλέως καθάπερ ὁ Ἥλιος, | μέγας βασιλεὺς τῶν τε ἄνω καὶ τῶν κάτω χωρῶν, ἐκγόνου θεῶν Φιλοπατόρων, ὃν ὁ Ἥφαιστος ἐδοκίμασεν, ὧι ὁ Ἥλιος ἔδωκεν τὴν νίκην, εἰκόνος ζώσης τοῦ Διός, υἱοῦ τοῦ Ἡλίου, Πτολεμαίου | αἰωνοβίου, (4) ἠγαπημένου ὑπὸ τοῦ Φθᾶ... (*OGIS,* 90 lines 1-4).
>
> (1) In the reign of the young (King) – who has received the rule from his father – Glorious Lord of the Royal Crowns, who brought stability to the land of Egypt and showed his piety in everything that pertains to the Gods, (2) supreme over his enemies, who improved the people's lot ... like Hephaistos the (3) Great; a king like Helios [the Egyptian sun-god Ré], Great King of the Upper and Lower Country; offspring of the Gods Philopatores and approved by Hephaistos; recipient of victory from Helios; *living*

[40] Günther Hölbl, *A History of the Ptolemaic Empire*, 165-6. See also the discussion in Edwyn R. Bevan, *The House of Ptolemy: A History of Hellenistic Egypt Under the Ptolemaic Dynasty* (Chicago: Ares Publishers, 1968), 262-69. For the larger context of Ptolemaic Egypt, see Dorothy J. Thompson, "The Ptolemies in Egypt," in *A Companion to the Hellenistic World* (ed. Andrew Erskine; Oxford: Blackwell, 2005), 105-20.
[41] Victor Tcherikover argues that an alliance between the priesthood and the Ptolemies was formed during Ptolemy V Ephiphanes' reign, which may provide an important religio-political background to the Rosetta Stone. See Victor Tcherikover, *Hellenistic Civilization and the Jews* (Grand Rapids: Baker 1999), 15.
[42] The strong Egyptianisation of imperial titulature in the Rosetta Stone may reflect the Ptolemy's attempt to increase alliances with the Egyptian clergy. See Jean Bingen, *Hellenistic Egypt: Monarchy, Society, Economy, Culture* (ed. Roger S. Bagnall; Edinburgh: Edinburgh University, 2007), 262-67.

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> *image of Zeus*; *son of Helios*;[43] Ever-Living Ptolemy (4) Beloved-of-Phtah... (English trans. Danker, no. 31).[44]

The opening line of the Rosetta Stone evoke Ptolemy V's piety toward the gods (τὰ πρὸς τοὺς θεοὺς εὐσεβοῦς). For showing piety toward the gods and conferring stability on Egypt, Ptolemy V is compared with the Egyptian gods Hephaistos and Helios (καθάπερ ὁ Ἥφαιστος ὁ μέγας βασιλέως καθάπερ ὁ Ἥλιος). The clergy proceed to move beyond associative honors using the emphatic comparative adverb καθάπερ by rooting the king's identity in a cosmogony of assimilation with Zeus and Helios. Aside from being the offspring of his divine parents and approved by Hephaistos, Ptolemy V is the "living image of Zeus," "son of the Sun," and "beloved by Pthah" (ἠγαπημένου ὑπὸ τοῦ Φθᾶ). The conglomeration of Greco-Egyptian associations legitimates Ptolemy V's rule for his Egyptian subjects—likewise, the clergy's approval of such divine honors sends a powerful message of unity between the imperial house and local priests. Here we have an example where honors of association are intensified to portray Ptolemy's assimilation with the gods as a veritable "living image of Zeus" (εἰκόνος ζώσης τοῦ Διός).[45]

The assimilation of Ptolemy V with Greco-Egyptian religion is further evident by his benefactions upon civic temples and his embedding in the cultic activities of the traditional gods. In language evocative of Jubilee, Ptolemy V is celebrated for forgiving debts and releasing prisoners (Lines 13-14). Moreover, Ptolemy is celebrated for relieving the Egyptians of burdensome taxes (Lines 12-18), for damming the Nile in order to protect farmland from flooding (Line 25) and for ridding the land of rebels (Line 26). Beyond Ptolemy's benefactions

[43] The use of ἥλιος should be translated as "Sun" to highlight the parallel with the Egyptian sun-god Re' rather than the Greek personification of the sun called Helios.
[44] Frederick Danker, *Benefactor*, 206-212.
[45] A. D. Nock rightly recognizes that these associative honors of assimilation "make it impossible to know sometimes whether he [the king] and the god in question were treated as separate entities" (Σύνναος θεός, 12).

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toward subjects and land, he is honored as a sacerdotal benefactor for his care of cult and religion—especially as it relates to Apis and Mnevis. Rather strikingly, the media that Ptolemy confers benefits on in the temple of Apis parallels the cultic media that Paul criticizes in Athens:

> τῶι τε Ἄπει καὶ τῶι Μνεύι πολλὰ ἐδωρήσατο καὶ τοῖς ἄλλοις ἱεροῖς ζώιοις τοῖς ἐν Αἰγύπτωι, πολὺ κρεῖσσον τῶν πρὸ αὐτοῦ βασιλείων φροντίζων ὑπὲρ τῶν ἀνηκόν[των εἰς] | αὐτὰ διὰ παντός, τά τ᾽εἰς τὰς ταφὰς αὐτῶν καθήκοντα διδοὺς δαψιλῶς καὶ ἐνδόξως καὶ τὰ τελισκόμενα εἰς τὰ ἴδια ἱερὰ μετὰ θυσιῶν καὶ πανηγύρεων καὶ τῶν ἄλλων τῶν νομι[ζομένων,] | τά τε τίμια τῶν ἱερῶν καὶ τῆς Αἰγύπτου διατετήρηκεν ἐπὶ χώρας ἀχολούθως τοῖς νόμοις, καὶ τὸ Ἀπιεῖον ἔργοις πολυτελέσιν κατεσκεύασεν χορηγήσας εἰς αὐτὸ χρυσίο(υ) τε κ[αὶ ἀργυρ]|ίου καὶ λίθων πολυτελῶν πλῆθος οὐκ ὀλίγον, καὶ ἱερὰ καὶ ναοὺς καὶ βωμοὺς ἱδρύσατο τά τε προσδεόμενα ἐπισκευῆς προσδιωρθώσατο ἔχων θεοῦ εὐεργετικοῦ ἐν τοῖς ἀνήκουσιν εἰς τὸ || θεῖον διάνοιαν· προσπυνθανόμενός τε τὰ τῶν ἱ[ε]ρῶν τιμιώτατα ἀνανεοῦτο ἐπι τῆς ἑουτοῦ βασιλείας ὡς καθήκει· ἀνθ᾽ ὧν δεδώκασιν αὐτῶι οἱ θεοὶ ὑγίειαν, νίκην, κρατος και τἄλλ᾽ ἀγαθ[ὰ πάντα,] | τῆς βασιλείας διαμενούσης αὐτωι και τοῖς τέκνοις εἰς τὸν ἅπαντα χρόνον· (*OGIS* 90 lines 31-36).
>
> …and he was much more liberal in his gifts to Apis and to Mnevis and the other sacred animals in Egypt than were his royal predecessors; (32) he paid constant attention to all that concerned them, | and made liberal and impressive arrangements for their burials, as well as for the maintenance of their rites, including sacrifices, and festivals, and all else that is customary; and the privileges of the temples and of Egypt he preserved as they were, in accordance with law and (33) custom; | on the temple of Apis he lavished many previous (34) decorations of gold and silver | and precious stones; he founded temples and shrines and altars; with the zeal of a beneficent deity in matters that concerned the divine, (35) he made repairs wherever they were needed; | and, during the course of his reign, after determining the identity of the most honorable temples, he proceeded to restore them, as is fitting; in return for which the Gods have given him health, victory, strength, and all the other (36) good things, with the kingdom enduring to him and to his children forever (English trans. Danker, no. 31).

As will be discussed in chapter five of this study, criticism of precious materials is the most consistent motif in the Hellenistic icon parody. Within the epigraphic diction of honors, Ptolemy is praised for lavishing decorations of gold, silver and precious stones on the temple of Apis (Χρυσίο(υ) τε κ[αι ἀγρθί]ου καὶ λίθων πολυτελῶν [*OGIS* 90 line 34]). The order of the precious materials reflects verbatim the order of Paul's critique of pagan conceptions of divinity like gold, silver or stone (χρυσῷ ἢ ἀργύρῳ ἢ λίθῳ, Acts 17:29). The result of Ptolemy's benefactions upon

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cult and religion is the gods' blessing upon his rule, providing him with *ὑγίειαν*, *νίκην*, *κράτος καὶ τἄλλ' ἀγαθ[ὰ πάντα]* (*OGIS* 90 line 35).

Thus far, the Rosetta Stone has portrayed Ptolemy as a super-benefactor, bestowing his vast financial resources upon subjects, cult and religion. As a result of Ptolemy's benefactions, the Rosetta Stone proceeds to give detailed instructions for how the Egyptian clergy are to properly honor Ptolemy V Epiphanes with divine honors throughout Egypt. Because the pericope provides us with one of the clearest windows into the cultic infrastructure of ruler cult during the Hellenistic period, I quote lines 36-54 in full:

> ἀγαθῆι τύχηι, ἔδοξεν τοῖς ἱερεύσι τῶν κατὰ τὴν χώραν ἱερῶν πάντων, τὰ ὑπάρχοντα τ[ίμια πάντα] | τῶι αἰωνοβίωι βασιλεῖ Πτολεμαίωι, ἠγαπημένωι ὑπὸ τοῦ Φθᾶ, θεῶι Ἐπιφανεῖ Εὐχαρίστωι, ὁμοίως δὲ καὶ τὰ τῶν γονέων αὐτοῦ θεῶν Φιλοπατόρων καὶ τὰ τῶν προγόνων θεῶν Εὐεργ[ετῶν καὶ τὰ] | τῶν θεῶν Ἀδελφῶν καὶ τὰ τῶν θεῶν Σωτήρων ἐπαύξειν μεγάλως· στῆσαι δὲ τοῦ αἰωνοβίου βασιλέως Πτολεμαίου θεοῦ Ἐπιφανοῦς Εὐχαρίστου εἰκόνα ἐν ἑκάστωι ἱερῶι ἐν τῶι ἐπιφα[νεστάτωι τόπωι], | ἣ προσονομασθήσεται Πτολεμαίου τοῦ ἐπαμύναντος τῆι Αἰγύπτωι, ἧι παρεστήξεται ὁ κυριώτατος θεὸς τοῦ ἱεροῦ, διδοὺς αὐτῶι ὅπλον νικητικόν, ἃ ἔσται κατεσκευασμέν[α τὸν τῶν Αἰγυπτίων] || τρόπον, καὶ τοὺς ἱερεῖς θεραπεύειν τὰς εἰκόνας τρὶς τῆς ἡμέρας καὶ παρατιθέναι αὐτοῖς ἱερὸν κόσμον καὶ τἆλλα τὰ νομιζόμενα συντελεῖν καθὰ καὶ τοῖς ἄλλοις θεοῖς ἐν [ταῖς κατὰ τὴν χώραν πα]|νηγύρεσιν. ἱδρύσασθαι δὲ βασιλεῖ Πτολεμαίωι θεῶι Ἐπιφανεῖ Εὐχαρίστωι, τῶι ἐγ βασιλέως Πτολεμαίου καὶ βασιλίσσης Ἀρσινόης θεῶν Φιλοπατόρων, ξόανον τε καὶ ναὸν χρ[υσοῦν ἐν ἑκάστωι τῶν] | ἱερῶν καὶ καθιδρῦσαι ἐν τοῖς ἀδύτοις μετὰ τῶν ἄλλων ναῶν, καὶ ἐν ταῖς μεγάλαις πανηγύρεσιν, ἐν αἷς ἐξοδεῖαι τῶν ναῶν γίνονται, καὶ τὸν τοῦ θεοῦ Ἐπιφανοῦς Εὐ[χαρίστου ναὸν συνε]|ξοδεύειν. ὅπως δ' εὔσημος ἦι νῦν τε καὶ εἰς τὸν ἔπειτα χρόνον, ἐπικεῖσθαι τῶι ναῶι τὰς τοῦ βασιλέως χρυσᾶς βασιλείας δέκα αἷς προσκείσεται ἀσπίς, [καθάπερ καὶ ἐπὶ πασῶν] | τῶν ἀσπιδοειδῶν βασιλειῶν τῶν ἐπὶ τῶν ἄλλων ναῶν· ἔσται δ' αὐτῶν ἐν τῶι μέσωι ἡ καλουμένη βασιλεία Ψχέντ, ἣν περιθέμενος εἰσῆλθεν εἰς τὸ ἐν Μέμφ[ει ἱερόν, ὅπως ἐν αὐτῶι συν]||τελεσθῆι τὰ νομιζόμενα τῆι παραλήψει τῆς βασιλείας. ἐπιθεῖναι δὲ καὶ ἐπὶ τοῦ περὶ τὰς βασιλείας τετραγώνου κατὰ τὸ προειρημένον βασίλειον φυλακτήρια χρυ[σᾶ δύο, οἷς ἐγγραφήσεται ὅ]|τι ἐστὶν τοῦ βασιλέως τοῦ ἐπιφανῆ ποιήσαντος τήν τε ἄνω χώραν καὶ τὴν κάτω· καὶ ἐπεὶ τὴν τριακάδα τοῦ {τοῦ} Μεσορῆ, ἐν ἧι τὰ γενέθλια τοῦ βασιλέως ἄγεται, ὁμοίως δὲ καὶ [τὴν ἑπτακαιδεκάτην τοῦ Φαωφὶ] | ἐν ἧι παρέλαβεν τὴν βασιλείαν παρὰ τοῦ πατρός, ἐπωνύμους νενομίκασιν ἐν τοῖς ἱεροῖς, αἳ δὴ πολλῶν ἀγαθῶν ἀρχηγοὶ πᾶσίν εἰσιν, ἄγειν τὰς ἡμέρας ταύτας ἑορ[τὰς καὶ πανηγύρεις ἐν τοῖς κατὰ τὴν Αἴ]|γυπτον ἱεροῖς κατὰ μῆνα, καὶ συντελεῖν ἐν αὐτοῖς θυσίας καὶ σπονδὰς καὶ τἆλλα τὰ νομιζόμενα, καθὰ καὶ ἐν ταῖς ἄλλαις πανηγύρεσιν τάς τε γινομένας προθέ[σεις τοῖς — — — — πα]|ρεχομένοις ἐν τοῖς ἱεροῖς. ἄγειν δὲ ἑορτὴν καὶ πανήγυριν τῶι αἰωνοβίωι καὶ

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ἠγαπημένωι ὑπὸ τοῦ Φθᾶ βασιλεῖ Πτολεμαίωι θεῶι Ἐπιφανεῖ Εὐχαρίστωι κατ' ἐνι[αυτὸν ἐν τοῖς ἱεροῖς τοῖς κατὰ τὴν] || χώραν ἀπὸ τῆς νουμηνίας τοῦ Θῶϋθ ἐφ' ἡμέρας πέντε, ἐν αἷς καὶ στεφανηφορήσουσιν συντελοῦντες θυσίας καὶ σπονδὰς καὶ τἆλλα τὰ καθήκοντα. προσαγορε[ύεσθαι δὲ τοὺς ἱερεῖς τῶν ἄλλων θεῶν] | καὶ τοῦ θεοῦ Ἐπιφανοῦς Εὐχαρίστου ἱερεῖς πρὸς τοῖς ἄλλοις ὀνόμασιν τῶν θεῶν ὧν ἱερατεύουσιν, καὶ καταχωρίσαι εἰς πάντας τοὺς χρηματισμοὺς καὶ εἰς τοὺς δ[ακτυλίους οὓς φοροῦσι προσεγκολάπτεσθαι τὴν] | ἱερατείαν αὐτοῦ. ἐξεῖναι δὲ καὶ τοῖς ἄλλοις ἰδιώταις ἄγειν τὴν ἑορτὴν καὶ τὸν προειρημένον ναὸν ἱδρύεσθαι καὶ ἔχειν παρ' αὐτοῖς συντελο[ῦντας] [τὰ νόμιμα ἐν ἑορταῖς ταῖς τε κατὰ μῆνα καὶ τ]|[αῖ]ς κατ' ἐνιαυτόν, ὅπως γνώριμον ἦι διότι οἱ ἐν Αἰγύπτωι αὔξουσι καὶ τιμῶσι τὸν θεὸν Ἐπιφανῆ Εὐχάριστον βασιλέα, καθάπερ νόμιμόν ἐστι[ν αὐτοῖς. τὸ δὲ ψήφισμα τοῦτο ἀναγράψαι εἰς στή|λας σ]τερεοῦ λίθου τοῖς τε ἱεροῖς καὶ ἐγχορίοις καὶ Ἑλληνικοῖς γράμμασιν, καὶ στῆσαι ἐν ἑκάστωι τῶν τε πρώτων καὶ δευτέρων [καὶ τρίτων ἱερῶν πρὸς τῆι τοῦ αἰωνοβίου βασιλέως εἰκόνι] (*OGIS* 90 lines 36-54).

(36) …With Good Fortune, be it resolved by *all* priests of *all* the sacred places throughout the land to multiply (37) abundantly the honors that belong to Ever-Living King Ptolemy Beloved-by-Ptah God Epiphanes Eucharistos; and likewise those that belong to his parents, the Gods Philopatores; (38) and those before them, the Gods Euergetai, | and to set up the image of Ever-Living King Ptolemy God Epiphanes Eucharistos *in* (39) *each temple in the most conspicuous place*, and it shall bear the name: Ptolemy, Avenger of Egypt. *And beside his statue shall stand [an image of] the principal deity of the temple offering him the weapon of victory, with* (40) everything arranged in the Egyptian | manner. The priests are to conduct a religious service before the images three times a day; they shall array them in sacred apparel; and they shall do all the other things they ordinarily do for the other Gods during the festivals that are (41) celebrated [throughout the land]; | and (they shall) make in honor of King Ptolemy God Epiphanes Eucharistos, the son of King Ptolemy (IV), a wooden statue and a golden shrine (42) and the priests shall take the shrine of God Epiphanes Eucharistos (43) along with the other shrines at the great festivals in which processions of the shrines are held; and in order that the shrine might easily be distinguished both now and in time to come, the priests shall place on the shrine ten golden royal crowns, to each of which an asp is (44) affixed | (just as on the other) asp-ornamented royal insignia on all the other shrines; and in their midst shall be the royal emblem called Pschent, which (the king) put (45) on when he went into the temple in Memphis to perform | the prescribed ceremonies connected with the king's assumption of the throne. There shall also be placed (two) golden phylacteries on the four-sided support that comprises the perimeter of the royal emblems; and the phylacteries [are [46] to be inscribed] as follows: | THIS BELONGS TO THE KING WHO MADE UPPER AND LOWER EGYPT FAMOUS. (46) And whereas (the priests) have assigned the name of the King to the 30th of Mesore, on which his birthday is celebrated ... (47) be it resolved to commemorate in the temples throughout the land of Egypt, with feasts and festivals and in their respective months, these days (48) which are the source of many good things for everyone ... (49) and to celebrate annually the feast and the festival in honor of the Ever-Living and Beloved-of-Phtah King Ptolemy God Epiphanes Eucharistos in the temples (50) throughout the land for five days, beginning with the first of Thoth. On these days also they shall wear garlands as they sacrifice and

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> make drink offerings and render other appropriate honors; and [the priests of the (51) other gods] are to bear the name | PRIESTS OF GOD EPIPHANES EUCHARISTOS in addition to the names of the other gods whom they serve, and the priests are to incorporate the mark that identifies them as his priests on all their ordinances and have it engraved on all the rings (52) they bear; | and (be it resolved) that other citizens be permitted to celebrate the festival and to consecrate a *shrine as aforemetioned and which they may have in their homes* as they carry out the customary observance (53) monthly and annually, so that all might know that the people of Egypt do, with all legal right, magnify and honor God Epiphanes Eucharistos the King; and (be it [54] finally resolved) to inscribe this decree on a stele of hard stone in sacred and demotic and Greek letters, and to place it in each of the temples comprising the first and the second and the third rank, near the image of the immortal King (English trans. Danker, no. 31).[46]

The clergy decree that Ptolemy V's image is to be erected in the most prominent location in all the temples with the militaristic title, "Ptolemy Avenger of Egypt" (Πτολεμαίου τοῦ ἐπαμύναντος τῆι Αἰγύπτωι; line 39). Although the phrase σύνναος θεός is not employed, the clergy instruct that beside Ptolemy's image shall stand an image of the principle deity of the temple offering Ptolemy the weapon of victory, creating a powerful image of hegemonic collaboration between the god and king (line 39). What is most remarkable about Ptolemy V's cult image, however, is that the clergy give explicit instructions to make its physiognomic design distinctive from the other gods. To that end, lines 43-45 give instructions for artists to represent Ptolemy with traditional Pharaonic headgear, which imbues his image with a distinctively Egyptian aura both in the temple and during royal processions with the other cult images of the gods.[47] The embedding of Ptolemy's image raises the complex question of whether Ptolemy V was "worshiped" as a god or "honored" as a benefactor in the temple alongside the traditional god. The ambiguity was likely intentional, creating a blurred distinction between the traditional god and the godlike stature of the king.

[46] Emphasis mine (*DJS*).
[47] R. R. R. Smith, *Hellenistic Royal Portraits,* 24.

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While the Rosetta Stone places great emphasis on Ptolemy V's honor in sacred places, it also emphasizes his honor through imperial festivals celebrated "monthly and annually" (line 53). The honor of Ptolemy V through imperial festival provides a precedent to Simon Price's thesis that the Roman imperial cults in the Greek East transformed civic space (via temple, image and sacrifice) and time (via calendrical festival).[48] Price argues that imperial festivals functioned as the "embodiment" of "the conceptual systems of temple, image and sacrifice."[49] Here in the Rosetta Stone, one hundred and sixty six years prior to Augustus' annexation of Egypt, we find an example of a Ptolemaic ruler influencing Egypt's sacred space and calendar around his cultic honor. A second point is critical here: line 52 decrees that private households participate in imperial festivals by encouraging citizens to "consecrate a shrine as aforemetioned and which they may have in their homes." For many years Hellenistic ruler cults were caricatured as a strictly political phenomenon without the personal religious qualities associated with Christianity.[50] This mentality of emperor worship as a type of superficial public flattery is illustrated by the infelicitous remark by E. Badian: "Modern Jews and Christians, or modern rationalists, from their different points of view, have always found it difficult to believe that the ancient Greeks took their religion seriously since it seems so patently absurd."[51] As is now well known, the work of Simon Price refuted these Christianizing assumptions, showing that Roman

[48] Simon Price, "Rituals and Power," 47-71, here 57. In Steven Friesen's study of the Roman imperial cult in Asia Minor, he identifies four components of the cult: cosmology, cosmogony, human maturation and eschatology. Cosmology, according to Friesen, has to do with the cult's concept of space and time, which he argues is centered around Rome and regulated by the calendar of imperial events. See Steven Friesen, *Imperial Cults and the Apocalypse of John,* 54.
[49] Price, "Rituals and Power," 57.
[50] So Price, "There is a deep-rooted ethnocentric desire to play off Greek and Roman cults against Christianity so as to define its standing, and the imperial cult is closely bound up in this debate" (Price, *Rituals and Power,* 14).
[51] I reproduce this quote from Justin Meggitt's introduction to the Roman imperial cults. See Justin Meggit, "Taking the Emperor's Clothes Seriously," in *The Quest for Wisdom*: *Essays in Honour of Philip Budd* (ed. Christine E. Joynes; Cambridge: Orchard Academic, 2002), 150. For the quote, see: E. Badian, "The Deification of Alexander the Great," in *Ancient Macedonian Studies in Honour of Charles F. Edson* (ed. H. J. Bell; Thessaloniki: Institute for Balkan Studies, 1981), 27-71, here 31.

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imperial cults had political *and* religious significance for their Greco-Roman auditors.[52] The Rosetta Stone encourages the cultic honor of Ptolemy V in private households, highlighting how the religion and politics of ruler cult could enter into private world of the *domus*. Though there is no extant evidence of a Roman decree promoting shrines of the emperor in private households, Ittai Gradel points out that, after Augustus' annexation of Egypt, the Senate determined to honor Caesar with a libation at "all banquets, public and private" (Cass. Dio. 51.19.7).[53] Due to the anti-monarchical ideology of Roman politics, it is unlikely that the libation was practiced at public feasts. However, Gradel puts forth evidence from Horace, Ovid and Petronius that the libation was performed at private banquets to the emperor himself.[54] Even in the context of the private household, it is striking to note that the libation was "performed in connection with ceremonies to the *lares* of the household."[55] That is to say, the emperor was honored *at the same time* as the household gods. This phenomenon provides evidence that emperor worship did not hold a stand-alone place in Greco-Roman religion within the private world of the household.

A final feature of the Rosetta Stone is its use of divine titles for Ptolemy V such as "glorious Lord of kings" (κυρίου βασιλειῶν μεγαλοδόξου [1]), "god manifest beneficent" (θεοῦ Ἐπιφανοῦς Εὐχαρίστου [38]) and "immortal king" (αἰωνοβίου βασιλέως [54]).[56] The description of Ptolemy V as the son of the Sun—that is, the son of the deified Egyptian Pharaoh who was

[52] Price, *Rituals and Power,* 11-15.
[53] See Ittai Gradel, *Emperor Worship and Roman Religion* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2002), 198-212. See also Justin Meggitt, "Taking the Emperor's Clothes Seriously," 143-69. Ittai Gradel points out that Tacitus records an image of Tiberius in a senator's home (*Ann.* 4.64). Though household images for Roman emperor worship are, for obvious reasons, scanty, the literary evidence provides clues to the role of emperor worship in the private sphere.
[54] Ittai Gradel, *Emperor Worship and Roman Religion*, 207-208. See Horace, *Carm.* 4.5.29ff; Ovid *Fast.* 2.633ff.; and Petronius, *Satyricon,* 60. Gradel points out that both Horace and Ovid could have a literary agenda to flatter; however, the account in Petronius is telling.
[55] Gradel, *Emperor Worship and Roman Religion,* 207.
[56] Alexander's first successor king in Alexandria, Ptolemy Lagos, changed his name to Ptolemy I Soter in 305 BCE, and thereafter claimed to be the dynastic successor of Alexander the Great and the Egyptian Pharaohs (other popular religious titles for Ptolemaic kings were *euergetes*, "benefactor"; and Dionysus). See Klauck, *Religious Context*, 275-76.

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understood as the earthly representative of Re'—provides a parallel to Roman imperial adoption formulas (Suetonius, *Jul.* 88). Moreover, the Rosetta Stone decrees that the image of Ptolemy V in each temple bear the inscription: "Ptolemy, Avenger of Egypt" (Line 39), which evokes Ptolemy V's superior military status as a warrior king (cf. Augustus' military accomplishments in the *Res Gestae*). The Rosetta Stone, then, well-illustrates five overlapping areas between Hellenistic and Roman ruler worship: (1) the assimilation of a Ptolemaic ruler with a traditional Greek and/or Egyptian god; (2) the embedding of ruler cult in the temples of traditional gods; (3) the transformation of civic space and time through cultic media and calendrical festival; (4) the worship of the ruler through images in private households; and (5) the use of divine titles for the ruler.

3.5 The Seleucids and the Traditional Gods

Of the Successor kingdoms, the Seleucid Empire comprised the largest geographical boundary spanning from Asia Minor to Iran. It was not uncommon for literary sources to portray the Seleucids' vast estate as "spear won land" (Polyb. 5.67; 28.14).[57] Likewise, Pliny the Elder captures the megalomania of Seleucus and his son Antiochus I when they aspired to rename the Indian Ocean "Seleukus and Antiochis" (*Nat.* 2.67-68).[58] As will be discussed in Chapter 4 of this study, the Seleucid Empire comprised a major leadership role in the imperial domination of Judea under Alexander's Successor kings, who, from a Jewish perspective, "multiplied evils on the earth" (*καὶ ἐπλήθυναν κακὰ ἐν τῇ γῇ*, 1 Macc 1:8). The evils Jews experienced in Judea were

[57] Quoted in Austin, "Seleukids and Asia," 122.
[58] Idem., "Seleukids and Asia," 122. In continuity with Alexander, the Seleucids hired out natives for administrative and military duties, which allowed them to build a field army of 80,000 soldiers and a phalanx that could reach 35,000 men. These figures are from Winthrop Lindsay Adams, "The Hellenistic Kingdoms," in *The Cambridge Companion to the Hellenistic World* (ed. Glenn R. Bugh; Cambridge: Cambridge University, 2006), 28-51, here 44.

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most acutely felt in the years leading up to and surrounding the Edict of Antiochus in 167 BCE. A core strategy of Antiochus IV's *programma* to erase Jewish identity was the forced adoption of "customs strange to the land" (νομίμων ἀλλοτρίων τῆς γῆς; 1 Macc 1:44). The strange customs imputed onto Judean subjects were, in large part, closely associated with ruler cult and the traditional gods. The "epigraphic habit" of the Hellenistic world provides further insight into the Seleucid royal family's relationship with the traditional gods. What follows in this section is an evaluation of two decrees that shed light on this relationship: first, a decree in Teos honoring Antiochus I Soter (281-261 BCE) and, second, a decree in Ilium honoring Antiochus III the Great (223-187 BCE).

3.5.1 Gods and Kings in the Tean Decree

The multicultural diversity of the Seleucid Empire created a highly complex setting for building an autocratic state. In accord with Alexander, one strategy of legitimating the king to his ethnically diverse subjects was to create an iconographic image that was associated with local or Panhellenic gods. Peter Green recognizes this strategy in all three dynasties: "Clearly, the prime motive in such associative *pietas* was an urge for legitimization by divine pedigree."[59] Coin issues were a primary vehicle for distributing the associative *pietas* of the royal family with the gods, especially for soldiers who needed a daily reminder that the king was their "royal paymaster and supreme commander."[60] Susan Sherwin-White and Amelie Kuhrt point out that the vast majority of Seleucus I Nicator's (305–281 BCE) gold, silver and bronze coin issues from

[59] Peter Green *Alexander to Actium,* 397.
[60] R. R. R. Smith, *Hellenistic Royal Portraits,* 14. Smith also rightly argues that the royal image on coins was designed "primarily to impress the Greco-Macedonian soldiery, the ultimate mainstay of royal power" (idem. 14). Currency, then, was the medium of power in a symbiotic relationship between warrior kings and their military apparatus—that is to say, the king maintained power from his military, while participants in the military gained power from the king's coin issues.

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306/305 BCE to his death "carry not Seleucus but a deity on the obverse."[61] The position of a deity on the obverse was typical of coin issues, allowing the king to express his *pietas* toward the gods without direct association and/or assimilation. Under Antiochus I, however, the Seleucid family's association with cult and religion was concretized more explicitly. In posthumous numismatic iconography, Antiochus I issued coins of Seleucus I with headgear that included Dionysiac bullhorns on the obverse (cf. Smith, Pl. 76.2).[62] The association of Dionysus with bullhorns comes from Euripides' *Bacchae,* where Dionysus is portrayed as a bull to Pentheus (*Bacch.* 100; 610-20; 922).[63] The choice of Dionysus was, in part, pragmatic—both Cicero and Plutarch attest to the remarkable malleability of Dionysus's cult image (Cicero, *Nat. D.* 3.58; Plutarch *E Delph.* 9).[64] But the association of Dionysus with wine, ecstasy and salvation from death suited well the psychological and physical needs of warring soldiers, who most directly benefited from the king's coin issues (and inadvertently distributed the king's image into the empire's vast economy).[65] As others have noted, bullhorns also evoked the powerful military stature of Seleucus. For example, Appian records a legend that "Seleucus was of such a large and

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[61] Susan Sherwin-White and Amélie Kuhrt, *From Samarkhand to Sardis: A New Approach to the Seleucid Empire* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993), 23.
[62] Notably, Demetrius I also wore the Dionysiac headgear on numismatic iconography (cf., Smith, Pl. 74.8). The subversive act of placing the king's head on the obverse in the place of a deity is best articulated by Michel Austin: "Royal portraits were normally placed on the obverse, reserved in the classical age for deities, while deities were now moved to the reverse, an indication of the new status of monarchy and its blurring of the distinction between divine and human" (*The Hellenistic World from Alexander to the Roman Conquest*, 14). This subversive iconography would have made a powerful—or, better yet, shocking—impression on the king's military, who would be the first to handle such coins. For further comment on religious motifs on Seleucid coins, see Jan Zahle, "Religious Motifs on Seleucid Coins," in *Religion and Religious Practice in the Seleucid Kingdom* (ed. Per Bilde et al.; Aarhus: Aarhus University, 1990), 125-39).
[63] R. R. R. Smith, *Hellenistic Royal Portraits,* 40-41; Jennifer Larson, *Ancient Greek Cults,* 140.
[64] Klauck, *Religious Context,* 107. On Dionysus, see: Jennifer Larson, *Ancient Greek Cults,* 126-143 and Klauck, *Religious Context,* 106-19.
[65] On the significance of the Roman military as a vehicle for disseminating the image and power of ruler cults *and* the traditional gods, see Beard, North and Price, *Religions of Rome,* Vol. I, 324-28. Aside from the Roman military, it is also important to recognize that the Roman diaspora had a tremendous impact on the development of distinctively Roman concepts away from the imperial center in Rome. See Nicholas Purcell, "Romans in the Roman World," in *The Cambridge Companion to the Age of Augustus* (ed. Karl Galinksy; Cambridge: Cambridge University, 2005), 85-105.

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powerful frame that once when a wild bull was brought for sacrifice to Alexander and broke loose from his ropes, Seleucus held him alone, with nothing but his hands, for which reason his statues (*agalma*) are ornamented with horns" (Appian *Syr.* 9.57).[66] The legend highlights Seleucus's powerful military stature, but it equally highlights his piety and commitment to cult and religion.

The diverse regions of the Seleucid Empire created a volatile conglomerate of ethnic associations prone to armed secession.[67] When Antiochus I (281-261 BCE) took power after his father's assassination by Ptolemy Thunderbolt, for example, he was faced with numerous resistance movements including an invasion by the Celts.[68] After quelling the disorder, the city of Ilium in Troas honored Antiochus with a public stele in ca. 281 BCE honoring him as "savior and benefactor" despite the fact he never stepped foot in or near the city.[69] The acclamation provides important insight into the self-understanding of a Greek city under Seleucid power: although Ilium experienced its own civic autonomy, ultimately it understood itself as subordinate to the distant king. The dating of the Ilium decree has been the source of much debate among scholars. Aside from providing chronological insight into the Syrian wars, its content is equally valuable for our understanding of civic ruler cult early in the Seleucid era.[70] As discussed above,

[66] Also quoted in R. R. R. Smith, *Hellenistic Royal Portraits,* 40-41; and Anathea-Portier Young, *Apocalypse Against Empire,* 54.
[67] It is important to remember that Jews represented one of these volatile regions, climaxing in the resistance movements under the Maccabees. See Peter Green, *Alexander to Actium*, 497-534.
[68] Peter Green draws attention to the Borsippa inscription which captures the existential angst Antiochus felt in his pursuit of being understood as the legitimate king of disparate regions: "I am Antiochus, the Great King, the legitimate king, the king of the world, king of Babylon, king of all countries … May I personally conquer [all] the countries from sunrise to sunset, gather their tribute, and bring it [home]" (*Alexander to Actium,* 148). For English translation, see: J. B. Pritchard *Ancient Near Eastern Texts* (2nd ed.; Princeton: Princeton University, 1955), 317.
[69] H. S. Versnel, *Inconsistencies in Greek and Roman Religion* (Leiden: Brill, 1998), 29.
[70] The decree is addressed to Antiochus, son of Seleucus, which creates a conundrum: both Antiochus I and Antiochus III had fathers named Seleucus. For its dating under Antiochus I, which I follow here, see: John Ma, *Antiochos III and the Cities of Western Asia Minor*, 254-59; Christopher P. Jones, "The Decree of Ilion in

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Antiochus I was responsible for coin issues associating Seleucus with Dionysus, and his own portrait upheld what Smith calls a "divinized royal idea" with "thick wild hair, huge upward staring eye, and gaunt angular profile" (cf. Smith, Pl. 76.3).[71] The impact of Seleucus and Antiochus I can be felt as late as ca. 187 BCE, where an epigraphic list of priesthoods includes an official priest for "Seleucus (I) Zeus Nicator and Antiochus (I) Apollo Soter" (Σελεύκου Διὸς Νικάτρος καὶ Ἀντιόχου Ἀπόλλωνος Ζωτῆρο[ς]; *OGIS* 245; Austin, no. 207). In a posthumous context, the inscription detailing priesthoods attests to both kings' association with an Olympic god, along with their cultic honor overseen by a designated priest. The Ilium decree, on the other hand, describes how civic cult was set up for Antiochus I during his lifetime.

The Tean decree opens by honoring Antiochus I for putting down the rebels and restoring "peace to the cities" (*OGIS* 219; Austin, no. 162 *l.* 10). In response to Antiochus's restoration of peace to North Syria and the region "this side of Mount Taurus," the clergy resolve to honor Antiochus with public prayers to "Athena of Ilium" so that Antiochus's kingdom may prosper (line 20). The connection between prayer and the gods' blessing upon Antiochus's rule is made more explicit when other priests are instructed to "pray together with the priest of King Antiochus to Apollo, the ancestor of his family, to Nike, to Zeus and to all the other gods and goddesses" (line 25). In accord with traditions stemming from Alexander the Great, Antiochus is understood as the offspring of Apollo, giving him a cosmogonic identity in close proximity to a traditional god (and perhaps an association with Alexander the Great, too). Moreover, Antiochus has a designated priest, which is evidence of his own civic cult. Even so, the decree instructs all the priests and citizens of the city to offer the customary ancestral sacrifice to Athena of Ilium,

Honor of King Antiochos," *GRBS* 34 (1993): 73-92; and Susan Sherwin-White and Amélie Kuhrt, *From Samarkhand to Sardis: A New Approach to the Seleucid Empire*, 29-30.
[71] R. R. R. Smith, *Hellenistic Royal Portraits*, 112.

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Apollo and the other gods *on behalf of the king* rather than to the king alone (lines 25-30). The formula of sacrifice demonstrates how civic ruler cult honored the king as a benefactor in conjunction with the public prayers and sacrificial rituals of the traditional gods. In terms of material representation, the decree proceeds to instruct the city to erect a gold equestrian statue of Antiochus in the temple of Athena:

> [ὅπως δὲ τὰ] εἰς τὴν τιμὴν καὶ δόχαν ἀνήκοντα συγκατασκευάζων ὁ δῆμος φανερὸς [ἦι πᾶσιν ἐπαι]|νέσαι μὲν αὐτὸν ἐπὶ τῆι ἀρετῆι καὶ τῆι ἀνδραγαθίαι ἥν ἔχων [διατ]ελεῖ, [στῆσαι δὲ αὐτοῦ εἰ]|κόνα χρυσῆν ἐφ᾿ ἵπποθ ἐν τῶι ἱερῶι τῆς Ἀθηνᾶς ἐν τῶι ἐπιφα[νεστάτωι τόπωι] | ἐπὶ βήματος τοῦ λευκοῦ λίθοθ καὶ ἐπιγράψαι: Ὃ δῆμος ὁ [Ἰλιέων βασιλέα Ἀντί]|οχον βασιλέως Ζελεύκου εὐσεβείας ἕνεκεν τῆς εἰς τὸ ἱερό[ν, εὐεργέτην καὶ σω]|τῆρα γεγονότα τοῦ δήμου᾿ (*OGIS,* 219 lines 33-40).

> [And so that] the people [may be] seen [by all] to be helping in promoting what relates to honour and glory, (be it resolved) to praise him for the excellence and manliness he [constantly] displays, [and to set up], a golden equestrian statue [of him] in the sanctuary of Athena in the [most] distinguished [place] on the step of white stone with the following inscription: 'The people of [Ilium (honours) King Antiochus] son of King Seleucus for his piety towards the sanctuary (and) for being [the benefactor and] saviour of the people.' (Austin, no. 162).

For Antiochus's excellence (ἀρετή) and manliness (alternatively "manly virtue" ἀνδραγαθία) a golden statue of Antiochus riding a horse is set up in the sanctuary of Athena. Instructions for the inscription on the statue base indicate that Antiochus is honored for his piety toward the gods and for being the city's benefactor and savior. Although the statue is more honorific than cultic, its location in the temple of Athena elevates Antiochus into a nebulous realm between man and demigod. Prayers, public sacrifices, precious materials, statuary and a sanctuary context all direct their gaze toward the king, yet do so in coordination with the shared space of the traditional gods. The sanctuary of Athena of Ilium illustrates the integration of politics and religion in the Hellenistic city: to be sure, the king's honorific golden εἰκών stands in the sanctuary of Athena in the most prominent place (ἐν τῶι ἐπιφα[νεστάτωι τόπωι]).

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3.5.2 Gods and Kings in the Ilion Decree

The reign of Antiochus III (223-187 BCE) reoriented the power structure of Seleucid ruler cults. For the first time, the impetus for ruler cult was transferred from the civic level on the periphery to the dynastic level at the imperial center (Austin, no. 200).[72] In contrast to Ptolemaic Egypt, the heterogeneous ethnic makeup of the Seleucid Empire made the dissemination of dynastic cult across its multi-cultural empire an uneven and more complicated process. Moreover, Antiochus III inherited a profoundly disjointed kingdom: the Eastern provinces had seceded and Asia Minor had been taken over by the Attalids of Pergamon. To restore what had been lost in the East, Antiochus III set out on his so-called *anabasis* campaign in 212-205 BCE to reclaim the Iranian Plateau.[73] After a successful campaign, he turned toward Asia Minor (but not after losing several teeth in the battle of Bactria [Polyb. X 49.14]). After reclaiming the city of Teos on the west coast of Asia Minor from Attalus I Soter of Pergamon, the Teans responded with a civic decree describing cultic honors for Antiochus III and his wife Laodice in 204/3 BCE. The decree well illustrates how a city could communicate underlying petitions to the ruling power through the euergetic language of public *timai.* John Ma helpfully labels this communicative exchange the "euergetic dialogue" between subject and ruler.[74] In this case, the dialogue focuses on the Teans' petition for tax relief and the highly desirable civic status of territorial inviolability (*asylia*),

[72] But see Duncan Fishwick's skepticism that the Seleucid dynastic cult began with Antiochus III despite the lack of evidence for dynastic cult before the reign of Antiochus III. Duncan Fishwick, *The Imperial Cult in the Latin West,* 17. The emergence of dynastic ruler cult under Antiochus III did not occur until the end of his reign in 193 BCE when he sent letters instructing priests in his satrapies to honor his wife Laodice (cf. *OGIS,* 224). For English translation of Antiochus's letter to the Carian satrapy, see Roger S. Bagnall and Peter Derow eds., *Historical Sources in Translation: The Hellenistic Period* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2004), no. 98.
[73] For discussion of Antiochus's *anabasis* campaign, see: Sherwin-White and Kuhrt, *From Samarkhand to Sardis,* 197-202.
[74] John Ma, *Antiochos III*, 204. On the phenomenon of Asylia in the Hellenistic world, see Kent J. Rigsby, *Asylia: Territorial Inviolability in the Hellenistic World* (Berkeley: University of California, 1996), 278-323.

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which meant immunity from tribute and retaliation by the ruling power.[75] Although Antiochus's grant of *asylia* to the Teans was likely initiated from above, the Teans honor Antiochus and Laodice from below with a civic decree for the purpose of maintaining—that is, petitioning for—the maintenance and ratification of their *asylia*.[76] The preamble of the decree opens with a personal account of the Teans' exhaustion from "continuous wars" (συνεχεῖς πολέμους) and burdensome contributions paid to Attalus I (τὸ μέγεθος ὧν ἐφέρομεν συντάξεων; Ma, no. 17 lines 13-14). The Teans' context of oppression sets the stage for Antiochus's exaltation as benefactor and savior over the city:

> Wishing / to display piety toward the gods to whom he consecrated our city and territory, and wanting to do a favour to the people and the association of Dionysiac artists, he came forward in person in the assembly and granted to our city and territory (to be) holy, inviolate and free from tribute (ἱερὰν καὶ ἄσυλον καὶ ἀφορολόγητον), and undertook to free us himself from the other contributions we pay to King Attalus (I), / so that by bringing about an improvement in the city's fortunes he would receive the title not only of benefactor of the people, but of its saviour (μὴ μόνον εὐεργεσίας λάβῃ τὴν ἐπιγραφὴν τῆς τοῦ δήμου, ἀλλὰ καὶ σωτηρίας) (Ma, Epigraphical Dossier, no. 17 lines 14-22; English trans. Austin, no. 191).

A prerequisite for the acquisition of *asylia* was the consecration of a city's land to the gods. In accord with this tradition, Antiochus shows exemplar piety toward the gods by officially consecrating the city as holy and inviolate. Since the third century BCE, the Dionysiac artists resided in Teos, a city that considered Dionysus its patron god (*archegetes*).[77] Antiochus's declaration of inviolability upon Teos, then, resulted in direct benefits for the Dionysiac cult, along with its guild of artists. In the hortative clause of the decree, the Teans resolve to return

[75] See Ma, *Antiochos III*, 261 and F. W. Walbank, *The Hellenistic World* (Sussex: The Harvester Press, 1981), 145-46.
[76] The interpretive options for the decree's historical context are mapped out by Ma, *Antiochos III,* 184 and 262 n. 7.
[77] See Kent J. Rigsby, *Asylia,* 280.

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thanks to Antiochus for his conferral of *asylia* on the city by embedding marble cult statues (*agalma*) of Antiochus and Laodice in the temple of Dionysus:

> ἵνα οὖν καὶ ἡμῖς ἐμ [πα]ντὶ και[ρῶι] φαινώμεθα χάριτασ ἀξίας ἀποδιδόντες τῶι τε βασι[λε]ῖ καὶ τῇ [βα]σιλίσσῃ καὶ ὑπερτιθέμενοι ἡαυτοὺς ἐν ταῖς τι[μ]αῖς ταῖς πρὸς [τ]ούτους κα[τὰ] τὰς εὐεργεσίας καὶ φανερὸς ᾖ πᾶσιν ὁ δη[μος] εὐπορίστως διακίμε[ν]ος πρὸς χάριτος ἀπόδοσιν· τύχῃ ἀγαθῇ· π[α]ραστῆσαι τῶι ἀγάλματ[ι] τοῦ Διονύσου ἀγάλματα μαρμάρινα ὡς κάλλιστ[α καὶ ἱε]ροπρεπέστατ[α] τοῦ τε βασιλέως Ἀντιόχου καὶ τῆς ἀδελφῆς αὐ[τ]οῦ [βα]σιλισσης Λαο[δί]κης, ὅπως ἀφέντες τὴμ πόλιν καὶ τὴν χώραν ἱερὰν καὶ ἄσθλον και [π]αραλύσαντες ἡμᾶς τῶμ φόρων καὶ χαρις[ά]μενοι ταῦτα τῶι τε δήμ[ω]ι καὶ τῶι κοινῶι τῶμ περὶ τὸν Διόνυσον τεχνιτῶν παρὰ πάντων τ[ὰς] τιμὰς κομίζονται κατὰ τὸ δ[υνατὸν] κ[α]ὶ ναοῦ καὶ τῶν ἄλλων με[τέχ]οντες τῶι Διονύσωι κοιν[οὶ σωτῆρες] ὑπαρχοσι τῆς [πό]λε[ως ἡ]μῶν καὶ κοινῇ διδῶσιν ἡ[μῖν ἀγ]αθά· (Ma, Epigraphical Dossier, no. 17 lines 40-52).
>
> Therefore, so that we may be seen in every [circumstance] to be returning adequate thanks to the king and to the queen and to be surpassing ourselves in the honours paid to them in proportion to the benefactions received, and so that all may see that the [people] is fully disposed to repay gratitude, with good fortune, (be it resolved) to place side by side with / the statue of Dionysus marble statues of King Antiochus and of his sister and queen Laodice, as beautiful [and as] majestic as possible, so that since they have granted to (our) city and territory (to be) holy and inviolate and have exempted us from taxation and have granted these favours to the people and to the association of Dionysiac artists, they may receive from / all [the] honours as far as [possible, and] may share in the temple and the other honours enjoyed by Dionysus and be the joint [saviours] of our [city] and bestow blessings [on our] community (Austin, no. 191).

The phrase *sunnaos theos* is not used in the decree, but the concept of temple sharing is made clear by the placement of the *agalma* of Antiochus and Laodice on each side of the statue of Dionysus. The central role of Dionysus to honor Antiochus shows how local religious traditions were employed to set up ruler cult.[78] The visual representation sent a clear message to subjects that the royal family's benefaction and soteriological benefits were on par with the Teans' patron deity. One can quickly sense how previous generations of scholarship interpreted such associations as political flattery; it is crucial to recognize, however, that the power and protection

[78] On the the diverse representations of ruler cult in Seleucid temples, see Lise Hannestad and Daniel Potts, "Temple Architecture in the Seleucid Kingdom," in *Religion and Religious Practice in the Seleucid Kingdom* (ed. Per Bilde et al.; Aarhus: Aarhus University, 1990), 91-124.

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of Antiochus over the city mirrored the power and protection of the Teans' patron deity, making the association of the two a natural amalgamation of ideas in Greco-Roman thought.

3.6 The Attalids of Pergamon and the Traditional Gods

The Attalids of Pergamon are often represented as the quintessential Greek dynasty (Polyb. 23.11.7-8).[79] Such high remarks are striking given their humble origins from a half-Greek eunuch named Phileteiros (283-263 BCE), who was put in charge of Alexander's war booty at Pergamum.[80] The success of the Attalids can, in part, be attributed to what Erich Gruen calls their mastery of the "art of cultivating an international image."[81] To cultivate this image, the Attalids literally "carved themselves into prominence" by stimulating an art renaissance that reflected the values of classical Athens.[82] The material remains of this renaissance can be illustrated by the archaeological record, of which the great altar at Pergamon depicting a cosmic struggle of gigantomachy is representative.[83] It is no accident, then, that the Attalids left behind a vivid epigraphic record depicting the relationship between gods and kings.

An inscription discovered in Elaia, most likely from Pergamon, honors the Attalids' penultimate king Attalus III (138-133 BCE) as *sunnaos theos* with Asklepius before he

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[79] Elizabeth Kosmetaton, "The Attalids of Pergamon," in *A Companion to the Hellenistic World* (ed. Andrew Erskine; Oxford: Blackwell, 2005), 159-74, here 159.

[80] Through an act of political expediency, Phileteiros betrayed the Diadoch Lysimachus and was able to gain autonomy for the city of Pergamon. The achievement of an Attalid kingdom, however, was not accomplished until Attalus I defeated the Galatians in ca. 237 BCE. See R. E. Allen, *The Attalid Kingdom: A Constitutional History* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1983), 9-65.

[81] Erich S. Gruen, "Culture as Policy: The Attalids of Pergamon," in *From Pergamon to Sperlonga: Sculpture and Context* (eds. Nancy T. de Grummond and Brunilde S. Ridgway; Berkeley: University of California, 2000), 17-31, 17.

[82] Mary Beard and John Henderson, *Classical Art: From Greece to Rome* (Oxford: Oxford University, 2001), 153.

[83] For commentary on the altar, see: Mary Beard and John Henderson, *Classical Art: From Greece to Rome* (Oxford: Oxford University, 2001), 147-58. Mary Beard and John Henderson's call the altar at Pergamon "an unapologetic exercise in hyperbole" (147).

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bequeathed his kingdom to the Romans in his will.[84] For bestowing benefits on Pergamon, the citizens (οἱ πολῖται) resolve to venerate Antiochus III with two carefully placed statues: the first statue is a cultic *agalma* inside of the Asklepeion that housed Pergamon's patron deity; and the second is a golden *eikon* in the market place beside the altar of Zeus Soter.[85] Notably, both statues closely associate Antiochus with a traditional god, and both contain a dedicatory inscription evoking typical motifs stemming from the system of benefaction.[86] A hortative resolution opening with δεδόχθαι explains the visual construction of these honors within Pergamon's built evironment:

> δεδόχθαι τῆι βουλῆι καὶ τῶι δήμωι, στεφανῶσαι τὸμ βασιλέα χρυςῶι στε|φάνωι ἀριστείωι, καθιερῶσαι δὲ αὐτοῦ καὶ ἄγαλμα πεντάπηχυ τεθωρακισμέ|νον καὶ βεβεκὸς ἐπὶ σκύλων ἐν τῶι ναῶι τοῦ Σωτῆρος Ἀσκληπιοῦ, ἵνα ἦ[ι]| σύνναος τῶι θεῶι, στησαι δὲ αὐτοῦ καὶ εἰκόνα χρυςῆν ἔφιππον ἐπὶ στυ||λίδος μαρμαρίνης παρὰ τὸν τοῦ Διὸς [τ]οῦ Σωτῆρος βωμόν, ὅπως ὑπάρχηι ἡ | εἰκὼν ἐν τῶι ἐπιφανεστάτωι τόπωι τῆς ἀγορᾶς (*OGIS*, 332 lines 6-11)
>
> Resolution of the council and of the assembled people: The king is to be crowned with a golden garland of victory. A cultic image of five ells high is also to be dedicated to him, showing him in his armour as he tramples upon the booty of war: this is to be set up in the temple of Asclepius Soter, so that he may be a temple companion of the god. A golden equestrian statue of the king is also to be erected on a marble plinth beside the altar of Zeus Soter, so that the statue may stand in the most prominent position in the market place (trans. Klauck, *The Religious Context of Early Christianity*, 276).

Attalus's cultic *agalma* is five ells high (πεντάπηχυ), making it a veritable colossal in the temple of Asklepius Soter (roughly 5.71 meters high). The size of the statue gives Attalus visual

[84] Erich Gruen, *The Hellenistic World and the Coming of Rome* (vol. 1; Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984), 592-610.
[85] Arthur Darby Nock, Σύνναος θεός, *HCSP* 41 (1930): 22-24. Hans-Josef Klauck, *Religious Context,* 276-77. R. R. R. Smith, *Hellenistic Royal Portraits*, 20. R. E. Allen, *The Attalid Kingdom: A Constitutional History* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1983), 154-7.
[86] The ἐπιγραφή (cf. line 22) on the cultic *agalma* reads: "The assembled people [honours] King Attalos Philometor Euergetes, son of the divine king Eumenes Soter, because of his skill and bravery in war, because he overcame our enemies" (*OGIS* 332 lines 22-23; English trans. Klauck, *Religious Context,* 276). The inscription on the honorific golden *eikon* reads: "The assembled people [honours] Attalos Philometor Euergetes, son of the divine king Eumenes Soter, because of his skill and prudence, so advantageous in matters of state, and because of his generosity to the people" (*OGIS* 332 lines 24-26; English trans. Klauck, *Religious Context,* 276).

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credibility as a temple sharing god with Asklepius (σὐνναος τῶι θεῶι). It is here that we have a good example where the visual language of art could communicate the integrated relationship between a god and a king to illiterate passersby, especially for monotheistic thinkers for which such visual theology would be understood as idolatry. The plastic language of the city is also evident in the erection of a gold equestrian statue of Attalus dressed in military garb standing on war booty next to the altar of Zeus Soter in the most visible location in the market (ἐν τῶι ἐπιφανεστάτωι τόπωι τῆς ἀγορᾶς). Aside from the visual association with Zeus, the priest of Attalus's cult—along with the bearer of garlands and organizer of athletic festivals—is instructed to offer incense daily in sacrifice to the king on the altar of Zeus (ἐπὶ τοῦ βωμοῦ τ[οῦ] Διὸς τοῦ Σωτῆρος τῶι βασιλεῖ). As Nock pointed out, the ambiguous dative "to" or "for" the king would have demanded ὑπερ for clarity, leaving the object of sacrifice ambiguous.[87] Attalus's golden *eikon*, then, is integrated by association into the cult of Zeus at both the material and ritual level within Pergamon's public market.

Two final features of the inscription from Eliaia deserve our attention. In accord with the typical protocol of ruler cults, an annual calendrical festival is set up to honor Attalus on the eighth day of the month on which he entered Pergamon (*OGIS* 332 line 15). On the sacred day, the priest of Asclepius is charged with overseeing a splendid procession (πομπὴν ὡς καλλίστην) from the town hall to the temple precincts of Asclepius *and* the king (Ἀσκληπιοῦ καὶ τοῦ βασιλέως). Moreover, whenever Attalus enters the city, the inscription provides detailed instructions for honoring Attalus by invoking the blessing of the traditional gods. Within the

[87] A. D. Nock, Σύνναος θεός, 22-23.

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porous polytheistic sytem of Greco-Roman religion, the gods are understood as collaborating and blessing Attalus's power:

> ὅταν δὲ παραγίνηται εἰς τὴν πόλιν ἡμῶν, [στεφ]|ανηφορῆσαι πάντα ἕκαστον στεφανηφόρον τῶν Δώδεκα θεῶν καὶ θεοῦ βα|σιλέως Εὐμενου, καὶ τοὺς ἱερεῖς καὶ τὰς ἱερε[ί]ας ἀνοίξαντας τοὺς ναοὺς τῶν θε|ῶν καὶ ἐπιθύοντας τὸν λιβαντὸν εὔχε[σ]θαι νῦν τε καὶ εἰς τὸν ἀεὶ χρόνον || διδόναι βασιλεῖ Ἀττάλωι φιλομήτορι καὶ Εὐεργέτηι ὑγίειαν σωτηρίαν νίκην | κράτος καὶ [ἐπι γῆς] κα[ὶ κατὰ] θά[λατταν] κ[α]ὶ ἄρχοντι καὶ ἀμθνομένου, καὶ τὴν βα|σιλείαν αὐτοῦ διαμ(ε)νειν [εἰς] τὸν ἅπαντα αἰῶνα ἀβλαβῆ μετὰ πάσης ἀσφαλ|είας (*OGIS* 332 lines 26-32).
>
> When he enters our city, each single garland bearer of the twelve gods and of the god-king Eumenes is to bear a garland, and the men and women priests are to open the temples of the gods, and pray while they offer incense that the gods may now and for all time bestow on King Attalos Philometor Euergetes health, deliverance, and victory both on land and on sea, when he attacks and when he repulses those who attack him, and that his kingship may endure inviolate forever in complete safety (English trans. Klauck, *The Religious Context of Early Christianity*, 276).

So that Attalus may rule in safety/security (ἀσφάλεια; cf. Luke 1:4; Acts 5:23), the priests of the city open the temple doors of the gods while offering incense so that the gods may bestow on Attalus health, salvation, victory and power (ὑγίειαν σωτηρίαν νίκην κράτος).[88] The context for the gods' blessing on Attalus is military domination: the gods are understood as collaborating with Attalus against his enemies both on "land and on sea." This point again highlights how the traditional gods could support the imperial domination system, a point that is also communicated without words through the architectural design of Attalus's golden *eikon* standing on war booty near the altar of Zeus in the marketplace (see above). The inscription closes with instructions for the placement of the stele—notably, in order that Attalus's victories may be visible forever (ἐκφανῆ δῖ αἰῶνος), the decree (ψήφισμα) is to be placed on a marble pillar in the sanctuary of Asklepius in front of the temple (πρὸ τοῦ ναοῦ; *OGIS* 332 lines 56-62). The visible placement and concretization of the decree's content in marble within the temple of Asklepius thus

[88] Klauck's English translation omits the word κράτος.

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sacralized Attalus's benefaction and status as a demi-god over the city for all times (εἰς ἅπαντα τὸν χρόνον).

3.7 The Kingdom of Commagene and the Traditional Gods

In many ways, Antiochus I of Commagene (c. 70 – c. 35 BCE) exemplifies the apex of the Hellenistic cult of rulers in the years leading up to the rise of the Roman Principate.[89] As a client-kingdom under Rome's encroaching power, Antiochus built a ἱεροθέσιον (monumental tomb) on the summit of the Nemrud Dagh in the Taurus Mountains to assert his power over the region.[90] The tomb and its vicinity represent a veritable hoard of media honoring Antiochus I alongside a blend of Greek and Persian gods. Most impressive are the four *dexiosis* stelae depicting Antiochus shaking hands with the goddess Commagene (Goell, fig. 277), Apollo-Mithras (Goell, fig. 279), Zeus Oromasdes (Goell, figs. 281-289) and Heracles (Goell, figs. 293-297).[91] The reliefs flank both the East and West sides of the Nemrud Dagh's tumulus, evoking a vivid visual theology of divine collaboration.[92] Above the reliefs on both the East and West terrace stands a colossal statue of Antiochus as σύνθρονος with the colossi of traditional Greco-Persian gods: Tyche-Commagene (Goell, figs. 113, 114, 117, 121), Zeus-Oromasdes (Goell, figs. 50, 104, 110), Apollo-Mithras-Helios-Hermes (Goell, figs. 95, 101) and Artagnes-Heracles-Ares (Goell, figs. 88, 94). Appropriately, the statue of Zeus overshadows the others and is placed in the

[89] Here I follow the dating of Antiochus's reign by Sherwin-White and Kuhrt, *Samarkhand to Sardis*, 118.
[90] The role of religion in asserting Antiochus's political authority is well stated by Duncan Fishwick who writes, "Antiochus attempts to weld his kingdom together and to guarantee his own position by instituting a cult of himself as a god in the circle of the highest gods" (*Imperial Cult in the Latin West*, 19).
[91] It is important to recognize that other *dexiosis* reliefs have been found. For example, at Zeugma, see: Charles Crowther and M. Facella, "New Evidence for the Ruler Cult of Antiochus Commagene from Zeugma," in *Neue Forschungen zur Religionsgeschichte Kleinasiens* (eds. G. Heedemann and E. Winter; Bonn: Asia Minor Studien, 2003), 41-80.
[92] On the inscriptions found at Nemrud Dagh, see: P. M. Fraser, "The Annual of the British School at Athens," Vol. 47 (1952): 96-101.

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center, with a height of 3.02 meters.[93] The statue of Antiochus, on the other hand, placed on the far left side of the monument, stands at 2.60m, giving it a divinized aura, yet subtly subordinate to the heavenly King Zeus.[94] The physiognomic design of Antiochus's colossal includes sun-rayed headgear with the diadem, a motif that evokes the iconography of Helios and the concept of radiating light (and, hence, Antiochus et al. royal epithet ἐπιφανής).[95] For pilgrims travelling to the towering tumulus from the East or West sides, the *dexiosis* relief*s* and the colossal image of Antiochus as enthroned among the gods communicated a striking image of ruler cult's integration within the material representation of the gods.

The visual language of Nemrud Dagh's iconography is supplemented by a remarkable inscription on the backside of the throne base of the five colossal statues (Goell, figs. 211-229).[96] Sometimes referred to as the "great inscription," Antiochus I ordered his sacred *Nomos* to be inscribed in stone on the East and West sides of the monument in order to be "unassailable to the ravages of time" (ἀπόρθητον χρόνου λύμαις; *OGIS* 383 line 36; English trans. Danker, no. 41).[97] Like the Ptolemies, Antiochus I upheld two faces, one that was Greek and one that was Persian; a hybrid identity that is remarkably spelled out in the opening lines of the inscription:

> [Βασιλεὺς μέ]γας Ἀντίοχος θεὸς | Δίκαιος [Ἐπιφ]αν[ὴς] φιλορωμαῖος καὶ | φιλέ[λλ]ην ὁ ἐκ βασιλέως μιθραδά|του Καλλινίκου καὶ βασιλίσσης Λαο||δ[ίκ]ης θεᾶς φιλαδέλφου τῆς ἐκ βασι|λέω[ς] Ἀντιόχου Ἐπιφανῦς φιλο|μήτορος Καλλινίκου ἐπὶ καθω|σιωμένων βάσεων ἀσύλοις | γράμμασιν ἔργα χάριτος ἰδίας εἰς || χρόνον ἀνέγραψεν αἰώνιον (*OGIS* lines 1-10).

> [King] Antiochos the Great – God the Just, Epiphanes, Friend of the Romans and Greeks, son of King Mithradates Kallinikos and of Queen Laodike | Goddess Philadelophos, daughter of King Antiochos Epiphanes Philometor Kallinikos – has recorded with inviolable letters for all time to come | his own gracious deeds (English trans. Danker, no. 41).

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[93] Theresa B. Goell et al., *Nemrud Dagi: The Herothesion of Antiochus I of Commagene: Volume 1: Text* (ed. Donald H. Sanders; Winona Lake: Eisenbraunds, 1996), 187.
[94] Theresa B. Goell et al., *Nemrud Dagi: The Herothesion of Antiochus I of Commagene: Volume 1: Text*, 191.
[95] Idem, 102.
[96] Idem, 103.
[97] Danker, *Benefactor,* 238.

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Antiochus traces his genetic makeup to the Achaemenids on his father's side and the Seleucids on his mother's side. Under the shadow of Rome's growing power, the dual lineage of Antiochus legitimated his kingship over a regional melting pot of Greek and Persian culture.[98] Indeed, lest the Romans fail to understand the legitimacy of Antiochus's rule based on his family lineage, the opening lines of the inscription include the remarkable reminder that Antiochus is a "friend of the Romans and Greeks" (φιλορωμαῖος καὶ φιλέλλην).[99]

The political apologetic underlining Antiochus's royal titulature is reinforced by cult and religion. In accord with the Hellenistic and Roman treatises on kingship, a large portion of the great inscription focuses on Antiochus's piety toward the gods. Here lines 25-60 are quoted, which ellucidate the purpose of the Nemrud Dagh—namely, to become "an abode for all the Gods" and to create the site where Antiochus will experience apotheosis up to the heavenly throne of Zeus Oromasdos:

> Ἐγω πατρώιαν [ἀ]ρχὴν [π]αρ[αλ]α[β]ῶν || βασιλείαν [μ]ὲν ἐμο[ῖ]ς ὑπήκοον θρό|νοις κοινὴν θεῶν ἁπάντων εὐσεβείαι γνώμης ἐμῆς | δίαιταν ἀπέδειξα, μορ|φῆς μὲν (ε)ἰκόνας παντοίαι τέχνηι, καθ᾽ | ἃ παλαιὸς λόγος Περσῶν τε καὶ || Ἑλλήνων – ἐμου γένους εὐτυχεσ|τάτη ῥίζα – παρδέδωκε, κοσμήσας, | θυσίαις δὲ καὶ πανηγύρεσιν, ὡς ἀρ|χαῖός τε νόμος καὶ κοινὸν ἀνθρώπων ἔθος· ἔτι δὲ ἐμὲ δικαία φροντὶς || προσεξεῦρε τιμὰς ἐπιφανῶς γερα|ράς. ἐπεὶ δὲ ἱεροθεσίου τοῦδε κρη|πεῖδα ἀπόρθητον χρόνου λύμαις | οὐρανίων ἄγχιστα θρόνων κατασ|τήσασθαι προενοήθην, ἐν ὧι μα||καριστὸν ἄχρι [γ]ήρως ὑπάρξαν σῶμα | μορφῆς ἐμῆς πρὸς οὐρανίους Διὸς | Ὠρομάσδου θρονους θεοφιλῆ ψυχὴν | προπέμψαν εἰς τὸν ἄπεριον αἰῶνα κοιμήσεται· τότε δὴ καὶ τόνδε χῶρον || ἱερὸν ἁπάντων κοινὸν ἀναδεῖξαι | θεῶν ἐνθρόνισμα προειλάσμην, ὅπως | μὴ μόνον ἐμῶν προγόνων οὗτος ὃν ὁρᾷς | ἡρῷ(ο)ς λόχος ἐμαῖς ἐπιμελείαις ὑπάρ|χῃ καθιδρθμένος, ἀλλα καὶ || δαιμόνων ἐπιφανῶν θεῖος τύπος ἐν |

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[98] On Antiochus's family lineage, see Duncan Fishwick, *Imperial Cult in the Latin West,* 18. Notably, on the terrace of the Nemrud Dagh, Antiochus constructed an ancestral relief tracing his genealogy back to Artaxerxes II Mnemon of Persia (on his father's side) and Alexander the Great (on his mother's side). On Antiochus's cultural hybridity, see Richard Fowler, "'Most Fortunate Roots': Tradition and Legitimacy in Parthian Royal Ideology," in *Imaginary Kings: Royal Images in the Ancient Near East, Greece and Rome* (München: Franz Steiner Verlag, 2005), 125-55, here 127-28.

[99] Margherita Facella, "Φιλορώμαιος καὶ Φιλέλλην: Roman Perception of Commagenian Royalty," in *Imaginary Kings: Royal Images in the Ancient Near East, Greece and Rome* (ed. Olivier Hekster and Richard Fowler; München: Franz Steiner Verlag, 2005), 87-104.

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> ἁγίωι λόγωι καθοσιωθείς, μηδὲ τόν|δε τὸν τόπον ὀρφανὸν ἐ|μῆς εὐσεβείας ἔχῃ μ[ά]ρτυρα. διόπερ | ὡς ορᾷς Διός τε ᾿Ωρομάσδου και Ἀπόλ|λωνος Μίθρου Ηλίου Ἑρμοῦ καὶ Ἀρτά|γνου Ἡρακλέους Ἄρεως ἐμῆς τε πατρίδος | παντρόφου Κομμαγηνῆς θεοπρε| πῆ ταῦτα ἀγαλματα καθιδρυσάμην | ἀπό τε λιθείας μιᾶς δαίμοσιν ἐπηκόος || σύνθρονον χαρακτήρα μοφῆς ἐμῆς (*OGIS* 383 lines 25-60).
>
> When I took over the ancestral reign, as expression of my pious thoughts I declared the kingdom that was subject to my thrones to be the common abode of all the Gods; and, in awareness of my own most auspicious familial roots, I adorned the images of their form with varied artistry in accordance with ancient Persian and Greek accounts, and I (honored) them with sacrifices and with festivals; and yet in my upright mind | I searched for still more honors; and so, when I assayed to establish the foundation of this Sacred Monument as closely as possible to the heavenly thrones and unassailable to the ravages of time, | so that my bodily frame – most blessed these many years – might sleep forever after dispatching my soul, divinely loved, to the heavenly thrones of Zeus Oromasdos, then indeed I further determined to consecrate this holy place | as a temple of enthronement for all the Gods to share, so that not only this Heroic Band of my ancestors that you see (in statuary) before you might owe its foundation to my care, but also that | the divine model of the illustrious divinities, sanctified on this sacred crest, might have this site, which suffers now no further deprivation, as a witness to my piety. Therefore, as you can see, I have set up these divinely appropriate statues of Zeus Oromasdes, of Apollo | Mithras Helios Hermes, of Artagnes Herakles Ares, and of my all-nourishing country Kommagene; and I have set up the express image of my being, jointly enthroned with the listening divinities – all out of one quarry… (English translation Danker, no. 41).

In contrast to the notion of *σύνναος* with the gods, the sacred *Nomos*, along with the extant iconographic record at Commagene, depicts Antiochus's image as *σύνθρονος* with the gods (line 60). The epigraphic record therefore clarifies any confusion behind the meaning of the *dexiosis* reliefs and the colossal statue of Antiochus. They are, simply put: concretized images of Antiochus in a collaborative and pious relationship with the Greco-Persian traditional gods. To express this piety, Antiochus claims to adorn the form of the gods with artistry from Greek and Persian customs (*μορφῆς μὲν εἰκόνας παντοίαι τέχνηι, καθ᾿ ἅ παλαιὸς λόγος* Περσῶν *τε καὶ* Ἑλλήνων, lines 28-30). Without these lines, it would be appropriate to attribute the syncretic art at Nemrud Dagh to an evolutionary process of merging cultural ideals. However, such an interpretation, as Smith has argued, would overlook Antiochus's intention to hire artists with the

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skill to orientalize his image in "a hybrid art designed to express his particular hybrid dynasty."[100] The hybridity of Antiochus's massive art project, then, does not reflect converging cultural styles alone; rather, it also blends traditional Greek and Persian gods as a mechanism for communicating Antiochus's piety and power alongside the divine.

The sheer volume of media related to Antiochus's dynastic cult at Nemrud Dagh represents an anomaly in the archaeological record. Yet the site well-illustrates the form and structure of ruler cult when it is left to materialize unaccountable off of the beaten path. In a certain sense, Antiochus brought ruler cult to a new level by depicting himself as *sunthronos* with the gods. Antiochus's elevated position of divinity manipulated in stone, however, is nowhere detached from the traditional gods. Indeed, the *dexiosis* reliefs are perhaps the best commentary we have on ruler cult from the Hellenistic period: gods and kings were collaborators in a partnership of power over subordinate subjects in antiquity. As the epigraphic record indicates, the Hellenistic cult of rulers and the traditional gods were not independent, ontologically compartmentalized categories. Rather, they were an integrated and interdependent matrix of power concretized in the visual and epigraphic environment of civic space.

3.8 The Roman Imperial Cults and the Traditional Gods

The decades leading up to the first century CE marked the dawn of a "new age" for two nations at opposite ends of the Mediterranean basin. In the aftermath of the Roman Republic's deterioration, a bid for power broke out between Octavian against Mark Antony and Cleopatra, which they settled with finality at the Battle of Actium in 31 BCE. The victor, Octavian—later renamed Σεβαστός (ie. Augustus)—was hailed as "Savior" of Rome, and the conquered

[100] R. R. R. Smith, *Hellenistic Royal Portraits,* 104.

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populaces quickly interpreted his rise to power through the shared cultural memory of the Hellenistic cult of rulers (especially the *sui generis* example of Alexander the Great [cf. Cicero, *Phil.* 5.17.48]). Augustus's rise to power was accompanied by eschatological undertones articulated best in Virgil's *Aenid*: "And this one is the hero who was so often promised to you, Augustus Caesar, offspring of the divine one … he brings back to the fields of Latium the golden age of the world" (*Aen.* 6.791-3). In contrast to Augustus's inauguration of a golden age, on the other end of the Mediterranean basin, the Jewish nation longed for eschatological deliverance from its subordinate status as a client kingdom under Roman power (*Ps. Sol.* 2).[101] These two contemporary, albeit theologically incompatible eschatological "new ages" nearly come into contact with one another when Luke synchronizes Augustus's imperial census (Luke 2:1-2) with the birth of Israel's "Savior" (Luke 2:11).[102] As other scholars have argued, Luke's synchronism evokes a subtle critique of the Augustan cult, yet it is crucial to remember that the soteriological diction of euergetism could employ the title savior for a god or a king (or both at the same time). Due to the Roman imperial cults' diversity from one city to another, along with the overwhelming volume of material related to it, we will focus on the built environment of Athens

[101] The Roman historian Tacitus interpreted the early Jesus movement with imperial associations: "…at this very time the East was to grow powerful, and rulers, coming from Judea, were to acquire a universal empire" (*Hist.* 5.13). Suetonius, on the other hand, writes, "There had spread over all the orient an old and established belief, that it was fated at that time for men coming from Judaea to rule the world" (*Vespasian* 5.13).

[102] I reproduce this quote from Hans-Josef Klauck, *Religious Context,* 277-78. See also Virgil *Eclogue* 4.4-12; 18-25 for the anticipation of Augustus's birth in language redolent of Messianic prophecy. The role of a child who ushers in a golden age—characterized by the child's god-like status and the dawn of cosmic equilibrium—evokes a striking parallel to the birth of Israel's "Savior" in Luke's infancy narratives (cf. Luke 1:47, 69; 2:11). Eschatological expectations for Augustus' reign can also be found in Luke's juxtaposition of Augustus's hegemonic decree with the birth of Israel's *σωτήρ* (cf. Luke 1:47; 1:69; 2:11; Acts 5:31; 13:23), which creates a curious "polemical parallelism" with the Augustan golden age, along with honors bestowed on Augustus as "savior of the human race" (*CAGI* IV/1 no. 894). On the imperial context of the synchronisms, see: Kazuhiko Yamazaki-Ransom, *The Roman Empire in Luke's Narrative*, 71-79; and Christian Blumenthal, "Augustus' Erlass und Gottes Macht: Überlegungen zur Charakterisierung der Augustusfigur und ihrer erzählstrategischen Funktion in der lukanischen Erzählung," *NTS* 57 (2010): 1-30. I borrow the phrase "polemical parallelism" from Adolf Deissmann, *Light from the Ancient East*, 342-43. Deissmann, however, does not take into account that the title *σωτήρ* had been applied to Zeus Soter, Artemis Soter and the Ptolemaic kings in Egypt well before the rise of Roman imperial cults. The title "savior" also occurs in Acts 5:31 and 13:23.

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in chapter 6.3 of the present study. Before evaluating that material, some initial comments on the Roman imperial cults and the traditional gods are in order.

3.8.1 *Augustan Rome and the Traditional Gods*

The role of the traditional gods as a context out of which the Roman emperors were honored is evident early on during Rome's rise to power. After Julius Caesar's victory at Munda (45 BCE), the Senate voted to permit a chryselephantine statue of Julius Caesar to appear in imperial processions at the circus "together with the statues of the gods" (Dio 43.45; 43.14.3-7).[103] The command to embed the image of Caesar in the statues of the gods represents the reticence the Roman elite had when elevating powerful humans into the abode of the gods. Indeed, it is striking that a period of aniconic worship existed in Rome's cultural memory before the rise of the Roman principate (cf. Varro in Augustine, *Civ.* 4.31). Although the tradition is likely idealized, Rome's aniconicism influenced Augustus, who set a precedent for refusing divine honors in precious materials out of respect for the gods. In the *Res Gestae* Augustus writes: "The statues of myself in the city, whether standing or on horseback or in a quadriga, numbering eighty in all and all of silver, I had removed, and from this money I dedicated golden offerings in the Temple of Apollo… (*Res. Ges.* 24).[104] In accord with the *peri basileias* literature, Augustus portrays himself as one who displays piety toward the gods—in this case, melting his own images down into an offering for the temple of Apollo. Despite Augustus's aniconicism, he was

[103] Quoted from Peter Stewart, *Statues in Roman Society,* 173 n. 51.
[104] Suetonius writes that the golden offerings were tripods (*Aug.* 52). See fig. 69, 193 and 209 in Zanker for extant artistic renderings of the golden tripods. Zanker writes, "The spectacular gesture of melting down so much sculpture was, incidentally, a convenient opportunity for Octavian to get rid of some statues of himself spouting self-assured gestures which did not fit in with his gradually evolving new style and image" (*Power of Images,* 86). Thus, Augustus himself manipulated his image to reflect his evolving political and theological self-understanding. Pliny the Elder, after writing that silver makes passion rage in humans (*Nat.* 33.53), goes out of his way to make it known that Augustus was not the first ruler to receive honors with silver statuary.

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quickly absorbed into the cults of the traditional gods in the winter of 30/29 BCE when he permitted honors of himself in the Greek East (with the expectation that his image be set up alongside Roma and he not be worshiped as a god [Suet., *Aug.* 52]).[105] Augustus's move toward accepting divine honors initiated what Paul Zanker calls a "dissolution of values" that paved the way for the materialization of the Roman imperial cults.[106] This materialization can be identified at the dynastic, provincial and civic levels, along with role-playing in literary sources and media in the archaeological record.

A. *Augustus and the Imperial Image*

Paul Zanker has shown that the manipulation of art and architecture played a strategic role in the bid for power between Octavian and Mark Antony during the thirteen years following Julius Caesar's death in 44 BCE.[107] Notably, Augustus associated his image with the orderly and protective character of the god Apollo, while Mark Antony and Cleopatra imitated the more "un-Roman" or wanton Dionysus (Cassius Dio 50.5). As the epigraphic record indicated above, Dionysus was a favorite deity of the Successors, making it an obvious choice for Antony who was seeking to construct an identity akin to a Hellenistic king. Plutarch relates a story about Mark Antony's reception at Ephesus (ca. 41 BCE) where the people were "hailing him as Dionysus Giver of Joy and Beneficent" (*Ant.* 24). Likewise, after the Augustan *Aegypto capta* and the defeat of Antony and Cleopatra, Plutarch writes that, "Many believed that the god [Dionysus] now abandoned Antony, that god whom he most resembled and whose behavior he had always imitated (Plutarch, *Ant.* 75). The imitation of the traditional gods through role-

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[105] Zanker, *Power of Images,* 302. So Suetoniues: "Though he [Augustus] knew it was the custom to vote temples even to proconsuls, in not one province did he accept one unless it was in the name of Rome as well as in his" (*Aug.* 52).
[106] Zanker, *Power of Images,* 2.
[107] Idem*,* 44-65.

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playing by Augustus and Antony shows that, at an early stage in the Roman Empire, the traditional gods played a pivotal role in the construction of the emperor's image and power. Zanker goes so far as to argue that "As far as art is concerned, it is clear that if the outcome of the civil war had been other than it was, classicism would not have become the dominant style that it did, and instead Roman art would have remained essentially Hellenistic."[108] Like the Attalids, Augustus manipulated sculpture as a strategy for articulating his piety and euergetic power over his subjects.[109]

Aside from role-playing, Augustus's impact on urban space is well documented in several cities in Asia Minor. H. Hänlein-Schäfer identifies fifty-six civic cults set up for Augustus alone, fifty of which were constructed during his lifetime.[110] The intra-continental impact of Augustan temples is noted by Cassius Dio: "This practice, beginning under him [Augustus], has been continued under other emperors, not only among the peoples of Greece, but also among all the others insofar as they are subjects to the Romans" (*Hist.* 51.20.7). This point is also made by Nicolaus of Damascus, who records the impact Augustus had on civic space around the Mediterranean: "Because mankind addresses him thus (as σεβαστός) in accordance with their estimation of his honour, they revere him with temples and sacrifices over islands and continents, organized in cities and provinces, matching the greatness of his virtue and *repaying his benefactions towards them*" (*FGH* 90 F 125). The inscription is telling: the reverence of Augustus through sacrifice and temples at the civic and provincial level reflects a repayment to

[108] Zanker, *Power of Images*, 65.
[109] The manipulation of art by mad emperors could become provocative. For example, Suetonius notes that Caligula sought to bring the famous statue of Zeus from Greece to Rome where the head would be chopped off and replaced with his own. Moreover, Suetonius writes, "Then he [Caligula] extended a part of the palace as far as the Forum, changed the temple of Castor and Pollux into a vestibule and often stood between the pair of divine brothers, presenting himself as an object of adoration to those who entered" (Suetonius, *Cal.* 22.2).
[110] H. Hänlein Schäfer, *Veneratio Augusti: eine Studie zu den Tempeln des ersten römischen Kaisers* (Rome: Bretschneider, 1985).

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Augustus for his benefactions. One can quickly get a sense from these sources for how the system of benefaction provided the conceptual framework for elevating Augustus into the divine realm.[111] A poorly preserved decree on the island of Cos makes a similar point: "Since Emperor Caesar, son of god, god Augustus has by his benefactions to all people outstripped even the Olympian gods…" (*I. Olympia* 53, lines 2-3).[112] This inscription provides a rare example of an emperor purportedly exceeding the ontological and beneficent status of the gods. In comparison to the Hellenistic cult of rulers, the impact of Augustus on civic space across islands and continents (to quote Nicolaus of Damascus) trumped Alexander and the Successors by sheer volume of media. Mary Beard and John Henderson note that a recent count of Augustus's full-length extant statues has reached more than 200, and estimates of ancient production approach 25,000 – 50,000 portraits in stone (notably, this figure does not include numismatics).[113]

B. *The Res Gestae Divi Augustus and the Euergetic Pietas of Augustan Rome*

The euergetic *pietas* of Augustus is evident throughout the *Res Gestae Divi Augustus* (*RGDA*).[114] The *RGDA* is an autobiographical aretology written by Augustus himself (with the possible

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[111] Simon Price, "Rituals and Power," 57 and 61. See also Steven Friesen, *Imperial Cults*, 54.

[112] Translation is from Justin Hardin, *Galatians and the Imperial Cult*, 28. See also Price, *Rituals and Power*, 55.

[113] Mary Beard and John Henderson, *Classical Art: From Greece to Rome* (Oxford: Oxford University, 2001), 216. On the remarkable consistency of imperial portraiture across the empire, see: Emerson H. Swift, "Imagines in Imperial Portraiture," *American Journal of Archaeology* 27.3 (1923): 286-301; and Price, *Rituals and Power,* 171. It is also important to recognize that Roman coin issues profoundly influenced the image of the emperor, where he (or his wife) was often represented alongside motifs of cult and religion, especially temples and sacrifice. See Jonathan Williams, "Religion and Roman Coins," in *A Companion to Roman Religion* (ed. Jörg Rüpke; Oxford: Blackwell, 2007), 143-63.

[114] John Scheid helpfully reminds the interpreter of Roman religion that *pietas* had little to do with Christian conceptions of personal experience, faith and eternal salvation. Rather, the concept had to do with "correct social relation with the gods; it meant giving them the honours due to their rank and associating them with the government of the *res publica,* as fellow citizens, or rather as good *patroni* of the city" ("Augustus and Roman Religion: Continuity, Conservatism, and Innovation," in *The Cambridge Companion to the Age of Augustus* [ed. Karl Galinsky; Cambridge: Cambridge University, 2005], 177). Hellenistic and Roman rulers' display of *pietas* communicated through benefits on cult and religion, then, had more to do with cosmic order than showing off wealth and personal religious devotion.

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exception of the Appendix).[115] The primary copy of the *RGDA* was written in bronze and placed at the front of Augustus's impressive Mausoleum in the *Campus Martius*.[116] Above the inscription stood a colossal bronze statue of Augustus (Strabo 5.3.8), thus placing the *RGDA* in direct visual-spatial relation to the image and power of Augustus. As Jaś Elsner writes, "To read the *Res Gestae* was to know one's master."[117] Although the *RGDA* in Rome is not extant, three copies of the *RGDA* have been uncovered from Asia Minor: a Latin and Greek copy from Ancyra (the *Monumentum Ancyranum*); a Latin copy from Pisidan Antioch (*Monumentum Antiochenum*); and a Greek copy from Apollonia (*Monumentum Antiochenum*).[118] The copies in Asia Minor were most likely associated with the emperor worship, and it is striking to note that Paul passed through both Pisidian Antioch (Acts 13:14), Apollonia (Acts 17:1) and Rome (Acts 28) during his missionary travels.

In the Appendix of the *Res Gestae*, Augustus boasts of his construction projects related to religion and civic infrastructure. The breadth of his building campaigns, including the repair of 82 temples, inscribed Augustus's *pietas* into civic space. Lines 1-4 of the Greek version of the Appendix are quoted here:

> 1. συγκεφαλαίωσις ἠριθμημένου χρήτος εἰς τὸ αἰράριον ἤ εἰς τὸν δῆμον τὸν Ῥωμαίων ἤ εἰς τοὺς ἀπολελυμένους στρατιώτας ἕξ μυριάδες μυριάδων. 2. ἔργα καινὰ ἐγενετο ὑπ᾽αὐτοῦ ναοὶ μὲν Ἄρεως, Διὸς Βροντησίου καὶ Τροπαιοφόρου, Πανός, Ἀπόλλωνος, θεοῦ Ἰουλίου, Κυρεινου, Ἀθηνᾶς, Ἥρας Βασιλίδος, Διὸς Ἐλθευθερίου, Ἡρώων, Θεῶν Πατρίων, Νεότητος, Μητρος Θεῶν, Βουλευτήριον σὺν Χαλκιδικῶι, ἀγορὰι Ζεβαστήι, θέατρον Μαρκέλλου,

[115] Allison Cooley notes that the verbs change from the first to third person in the Appendix and monetary values are calculated in *denarii* rather than in *sestertii*, which is the currency of the Greek East. Consequently, the Appendix was likely written for "the benefit of provincial readers" with its focus on benefits for towns in the Greek East. Allison E. Cooley, *Res Gestae Divi Augustus: Text, Translation, and Commentary* (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 2009), 19.
[116] On the Campus Martius as a "cosmological center" for Augustus's re-mapping of space and time around his rule, see the comments in Paul Rehak, *Imperium und Cosmos: Augustus and the Northern Campus Martius* (ed. John G. Younger; Madison: University of Wisconsin, 2006), 143-46.
[117] Jaś Elsner, "Inventing Imperium: Texts and the Propaganda of Monuments in Augustan Rome," in *Art and Text in Roman Culture* (ed. Jaś Elsner; Cambridge: Cambridge University, 1996), 32-53, here 52.
[118] Allison E. Cooley, *Res Gestae Divi Augustus*, 7.

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> βασιλικὴ Ἰουλία, ἄλσος Καισάρων, στοαὶ ἐν Παλατίῳι, στοὰ ἐν ἱπποδρόμωι φλαμινίωι. 3. ἐπεσκευάσθη τὸ Καπιτώλιον, ναοὶ ὀγδοήκοντα δύο, θέατρον Πουπηίου, ὁδος φλαμινία, ἀγωγοὶ ὑdάτων. 4. δαπάναι δὲ εἰς θέας καὶ μονομάχους καὶ ἀθλητὰς καὶ θηρομαχίαν δωρεαί τε ἀποικίαις πόλεσιν ἐν Ἰταλίαι, πόλεσιν ἐν ἐπαρχείαις σεισμῶι καί ἐνπυρισμοῖς πεπονηκυίαις, ἤ κατ᾽ἄνδρα φίλοις καὶ συνκλητικοῖς, ὧν τὰς τειμήσεις προσεξεπλήρωσεν, ἄπειρον πλῆθος.[119]
>
> 1. Summary of money paid to the treasury or to the people of Rome or to soldiers who had been discharged: 600,000,000. 2. New works were built by him: temples of Ares, Zeus Thunderer and Trophy-Bearer, Pan, Apollo, god Julius, Quirinus, Athene, Queen Hera, Zeus Liberator, Heroes, ancestral gods, Youth, Mother of Gods; Council chamber with *Chalcidicon,* Augustan forum, theatre of Marcellus, basilica Julia, grove of Caesars, porticoes on the Palatine, portico in the Flaminian racecourse. 3. Repaired were the Capitolium, eighty-two temples, theatre of Pompey, Flaminian Way, acqueducts. 4. In addition, expenditure for spectacles, namely gladiatorial and athletes and sea battle and wild-beast hunt, and gifts to colonies and cities in Italy, to cities in the provinces that had suffered as a result of earthquakes and fires, or individually to friends and senators, whose census valuation he made up to the full amount, countless quantity.[120]

The Appendix of the *RGDA* portrays Augustus as a super-benefactor over matters related to civic infrastructure and especially religion. When read within its larger narrative context, the Appendix reminds its implied audience that the empire-wide improvements to civic space—in both cultic and non-cultic contexts—have a master architect and benefactor: namely, Augustus. In this way, the *RGDA* functions as a guidebook for Augustus's re-mapping of imperium. On this point, Jaś Elsner is again worth quoting again: "In the realm of imperial rhetoric and propaganda … the *Res Gestae* served to set up the frame-work of signification both for the copious art works and monuments produced by the Augustan era and by extension for the new vision of imperium itself."[121] This point highlights the important function of the Hellenistic and Roman ruler as a collaborator and priestly mediator between the gods and the city, and reflects the religious—and artistic—revival that often accompanied Hellenistic and Roman rulers' accession to power. In

[119] Greek text from Cooley, *Res Gestae Divi Augustus*, 101.
[120] English translation from Cooley, *Res Gestae Divi Augustus*, 101.
[121] Jaś Elsner, "Inventing Imperium," 32-53, here 41.

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addition, it raises the question of how the aniconic thinker in antiquity would interpret such religious revival initiated by the ruling power.

3.8.2 Polemical Parallelism and the Traditional Gods

Adolf Deissman's *Licht vom Osten* opened up new philological connections between early Christianity and the Roman imperial cults. In particular, Deissmann pioneered the concept of "polemical parallelism" between royal epithets in the epigraphic record used to honor Hellenistic and Roman rulers that were transferred to the cult of Christ. One often-quoted line from Deissmann's work deserves our consideration:

> The cult of Christ goes forth into the world of the Mediterranean and soon displays the endeavour to reserve for Christ the words already in use for worship in that world, words that had just been transferred to the deified emperors (or had perhaps even been newly invented in emperor worship). Thus there arises a polemical parallelism between the cult of the emperor and the cult of Christ, which makes itself felt where ancient words derived by Christianity from the treasury of the Septuagint and the Gospels happen to coincide with solemn concepts of the Imperial cult which sounded the same or similar.[122]

Deissmann's point is especially evident in the custom of honoring rulers with the royal epithets σωτήρ and εὐεργέτης, which is a common epigraphic honor during the age of the Successors and the Roman era (e.g., Julius Caesar was honored as σωτήρ and εὐεργέτης in Greece, I.G. VII; Athens, *CIA* III; *IO* 365; and Asia *IGR* 4.57; *IGR* 4.303; *IGR* 4.305).[123] As other have noted, Luke's synchronism of Jesus the Davidic savior (Luke 1:47, 69; 2:11) with Augustus's census (Luke 2:1) evokes a strong intra-textual polemical parallelism with the public *timai* accorded to the Augustan cult.[124] Moreover, Luke is the only author in the New Testament to employ the substantive εὐεργέτης (Luke 22:25) and the verb εὐεργετέω (Acts 10:38) to critique gentile power

[122] Adolf Deissmann, *Light from the Ancient East*, 342.
[123] For epigraphic inscriptions recording divine honors toward the Roman emperors, see Appendix III in Lily Ross Taylor, *The Divinity of the Roman Emperor* (New York: Arno Press, 1975), 267.
[124] Christian Blumenthal, "Augustus' Erlass und Gottes Macht: Überlegungen zur Charakterisierung der Augustusfigur und ihrer erzählstrategischen Funktion in der lukanischen Erzählung," *NTS* 57 (2010): 1-30.

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dynamics (e.g., Luke 22:24-30).[125] The popularity of reading imperial epithets subversively, however, demands hermeneutical nuance since imperial titulature was conferred on gods *and* kings. For example, epithets such as σωτήρ, εὐεργέτης, παντοκράτωρ, πατήρ, βασιλεύς, ἐπιφανής and θεὸς ὕψιστος can be found in honorific inscriptions for gods and the ruling power in Greco-Roman antiquity; this usage raises deeper questions about the implied object of resistance of a polemical parallelism.

A. *Imperial Epithets and Functional Polytheism*

The religio-cultural hybridity of euergetism underlies the contextual flexibility of gods' and kings' epithets. Indeed, Hellenistic and Roman imperial epithets were not a subjective or abstract ascription of divinized quality conferred on a ruler to make a statement about their ontological status. Rather, royal epithets were descriptors transferred from the gods to powerful benefactors to articulate the circumstances under which a hero, benefactor, governor or ruler is honored. But more importantly, the gods' epithets were conferred on powerful humans to associate the benefactor with a god's pragmatic *function*.[126] As Nock writes in his seminal article on the subject: "[*Soter*] could be used of gods and men alike, and, when applied to the latter, it did not necessarily suggest that they belonged or approximated to the category of the former… But at all times it denoted a performance of *a function and not membership of a class in the hierarchy of beings*."[127] Even in cases when subjects assimilated a ruler to a god's actual name, Duncan Fishwick observes that the act of identification "does not mean, surely in most cases, … that the ruler is thought literally to be a god incarnate or is worshipped in that capacity; only that he is

[125] Craig A. Evans, “King Jesus," 120-139.
[126] For a list of governors given the epithers *soter* and *euergetes,* see A. D. Nock, "Soter and Euergetes," 732-33.
[127] Nock, "Soter and Euergetes," 720, 22.

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conceived as exercising some of the functions or qualities of a god to whom he approximates by analogy."[128] The hermeneutical danger, therefore, is reading into imperial epithets a host of monotheistic concepts about divinity that stem from the Jewish-Christian tradition rather than the "functional polytheism" of Greco-Roman religion.

The functional purpose of the gods' epithets surfaces in Cicero's dialogue *On the Nature of the Gods.*[129] Through the mouth of the character Balbus, Cicero discusses the personification of abstract ideas. According to this account, the Greeks named their gods based on "the benefits they bestow" (Cicero, *Nat. d.,* II.60-2; trans. Beard, North and Price no. 2.3a). In correlation with the type and quality of benefit the object of power bestows, the deity is in turn given a descriptive epithet that reflects that quality of power. "So sometimes they called what was produced by a god by the name of the deity itself—as when we refer to 'wheat' as Ceres, or to 'wine' as 'Liber'" (Cicero, *Nat. d.,* II.60-2; trans. Beard, North and Price no. 2.3a). The epithets conferred on rulers followed a similar functional pattern. In Dio Chrysostom's *First Oration on Kingship,* for example, Dio observes that the king "may be called by the title 'Father' of his people and his subjects, *but he may justify the title by his deeds*" (*Or.* 1.22). Dio further elucidates the relationship between a ruler's deeds and their epithets when he suggests that the royal titles of Zeus Basileus are a pattern of descriptive functional qualities that the ideal ruler should emulate and conform to (*Or.* 1.37). According to Dio, rulers' imitation of Zeus stems from Homer, who set in motion the notion of calling "true kings 'Zeus-nurtured' and 'like Zeus in

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[128] Duncan Fishwick, *The Imperial Cult in the Latin West,* 30.
[129] Herodotus suggests that, "Hesiod and Homer created the genealogy of the gods in Greece and gave them their sobriquets, distributing offices and honours among them and shaping their figures" (Hist. 2.53.2). For further coments on the gods' epithets, see: W. Burkert, *Greek Religion* (trans. John Raffan; Cambridge: Harvard University, 1985), 123, 84; and idem. *The Orientalizing Revolution: Near Eastern Influence on Greek Culture in the Early Archaic Age* (trans. Margaret E. Pinder and Walter Burkert; Cambridge: Harvard University, 1992), 115-16.

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counsel…'" (*Or.* 1.38; cf. Homer *Il.* 2.169, 196, 407). On the royal function of Zeus's royal titles, and their implication for the behavior of the ideal ruler, Dio writes:

> In fact, it stands to reason that practically all the kings among Greeks or barbarians who have proved themselves not unworthy of this title have been disciples and emulators of this god. For Zeus alone of the gods has the epithets of "Father" and "King," Protector of Cities," "Lord of Friends and Comrades," "Guardian of the Race," and also "Protector of Suppliants," "God of Refuge," and "God of Hospitality, these and his countless other titles signifying goodness and the fount of goodness. He is addressed as "King" because of his dominion and power; as "Father," I ween, on account of his solicitude and gentleness; as "Protector of Cities" in that he upholds the law and the commonweal; as "Guardian of the Race" on account of the tie of kinship which unites gods and men; as "Lord of Friends and Comrades" because he brings all men together and wills that they be friendly to one another and never enemy or foe; as "Protector of Suppliants" since he inclines his ear and is gracious to men when they pray; as "God of Refuge" because he gives refuge from evil; as "God of Hospitality" because it is the very beginning of friendship not to be unmindful of strangers or to regard any human being as an alien; and as "God of Wealth and Increase" since he causes all fruitage and is the giver of wealth and substance, not of poverty and want. For all these functions must at the outset be inherent in the royal function and title (ὡς εὐθὺς ἁπάσας ταύτας δέον ἐγγενέσθαι τὰς δυνάμεις τῇ τοῦ βασιλέως δυνάμει τε καὶ κλήσει, *Or.* 1.38-41).

For Dio, Zeus's royal epithets have a specific "royal function" that the ideal ruler is to emulate as King, Father and so on so forth. Imperial epithets, for Dio, were less a statement about a given ruler's divinity and more a descriptive quality related to imitating the behavior and cosmic order of Zeus. Richard Gordon best captures this nuance: "If to the people emperors looked very much like gods, to the emperors the gods looked very much like themselves—part of the order of things."[130] Rulers' epithets, therefore, were not evoked within categories of divinity *per se*—rather, they were conferred as descriptive and/or functional qualities that mirrored the cosmic order and *euergesia* of the gods.

The imitation of gods' royal function is further evident when Philo caricatures the theatricality of Gaius Caligula's imitation of the gods through role-playing (*Legat.* 76-113). Philo especially condemns Gaius for eclipsing the demi-gods in an attempt to publicly assimilate

[130] Richard Gordon, "Roman Imperial Cult," 50.

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himself to Hermes, Apollo and Ares (*Legat.* 93). But rather than imitate the virtue and *euergesia* of each god, Philo condemns Gaius for acting as their semantic and functional opposite. In response, Philo writes: "The people who witnessed this were amazed at the illogicality of it all, and wondered how a man whose actions were the opposite of those of the gods to whose honours he laid claim (ἰσότιμος) could fail to realize that he should cultivate their virtues (ἀρετὰς αὐτῶν), although he dressed up in the insignia of each of them in turn" (*Legat.* 98; trans. Smallwood).[131] Much more could be said on this passage in the *Legatio*—suffice it to say that Philo interprets Gaius's ἰσόθεοι τιμαί within a framework of functionality and imitation of the gods' virture rather than a statement about divinity per se. The transfer of epithets from gods to kings in a mimetic paradigm infuses polemical parallelisms with a political and religious dimension; however, a ruler's epithet was not abstracted from the functional purpose of the gods. Therefore, when Luke applies the epithets σωτήρ, κύριος, and βασιλεύς to Jesus, he could be making a theological claim that Jesus is the true savior over against a god or a king (or, more likely, both at the same time).[132] Ironically, interpreting royal epithets as anti-imperial polemical parallelisms can mitigate Luke's subversive polemical aims by reducing the referent of such speech to Caesar/empire alone (rather than the larger cosmology of empire in which the image and power of gods and kings were embedded).

B. *Εὐαγγέλιον and Polemical Parallelism*

A correlative hermeneutical consideration deserves our consideration. Among New Testament scholars, much attention has been drawn to the Priene inscription from 9 BCE where Augustus is

[131] E. Mary Smallwood, *Philonis Alexandrini Legatio Ad Gaium* (Leiden: Brill, 1961).
[132] Luke uses σωτήρ at Luke 1:47; 2:11; Acts 5:31; 13:23. For Luke's use of βασιλεύς with direct reference to Jesus, see Luke 19:38; 23:2, 3; 23:37, 38; Acts 17:7. On Luke's extensive use of κύριος, see C. Kavin Rowe, *Early Narrative Christology: The Lord in the Gospel of Luke* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2006).

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hailed as savior (*σωτῆρα*) for bringing good news (*εὐαγγέλια*) to the world.[133] The inscription, on two separate stones, was discovered in Priene; but fragments of it were also found in Apamea, Eumeneia, Dorylaion and Maioneia.[134] The first stone (lines 1-29) records a letter from the proconsul Paulus Fabius Maxiumus to the Asian League, encouraging the Asian League to reorient time—calendrically speaking—around Augustus's birthday for the "many benefits (*εὐεργετήμασιν*) he has conferred" (Danker, no. 33 line 17). The second stone (lines 30-75) records a decree by the Asian League to confer honors upon Augustus by reorienting the calendrical year to begin with Augustus's birthday and to replace the Macedonian lunar calendar with the Julian solar calendar.[135] Lines 32-41 are quoted here:

> Ἔδοξεν τοῖς ἐπὶ Ἀσίας | Ἕλλησιν, γνώμη τοῦ ἀρχιερέως Ἀπολλωνίου τοῦ Μηνοφίλου Ἀζανίτου· | ἐπειδὴ ἡ πάντα διατάξασα τοῦ βίου ἡμῶν πρόνοια σπουδὴν εἰσενενκαμένη καὶ φιλοτμίαν τὸ τεληότατον τῶι βίωι διεκόσμησεν ἐνενκαμένην τὸν Σεβαστόν, ὅν εἰς εὐεργεσίαν ἀνθρώπων ἐπλήρωσεν ἀρετῆς, ὥσπερ ἡμεῖν καὶ τοῖς μεθ᾽ ἡμᾶς σωτῆρα πέμψασα | τὸν παύσοντα μὲν πόλεμον, κοσμήσοντα δὲ πάντα, φανεὶς δὲ | ὁ Καῖσαρ τὰς ἐλπίδας τῶν προλαβόντων [---------------------] ἔθηκεν, οὐ μόνον τοὺς πρὸ αὐτοῦ γεγονότας εὐεργέτας ὑπερβα|λόμενος, ἀλλ οὐδ᾽ ἐν τοῖς ἐσομένοις ἐλπίδα ὑπολιπὼν ὑπερβολῆς, || ἦρξεν δὲ τῶι κόσμωι τῶν δἰ αὐτον εὐανγελίων ἡ γενέθλιος | (*OGIS* 458 lines 32-41).
>
> It seemed good to the Greek cities in Asia, on the recommendation of the high priest Apollonius, son of Menophilos from Arcadia, since providence, in divinely ordering our existence, has shown esteem and a lavish outlay has embellished the good—perfection—onto life by displaying Augustus, whom virtue has filled for the benefit of humankind, while graciously giving us and those after us a Savior who has ended war, setting things right in peace, and since Caesar when revealed surpassed the hopes of all who had anticipated the good news [*euangelia*],[136] not only going beyond the benefits of those who

[133] For textual reconstruction, see or Victor Ehrenburg and A. H. M. Jones, eds., *Documents Illustrating the Reigns of Augustus and Tiberius* (2nd ed.; Oxford: Clarendon, 1976), no. 98. References to the Priene inscription among New Testament scholars are seemingly endless. See especially Justin Hardin, *Galatians and the Imperial Cult* (WUNT 237; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2008), 32-34. On the context, form and English translation of the inscription, see the important contribution of Edwin A. Judge, "Augustus in the *Res Gestae*," in *The First Christians in the Roman World: Augustan and New Testament Essays* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2008), 182-223.
[134] See Frederick Danker, *Benefactor: Epigraphic Study of a Graeco-Roman and New Testament Semantic Field* (St. Louis: Clayton, 1982), 216.
[135] For comment, see Justin Hardin, *Galatians and the Imperial Cult*, 32.
[136] It is important to note that there is a textual lacunae here, which has been reconstructed by Ehrenburg and Jones to include the word "gospels" in the plural. Thus there is only one extant use of the word *εὐαγγέλιον*

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> had preceded him, but rather leaving no hope of surpassing him for those who will come, because of him the birthday of God began good news [*euangelia*] for the world (English trans. Elliot and Reasoner, no. 24).

The decree is written in the diction of benefaction—notably, εὐεργέτης and σωτήρ are both present. As we will see repeatedly below, one ought not to suppose that such honors began with Augustus; rather, the honors conferred on Augustus in the Priene inscription find ample precedent within the epigraphic literary culture of the Hellenistic cult of rulers. For example, Neil Elliot and Mark Reasoner, along with Adolf Deissmann, Graham Stanton and Justin Hardin, fail to acknowledge the use of εὐαγγέλιον as early as 311 BCE on an inscription in Scepsis honoring Antigonus I Monophthalmus (306-301 BCE) with the hortatory command that the city offer "sacrifice for the good tidings sent by Antigonus" (θῦσαι δὲ καὶ [εὐ]αγγέ|λια τὴν πόλιν ἐπὶ τοῖς ὑπ᾽Ἀντιγόνου | ἀφεσταλμένοι[ς]; *OGIS* 6, *l.* 31; Austin, no. 39). Likewise, in ca. 246-244 BCE, the city of Ilion began a "good-tidings" (*euangelia*) sacrifice for Seleucus II (*I. Ilion* no. 35). It is this rich Hellenistic epigraphic culture, I contend, that has been overlooked by some New Testament scholars with the consequence of giving the false impression that the epigraphic honors given to Augustus were a new phenomenon in the Greco-Roman world.

In addition, several scholars have rightly drawn attention to the use of εὐαγγέλιον in the Priene inscription.[137] However, some scholars have over-weighted the word with Christianizing semantic presuppositions to create a polemical dichotomy between early Christianity and the Roman imperial cults. Neil Elliot and Mark Reasoner, for example, write of a "veritable Augustan 'gospel'" based on the use of εὐαγγέλιον in the Priene inscription.[138] The concept of an

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in the inscription. See Victor Ehrenburg and A. H. M. Jones, eds., *Documents Illustrating the Reigns of Augustus and Tiberius*, no. 98.

[137] For other important occurrences of the word, see: Plutarch *Pomp.* 66.3; Josephus, *War* 4.10.6; 4.11.5; and Deissmann, *Light from the Ancient East,* 366.

[138] See Neil Elliot and Mark Reasoner, *Documents and Images for the Study of Paul* (Minneapolis: Fortress,

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Augustan gospel misunderstands the polymorphic nature of Roman religion, and embellishes emperor worship with Christianzing presuppositions as if ruler worship functioned apart from the larger ritual and cosmic infrastructure of the traditional gods. Additionally, the above New Testament scholars do not take into account that the Priene inscription orders that "the stelae [are] to be placed in the temple precincts of Roma and Augustus…" (Danker, no. 33, l. 64; ἥν καὶ τεθῆναι ἐν τῶι τῆς Ῥώμης καὶ τοῦ | Σεβαστοῦ τεμένει.; *OGIS* 458 lines 63-64). The location of the stelae associate Augustus with Roma, placing the literary content of the inscription in a posture of piety and visual association with Rome's patron deity. Notwithstanding my caution, Martin Hengel's comments are probably too strong: "It is absurd to continue to suggest, as happens again and again, that one should derive these forms of speech [the word "gospel"] from the cult of the Caesar."[139] In Hellenistic and Roman imperial contexts, *euangelia* in the plural was employed to describe the joy that accompanied a ruler's *euergesia* and their accession to power. In the Christian context, on the other hand, *euangelion* in the singular evoked an exclusive message—*the* Gospel—of salvation rooted in the coming, life, death and resurrection of the Christ within a much more exclusive monotheism (e.g., Mark 1:1; 1 Cor 15:3-5). One cannot preclude the possibility of underlying polemical parallelism, but the notion of an "Augustan Gospel" eclipses the myriad ways the functional polytheism of Greco-Roman religion undergirded the soteriological dimensions of imperial power. Although Deissmann overlooked

2011), 119. Mark Reasoner writes "This inscription [ie., the Priene inscription] represents the best known use of 'gospel' in Greek (*euangelia,* here in the plural) before the composition of the New Testament" (*Roman Imperial Texts: A Sourcebook* [Minneapolis: Fortress, 2013], 30). Reasoner, however, does not discuss its usage in the Hellenistic world. See also Richard Horsley's oversimplified dichtomy between the "gospel of Caesar" and the "gospel of Christ" ("Introduction," in *Paul and Empire: Religion and Power in Roman Imperial Society* [Harrisburg: Trinity Press International, 1997], 1-8). See also Graham N. Stanton, *Jesus and Gospel* (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 2004), 31-33; and Justin Hardin, *Galatians and the Imperial Cult* (WUNT 237; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2008), 33-34. For English translation of the Priene inscription, see: Frederick Danker, *Benefactor,* no. 33.

[139] Martin Hengel, *Saint Peter: The Underestimated Apostle* (trans. Thomas Trapp; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2010), 88 n. 302.

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this point, one can sense Deissmann's caution: “I am sure that in certain cases a polemical intention against the cult of the emperor cannot be proved; but mere chance coincidences might later awaken a powerful sense of contrast in the mind of the people.”[140] The use of *εὐαγγέλιον* in the plural in both Hellenistic and Roman contexts cautions against creating a so-to-speak "Augustan gospel" as if the Augustan ideology functioned apart from the benefits and material culture of the gods.

3.9 Summary and Conclusion

Just as Roman religion did not have a systematic theology detailing the mechanics of ruler cults, it also did not have a systematic formula for understanding the relationship between gods and kings. As the epigraphic and literary sources examined heretofore indicate, this relationship was a variegated one. Notwithstanding this diversity, the preceding discussion has sought to show that the traditional gods provided the cosmic setting, theological framework and ritual infrastructure for the dissemination of deified rulers' image and power across the Mediterranean. The polytheistic system and anthropomorphic narrative of Greco-Roman religion provided the interpretive lens through which subjects made sense of powerful rulers. Despite Simon Price's warning against "Christianizing" approaches to the interpretation of the imperial cults, the concept of "anti-imperial rhetoric" in the New Testament carries with it the inherent danger of reducing Roman polytheism to the thought world of Jewish-Christian monotheism.[141] That is to say, to pit Jesus against Caesar—while turning a blind eye to the cosmic matrix of traditional gods in which Caesar was embedded—is, in effect, to falsely interpret the emperor as a stand-alone, monotheistic deity. Because of the Roman imperial cults' local variation, we will evaluate

[140] Adolf Deissmann, *Light from the Ancient East*, 342-43.
[141] So Price, "There is a deep-rooted ethnocentric desire to play off Greek and Roman cults against Christianity so as to define its standing, and the imperial cult is closely bound up in this debate" (*Rituals and Power,* 14).

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the relationship between gods and kings in Athens in more detail in chapter six. But in order to further understand the referent and strategy of Paul's polemic against idolatry, it is necessary that we evaluate the treasure chest out of which Luke crafted his historiographical narrative: the Septuagint and its strategies of resisting the idolatry of empire.

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CHAPTER 4.

POLITICAL IDOLOTRY AND GENTILE KINGSHIP

> The Egyptians worship many animals and monstrous images; the Jews conceive of one god only, and that with the mind alone: they regard as impious those who make from perishable materials representations of gods in man's image; that supreme and eternal being is to them incapable of representation and without end. Therefore they set up no statues in their cities, still less in their temples; this flattery is not paid their kings, nor this honour given to the Caesars (*non regibus haec adulatio, non Caesaribus honor*).
>
> —Tacitus, *Hist.* 5.5.4

4.1 Introduction

The Roman historian Tacitus provides the most detailed description of Judaism we have from a gentile perspective in antiquity. In a sardonic remark, Tacitus observes that Jews' aniconic monotheism was not only a religious conviction, but also a political one: images of "gods in man's image" along with the Israelite kings and the Caesars were strictly prohibited in accord with Jewish ancestral tradition. Tacitus, perhaps unknowingly, was commenting on the Mosaic prohibition against the worship of "other gods" (θεοὶ ἕτεροι, LXX Exod 20:3) and sculptured idols (οὐ ποιήσεις σεαυτῷ εἴδωλον, LXX Exod 20:4), traditions Tacitus calls "perverse and disgusting" (*Hist.* 5.5.1). Tacitus's biting cynicism may reflect artful double-speak, wherein his caricature of the Jews provides an opportunity to covertly articulate Tacitus's own disgust with emperor worship.[1] But the rhetorical strategy of double-speak ought not diminish the substance

[1] On the art of double-speak, see Shadi Bartsch, "The Art of Sincerity: Pliny's Panegyricus," in *Oxford Readings in Classical Studies: Latin Panegyric* (ed. Roger Rees; Oxford: Oxford University, 2012), 148-93; "Praise and Doublespeak: Tacitus' *Dialogus,*" in *Oxford Readings in Tacitus* (ed. Rhiannon Ash; Oxford: Oxford University, 2012) 119-154; and Actors *in the Audience: Theatricality and Doublespeak from Nero to Hadrian* (Cambridge: Harvard University, 1994). On Tacitus's character assassination of the Jews, see Eric Gruen, "Tacitus and the Defamation of the Jews," in *Rethinking the Other in Antiquity* (Princeton: Princeton University, 2011), 179-196. Gruen writes, "…the mention of Jewish aversion to divine honors for the Caesars

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of Tacitus's accusations: Jews' worship of "one god only" and non-participation in the visual honors of gods and kings is tantamount to a form of superstition at best and iconoclasm at worst. But to what degree did Jews' religious identity, rooted in the first and second commandments, create an environment of tension with the ruling power, especially as Jews lived out their lives under the authority of gentile rulers during the Second Temple period? And when conflict did arise—what were the discursive strategies of resistance available to Jews?

A primary feature of resistance literature is the attempt to limit the power of one's ideological opponent.[2] The concept of resisting "empire," however, is admittedly broad. To avoid abstract, undefined notions of empire and resistance, it is crucial that the interpreter identify (1) the conditions for resistance; (2) the medium of resistance; and (3) *what* machinations of empire comprise the object of resistance. For example, subjugated peoples could experience multiple forms of stressors from their colonizers, including—but not limited to—violent oppression, forced labor, limited legal autonomy, economic exploitation and racism. Under these oppressive circumstances, the colonized could "write back" to their overlords with a discourse of resistance

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constitutes a sneer at the imperial cult, rather than at the Jews" (193). Gruen points to Tacitus's aversion to Augustus **(**Tacitus, *Ann.* 1.10); Nero (*Ann.*15.74); and Caligula (*Hist.* 5.9.2). Gruen may well be right that the invective reflects Tacitus's cynical and teasing style of writing; however, as we know from other sources, the accusation also contains a nugget of historical truth: Jewish belief in one god without representation cut against the grain of emperor worship. On gentile attitudes toward Jews, see: M. Stern, *Greek and Latin Authors on Jews and Judaism,* 3 vols. (Jerusalem: Israel Academy of Sciences and Humanities, 1974-84).

[2] See J. M. Barbalet, "Power and Resistance," *British Journal of Sociology* 4 (1985): 531-48; and Anathea Portier-Young, *Apocalypse Against Empire: Theologies of Resistance in Early Judaism* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2011), 5-11. In contrast to many studies that do not define resistance, Portier-Young provides three major points undergirding her concept of resistance: (1) Domination, its strategies, and the hegemony that reinforces it provide the conditions for and objects of resistance. (2) Acts of resistance proceed from the intention to limit, oppose, reject, or transform the hegemonic institutions (and cosmologies…) as well as systems, strategies, and acts of domination. (3) Resistance is effective action. It limits power and influences outcomes, where power is understood as an agent's ability to carry out his or her will" (Portier-Young, *Apocalypse Against Empire,* 11). Whereas Jewish apocalyptic sought to resist the hegemonic devices of imperial stressors, other literature such as the icon parody sought to more explicitly resist cultic and euergetic honors. In this way, both the medium and object of resistance of the icon parody differs from Jewish apocalyptic.

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to classify and undermine the symbols, oppressive mechanisms and ideologies of the oppressor.[3] Among Biblical scholars, much attention has been drawn to the strategies of resistance in Jewish apocalyptic literature.[4] The industrious study of Anathea Portier-Young, in particular, provides the most theoretically sophisticated and historically grounded case for an anti-imperial reading of Jewish apocalypses during the Hellenistic period.[5] To resist Antiochus IV's *programma* to erase Jewish identity, Portier-Young argues that Jewish apocalyptic visionaries urged public confrontation of their persecutors through a message of faithfulness and hope in the Book of Daniel, the Apocalypse of Weeks (*1 En.* 93:1-10) and the Book of Dreams (*1 En.* 83-90).[6] Portier-Young's study has significantly advanced our understanding of early Judaism's apocalyptic strategies of resistance to empire. However, as the Epilogue to Portier-Young's study

[3] See Bill Aschcroft, Gareth Griffiths and Helen Tiffin, *The Empire Writes Back: Theory and Practice in Post-Colonial Literatures* (New York: Routledge, 1989), esp. 38-77.
[4] See Anathea-Portier Young, *Apocalypse Against Empire*; Richard Horsley, *Revolt of the Scribes: Resistance and Apocalyptic Origins* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2009); Philip F. Esler, "Rome in Apocalyptic and Rabbinic Literature," in *The Gospel of Matthew in its Roman Imperial Context* (eds. John Riches and David C. Sim; London: T&T Clark, 2005), 9-33; and David C. Sim, "Coping with the Present by Inventing the Future: Jewish Apocalyptic Texts as Crisis Management Literature," in *Ancient Jewish and Christian Texts as Crisis Management Literature* (eds. David C. Sim and Pauline Allen; LNTS 445; New York: T&T Clark, 2012), 29-45.
[5] John Collins goes so far as to write in the foreward of Anathea Portier-Young's study that "not since the early work of Martin Hengel have we seen such a thick description of Seleucid history and politics in the context of biblical scholarship" (xii).
[6] Though it is not yet common to interpret Enochic literature anti-imperially, Portier-Young argues that this body of literature counters the discourse of Antiochus's empire by rooting its authority in the unique status of Enoch—"who walked with God"—during Israel's primeval history (Gen 5:24). The seventeen verses that make up the Apocalypse of Weeks (93:1-17) create an alternative vision of a future just economy, future temple, and the coming kingdom of the Great One (345). Contrary to Daniel's call for non-violent witness, the audience of the Apocalypse of Weeks is invited to wield the sword when God executes judgment on the wicked. Enoch's vision of a future just world woud speak loudly to Judeans living under the domination of Antiochus. The Enochic Book of Dreams (*1 En* 83-90), written between 165–160 BCE, concludes Portier-Young's discussion on apocalyptic theologies of resistance. Through Enoch's first-person account of two dreams, Enoch calls readers to resist the Edict of Antiochus with prayers, prophetic preaching and with open warfare. Enoch's second dream vision, called the Animal Apocalypse, depicts the people of God as apostate sheep "whose eyes have been pecked out by those who rule them" (90:2). Portier-Young argues that the Animal Apocalypse resists the hegemony of Antiochus by depicting a group of lambs led by Judas Maccabeus whose job is to restore the sight of the apostate sheep. Israel's sacred ancestral leaders—especially Elijah, Moses and Joshua—provide the lambs with a model for crying out, calling Israel to repent and to fight idolatry with arms. The idea of open eyes, according to Portier-Young, captures a shared theme in all three apocalypses that encourages the Judeans to see beyond their present suffering to the reality of God's just future. See *Apocalypse Against Empire,* 280-381.

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indicates, the literary culture of early Judaism contained other genres of literature that were not resistance literature *per se*, but contained narratives of resistance.[7] The Jewish icon parody is one such example, wherein its allusive cult referents, within the idiolect of the Septuagint, provided Hellenistic Jews with a contextually flexible literary device that could be employed within apocalyptic, prophetic, wisdom, apologetic and historiographic literature to critique the philosophical and theological incongruities of gentile hubris with the worship of the one true God. Before turning to a deeper analysis of the Hellenistic- and Roman-Jewish icon parodies in chapter five, the discussion that follows examines the relationship between Jewish monotheism, political sovereignty and idolatry. Indeed, as Tacitus observes, in a world where gods and kings were endowed with divine attributes and honored as benefactors over subject peoples, the worship of "one God" infused Jewish identity with a culturally peculiar expression of politics and religion. The final section of this chapter investigates Hellenistic- and Roman-Jewish strategies for resisting the exalted tyrant.

The primary sources evaluated in this chapter stem from the Septuagint, since it provided the primary literary medium for negotiating empire and idolatry in the Diaspora. But in addition to the texts of the Septuagint both Josephus and especially Philo of Alexandria will be important conversation partners along the way.

4.2 Political Idolatry: Weapons, Wealth and Strange Gods

The most frequent descriptor for idolatry in the Old Testament is "the worship of other gods" (or what the rabbis called *avodah zarah* – "strange worship").[8] Strange worship materialized at the cultic level in three forms in ancient Judaism: (1) the cultic worship of other gods; (2) the

[7] Portier-Young, *Apocalypse Against Empire,* 395.
[8] Moshe Halbertal and Avishai Margalit, *Idolatry* (trans. Naomi Goldblum; Harvard: Harvard University, 1998), 3.

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material representation of false-gods' images; and (3) mistaken conceptions/thinking about false-gods.[9] For the Old Testament prophets, all three forms of strange worship produced erroneous conceptions of God—indeed, "such are no gods!" (οὔκ εἴσιν θεοί, Jer 16:20). But we need to be cautious of reducing the Jewish understanding of idolatry to an anachronistic post-enlightenment binary distinction between politics and religion.[10] As Carol A. Newsom observes, "Throughout the Hebrew Bible where the God of Israel is represented as having an opponent, this opponent is more often framed, not as another god, but as a human king..."[11] In the ancient Near East and the Greco-Roman worlds, deities and imperial ideology and power went hand in hand.[12] The Jewish struggle against gentile idolatry centered on questions of political sovereignty, which could manifest itself in hegemonic and iconic machinations of imperial power.

The Israelite prophetic literature of the eighth century BCE provides an important witness

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[9] For this tripartite distinction, see: John M. G. Barclay, "Snarling Sweetly: Josephus on Images and Idolatry," in *Idolatry: False Worship in the Bible, Early Judaism and Christianity* (ed. Stephen C. Barton; New York: T&T Clark, 2007), 73-87, here 73. Joel Marcus, "Idolatry in the New Testament," in *The Word Leaps the Gap: Essays on Scripture and Theology in Honor of Richard B. Hays* (eds. J. Ross Wagner, C. Kavin Rowe and A. Katherine Grieb; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2008), 107-131; Terry Griffith, *Keep Yourselves from Idols: A New Look at 1 John* (London: Sheffield Academic, 2002); and Richard Liong-Seng Phua, *Idolatry and Authority: A Study of 1 Corinthians 8.1-11.1 in the Light of the Jewish Diaspora* (New York: T&T Clark, 2005).
[10] On the ideological metanarrative of Assyrian and Babylonian imperial power, see the helpful introduction in Leo G. Perdue and Warren Carter, *Israel and Empire: A Postcolonial History of Israel and Early Judaism* (ed. Coleman Baker; New York: Bloomsbury, 2015), 40-48 and 72-75.
[11] Carol A. Newsom, "God's Other: The Intractable Problem of the Gentile King in Judean and Early Jewish Literature," in *The Other in Second Temple Judaism: Essays in Honor of John J. Collins* (ed. Daniel C. Harlow et al.; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2011), 31-48, here 31. As Newsom suggests, literary opposition to Yahweh's royal opponents included variations of (1) elimination of the king (e.g., Dan 7, 11); (2) domination of the king (e.g., 2 Macc 9); and (3) assimilating the foreign king to the Davidic dynasty (Isa 44:24-45:13). So when Antiochus IV imposes his authority on Jewish subjects, a voice from heaven reminds him that, "…the Most High has sovereignty over the kingdom of mortals and gives it to whom he will" (Dan 4:32). Ps-Solomon, on the other hand, reminds the angry tyrant: "For your dominion was given you from the Lord, and your sovereignty from the Most High" (Wis 6:21).
[12] Israel's resistance to imperial ideology at a theo-political level is evident in early traditions of Yahweh's empty throne. In contrast to foreign empires' chief deity, whose cult statue imitated the features of the king, Israel's empty throne may have represented an anti-kingship motif through its lack of a statue. For comment, see Ronald S. Hendel, "Aniconicism and Anthropomorphism in Ancient Israel," in *The Image and the Book: Iconic Cults, Aniconicism, and the Rise of Book Religion in Israel and Ancient Near East* (ed. K. van der Toorn et al.; Leuven: Peeters, 1997), 205-28, here 225.

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to the overtly political nature of idolatry in ancient Judaism.[13] Here I draw on the important study by Moshe Weinfeld who suggests that Isaiah, followed by Nahum and Habakkuk, developed a prophetic genre he calls "prophecies concerning empires."[14] This genre of protest, according to Weinfeld, represents a shift in emphasis: rather than protest empire because of its maltreatment of Israel, this literature protests empire because of its ruthless and hegemonic imperial policies.[15] So Assyrian imperialism is critiqued for its unjust taxation policies (Isa 9:3, 10:27, 14:25), annihilation of nations (Isa 10:7; Hab 1:17), destruction of cities (Isa 14:17; 33:8; 37:13), removal of national boundaries (Isa 10:13), plundering and exploiting of peoples (Isa 10:14; 33:1, 4; Hab 1:9, 2:8-9; Nah 2:12-14; 3:4, 16-17), degradation of national leaders (Isa 10:8; Hab 1:10) and exile of populations (Isa 10:14; 33:3).[16] The ruthless imperial policies of gentile empires are especially reflected by economic exploitation, military build up and the worship of foreign deities. This is evident in Isaiah, who was the first on record to attack empire in the 8th century BCE: "[The Assyrian empire's] land is full of silver and gold, there is no limit to their treasures; their land is full of horses, there is no limit to their chariots. And their land is full of idols; they bow down to the work of their hand, to what their own fingers have wrought" (Isa

[13] Christopher B. Hays rightly notes that "When one reads Isaiah, one is reading some of the world's oldest surviving resistance literature" ("Isaiah as Colonized Poet: His Rhetoric of Death in Conversation with African Postcolonial Writers," in *Isaiah and Imperial Context: the Book of Isaiah in the Times of Empire* [eds. Andrew T. Abernethy et al.; Eugene: Pickwick, 2013], 51-70, here 51).
[14] Moshe Weinfeld, "The Protest Against Imperialism in Ancient Israelite Prophecy," in *The Origins and Diversity of Axial Age Civilizations* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1986), 169-82, here 171. On Isaiah's anti-imperial critique of empire, see also Walter Brueggemann, "Faith in the Empire," in *In the Shadow of Empire: Reclaiming the Bible as a History of Faithful Resistance* (ed. Richard Horsley; Louisville: Westminster John Knox 2008), 25-40. See also, G. Maddox, "Prophetic Religion and the Roots of Political Opposition," in *Ancient History in a Modern University* (ed. T. Hillard et al.; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), 459–67.
[15] Weinfeld, "Protest Against Imperialism," 171.
[16] Weinfeld, "Protest Against Imperialism," 172. Despite the clear imperial referent of this polemic, it is striking that the regal object of resistance is never explicitly stated. As Weinfeld suggests, Isaiah could be opposing Tiglath Pileser III, Shalmanessar V, Sargon, or Sennecherib, yet their identity is never made explicit because "they are all the same; they all subdue nations, exploit them and plunder them" (Weinfeld, "Protest Against Imperialism," 171). Notably, the tendency to universalize the imperial and theological object of resistance is also evident in the Jewish icon parody.

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2:7-8). One can sense the seeds of the icon parody germinating in this pre-exilic material. The objects of resistance, however, are not Assyria's gods alone; rather, Isaiah opposes Assyria's wealth, deified objects of creation and military power (or, what Abraham Heschel calls "the idolatry of might").[17]

Opposition to idolatry, therefore, was in part an attack on the purported euergetism of empire, including its gods, kings and deified objects of creation. Jeremiah can even mock the failure of the nations' idols to provide benefits over the natural world: "Can any idols of the nations bring rain? Or can the heavens give showers? Is it not you, O LORD our God? We set our hope on you, for it is you who do all this" (Jer 14:22). Jeremiah's attack against the false-euergetism of other nations' idols well-represents Israel's alterity. For Israel, Yahweh alone was the rightful benefactor over the created order; in this way, opposition to idolatry was a means of defining power, authority and proper conceptions of divinity amid "the idols of the nations" (τὰ εἴδωλα τῶν ἐθνῶν, Ps 135:15). The overlapping nature of gods and imperial domination in the ancient Near East is evident in Mesopotamian warfare strategies, which sought the iconoclastic mutilation—or what Alasdair Livingston called "godnapping"—of the enemy's cult statues so as to render their gods' power obsolete. Isaiah's discursive resistance against idolatry is enmeshed within Israel's real-lived struggle to survive amid empire and render the God of Israel as a more powerful cosmic creator and benefactor than the gods of the nations.

Isaiah's interface with political idolatry resurfaces in early Jewish sources. To take one example in more detail, the foreign invaders known as the *Kittim* in the Qumran documents, who might be interpreted as Rome in my opinion, are condemned as idolatrous warmongers.[18] The

[17] See Abraham Heschel, *The Prophets: An Introduction* (vol. 1; New York: Harper, 1955), 159.
[18] The identity of the Kittim is debated among scholars. The options include the Seleucid Greeks, Romans or a composite of all pagan enemies. In 1 Macc 1:1 the author writes that Alexander the Great "came from the land of Kittim…" The association of Macedonians with the Kittim is also evident in Jubilees 24, 28. Daniel 11:30

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Habbakuk Pesher, for example, interprets the fishermen who worship their nets in Habakkuk 1:14-16 as a typological reference to Rome, who "gather in their riches, together with all their booty" and "sacrifice to their standards and worship their weapons of war" (1QpHab6).[19] The pesher is a damning condemnation of the hegemonic-idolatry of the Roman military apparatus (the worship of weapons and gods went hand in hand). The author proceeds to interpret the icon parodies of Hab 2:19-20 as a prophecy concerning the eschatological elimination of empires and their idols:

> Woe, wo[e, to anyone saying] to wood: Wake up! And to a silent [st]one: G[et up!] [Can it instruct? It is covered with gold and silver, but no] [spirit at all is therein. Buy YHWH is in his holy Temple.] Silence in his presence, all the world! Its interpretation concerns all the peoples which serve stone and wood. However, on the day of judgment God will destroy all the worshippers of idols, and the wicked, from the earth (1QpHab 12.15-13.1-4).[20]

The pesher on Habakkuk's icon parody sheds light on the congruity of thought between the prophecies concerning empires in ancient Judaism and the colonized context of Second Temple Jews. For both the Old Testament prophets and the Qumran community, idolatry is associated with empire's strange worship and military domination; moreover, both groups place these foreign practices of false worship and plunder under prophetic eschatological indictment (e.g.,

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refers to the Roman intervention against Antiochus IV in 168 BCE as the "ships of Kittim…" Notably, the Septuagint translation of Kittim in this verse is Ρωμαῖοι. Josephus writes that "Cethimus [Kittim] possessed the island Cethima; it is now called Cyprus: and from that it is that all islands, and the greatest part of the seacoasts, are named Cethim [Kittim] by the Hebrews… (*Ant.* 1.128). In Josephus's context this is a clear reference to the Roman Empire. Even if the term is used as composite for "empire" in some Qumran documents its imperial dimension is clear. For further discussion, see Mireille Hadas-Lebel, *Jerusalem Against Rome* (Leuven: Peeters, 2006), 23-26.

[19] English translation from Geza Vermes, *The Complete Dead Sea Scrolls in English* (New York: Penguin, 2004). See George J. Brooke, "The Kittim in the Qumran Documents," in *Images of Empire* (ed. Loveday Alexander; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1991), 135-159. The economic critique of empire surfaces most explicity in the New Testament in Revelation 18. See Richard Bauckham, "The Economic Critique of Rome in Revelation 18," in *Images of Empire* (ed. Loveday Alexander; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1991), 47-90.

[20] English translation from Florentino García Martínez and Eibert J. C. Tigchelaar, eds., *The Dead Sea Scrolls Study Edition: Vol 1 (1Q1 – 4Q273)* (Leiden: Brill, 1997).

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the divine ruler in Isa 11:1-10).[21] As Weinfeld concludes, "End of idolatry is end of empire. Bowing down to idols made out of gold and silver means worshipping the work of one's own hand and is tantamount to prostration and submission to the imperial power."[22] What is striking about this literature is that idolatry and political authority went hand in hand: iconic cult, military domination and economic hubris could threaten Jewish theo-political limitations.

When investigating Jewish resistance literature for anti-imperial motifs, it is incumbent on the interpreter to reflect on the overtly political nature of idolatry in the Ancient Near Eastern and Second Temple Jewish contexts, and what components of Jewish Law inscribed Jewish identity and self-definition with an alter-cultural understanding of God, empire and kingship.[23] As Josephus observes, despite calamity or loss of autonomy under colonial power, Torah is immortal and Jewish subjects will be more afraid of Torah than a bitter tyrant (οὔτε πικρὸν φοβηθήσεται δεσπότην, *C. Ap.* 2.277). Second Temple Jews' political autonomy to observe Torah created the conditions for peaceful co-existence with imperial authority, but also the potential conditions for conflict with their overlords. Before examining the first commandment and political idolatry in more detail, a formal introduction to Jews' life under foreign domination during the Second Temple period is warranted.

[21] Judgment is also reflected in the logic that the plunderer will be plundered (Isa 33:1; Hab 2:6-8). Notably, the utility of prophecies concerning empires was still in existence among both Jews and Romans by the first century CE (Jos., *War* 6.312-314; Tac., *Hist.* 5.13.2; and Suet., *Vesp.* 4.5). On the pagan oracles, see: H. Fuchs, *Die geistige Widerstand gegen Rom in der antiken Welt* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1938); and A. Momigliano, "Some Preliminary Remarks on the 'Religious Opposition' to the Roman Empire," in *Opposition et Résistances a l'Empire d'Auguste* à *Trajan* (Genève: Fondation Hardt, 1987), 103-33.
[22] Weinfeld, "Protest Against Imperialism," 179. The Israelite prophets who opposed the Assyrian empire may have been the first group in world history to oppose empire's tyranny. See Weinfeld, "Protest Against Imperialism," 172 and 182.
[23] I am grateful to Dr. Michael Gorman for sharing the descriptor "alter-cultural" with me.

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4.3 Second Temple Judaism and Empire

The stressors that empire could elicit were particularly felt during the period known as Second Temple Judaism (516/515 BCE -70 CE). Scholars also call this period "early Judaism."[24] Five primary events initiated by empires from above shaped Jewish self-understanding leading up to and during this period: the Babylonian empire's destruction of the Jerusalem temple (586 BCE); Alexander the Great's conquests and the dawn of Hellenism (323 BCE);[25] the Seleucid king Antiochus IV Epiphanes' persecution of the Jews (175 BCE); the Roman general Pompey's occupation of Judea (63 BCE); and the Roman destruction of the Jerusalem temple (66-74 CE).[26] To this list could be added a variety of skirmishes and diverse uprisings against the ruling power. Aside from a brief respite under the Hasmonean dynasty (140-63 BCE)—which flirted with empire building in its own way—foreign empires dictated the terms and conditions by which Jews lived out their ancestral traditions.[27] The ruling power, then, provided a foreground, rather than a background, in shaping the social identities and discursive practices that gave way to the Septuagintal critique of idolatry and imperial power.

George W. E. Nickelsburg writes that the Second Temple period was a time of crisis, transition and creativity.[28] One can add that it was also a time of prodigious Jewish literary activity. Two theological developments during the Second Temple period influenced Jews'

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[24] I follow James C. Vanderkam in seeing Second Temple Judaism and early Judaism as descriptors for a coterminous period. See *An Introduction to Early Judaism* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2001), xii.
[25] See John J. Collins, "Hellenistic Judaism in Recent Scholarship," in *Jewish Cult and Hellenistic Culture: Essays on the Jewish Encounter with Hellenism and Roman Rule* (Leiden: Brill, 2005), 1-20, here 2-4.
[26] Larry R. Helyer, *Exploring Jewish Literature of the Second Temple Period: A Guide for New Testament Students* (Downers Grove: Intervarsity, 2002), 18-21.
[27] Eric Gruen observes how the Hasmonean dynasty increasingly imitated and adopted "in stages the package of practices normally associated with Hellenistic kings: erecting monuments, minting coinage in their name, hiring mercenaries, displaying their achievements on *stelai*, even taking a royal title" ("Hellenistic Kingship: Puzzles, Problems, and Possibilities," in *Aspects of Hellenistic Kingship* (eds. Per Bilde et al.; [Oxford: Aarhus University Press, 1996], 116-25, 124).
[28] On the schema crisis, transition and creativity, see George W. E. Nickelsburg, *Jewish Literature Between the Bible and the Mishnah: A Historical and Literary Introduction* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1981), 1.

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critique of the religions of the Roman Empire. The first is related to a more strict exclusive monotheism and the second is related to the infusion of Hellenistic philosophical ideas into Jewish reflections on God and the nature of kingship. Daniel C. Harlow poignantly captures the significance of this transition:

> A major transition occurred during the Babylonian exile of the sixth century B.C.E., when Second Isaiah pushed the henotheism that had characterized Israelite faith toward a monotheism that not only asserted the supremacy of the God of Israel over all other gods but denied the very existence of those gods: "I am the Lord, and there is no other; besides me there is no god" (Isa. 45:5 and often; cf. Deut. 32:39). Another noteworthy trend got underway in the third and second centuries B.C.E., when their encounter with Hellenism led Jewish thinkers to import Greek philosophical categories into their reflections on God.[29]

The transition to a more exclusive monotheism gave birth to Jewish denial of other gods' existence and the parody of their cult media (the latter point we will discuss in more detail in section 5.3). But Harlow overstates the ubiquity of Jewish monotheism in the strict sense—as we will see below, Philo articulates the absolute sovereignty of God within a cosmology that leaves room for the subordinate authority of gods and kings.[30] The point of emphasis, therefore, was not always on denial of the gods but on the act of worshiping them through cultic practice.[31] In addition, the encounter with Hellenism also introduced Jews to pagan monotheism, Hellenistic philosophical icon parodies and philosophical portrayals of the ideal ruler, including the idea of "animate law" (Philo, *Mos.* 1.162; 2.4). Although Jewish ancestral tradition was incompatible with many of the theological tenets of the Hellenistic world, Jews could, as Steven Weitzman

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[29] Daniel C. Harlow, "Idolatry and Alterity: Israel and the Nations in the *Apocalypse of Abraham*," in *The Other in Second Temple Judaism: Essays in Honor of John J. Collins* (eds. Daniel C. Harlow et al., Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2011), 302-330, here 302.

[30] Philo, however, repudiates the material representation of gods and kings. See 4.5.1.

[31] John M. G. Barclay's comments on monotheism are apt on this point: "To define Jewish religious distinction simply as adherence to 'monotheism' seems inadequate on a number of grounds. The term 'monotheism' places the emphasis on a concept—the belief that there is one, and only one, being rightly 'God'—and obscures the significance of cultic practice in defining acceptable or unacceptable religion" (*Jews in the Mediterranean Diaspora: From Alexander to Trajan (323 BCE – 117 CE)* [Berkeley: University of California, 1996]), 429). Barclay, however, does not adequately take into account how human political institutions could compete for allegiances from Jewish subjects.

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writes, "poach resources from the *other* for use in sustaining their own culture."[32] The cultural reciprocity that is Hellenism, therefore, supplemented Jewish literary culture with new rhetorical strategies for articulating the theological consistency and political theory of Jewish ancestral tradition over against the non-Jewish world.[33]

Before examining Jews' literary strategies for sustaining their ancestral traditions, three points of hermeneutical caution deserve reflection. First, it is necessary to acknowledge that there was no singular way that Jews negotiated gentile rulers; this relationship was both complex and manifested in diverse methods of imperial negotiation.[34] Second, it is crucial to acknowledge that the traditional gods played a significant role when the ruling power oppressed Jewish communities. Simply put: creating a polemical dichotomy between Yahweh and a gentile ruler is to misunderstand the polymorphic nature of Greco-Roman religion. Finally, to avoid anachronism, some comments on the art of covert or safe criticism in the Greco-Roman world are warranted.

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[32] Steven Weitzman, *Surviving Sacrilege*, 9. Erich Gruen make a similar point: Jews "molded Hellenism to their own design, underscoring rather than covering up distinctiveness, and placing a premium on moral, intellectual, and even cultural superiority" (Erich Gruen, *Diaspora: Jews Amidst Greeks and Romans* [Harvard: Harvard University, 2004], 227).

[33] It has been recognized in recent years that Hellenization was not a unidirectional flow of power between colonizer and colonized, nor a primary aim of imperial domination. As Susan Sherwin-White and Amélie Kuhrt observe, "'hellenization' is an adjunct, not an aim, of imperialism" (*From Samarkhand to Sardis: A New Approach to the Seleucid Empire* [Berkeley: University of California, 1993], 142). More recently, John M. G. Barclay suggests that although Hellenism was spread on the "back of monarchies and armies," the relationship between colonized Jews and colonial power was one of "negotiation." Jews' negotiation of the cultural hegemony of imperial power included "writing back" with discourses of resistance to sustain ancestral tradition. See John M. G. Barclay, "Using and Refusing: Jewish Identity Strategies under the Hegemony of Hellenism," in *Ethos und Identität: Einheitund Vielfalt des Judentums in hellenistischrömischer Zeit* (ed. Matthias Kondradt and Ulrike Steinert; Paderborn: Ferdinand Schöningh, 2002), 13-25, here 17-18.

[34] James Constantine Hanges cautions against a uni-directional understanding of the word "negotiation" as if it "were describing something analogous to climbing over barricades on an obstacle course." From a post-colonial perspective, the flow of power was mult-directional between colonized and colonizer in a relationship of "complexity and reciprocity" ("To Complicate Encounters: A Response to Karl Galinsky's 'The Cult of the Roman Emperor: Uniter or Divider?'" in *Rome and Religion: A Cross-Disciplinary Dialogue on the Imperial Cult* [ed. Jeffrey Brodd and Jonathan L. Reed; Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2011)], 27-34, here 30).

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4.3.1 The Heterogeneous Nature of Jewish Resistance

Jewish negotiation of empire and political idolatry encompasses a diverse set of data, ranging from strategies of violent revolt, apocalyptic resistance, various acts/gestures of accommodation and outright acculturation and assimilation.[35] Like the study of Acts, the danger is that interpreters can pick and choose from this diverse data to meet subjective *a priori* sentiments toward empire and draw conclusions from that set of data alone. Simply put, Jewish attitudes toward the ruling power at home and in the Diaspora were heterogeneous, and fluctuated in tandem with the degree of autonomy and benefits they were given from above. Jews' diverse responses to imperial hegemony and idolatry are not difficult to illustrate during the Roman period. One only has to think of the Alexandrian riots against the antics of Gaius Caligula (Philo, *Flacc.* 17-96; *Legat.* 120-36) in contrast to Philo's nephew, Tiberius Julius Alexander, who assimilated to the Roman army and oversaw the elimination of Alexandrian Jews (Jos., *War* 494; and Tac., *Ann.* 15.28.3).[36] It is between these poles—violent resistance and political deference—that the majority of subordinate groups lived out their lives. As the political scientist James C. Scott observes, "Most of the political life of subordinate groups is to be found neither in overt collective defiance of powerholders nor in complete hegemonic compliance, but in the vast

[35] John M. G. Barclay, *Jews in the Mediterranean Diaspora: From Alexander to Trajan 323BCE-117CE,* (Berkeley: University of California, 1996), 181-191. John M. G. Barclay interprets Jewish negotiation of Hellenism through three heuristic lenses: accommodation, acculturation and resistance.
[36] On Tiberius's apostasy, see Gottfried Schimanowski, "Die jüdische Integration in die Oberschicht Alexandriens und die angebliche Apostasie des Tiberius Julius Alexander," in *Jewish Identity in the Greco-Roman World* (ed. Jörg Frey et al.; Ancient Judaism and Early Christianity 71; Leiden: Brill, 2007), 111-35. Acts of accommodation that could err toward assimilation could also occur when Jewish communities received gifts from imperial authorites. Tessa Rajak, for example, draws attention to the priestess of the imperial cult of Nero at Acmonia in Phrygia named Julia Severa who helped build a synagogue for the Jews. The role of a protagonist providing benefits on a synagogue reflects what Rajak rightly calls the "double life" of some Diaspora communities. See Tessa Rajak, "The Synagogue in the Greco-Roman City," in *The Jewish Dialogue with Greece and Rome* (Leiden: Brill, 2001), 463-78

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territory between these two polar opposites."[37] A diachronic analysis of Jews' negotiation of empire between these poles is beyond our means here. However, a sketch of some key texts will help to illustrate a simple point in fact: Jews' negotiation of the ruling power manifested itself predominantly in acts/gestures of accommodation.

Violent resistance to colonial power was the exception rather than the norm among Second Temple Jews. During the Roman era, after Pompey brought Israel under Roman power in 63 BCE, some Jews resisted Rome with banditry (Josephus, *War* 2.228, 235, 253, 254, etc.), while others employed terrorist tactics through kidnappings and spontaneous stabbings with concealed daggers (Josephus, *Ant.* 20.186-87)[38]; still others, according to the Jewish historian Josephus, created a "fourth philosophy," which urged Jews to affirm that Yahweh is Lord rather than Caesar (*Ant.* 18.23-24; *War* 2.118, 425; Acts 5:36-37).[39] When read alongside native non-Jewish resistance movements, Martin Goodman suggests that the portrayal of Judaism as more rebellious than other provincials under Roman power is created from biased evidence. Goodman, however, defines resistance too narrowly: "…it seems to me that real opposition can only be asserted with any certainty when it appears to have provoked action rather than just words, whether such action was taken by the malcontents themselves or by the state in anticipation of

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[37] James C. Scott, *Domination and the Arts of Resistance: Hidden Transcripts* (New Haven: Yale University, 1990), 136. In his study of Jewish inscriptions that honor the emperor, Michael White draws a similar conclusion: "Thus, I would suggest that *most* Jewish communities, at least *most* of the time, hovered in the middle ground between complete assimilation and outright resistance." See "Capitalizing on the Imperial Cult: Some Jewish Perspectives," in *Rome and Religion: A Cross-Disciplinary Dialogue on the Imperial Cult* (ed. Jeffrey Brodd and Jonathan Reed; Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2011), 173-214, here 174.

[38] As Josephus observes, the *sicarrii* slew their enemies with daggers during Jewish festivals. The crowds provided a convenient platform for such aggression, but it is also worth noting that resistance toward the elite often took place on festival holidays. See James C. Scott, *Domination and the Arts of Resistance,* 187.

[39] On Jewish resistance movements, see Richard A. Horsley, *Bandits, Prophets and Messiahs: Popular Movements in the Time of Jesus* (Harrisburg: Trinity Press International, 1999); *Jesus and the Spiral of Violence: Popular Jewish Resistance in Roman Palestince* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1987), 77-78. See also bibliography in James S. McClaren, "Resistance Movements" *DEJ,* 1135-40.

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their disaffection."[40] Goodman reduces the concept of "resistance" to armed revolt. This definition undermines the many ways Jews resisted imperial domination and political idolatry *literarily* without recourse to violence. For example, we see the call toward non-violent resistance most notably in the Book of Daniel through the call to resist Antiochus IV through prayer, fasting and penitence, teaching and preaching and covenant fidelity even in the face of death.[41] Jewish polemic against idolatry functioned similarly, reorienting power away from the arrogant tyrant and iconic cult toward Israel's God through parody rather than armed sedition.

If we only evaluate armed resistance movements in early Judaism the result would be a lopsided account of Israel's negotiation of empire. Early Judaism had a powerful political theology in the Deuteronomic theology of divine retribution and the prophet Jeremiah for rationalizing imperial domination.[42] On the one hand, according to Deuteronomy and Jeremiah, Yahweh uses gentile empires to punish Israel for her sins (Deut 28: 47-48; Jer 25:9; 27:6-15; 50:25). On the other hand, Yahweh sets an appointed timetable for the demise and destruction of empires (Jer 25:11-12; 29:10; 50-51). The impact of this rationalizing hermeneutic can be felt in early Jewish apocalyptic literature—most notably in the eschatological judgment of empire through Jeremianic timetables in Dan 9:2 and the *Apocalypse of Baruch*. Josephus also draws on the logic of the Deuteronomic tradition to make sense of Rome's destruction of Jerusalem (*Ant.* 1.14), blaming the calamity on the impiety of Jewish resistance movements (*War* 5.401, 408; 7.327-33). But as Tessa Rajak puts it, "the implication of the Josephan doctrine that God is

[40] Martin Goodman, "Opponents of Rome: Jews and Others," in *Images of Empire* (ed. Loveday Alexander; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1991), 222-238, here 224. See also, Momigliano, "Religious Opposition," 103-29.
[41] Anathea Portier-Young, *Apocalypse Against Empire,* 229.
[42] For discussion, see: Shaye J. D. Cohen, *From the Maccabees to the Mishnah* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2006), 19-26. Cohen also notes that the rabbinic reflections on the wars of 66-70 CE and 132-35 CE depict the revolutionaries as "fools and wicked sinners" (208). Therefore, "Collaboration with the enemy was no sin, if the enemy was granted dominion by God and if the enemy's Jewish opponents were themselves sinners" (208). The Jeremianic view of Yahweh's orchestration of punishment on the Jewish nation could function as impetus for some Jews to collaborate/cooperate with the enemy.

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siding with the Romans must surely be that the day will come when the tables will be turned, when He will change sides once more."[43] The theology of divine retribution worked two directions. On the one hand, it rationalized Jews' domination by appeal to their sinful ways (2 Macc 5:17-18; 3 Macc 2:13; *Pss. Sol.* 1:5; Josephus, *Ant.* 1.14). On the other hand, it placed Jews' punishers under the authority of God and God's eschatological timetable of destruction (Isa 11:1-10; 1QpHab 13.4; *1 En.* 38:5-6; *Sib. Or.* 3.663-668, 671; Wis 5:23; 6:4-5).

In addition to rationalizing imperial domination, it was not entirely uncommon for Second Temple Jews to articulate a place for imperial tyrants within the economy of God's providential and sovereign rule over the nations. Whereas the cosmology of empire placed gods and kings at the top of the social hierarchy, the cartography of Jewish cosmology placed Israel's God at the pinnacle of power. For example, Philo concludes his *De Decalogo* with the provocative statement that "God is the president of peace, but his subordinate ministers are the chiefs of war" (τῷ γὰρ ὄντι ὁ μὲν θεὸς πρύτανις εἰρήνης, οἱ δ' ὑποδιάκονοι πολέμων ἡγεμόνες εἰσίν, *Dec.* 178).[44] In *De Providentia*, Philo fleshes this idea out further by portraying Yahweh's use of tyrants and cosmic disasters to preserve virtue among humanity:

> And why should we wonder if God employs the agency of tyrants to get rid of wickedness when widely diffused over cities, and countries, and nations (καὶ τί θαυμάζομεν, εἰ διὰ τυράννων ὁ Θεὸς κακίαν ἀναχυθεῖσαν ἐν πόλεσι καὶ χώραις καὶ ἔθνεσιν ἀποδιοπομπεῖται)? For he very often uses other ministers, and himself brings about the same end by his own resources, inflicting upon the nation famine, or pestilence, or earthquakes, or any other heaven-sent calamity, by which great and numerous multitudes

[43] Tessa Rajak, "Friends, Romans, Subjects: Agrippa II's Speech in Josephus's *Jewish War*," in *Images of Empire* (ed. Loveday Alexander; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1991), 122-134, here 132. Note also Josephus's interpretation that all empires will die in his interpretation of Dan 2:34-35 in *Ant.* 10.207-210.

[44] Ronald Williamson suggests that this passage articulates Philo's belief that God is "the Great King" who oversees the "general safety of the universe." God enacts justice "indirectly upon the universe … through his servants and lieutenants" (*Jews in the Hellenistic World: Philo* [Cambridge: Cambridge University, 1989], 277). Williamson, however, does not hold this passage in tension with numerous passages in Philo where God's subordinate authorities exploit their power rather than function as representatives of the power of God. Thus, it is possible to see in this a critique of (a) the subordinate status of the chiefs of war; and (b) their status as pawns and, at times, warmongers that cut against the grain of the King of peace.

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> perish every day, and by which a great portion of the habitable world is made desolate, on account of his care for the preservation of virtue" (*Prov.* 2.41).

Philo's skillful use of oblique innuendo is present here—just as God can use tyrants to whip subjects into moral shape, so God can manipulate the created order to wreak disaster upon the tyrant's nation (e.g., the Song of the Sea in Exod 15). On this point, Goodenough is worth quoting: "Tyrants, he [Philo] says, are permitted by God, like earthquakes and plagues, as a punishment for the wickedness of a nation … When the tyrant has done his devastating work in the wicked state he perishes with the society he has afflicted."[45] As Goodenough points out, Philo's notion of providential power over empire stems from Jewish tradition not the *peri basileias* literature. Whereas Greek political theory could support tyrannicide (e.g., Plut., *Adv. Col.* 1126C, 1128F), early Judaism opted to rationalize oppression by appeal to the Deuteronomic theology's emphasis on moral reform.

Under the shadow of gentile rulers, Philo can confer the title θεός on rulers who mediate on behalf of the "Ruler of the universe," with the caveat that the subordinate ruler must operate in "imitation of the merciful power of the father" to exercise punishment over subjects (*Mut.* 125-29). But as we will see below, Philo is speaking of a highly limited form of divinity that is redolent of the *peri basileias* literature. Moreover, Philo expects the ruler to function as a subordinate authority that conforms their character to Yahweh so as to animate Torah. In the third book of the *Sibylline Oracles*, a genre which Augustus is said to have destroyed two thousand oracles because of its subversive nature (Suet., *Aug.* 31.1), we find the remarkable eschatological anticipation that God will use a gentile "King from the sun" to restore Israel's kingdom and temple (*Sib. Or.* 3.652-56). The portrayal of a seventh king—Ptolemy VI Philometor (180-145 BCE)—in royal-messianic terms reflects a remarkable accommodation: it is

[45] Edwin R. Goodenough, *An Introduction to Philo Judaeus* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1962), 100.

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through the agency of gentile imperial authority that the eschatological restoration of Israel will be achieved (strikingly, Egyptian Jews even erected an epigraphic monument to honor Ptolemy IV [2 Macc 1:10; Josephus *Ap.* 2.49]).[46] By rationalizing gentile rule within God's providential design, Jews coped with cognitive dissonance by subordinating tyrannical rulers to the status of political puppets on the unfolding global stage of salvation history.

Accommodation could manifest itself in a variety of gestures such as collaboration and concessionary gestures to achieve peaceful co-existence. The accommodating position of collaboration, for example, is evident in 1 Maccabees' positive portrayal of Rome during the Seleucid era, where Rome is praised for its military accomplishments despite the hegemonic terror it could elicit upon its enemies (1 Macc 8:10).[47] In addition to its impressive military apparatus, Rome's senatorial ruling power is praised for deposing and making kings while refusing divinized motifs of Hellenistic monarchy such as the diadem and purple accoutrements (1 Macc 8:14).[48] As a tactic to thwart Greek occupation of Israel—which was "enslaving Israel completely" (καταδουλουμένους τὸν Ισραηλ δουλείᾳ)—Eupolemus and Jason son of Eleazar were sent to "establish friendship and alliance" with Rome (1 Macc 8:17-18).[49] In other words, Israel could collaborate with empire if it provided benefits and did not adversely affect its religious

46 See Klauck, *Religious Context*, 282; Lorenzo DiTomasso, "Sibylline Oracles," in *The Dictionary of Early Judaism,* 1126-1128; and John J. Collins, "The Third Sibyl Revisited," in *Jewish Cult and Hellenistic Culture: Essays on the Jewish Encounter with Hellenism and Roman Rule* (Leiden: Brill, 2005), 82-98.
47 On this episode, see John J. Collins, "The Jewish World and the Coming of Rome," in *Jewish Cult and Hellenistic Culture: Essays on the Jewish Encounter with Hellenism and Roman Rule* (Leiden: Brill, 2005), 202-215, here 202-203. See also A. N. Sherwin White's skepticism about the historicity of the treaty in *Roman Foreign Policy in the East: 168 BC to AD 1* (Norman: University of Oklahoma, 1984), 70-79. For other references to the treaty, see: 1 Macc 8:20; 2 Macc 4:11; and for renewal of the treaty 1 Macc 12:1-4, 16.
48 The diadem was the primary symbol of Hellenistic kingship. See Smith, *Hellenistic Royal Portraits,* 34.
49 Jews' fidelity to the treaty with Rome is also reflected on by Josephus: "And when all the kings everywhere were conquered by the Romans, our ancestors were the only people who continued to be esteemed their confederates and friends, on account of their fidelity to them" (*C. Ap.* 2.134).

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autonomy.[50] A diachronic evaluation of Jews' relationship with Rome reveals a swing across the entire pendulum of imperial negotiation and then back again. Mireille Hadas-Lebel's exhaustive study of the primary sources, for example, shows that Judea's relationship with Rome transitioned from friendship, disillusionment (revolt), conciliation and, finally, respect and loyalty toward the emperor.[51]

Aside from collaborating with empire, Jews could also make accommodations toward peaceful co-existence. Through a nuance of syntax, Jews could offer a sacrifice on behalf of rulers to Yahweh during the Hellenistic period to communicate loyalty to the ruling power (1 Macc 7:33; *Arist.* 45). During the Roman period, Jews offered a sacrifice on behalf of Caesar to Yahweh in the Jerusalem temple twice daily as long as Caesar did not erect images of himself (*War* 2.197). Josephus understood the sacrifices as gestures of honor financially funded by the Jews (*Apion.* 2.76-77; 409-10, 412-17). Philo, on the other hand, understood the offerings as funded by the emperor under the condition that he place "in the temple no image (ἀφίδρυμα) erected, either in open sight or in any secret part of it" (*Legat.* 317; see also *Legat.* 157, 291; *Flacc.* 48-49).[52] Although such postures of piety could pacify the ruling power; it is also the case

[50] On the tangible benefits of empire for the ruling power and client kingdoms, see Eric Gruen, *The Hellenistic World and the Coming of Rome* (vol 1; Berkeley: University of California, 1984), 288-315. So Josephus can reflect on the decrees of Julius Caesar detailing Jewish rights positively: "It seems to me to be necessary here to give an account of all the honors that the Romans and their Emperors paid to our nation" (*Ant.* 14.10.1). Philo also reflects favorably on the benefits of the *pax romana* in his eulogy of Augustus (*Legat.* 143-153).
[51] See Mireille Hadas-Lebel, *Jerusalem Against Rome* (Leuven: Peeters, 2006).
[52] On the offerings, see Emil Schürer, *The History of the Jewish People in the Age of Jesus Christ (175 B.C.-A.D. 135): A New English Version Revised and Edited by Géza Vermes and Fergus Millar* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1973), 1:379-80**.** Notably, similar offerings took place during the Hellenistic period (1 Macc 7:33; *Let. Aris.* 45). Non-Jewish historians are also aware of this tradition, so Suet., *Dom.* 13.2 and Pliny, *Pan.* 2.3. On the Jews' sacrifice on behalf of the emperor, see James S. McClaren, "Jews and the Imperial Cult: From Augustus to Domitian," *JSNT* 27.3 (2005): 271-73. The author of 3 Maccabees provides a striking story of Ptolemy IV Philopator (222-203 BCE) attempting to offer honors in the Jerusalem temple upon conquering Jerusalem. The gesture reflects the custom of honoring and restoring the temples of gods by the conquering ruler (see ch. 3 of our study). But, in an act of subversion, the Jews refuse Ptolemy's entrance into the Jerusalem temple, making the Jews "the only people among all nations who hold their heads high in defiance of kings and their benefactors" (βασιλεῦσιν καὶ τοῖς ἑαυτῶν εὐεργέταις, 3 Macc 3:19).

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that they were pregnant with subversive potential. Notably, it was the cessation of these sacrifices that contributed to the Roman destruction of Herod's temple in 70 CE (Josephus, *War* 2.409-18).[53]

In addition to the sacrifice on behalf of Caesar, we have evidence during the Roman era that Jewish synagogues provided a space out of which Jews could confer non-cultic honors on the emperor.[54] For protecting Jews' religious rights, Philo refers to Augustus as "savior and benefactor" (ὁ σωτὴρ καὶ εὐεργέτης Σεβαστός, *Flacc.* 74). For Philo, the destruction of Jewish synagogues under the terror of Gaius Caligula is tantamount to depriving Jews "of all means of showing their piety towards their benefactors (τὴν εἰς τοὺς εὐεργέτας εὐσέβειαν, *Flacc*. 48). Philo makes the point more explicit in the subsequent passage:

> You, without being aware of it, are taking away honour from your lords (τοῖς κυρίοις τιμήν) instead of conferring any on them. Our houses of prayer are manifestly incitements to all the Jews in every part of the habitable world (πανταχόθι τῆς οἰκουμένης) to display their piety and loyalty towards the house of Augustus; and if they are destroyed from among us, what other place, or what other manner of showing that honour, will be left to us (ἀπολείπεται τόπος ἢ τρόπος τιμῆς)? (*Flacc.* 49).

Philo employs τιμή twice to articulate the role of synagogues in displaying loyalty and honor toward Augustan Rome. In the *Legatio*, Philo fleshes out what material honors were conferred on Rome from Alexandrian synagogues: "gilded shields and crowns, monuments and inscriptions" (*Legat.* 132). The apologetic irony, for Philo, is that Gaius destroys Jewish structures that, in fact, honor his power. One needs to exercise caution here—the honors Philo mentions are honorific, not cultic (and represent a more liberal attitude than Jerusalem).[55] To be sure, Philo

[53] On the debates concerning this sacrifice, see Daniel Schwartz, "On Sacrifice by Gentiles in the Temple of Jerusalem," in *Studies in the Jewish Background of Christianity* (WUNT 60; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1992), 102-16.
[54] On Jews' participation in local systems of benefaction, see Tessa Rajak, "Benefactors in the Greco-Roman Diaspora," in *The Jewish Dialogue with Greece and Rome* (Leiden: Brill, 2001), 373-392.
[55] See E. Mary Smallwood, *Philonis Alexandrini,* 221.

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records Jews' repulsion at Pontius Pilate's audacious erection of votive shields in Herod's palace in Jerusalem (*Legat.* 299-305). Moreover, as we will discuss in more detail below, Philo often portrays Augustus as a cipher to contrast the ideal ruler with the angry tyrant, which cautions against taking his polemically charged rhetoric at face value. Gestures of epigraphic honor and/or sacrifices on behalf of the emperor—using *ὑπέρ*—do not provide a certain metric for discerning Jews' attitudes toward the ruling power; it is equally plausible that such gestures of public accommodation were concessionary and wrought with negative sentiments even under Augustan Egypt.[56]

The loyalty of Jewish subjects toward Rome is further spelled out in an embedded letter written by Herod Agrippa I to Gaius (*Legat.* 276-39). The letter, clearly the product of Philo's own rhetorical purposes, gives an account of how Agrippa protects the Jewish Temple from Gaius's hubris.[57] Agrippa argues that Jews are second to no one in Asia or Europe in terms of the prayers, offerings and sacrifices they confer on Rome (*Legat.* 280). Indeed, the Jews are not friends to Caesar" (φιλοκαίσαρές) in deceitful flattery, but "really are his friends" (trans. Smallwood, *Legat*. 280). When Philo's embassy to Gaius finally meets the emperor in Rome, they bow down in *proskynesis* and salute him as "emperor Augustus" (Σεβαστὸν Αὐτοκράτορα, *Legat.* 352). The embassy's posture of *proskynesis* could be interpreted as assimilation to imperial power, but elsewhere Philo caricatures *proskynesis* before Roman rulers as a "barbaric practice" (τὸ βαρβαρικὸν ἔθος, *Legat.* 116).[58] The episode reflects how the apologetic and

[56] On the epigraphic evidence of Egyptian Jewish synagogues toward benefactors, see 5.3.2 of our study.
[57] The historicity of the letter is called into question when one takes into account Josephus's account that Agrippa appeased Gaius through a banquet (*Ant.* 18.289-301). For comment, see Smallwood, *Philonis Alexandrini*, 291-92.
[58] The concept of prostration before kings stems from the Persian Empire. In the Persian context, however, prostration was a political rather than religious gesture—divinity was not accorded to Persian kings like it was, for example, the pharaohs of Egypt. See Hans-Josef Klauck, *Religious Context*, 272.

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polemical persuasion strategies of subordinate subjects sometimes demanded acts of accommodation in order to be heard.

When Rome did tighten its grip on Judea in the aftermath of 66-70 CE, Jews re-tooled the apocalyptic strategies of resistance from the Hellenistic period to confront Roman occupation and hegemony. To take one example, the author of *4 Ezra* depicts the eschatological destruction of Rome after the Jerusalem temple was "destroyed" (10:21).[59] The apocalyptic narrative is rooted in the authoritative voice of the captive Ezra (3:1-3) and set *vaticinium ex eventu* during Babylonian exile (586 BCE). The author personifies Rome's hegemony in the guise of the anonymous fourth beast of Daniel (Dan 7:3-12). But in contrast to Daniel's winged lion, *4 Ezra* animates Rome's brutality with an eagle, an icon that was placarded on Rome's military standards and coins (often between the *dioscurii*).[60] In the so-called eagle vision, the apocalyptic judgment of Rome (the eagle) presents a damning critique of imperial hubris and oppression:[61]

> Listen and I will speak to you. The Most High says to you, "Are you not the one that remains of the four beasts that I had made to reign in my world, so that the end of my times might come through them? You, the fourth that has come, have conquered all the beasts that have gone before; and you have held sway over the world with great terror, and over all the earth with grievous oppression; and for so long you have lived on the earth with deceit. You have judged the earth, but not with truth, for you have oppressed the meek and injured the peaceable; you have hated those who tell the truth, and have loved liars; you have destroyed the homes of those who brought forth fruit, and have laid low the walls of those who did you no harm. Your insolence has come up before the Most High, and your pride to the Mighty One. The Most High has looked at his times; now they have ended, and his ages have reached completion. Therefore you, eagle, will surely disappear, you and your terrifying wings, your most evil little wings, your malicious heads, your most evil talons, and your whole worthless body, so that the whole earth, freed from your violence, may be refreshed and relieved, and may hope for the judgment and mercy of him who made it" (*4 Ezra* 11:38-46).

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[59] On the monuments commemorating Rome's destruction of Jerusalem, see: Fergus Millar, "Last Year In Jerusalem: Monuments of the Jewish War in Rome," in *Flavius Josephus and Flavian Rome* (ed. Jonathan Edmondson et al., Oxford: Oxford University, 2005), 101-128.
[60] See Mireille Hadas-Lebel, *Jerusalem Against Rome,* 472.
[61] On the dating and context of the eagle vision, see Karina Martin Hogan, *Theologies in Conflict: Wisdom Debate and Apocalyptic Solution* (Supplements to the Journal for the Study of Judaism 130*;* Leiden: Brill, 2008), 178-84.

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When read in its larger narrative framework, the apocalyptic vision of destruction is initiated by God's chosen Messiah, who will—in the future—destroy the eagle and deliver a remnant (*4 Ezra* 12:31-39).[62] In accord with the resistance tendencies of other Jewish apocalypses and the prophecies concerning empires, *4 Ezra's* objects of resistance focus on the hegemonic and violent stressors of empire: terror, oppression, injury and destruction (11:40-42). To resist such terror, as Philip Esler writes, *4 Ezra* characterizes the destruction of Rome as "a future myth … as a way of giving voice to a destiny in which the evident wrongs of the present will be righted."[63] Here again eschatology is employed as a strategy not only of resistance, but of total elimination of empire.[64]

A. *Summa*

The above sketch is not meant to be exhaustive. Rather, it is meant to illuminate the point in fact that Jewish negotiation of empire was both diverse and complex. With this in mind, Shaye Cohen rightly argues that the open resistance of the Maccabees (164 BCE), the revolt against Rome (66-74 CE), the uprising of Alexandrian Jews (115-117 CE) and the Bar Kokhba rebellion (132-135CE) were exceptions, not the norm. The attitude of Jews at home and in the Diaspora toward gentile rule was "not rebellion but accommodation."[65] It is important to recognize, however, that gestures of accommodation were a compromise position and concession to the Jewish political ideals of theocracy, Davidic monarchy or a priestly aristocracy. Therefore, gestures of accommodation could be coterminous with attitudes of discontentment and resistance

[62] Philip F. Esler, "Rome in Apocalyptic and Rabbinic Literature," 24.
[63] Idem., "Rome in Apocalyptic and Rabbinic Literature, " 24.
[64] On *4 Ezra's* eschatology, see M. E. Stone, *Features of the Eschatology of 4 Ezra* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1989).
[65] Shaye J. D. Cohen, *From the Maccabees to the Mishnah*, 26.

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without physical expression of violent revolt simply out of fear of retaliation.[66] What I am cautioning against is (1) thinking of early Judaism as a homogenous anti-imperial-armed-resistance movement, or reducing the concept of "resistance" to violent revolt; and (2) thinking of early Judaism's gestures of accommodation as bereft of negative sentiments toward the ruling power. Simply put: it was possible to be submissive to the ruling power while simultaneously critiquing its idolatrous manifestations *literarily* within Jewish circles through the idiosyncratic vocabulary of the Septuagint. The latter was a far more normative option for Second Temple Jews wishing to critique the idolatry of gods and kings and maintain their distinctive group identity. In Steven Weitzman's study of the "art of cultural persistence" among Second Temple Jews, he poignantly observes: "Unable to control their destiny in the way that God does, Jews in the Second Temple period developed a variant of the arts of the weak, survival tactics by which they could operate within an environment controlled by foreign rulers in defense of their cultural traditions."[67] Weitzman's study employs the work of Michel de Certeau who analyzes the ways subordinate peoples—that is, "the weak"—create tactics to empower their autonomy in situations they don't control.[68] The prophecies concerning empires and Jewish resistance toward gentile regal hubris and iconic spectacle provided a type of "art of the weak" for Jews to resist and limit the power of imperial authority in its cultic *and* hegemonic forms. But to what degree did the iconic cults of gods and kings impinge on Jewish worship practices?

[66] As James C. Scott observes, "A subordinate conceals the hidden transcript [i.e., offstage resistance] from powerholders largely because he fears retaliation" (*Domination and the Arts of Resistance*, 140).
[67] Steven Weitzman, *Surviving Sacrilege,* 7.
[68] Michael de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life* (trans. Steven Rendall; Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984), 35-36.

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4.3.2 Imperial Domination and the Traditional Gods

Imperial domination of Jewish subjects was often carefully coordinated with the cults of the traditional gods rather than ruler cults. In Philo's remarks on the colossal Augustan *Sebasteion* complex in the harbor of Alexandria, he writes, "…the whole empire had decreed him [Augustus] honours equal to those of the Olympian gods" (πᾶσα ἡ οἰκουμένη τὰς ἰσολυμπίους αὐτῷ τιμὰς ἐψηφίσαντο, *Legat.* 149). This passage provides lucid commentary, from an Alexandrian Jew no less, on how empire's web of power was carefully entrenched in a tight-knit relationship between the ruling power and the traditional gods. As we saw in chapters two and three, the Hellenistic cult of rulers did not demand new religious innovations: rather, Hellenistic and Roman rulers imitated the dress and piety of the gods through role-playing, and were carved by subjects into the pre-existing patterns of the traditional gods' iconography. Moreover, the epigraphic record indicated that religious revival often accompanied a ruler's accession to power (e.g., *OGIS* 56 lines 8-10; *OGIS,* 90 lines 1-4; *Res. Gest.* 1-4). Given the overt religious nature of ruler cults, it is worth reflecting on what machinations of the religions' of the ruling power and their subjects encroached on Jews worship of the one God.

As Goodenough observes, religious syncretism "was one of the binding forces of the empire."[69] For the Jews alone, however, associating Yahweh with Zeus or Dionysus was "a signal for war to the death…"[70] Whereas the gentile world could tolerate—even embrace—the "coexistence, borrowing and fusion" of religious ideas between ruler and subject; the Jews, on the other hand, understood such fusions as idolatry and abandonment of ancestral tradition. The freedom fighter Mattathias, for example, understood gentiles' acculturation to the demands of

[69] Edwin R. Goodenough, *An Introduction to Philo Judaeus*, 53.
[70] Idem, 53-54.

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Antiochus IV as an act of "abandoning the religion of their ancestors" (1 Macc 2:19).[71] Mattathias and his brothers, on the other hand, will "not obey the king's words by turning aside from our religion to the right hand or to the left" (1 Macc 2:22). The role religion played as a mechanism to acculturate and control subject peoples also surfaces in an oracle directed toward Greece in the Third Sibyl. Of significance, the oracle condemns Greek subjects for relying on mortal kings who proliferate the worship of dead gods:

> Greece, why do you rely on mortal leaders who are not able to flee the end of death? To what purpose do you give vain gifts to the dead and sacrifice to idols (θύεις τ' εἰδώλοις)? Who put error in your heart that you should abandon the face of the great God and do these things? Revere the name of the one who has begotten all, and do not forget it. It is a thousand years and five hundred more since the overbearing kings of the Greeks reigned, who began the first evils for mortals, setting up many idols of dead gods (πολλὰ θεῶν εἴδωλα καταφθιμένων θανεόντων). On account of them you have been taught vain thinking (*Sib. Or*. 3.545-555).[72]

According to the Third Sibyl, imperial authorities are mere mortal men who exacerbate the problem of idolatry. To be sure, the author asks a rhetorical question: "who has put error in your mind" (τίς τοι πλάνον ἐν φρεσὶ θῆκεν)? The answer is that the "overbearing kings of the Greeks" with their many idols and dead gods have led Greek subjects to cognitive error.[73] We see a similar emphasis in 3 Maccabees, a text we will examine in much more detail below (4.5.2.C). Despite Ptolemy IV Philopator's exalted sense of self, the king is caricatured not for his own ruler cult, but for honoring "all his idols" (πάντων τῶν εἰδώλων, 3 Macc 4:16). Likewise, in the anonymous *Psalms of Solomon*, the psalmist condemns Pompey's invasion of Jerusalem in 63

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[71] I take the phrase "coexistence, borrowing and fusion" from William Van Andringa, "New Combinations and New Statuses: The Indigenous Gods in the Pantheons of the Cities of Roman Gaul," in *Oxford Readings in Classical Studies: The Religious History of the Roman Empire: Pagans, Jews, and Christians* (ed. J. A. North and Simon R. F. Price; Oxford: Oxford University, 2011), 109-138.

[72] For English translation and provenance around the battle of Actium (31 BCE), see John J. Collins, "Sibylline Oracles," in *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha I* (New York: Hendrickson, 1983), 355-6, 374; and Erich S. Gruen, "Jews, Greeks, and Romans in the Third Sibylline Oracle," in *Jews in the Graeco-Roman World* (ed. Martin Goodman; Oxford: Oxford University, 2002), 15-36.

[73] Notably, the Sibyl suggests that the Greeks can escape their impending eschatological destruction by sending offerings to the Jewish Temple (*Sib. Or.* 3.565).

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BCE. Notwithstanding God's use of Pompey to punish the Jews for their sins (17:6), Pompey is critiqued for having a heart that is "alien from God" and especially for introducing foreign cult into Jerusalem (17:13-14). The result is that Pompey's occupation of Judea stimulated Jews' acculturation to the religions of the ruling power—indeed, "the children of the covenant … surpassed them [Rome] in evil" (17:15).[74]

It is at this juncture that I wish to be clear: when the ruling power imposed their will on Jewish subjects, the primary stumbling block was the traditional gods—*not* ruler cults.[75] As Emil Schürer rightly observes, no demands of emperor-worship "were ever made of the Jews except in Gaius's time."[76] When conflict emerged, the struggle was more often against the polytheistic system of traditional gods that undergirded the imperial family's authority and upheld their public image. As Victor Tcherikover further observes, aside from one exception during a rare circumstance, "there exists no document which exempts the Jews from the duty of participating in the worship of the gods ... The same was true in respect of the cult of the kings and emperors…"[77] The lack of an official policy created a dangerous silence: when rulers did impinge on Jews' aniconic monotheism, the ruling power could employ the traditional gods on their own or together with their royal image. But even during that rare circumstance when ruler

[74] The psalmist's solution to the Jews' plight under Roman occupation is that God will send a Davidic messiah to destroy gentile and Jewish sinners (*Ps. Sol.* 17:21-46).
[75] So Philip R. Davies: "The historian finds little evidence of religious persecution or enforced emperor-worship in the eastern diaspora under Neo-Babylonians, Persians or Seleucids. These tales of conflict have been manufactured for ideological reasons. These reasons may be quite complex, but we can presume that the preservation of distinct values and identity by a subculture in an imperial cultural milieu, where hostile or not, requires conflict in order to sustain itself; lack of conflict aids assimilation" (Philip R. Davies, "Daniel in the Lion's Den," 164).
[76] This is not to say, of course, that the act of emperor-worship was offensive and incompatible with Jewish ideals. For the erection of imperial images in synagogues under Caligula, see: Jos., *War* 2.184-203; *Ant.* 18.261-309; Philo, *Legat.* 186-88). Emil Schürer, *History of the Jewish People*, 379. Schürer, however, does not acknowledge Josephus's recollection in *War* 7.418-419 that the sicarii in Egypt and Cyrene experienced loyalty tests. For comment on this episode, see Richard Horsley, *Bandits, Prophets and Messiahs*, 215.
[77] Victor Tcherikover, *Hellenistic Civilization*, 306. The one exception surfaces in the aftermath of Claudius's attempt to put imperial images in synagogues. See Jos., *Ant.* 19.303-311.

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cult was imposed on Jewish subjects directly under Gaius it is often overlooked that the traditional gods supplemented Gaius's cultic demands.[78]

According to Philo, for example, Gaius's colossal statue intended for the Jerusalem Temple did not stand-alone—rather, it was designed in the character of Jupiter (ἐμοῦ κελεύσαντος ἐν τῷ ἱερῷ Διὸς ἀνδριάντα ἀνατεθῆναι, *Legat*. 265) and included epigraphic associations with Jupiter (*Leg.*188; 346). It is also striking that the opposing embassy, upon winning their case, honored Gaius with all the names of traditional gods (τὰς θεῶν ἁπάντων ἐπωνυμίας ἐπεφήμιζον αὐτῷ, *Leg.* 354). The integration of the traditional gods with Gaius's colossal illuminates the political dimension and polyvalent referents of Jewish idol polemic. That Jews' non-participation in the cults of regional gods could evoke accusations of a political sort is evident in the oft-quoted line from Josephus's *Contra Apionem*, where Josephus refutes the Alexandrian scholar Apion for his hostility toward Jews (*C. Ap.* 2.1-144). Apion says, "Why, then, if they are citizens, do they not worship the same gods as the Alexandrians?" (*C. Ap.* 2.65).[79] For Apion, Alexandrian Jews' refusal to honor Egyptian deities calls into question Jews' citizenship rights under the political authority of Roman-Egypt. Josephus also notes that the first major Jewish revolt was stimulated by the *fiscus Iudaicus* tax, a two-denarii tax that was imposed on Diaspora Jews to fund the temple of Jupiter Optimus Maximus Capitolinus in Rome (*Ant.* 16.27-9, 162-70).[80]

[78] Eric Gruen rightly observes: "It is worth observing—what is rarely noted—that the statue designed for the Temple was apparently not one of Gaius at all but one of Jupiter." ("Caligula, the Imperial Cult, and Philo's *Legatio*," *Studia Philonia Annual* 24 (2012): 135-47, here 142.

[79] Josephus also records the Jews refusing to rebuild a temple to Bellus (Jos., *C. Ap.* 1.192). Even Tacitus calls the Jews "a race of men hateful to the gods [not to the empire or emperor]" (*genus hominum invisum deis*, *Hist.* 5.3).

[80] Ehrenkrook, *Sculpting Idolatry,* 176-77. On the *Fiscus Judaicus* tax, see: Mariu Heemstra, *The Fiscus Judaicus and the Parting of the Ways* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2010), 7-84; and Martin Goodman, "The *Fiscus Judaicus* and Gentile Attitudes to Judaism in Flavian Rome," in *Flavius Josephus and Flavian Rome* (ed. Jonathan Edmondson et al., Oxford: Oxford University, 2005), 167-180.

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The use of the traditional gods for hegemonic and potentially violent purposes demonstrates how important the gods were for the ruling power's image. It also shows how rare it was for imperial families to elevate oneself above the gods when they imposed their authority on Jewish subjects. During the Hellenistic period we see a similar phenomenon in what are largely fictive and historical loyalty tests between ruler and subject. In the best-known loyalty tests in Jewish literature, the Book of Daniel resists the terror of Antiochus IV by portraying exemplar models of faith. The anti-imperial program of the Book of Daniel, including an apocalyptic vision of empires' demise, has been well articulated by others.[81] What is less acknowledged is the important role of the gods in Nebuchadnezzar's imperial loyalty test. After constructing a colossal gold cult image (LXX, *εἰκών*; MT, צֶלֶם), Nebuchadnezzar decrees that "peoples, nations and languages" must bow down to the colossal statue at the sound of a musical ensemble or else be thrown into a furnace of blazing fire (Dan 3:4-6). It is not clear whether the colossal image is of a god or Nebuchadnezzar himself when the Chaldeans accuse Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego of foot-dragging: "These men do not fear your commandment. They do not worship your idol and they do not worship your golden image that you have set up" (*trans. mine*, Dan 3:12). That the gods are in view, however, is made emphatic when the trio is brought before Nebuchadnezzar for questioning: "Is it true … that you do not serve [alternatively,

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[81] Josephus considered Daniel to be the greatest prophet because he applied times and dates to his prophecies (*Ant.* 10.267). Anathea Portier-Young argues that the Book of Daniel resists the Edict of Antiochus through an alternative vision of reality where Yahweh is King and Antiochus is not. Portier-Young argues that Daniel is written by a group of wise teachers who are calling the Judeans to a life of prayer, fasting, penitence, teaching and preaching, and covenant faithfulness even in the face of death. These embodied disciplines are exemplified by Daniel, Shadrak, Meshak and Abednego who serve as a paragon of faithful resistance. Even in the face of death, they "defy the king's edict, refuse to worship any God but Yhwh, proclaim their faith out loud and in public, and surrender their bodies to death, not to apostasy" (*Apocalypse Against Empire,* 261). Portier-Young suggests that Daniel's alternative vision of faithful witness is rooted in the prophetic story of Israel. By evoking echoes and reinterpretations of Jeremiah's seventy-year prophecy and the suffering servant poem of Isaiah, the wise teachers create an eschatogical timetable for the end of Antiochus's empire and a model for faithful witness. See *Apocalypse Against Empire,* 223-279. See also, Philip R. Davies, "Daniel in the Lion's Den," in *Images of Empire* (ed. Loveday Alexander; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1991), 160-178.

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"worship"] my gods (τοῖς θεοῖς μου) and you do not worship the golden statue that I have set up?" (Dan 3:14). While the golden colossal evokes imagery of the Hellenistic cult of rulers, the episode likewise enmeshes the golden image alongside Nebuchadnezzar's "gods."[82]

First and Second Maccabees also provide insight into the role of the traditional gods in the state terror programs of Antiochus IV.[83] In the opening chapter of 1 Maccabees, the Judeans are forced to adopt "customs strange to the land" (νομίμων ἀλλοτρίων τῆς γῆς, 1 Macc 1:44). The strange customs imputed onto Judean subjects comprised a holistic and calculated campaign to erase Jewish identity. In Antiochus's letters to Jerusalem and the towns of Judah, he orders the Jewish nation "to forbid burnt offerings and sacrifices and drink offerings in the sanctuary, to profane sabbaths and festivals, to defile the sanctuary and the priests, to build altars and sacred precincts and shrines for idols (οἰκοδομῆσαι βωμοὺς καὶ τεμένη καὶ εἰδώλια), to sacrifice swine and other unclean animals, and to leave their sons uncircumcised" (1 Macc 1:45-49). So as to rebuild what Antiochus erased, Judas's military campaigns functioned as an embodied-militaristic form of anti-idol polemic through forced circumcision (2:46) and the destruction of altars and carved images of the gods (5:68).

Second Maccabees provides further insight into the strange customs imputed onto Judean subjects. After Antioch IV sends an "Athenian" senator to compel the Jews to forsake their ancestral traditions (2 Macc 6:1), he renames the Jerusalem temple "the temple of Olympian

[82] For Josephus's recounting of the episode, see *Ant.* 10.211-214. The author of Daniel further indicts the ruling power for their idolatry when king Belshazzar orders that the vessels stolen out of the Jerusalem Temple by Nebuchadnezzar be used at a feast to praise "the gods of gold and silver, bronze, iron, wood, and stone" (Dan 5:4). Here the political metaphor of idolatry comes into play, along with the Jewish icon parody as means of resisting royal hubris. In a speech before the king, Daniel warns: "You have exalted yourself against the Lord of heaven! The vessels of his temple have been brought in before you, and you and your lords, your wives and your concubines have been drinking wine from them. You have praised the gods of silver and gold, of bronze, iron, wood, and stone, which do not see or hear or know; but the God in whose power is your very breath, and to whom belong all your ways, you have not honored" (Dan 5:23).
[83] For Josephus's recounting of the terror imputed onto Judean subjects, see *Ant.* 12.248-254.

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Zeus" and the one at Gerizim "the temple of Zeus-the-friend-of-strangers" (6:2). The association of the Jerusalem temple with Olympian Zeus challenged the exclusive kingship of Yahweh, thereby subversively communicating Yahweh's subordinate status and/or assimilation with the Greek pantheon.[84] In accord with the importance of calendrical festivals for ruler cults, Antiochus IV reorients Jewish space and time by forcing them to participate in sacrifices and celebrate a festival of Dionysus by wearing "wreaths of ivy and to walk in the procession in honor of Dionysus" (2 Macc 6:7).[85] The promiscuous behavior of the Dionysus cult also manifests itself within the Jerusalem temple, where debauchery (ἀσωτία) and prostitution took place in the temple precincts (ἐν τοῖς ἱεροῖς περιβόλοις; 2 Macc 6:4). By replacing the cult of Yahweh with a Greco-Roman deity associated with kingship, Antiochus effectively "replaced Judean particularity with a fictional identity that aims solely to achieve and express the power of the king and the might of the empire."[86] Antiochus's employment of traditional gods in service of Seleucid hegemony highlights the polytheistic system that could undergird the imperial domination system.

Third Maccabees, a text we will examine in more detail below (cf. 4.5.2.C), reflects a similar strategy of oppression.[87] After Ptolemy IV Philopator (222-203 BCE) attributes the success of his military campaign against Judea to "the gods deliberate alliance" (τῶν θεῶν ἀπροπτώτῳ συμμαχίᾳ, 3 Macc 3:14), he attempts to heap honors on the cult of Yahweh in accord

[84] See Portier-Young, *Apocalypse Against Empire,* 202-203.
[85] On 2 Macc 6:1-7, see: Anathea Portier-Young, *Apocalypse Against Empire*, 202-23. Jan Willem van Henten, "Royal Ideology: 1 and 2 Maccabees and Egypt," in *Jewish Perspective on Helleneistic Rulers* (ed. Tessa Rajak et al.; Berkeley: University of California, 2007), 265-282.
[86] Anathea Portier-Young, *Apocalypse Against Empire*, 204.
[87] The dating of 3 Maccabbees is heavily debated. See 4.5.2.C below.

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with the Hellenistic treatises on kingship.[88] But Ptolemy's envoy is excluded from entrance into the Jerusalem temple, thereby making the Jews, according to Ptolemy, "the only people among all nations who hold their heads high in defiance of kings and their benefactors" (βασιλεῦσιν καὶ τοῖς ἑαυτῶν εὐεργέταις, 3 Macc 3:19). This passage shows how Jews' alter-cultural identity could conflict with imperial power and its enmeshment in the system of benefaction. Ptolemy proceeds to "inflict public disgrace" on the Jews through a decree detailing their ethnic demotion through the *laographia* tax (2:27). Those who do not comply are put to death, while those who register are branded with the ivy leaf of Dionysus (3 Macc 2:25-30). In the postscript of the decree, Jews who join the Dionysian mysteries receive equal rights as the Alexandrians (ἰσοπολίτης, 2:30).[89] The use of Dionysus to persecute the Jews accords with the important place that Dionysus played in Seleucid and Ptolemaic ruler cults. Notably, in a fragment from Satyrus, the Ptolemies are given a cosmogonic identity as descendants of Dionysus (Theophilus, *Autol.* 2.7).[90] The concept of branding by fire was not uncommon among slaves, and Philo condemns apostates who tattoo idolatrous characters on their bodies (*Spec.* 1.58).[91] In this way, Philopator imprints the representation of Dionysus on his subjects' bodies, a particularly acute offense against the second commandment.

During the Christian era, it is not until the Second Sophistic that Christians faced loyalty tests before Roman magistrates. Even then, as Fergus Millar and Karl Galinsky have pointed out,

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[88] See prayer of Scipio in section 2.2 for further clarity on the gods in the Hellenistic and Roman military apparatus. Ps 151 also makes this point when David writes, "I went out to meet the Philistine [Goliath], and he cursed me by his idols" (Ps 151:7).
[89] Ps-Solomon also polemicizes against the Dionysiac mysteries: "For whether they kill children in their initiations, or celebrate secret mysteries, or hold frenzied revels with strange customs…" (Wis 14:23).
[90] See N. Clayton Croy, *3 Maccabees* (Leiden: Brill, 2006), 60.
[91] N. Clayton Croy also draws attention New Testament references to branding. See Gal 6:17; Rev 7:3; 13:16-17). See Croy, *3 Maccabees*, 60.

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the image of the emperor was evoked along with that of the traditional gods.[92] If we take Pliny's correspondence with Trajan seriously, Christians were forced to recite a formula to the gods and offer incense to the image of Trajan; additionally, the image of Trajan was brought into the court setting "with the statues of the gods" (Pliny, *Ep.* 10.96.5). But as a principle, one should never read the younger Pliny without reading Trajan's response; it is telling that Trajan downplays the evocation of his own image, yet affirms the use of the traditional gods for loyalty tests (Pliny, *Ep.* 10.97). The episode shows how the traditional gods could be utilized to support imperial hegemony. Fergus Millar's concluding comments are apt:

> I would like to suggest that it is precisely this integration of the Imperial cult into the wider spectrum of pagan cults which is the first reason why it plays only a modest role in the persecutions. The second reason is that, both for the people and, in the end, for the Emperors themselves, there was a real fear of the abandonment of the ancient gods, and the loss of the protection which they extended to the cities, and the Empire as a whole.[93]

Millar reminds us how important the traditional gods were for the vitality and preservation of empire. Miller also reminds us that the imperial cults were not the primary mechanism for opposition toward the early Christian movement. Early Judaism and early Christianity's negotiation of political idolatry cannot be reduced to a simple Yahweh versus Caesar—or Jesus versus Caesar—polemical dichotomy. Rather, when conflict broke out, "reverence for the gods proved *the* stumbling-block to the Jews in their struggle for civic rights in the Greek States."[94] This point cautions against embellishing ruler cults as if they were *the* pervasive mechanism of

[92] See Fergus Millar, "The Imperial Cults and Persecutions," in *Le Culte Des Souverains Dan L'Empire Romain* (Genève: Fondation Hart, 1973), 145-165, here 164; and Karl Galinsky, "The Cult of the Roman Emperor: Uniter or Divider?" in *Rome and Religion: A Cross-Disciplinary Dialogue on the Imperial Cult* (ed. by Jeffrey Brodd and Jonathan L. Reed; Atlanta: Society of Bibical Literature, 2011), 1-22, here 5-7. On scholarly embellishment of Roman persecution against Christians and loyalty tests that evoked both imperial cults and the traditional gods, see: Philip Harland, *Associations, Synagogues, and Congregations: Claiming a Place in Ancient Mediterranean Society* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2003), 239-264.
[93] See Fergus Millar, "The Imperial Cults and Persecutions," 164.
[94] Tcherikover, *Hellenistic Civilization,* 306-307.

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persecution. On the other hand, it cautions against reducing Jewish polemic against Greco-Egyptian idolatry as devoid of political meaning.

4.3.3 The Art of Safe Criticism

The critique of empire demanded rhetorical sophistication in antiquity. Public defamation carried with it the obvious danger of reactionary retribution. Tacitus recalls Augustus reviving the laws of treason, which included defection from the military, sedition and any act that impairs "the majesty of the people of Rome" (*Ann.* 1.72). Due to the subversive rhetor Cassius Severus who "defamed men and women of distinction in his insulting satires," Augustus deemed it fit to legislate "legal inquiry to libellous writings" (*Ann.* 1.72).[95] Cassius Dio writes of a certain Carrinas Secundus for the declamation of tyrants (59.20.6), and a sophist named Maternus was put to death by Domitian for similar reasons (67.12.5).[96] Literary subversion under the Principate, then, fell under the jurisprudence of criminal treason (*crimen maiestatis*). The defendant (*condemnatus maiestatis*) in cases of *maiestas*, depending on social status, was crucified or thrown into the arena with the beasts.[97] Epictetus provides us with an acute example of the danger of speaking openly, especially in the face of the presence of public sycophant informers (*delatores*)[98]: "A soldier, dressed like a civilian, sits down by your side, and begins to

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[95] In light of Augustus's legislation, Shadi Bartsch observes that "the detection of double entendre by audiences and emperors and the punishment (or not) of authors and actors is attested under almost every reign from Augustus to Domitian" (*Actors in the Audience: Theatricality and Doublespeak From Nero to Hadrian* [Harvard: Harvard University, 1994], 66). Bartsch reminds the modern interpreter that allusive double speak is what the audience would have expected.
[96] See Bartsch, *Actors in the Audience*, 94-95.
[97] For judicial consequences, see C. W. Chilton, "The Roman Law of Treason under the Early Principate," *JRS* 45 (1955): 73-81, here 75.
[98] See Dio Chrysostom *Or*. 43.9 for his belief that Socrates was sentenced by informers. Tacitus writes that Augustus's suspension of the Triumvirate and introduction of monarchy was accompanied by spies who acted for the State as a "universal parent" in which "every corner of the Roman world had suffered from their attacks" (*Ann.* 3.28). Josephus observes that Gaius filled the "whole habitable world which he governed, with false accusations and miseries" (συκοφαντιῶν καὶ κακῶν, *Ant.* 19.14). On the theoretical framework of rumor

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speak ill of Caesar, and then you too, just as though you had received from him some guarantee of good faith in the fact that he began the abuse, tell likewise everything you think, and the next this—you are led off to prison in chains!" (*Diatr.* 4.13.5).[99] To circumvent and protect oneself from retaliation, oblique speech was needed to safely subvert the imperial object of resistance.

A. Safe Speech and Greco-Roman Rhetoric

In the search for covert speech against the emperor, several New Testament scholars have invented or employed synthetic rhetorical devices to identify so-to-speak anti-imperial rhetoric: for example, "coded speech," "anti-Roman cryptograms" and especially James C. Scott's theory of "hidden transcripts" have become common methodological idiom.[100] Space precludes a full

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and gossip as a strategy among subordinate groups, see James C. Scott, *Domination and the Arts of Resistance,* 142-47.

[99] For further comment on this passage, see Christopher J. Fuhrmann, *Policing the Roman Empire: Soldiers, Administration, and Public Order* (Oxford: Oxford University, 2012), 143.

[100] On hidden transcripts, see James C. Scott, *Domination and the Arts of Resistance*. N. T. Wright appeals to "coded" challenges in "Paul's Gospel and Caesar's Empire," in *Paul and Politics: Ekklesia, Israel, Imperium, Interpretation*, 6-10. Norman Beck, on the other hand, uses James C. Scott's theory of hidden transcripts to develop a rhetorical device he calls "anti-Roman cryptograms." See Norman A. Beck, *Anti-Roman Cryptograms in the New Testament: Hidden Transcripts of Hope and Liberation* (New York: Peter Lang, 2009). For New Testament scholars who use James Scott's work, see: Richard Horsley ed., *Hidden Transcripts and the Art of Resistance: Applying the Work of James C. Scott to Jesus and Paul* (Leiden: Brill, 2004); Warren Carter, The *Roman Empire and the New Testament: An Essential Guide* (Nashville: Abingdon, 2006); Brigitte Kahl, "Acts of the Apostles: Pro(to)-Imperial Script and Hidden Transcript," 137-156; Steven Muir, "The Anti-Imperial Rhetoric of Hebrews 1.3: χαρακτήρ as a 'Double-Edged Sword;" in *A Cloud of Witnesses: The Theology of Hebrews in its Ancient Contexts* (ed. Richard Bauckham et al.; London: T&T Clark, 2008), 170-186, here 172-74; and see discussion in James R. Harrison, *Paul and the Imperial Authorities at Thessalonica and Rome: A Study of Conflict of Ideology* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2011), 28-33, 60 n. 57. John M. G. Barclay is rightly critical of N. T. Wright and other scholars who employ Scott's work to identify coded language. Barclay argues that (1) we have examples in Philo's *Legatio* and Josephus's *Contra Apionem* of Jews speaking bluntly against corrupt rulers; and (2) Paul's letters are written to insider Christian communities—therefore, one should not expect to find "dissimulation and disguise" because it is not written to outsiders, and we have access to the full transcript of Christian offstage dissent (which, according to Barclay, contains "no openly subversive statements about Caesar"). Barclay, however, misses the rich tradition of figured speech, which, as we see in Quintilian, could be used for safety and/or to add more elegance than straightforward language (*Inst. Or.* 9.2.66). Thus, the lack of explicit critique of Caesar in Paul's letters is not grounds for throwing the baby out with the bathwater: rather, allusive rhetoric is what Paul's audience would have expected—indeed, looked for—especially from an author attempting to persuade his audience artfully. For Barclay's critique of Wright, see: "Why the Roman Empire Was Insignificant to Paul," in Pauline Churches and Diaspora Jews (WUNT 275; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2011), 379-83. It is worth noting that

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evaluation of Scott's anthropological model. Suffice it to say that Scott focuses predominantly on "oral" forms of resistance, where subordinates disguise anonymous speech (the hidden transcript) to oppose their oppressors' dominant hegemonic discourse (the public transcript).[101] Scott's theory of hidden transcripts shows the effectiveness of oral resistance to imperial hegemony among modern Malaysian peasants through jokes, foot dragging, songs of resistance, etc.[102] However, Scott's model does not illustrate—*historically speaking*—how ancient auditors of the Roman Empire resisted the emperor *literarily* through rhetorical *discourse*. To be sure, Scott's in-person fieldwork allowed him to observe peasant resistance first hand, to empirically test and observe the hidden transcript, a privilege we are not afforded in the study of resistance among subordinate groups in literary texts of antiquity. Therefore, rather than impute modern non-literary forms of resistance onto texts of antiquity, it is argued here that we need to give pride of place to Greco-Roman and Jewish rhetorical strategies for resisting the ruling power.

Barclay employs Scott's theory of hidden transcripts in his interpretation of Josephus's covert criticism of imperial images in *Contra Apionem* 2.76-77. Barclay argues that Josephus's reference to "Greeks and some others" who erect statues is a hidden transcript critiquing Rome's idolatrous material culture (79-80). For Barclay, Josephus's rhetorical "deflection" and "circumspection" contains a "cultural snarl" in his reply to Apion when he writes that Moses "disdained" images (*despiciens, C. Ap.* 2.75). Barclay writes, "…as spin-doctors go, Josephus is one of the best" (77-81). Barclay perceptively draws attention to Josephus's use of allusive speech, however, his discussion omits reference to figured speech. Moreover, Barclay somewhat surprisingly appeals to James Scott and his own synthetic categories of "snarling sweetly" to characterize Josephus's subversive allusion. See John M. G. Barclay, "Snarling Sweetly: Josephus on Images and Idolatry," 73-87. Barclay also employs Scott's work in "The Empire Writes Back: Josephan Rhetoric in Flavian Rome," in *Flavius Josephus in Flavian Rome* (ed. Jonathan Edmondson et al.; Oxford: Oxford University, 2005), 315-332, here 319-20.

[101] See James C. Scott, *Domination and the Arts of Resistance*, 18-19 and 136-82. Since the hidden transcript was in oral, rather than written form, it is impossible to unearth the *exact* content of the hidden transcript among peasants. As Dennis Duling writes, "It is impossible for scholars of ancient empires, thus the Roman Empire, to gain access to the 'full transcript' of ancient peasants to the degree that Scott does" ("Empire: Theories, Methods, Models," 273).

[102] Of the different strategies of resistance, Scott writes, "Subordinate groups have developed a large arsenal of techniques that serve to shield their identity while facilitating open criticism, threats, and attacks. Prominent techniques that accomplish this purpose include spirit possession, gossip, aggression through magic, rumor, anonymous threats and violence, the anonymous letter, and anonymous mass defiance" (*Domination and the Arts of Resistance,* 140).

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In a 1984 article that is largely neglected by New Testament scholars, the classicist Frederick Ahl explores how ancient rhetoricians critiqued political tyrants with "verbal double innuendo" (ἐσκηματισμένος ἐν λογῳ, Demetrius, *Eloc.* 287; trans. Doreen C. Innes, LCL).[103] At the core of this rhetorical figure lies the premise that blunt speech (παρρησία) was both unacceptable and ineffective for critiquing the ruling power (Aristotle, *Rhet.* 1382B).[104] As Demetrius writes,

> Often when we converse with a tyrant or someone violent in some other way we set out to reproach them we use allusive speech of necessity (χρήζομεν ἐξ ἀνάγκης σχήματος λόγου) … I have spoken of these because I wished especially to demonstrate of the true despotic character how it particularly requires the wary speech that is called allusive … For flattery is shameful, criticism is dangerous, but the best is the middle path, that is, allusive speech" (Τὸ μὲν οὖν κολακεύειν αἰσχρόν, τὸ δὲ ἐπιτιμᾶν ἐπισφαλές, ἄριστον δὲ τὸ μεταξύ, τοῦτ ἔστι τὸ ἐσχηματισμένον, *Eloc.* 289, 294).[105]

According to Ahl, the chief feature of figured speech "was its compactness" where anti-tyrannical motifs have to be established by the reader and/or listener thus creating, in the words of Quintilian, "something which lurks there for the reader to discover" (*latens et auditori quasi inveniendum, Inst. Or.* 9.2.65).[106] For Quintilian, figured speech is especially useful under three circumstances: (1) "if it is unsafe to speak openly"; (2) "if it is unseemly to speak openly"; and

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[103] Frederick Ahl, “The Art of Safe Criticism in Greece and Rome,” *AJP* 105.2 (1984): 174-208. I am grateful to Dr. Hans-Josef Klauck for introducing me to Ahl's work. For Klauck's application of figured speech to Acts 12, see: Hans-Josef Klauck, “Des Kaisers schöne Stimme. Herrscherkritik in Apg 12,20-23,” in *Religion und Gesellschaft im frühen Christentum: Neutestamentliche Studien* (WUNT, 152; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2003), 251-67. Klauck's Ph.D student Justin Howell also discusses figured speech in his article, “The Imperial Authority and Benefaction of Centurions and Acts 10:34-43: A Response to C. Kavin Rowe,” 43-44. More recently, Jason A. Whitlark provides an excellent overview of figured speech in his evaluation of resistance to empire in the so-called “Letter” to the Hebrews. See Jason A. Whitlark, *Resisting Empire: Rethinking the Purpose of the Letter to "the Hebrews"* (London: Bloombury T&T Clark, 2014), 21-48. Steve Mason fills a much-needed void in scholarship on Josephus, applying the work of Ahl et al. to Josephus's *Antiquities* and *Vita*. See "Figured Speech and Irony in T. Flavius Josephus," in *Flavius Josephus and Flavian Rome* (ed. Jonathan Emondson et al.; Oxford: Oxford University, 2005), 243-288.

[104] Ahl, "Art of Safe Criticism," 175.

[105] English translation from Shadi Bartsch, *Actors in the Audience,* 96. On the likely dating of Demetrius in the first century CE, see: D. M. Schenkenveld, *Studies in Demetrius On Style* (Amsterdam: A. M. Hakert, 1964), 135-48.

[106] See Ahl, "Art of Safe Criticism," 176. Translation of Quintilian from Ahl, 187.

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(3) if it provides more elegance and pleasure than "straightforward language" (*Inst. Or.* 9.2.66). For Demetrius, on the other hand,

Quintilian observes that the first scenario provides the most frequent setting for rhetorical exercises of *declamatio*, "where we imagine conditions laid down by tyrants…" (*Inst. Or.* 9.2.67). In a judicial setting under tyranny, Quintilian writes, "You can speak well and make open statement against the tyrants we were discussing, provided the statement can be understood in another way. It is only danger you are trying to avoid, not giving offense. If you can slip by through ambiguity of expression, there's no one who won't enjoy your verbal burglary" (*Inst. Or.* 9.2.66-67).[107] Concealing one's subversion was an art for Quintilian: "if a figure is perfectly obvious, it ceases to be a *figure*" (*Inst. Or.* 9.2.69). Notably, Quintilian's concept of "ambiguity of expression" includes diction of speech where "hidden meaning is extracted from some phrase" (*Inst. Or.* 9.2.64). Demetrius provides several examples of how oblique words and phrases can "say opposing things simultaneously … [leaving] one confused as to whether it is praise or mockery" (*Eloc.* 291). One of Demetrius's examples points to Antigonus the one-eyed (382-301 BCE): "Such caution is often needed when dealing with rulers. Because he had only one eye, Philip would grow angry if anyone mentioned the Cyclops in his presence or used the word 'eye' at all" (*Eloc*. 293). Figured speech provided the modus operandi for communicating so-called "anti-imperial rhetoric" in antiquity. David Konstan points out that classical literature was intentionally demanding, and readers were trained to become active participants "in constituting the text."[108] With the active reader in mind, not only was blunt speech dangerous; it was also artless: "the most artistic device is to indicate one thing by allusion to another" (Quintilian, *Inst. Or.* 9.2.96).

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[107] Translation from Ahl, "Art of Safe Criticism," 195.
[108] David Konstan, "The Active Reader in Classical Antiquity," *Argos* 30 (2006): 5-16.

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Flattery (κολακεία) of emperors could also be figured as disguised dissent. By the end of the first century, Shadi Bartsch argues that political doublespeak was so common that Pliny had to assure Trajan that his words of panegyrical flattery didn't mean their "semantic opposites" (as they did during the reign of Domitian [*Pan.* 3.4]).[109] Similarly, Dio Chrysostom, who was exiled by Domitian in 82 CE (*Exil.* 13.1), praises Trajan's character for delighting in "truth and frankness rather than flattery and guile" (3 *Regn.* 4.2). Dio proceeds to defend his own words from double speak because he alone during the Domitianic era "was bold enough to tell the truth even at the expense of my life" (*3 Regn.* 4.12-13). In Dio Chrysostom's oration *De tyrranie* (On Tyrrany), Dio obliquely condemns Domitian by retelling his own exile through the experience of Diogenos of Sinope and a certain "Persian king." Dio cogently articulates the danger of critiquing the angry tyrant with blunt speech and flattery:

> If you talk with him boldly, he is angered and fears your frankness; if you converse with him meekly and deferentially, he suspects your meekness. He feels that he is being insulted by those who treat him as an equal and deceived by those who are more obsequious. Censure, too, stings him far more that it does others because he, a sovereign, if spoken ill of; nor is he pleased with praise either, for he does not think that the speaker is sincere in his praise (*Tyr.* 6.58-59).

The portrait of Domitian that Dio paints is one of obsessive paranoia which does not comport with frank speech or flattery, a situation in which a third option would be necessary. Similarly, when Marcus Aurelius brought the subversive orator Herodes Atticus to trial for treason, Philostratus criticizes Herodes for not using figured speech: "When he [Herodes] came up he began to attack the emperor. He did not even put his words in figured speech (σχηματίσμας τὸν λόγον)—the appropriate way for a man trained at school in this kind of rhetoric to keep his anger under control. Instead, with contentious and unschooled nakedness of tongue, he stretched

[109] See Shadi Bartsch, "The Art of Sincerity: Pliny's Panegyricus," 156-57.

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himself to the limits… (*Vit. soph.* 560-61).[110] Nakedness of tongue stands in contrast to what Plutarch describes as "a frankness neither genuine nor helpful but one that winks from its scowl, so to speak, and merely titillates" (*Adul. amic.* 51D). Rhetoricians' use of figured speech to critique the ruling power answers Hans-Josef Klauck's important question: if Luke (and early Jewish authors) did have a negative attitude toward Rome, "warum wollte Lukas nicht deutlicher werden?"[111] The answer, as Klauck has argued, is that explicit censure of the ruling power was considered artless especially in a political setting *when the speaker's safety was in doubt*.[112]

B. Safe Speech and Philo of Alexandria

The danger of speaking openly against imperial authority is evident in Philo of Alexandria. Goodenough was the first to draw attention to Philo's emphasis on the principle of caution when critiquing political tyrants (*Somn.* 2.81-92).[113] It is of special interest that Philo may reflect the concept of figured speech when he critiques the use of παρρησία as dangerous and ineffective against kings and tyrants; this is a point that Goodenough and others have not adequately addressed.[114] Neil Elliot, drawing on Goodenough's comments on this passage, argues that Philo's

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[110] Quoted from Ahl, "The Art of Safe Criticism," 202.
[111] Hans-Josef Klauck, "Des Kaisers schöne Stimme," 265.
[112] Although the level of Luke's rhetorical education is heavily debated, few scholars would question that Luke had at least a basic rhetorical education. On the influence of Quintilian upon Luke-Acts, see: Robert Morgenthaler, *Lukas und Quintilian: Rhetorik als Erzählkunst* (Zurich: Gotthelf, 1993). Conversely, Osvaldo Padilla argues that Luke's level of rhetorical education has been embellished by recent scholars. See "Hellenistic Paideia and Luke's Education: A Critique of Recent Approaches," *NTS* 55 (2009): 416-437.
[113] See E. R. Goodenough, *The Politics of Philo Judaeus: Practice and Theory, with a General Bibliography of Philo* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1938), 5-7. But see the critical comments of Goodenough's interpretation in A. H. M. Jones *JTS* 40 (1939): 182-85; Maren Niehoff, *Philo on Jewish Identity and Culture* (Tübingen: Morh Siebeck, 2001), 6-7 n. 18; John Collins, *Between Athens and Jerusalem: Jewish Identity in the Hellenistic Diaspora* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000), 134; and R. Barraclough, "Philo's Politics, Roman Rule, and Hellenistic Judaism," *ANRW* II 21/1 (1984): 449-475.
[114] However, Steven Weitzman alludes to Ahl's work but doesn't engage it with any depth. Weitzman argues that Philo employs his principle of caution to negotiate the well-known rhetorical dangers of flattery and frank speech (both of which rulers could detect—so, Agrippa to Caligula (*Legat.* 263) and Flaccus toward Petronius (*Flacc.* 2). Weitzman suggests that Philo's tactic is a type of "frank speech that mimics flattery by adjusting itself to soften and tame the powerful" (*Surviving Sacrilege*, 73, 74 n. 24).

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emphasis on "caution" reflects offstage subversion of empire through James Scott's idea of the hidden transcript.[115] While this is certainly plausible if we had access to the hidden transcript, it fails to take into account the use of figured speech in the first century CE. Of subjects who critique the ruling power openly, Philo writes:

> *ἆρ᾽ οὖν οὐ παραπαίουσι καὶ μεμήνασιν ὅσοι παρρησίαν ἄκαιρον σπουδάζουσιν ἐπιδείκνυσθαι βασιλεῦσι καὶ τυράννοις ἔστιν ὅτε λέγειν τε καὶ ποιεῖν ἐναντία τολμῶντες, οὐκ αἰσθανόμενοι, ὅτι οὐ τοὺς αὐχένας μόνον ὥσπερ τὰ θρέμματα ὑπεζεύχθησαν, ἀλλ᾽ ὅλα τὰ σώματα καὶ τὰς ψυχὰς γύναιά τε καὶ τέκνα καὶ γονεῖς καὶ τὴν ἄλλην ἑταίρων καὶ συγγενῶν πολυάνθρωπον οἰκειότητα καὶ κοινωνίαν ἐκδέδενται, καὶ ἔξεστι τῷ ἡνιόχῳ καὶ ἐπόχῳ μετὰ πάσης εὐμαρείας κεντεῖν, ἐλαύνειν, ἐπέχειν, ἀναχαιτίζειν, ἅττ᾽ ἂν ἐθελήσῃ μικρὰ καὶ μείζω διατιθέναι;*
>
> Do not these men then talk foolishly, are they not mad, who desire to display their inexperience and freedom of speech (*παρρησίαν*) to kings and tyrants, at times daring to speak and to do things in opposition to their will? Do they not perceive that they have not only put their necks under the yoke like brute beasts, but that they have also surrendered and betrayed their whole bodies and souls likewise, and their wives and their children, and their parents, and all the rest of the numerous kindred and community of their other relations?" (*Somn.* 2.83).

For Philo, torture and execution by imperial authority are the consequences for those who utilize "untimely blunt speech" (*ἀκαίρου παρρησίας*, *Somn.* 2.85). Philostratus also makes this point: "Let this be my advice to everyone: not to challenge tyrannical governments, not to incite their raw natures to anger" (*Vit. soph.* 500). Philo likens the retributive volatility of tyrants to brute beasts and Egyptians asps (*Somn.* 2.87-89). Indeed, to critique the beasts (i.e., imperial authority) with untimely blunt speech is "to be yoked under the beasts" (*τὰ θρέμματα ὑπεζεύχθησαν*, *Somn.* 2.83). Like Abraham who bowed down to the superior power of the Hittites (Gen 23:7; *Somn.* 2.90), Philo acknowledges that Jews in the public marketplace look upon "the masters with

[115] See Neil Elliot, "The 'Patience of the Jews': Strategies of Resistance and Accommodation to Imperial Cultures," in *Pauline Conversations in Context: Essays in Honor of Calvin J. Roetzel* (eds. Janice Capel Anderson et al.; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 2002), 32-41, here 37-40; and idem., "Romans 13:1-7 in the Context of Imperial Propaganda," in *Paul and Empire: Religion and Power in Roman Imperial Society* (ed. Richard A. Horsley; Harrisburg: Trinity International, 1997), 184-204, here 199-201.

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honour (ἐν τιμῇ), and upon the beasts of burden with fear, lest some injury should be done to us by them" (*Somn.* 2.91).

Notwithstanding the fear of retaliation, Philo proposes, "it is a good thing to attack our enemies and put down their power; but when we have no such opportunity, it is better to be quiet; but if we wish to find perfect safety as far as they are concerned, it is advantageous to caress them" (*Somn.* 2.92). Between the dichotomy of blunt speech and flattery, both of which carry inherent dangers, two other options of negotiation exist according to Philo. The first is silence. On its surface, the option of silence looks like a call to acquiescence. Silence, however, was known to create paranoia in emperors—especially when coming from exiled or retired politicians.[116] In Tacitus's biography of Agricola, he records the circumstances of political philosophers such as Thrasea Paetus and others who were exiled for publishing subversive panegyrical biographies:

> They [Domitian's regime] even went on to banish the professors of philosophy and exile all honourable accomplishments so that nothing decent might anywhere confront them. We have indeed set up a record of subservience. Rome of old explored the utmost limits of freedom; we have plumbed the depths of slavery, robbed as we are by informers even of the right to exchange ideas in conversation. We should have lost our memories as well as our tongues had it been as easy to forget as to be silent (Tacitus, *Agr.* 2).

Despite being forced to silence in exile, Ramsay MacMullen points to the exiles' "protest through inactivity" which became "a part of the formal charges against them that they had withdrawn from politics."[117] In the *Legatio*, when Philo's embassy does not achieve its intended rhetorical

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[116] See Paula James, "The Language of Dissent," in *Experiencing Rome: Culture, Identity and Power in the Roman Empire* (London: Routledge, 2000), 277-304, here 280. On the paranoia of emperors, see Dio Chrysostom's satire of the Persian king (i.e., Domitian) who is afraid of unarmed people, the food he eats and his own wife and children. "Yet difficult and grievous as the position of monarch was, he never wanted to get rid of it, nor could he" (*Tyr.* 6.35-39, 45).
[117] Ramsay MacMullen, *Enemies of the Roman Order: Treason, Unrest, and Alienation in the Empire* (Cambridge: Harvard, 1966), 51.

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effect on Gaius—and Gaius articulates his discontent that Jews did not sacrifice "to me" (οὐ γὰρ ἐμοὶ τεθύκατε, *Legat.* 357)—Philo concedes that silence was the best response:

> When it is the judge himself, and a judge possessed of such great power too [e.g., Gaius], who accuses the person on trial, the only thing to do is to say nothing. Silence is a kind of defence, particularly in the case of people who could not answer any of the questions or demands, because their customs and Laws bridled their tongues and closed and sewed up their mouths (*Legat.* 360; trans. Smallwood).

The embassy's refusal to acknowledge Gaius's divinity created an acute conflict between Jewish Law and emperor worship. How could a monotheistic Jew flatter the emperor's divinity in such a setting? The answer is that he/she couldn't, and silence was the only medium for conciliation without compromise. Still, silence is a type of answer in itself—to be sure, Gaius proceeds to call Philo's embassy "unfortunate and foolish" for not believing he had been "endowed with the nature of God" (μὴ πιστεύοντες ὅτι θεοῦ κεκλήρωμαι φύσιν, *Legat.* 367).

The second option of negotiation for Philo is the safest, which is to "caress" or to "tame" the tyrant (τιθασεῦσαι, *Somn.* 2.92). The word τιθασεύω does not occur in the LXX; however, Philo uses it in the *Legatio* to "propitiate and conciliate" (μαλθάξαι καὶ τιθασεῦσαι, *Legat.* 174) the Egyptian freedman Helicon, who collaborated with Gaius to inflict "his Egyptian venom against the Jews" (*Legat.* 205). Mary Smallwood suggests that Philo may be hinting at bribery here.[118] However, the semantic domain of taming, caressing and domesticating animals fits the mode of figured speech, wherein the "beasts of burden" (to quote Philo again) are managed through the *techne* of cautious rhetoric, not bribery. As Philo concludes, just as Joseph's brothers questioned his rule—"Shall you reign over us?" (Gen 37:8; *Somn.* 2.93)—so, too, the Jew endowed with "right reason" (ἐν διανοίᾳ ὁ ὀρθός) is able to resist the pride (τῦφος) of tyrants and say: "You shall not be a king, you shall not be a lord either over us, or during our lifetime over

[118] E. Mary Smallwood, *Philonis Alexandrini,* 251.

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others" (*Somn.* 2.95). Philo employs this passage allegorically to say that a philosophically astute soul is the necessary pre-condition for speaking truth to power.[119] But the conditions in which such truth is spoken to power demands caution, silence and/or caressing—untimely blunt speech merely transforms imperial power into the furor of beasts.

In his seminal study on opposition to the Roman Empire, Ramsay MacMullen asked why philosophy and subversion went together. The answer, according to MacMullen, is that "Stoicism in particular sharpened the impulse and the courage to say what one felt [against the emperors]…"[120] Certainly, in part, philosophy funded Philo's strategies of resistance, but Philo lives in tension with the art of safe criticism. On the one hand, the disciples of Moses should speak with boldness on behalf of their Laws (*Spec.* 1.321), and be ready to die at the hands of imperial authority (*Legat.* 192). On the other hand, to criticize royal beasts openly is foolish and lacks rhetorical prowess. Goodenough identified Philo's allusive anti-imperial rhetoric as "innuendo" and "code" but why not place Philo's double-speak within the ambit of his own Hellenized literary culture? The following fragment, quoted directly from Goodenough, provides even more clarity on the overlap between Philonic innuendo and the concepts of figured speech:

> The *politicus* must not just talk, but must have a two-fold manner of speech, the one concerned with the truth and genuine advantage, the other based upon opinion and the giving of pleasure. For the *politicus* can not say right out whatever he thinks it would be advantageous for the people to understand, but must conceal some things for the reason

[119] Notably, Quintilian believed that one could use allegory as a form of figured speech: "But all such devices which consist in saying one thing, while intending something else to be understood, have a strong resemblance to *allegory*" (*Inst. Or.* 9.2.92). On the political dimension of Philo's allegorical exegesis, see: David M. Hays, "Politics and Exegesis in Philo's Treatises on Dreams," in *Society of Biblical Literature 1987 Seminary Papers* (ed. Kent Harold Richards; Atlanta: Scholars, 1987), 429-438.

[120] Ramsay MacMullen, *Enemies of the Roman Order*, 53. Pierre Hadot also makes this point: "They [philosophers] often opposed the Roman emperors, with exemplary courage. In general, the philosophers never renounced their hope of changing society, even if only by the examples of their lives" (*What is Ancient Philosophy?* [trans. Michael Chase: Cambridge: Harvard, 2002], 95). The subject of tyranny was ubiquitous in the rhetorical schools. Thomas Habinek writes, "If there is one figure whose exclusion preoccupies speakers and writers throughout Greco-Roman antiquity, it is the tyrant" (*Ancient Rhetoric and Oratory* [Oxford: Blackwell, 2005], 8).

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> that the hearer is often aroused to opposition by hearing what is not flattering, and flatly refused to obey the truth, so that no impression is accomplished.[121]

Like the technicians of figured speech, Philo proposes a third option between the poles of flattery and blunt speech, a type of allusive rhetoric that leaves space for the implied audience to discern its multiple referents. Although this technique is cautious, "Philo thinks it is better to insinuate, to flatter, and so perhaps to guide into patronage, these Roman rulers whom he hated in his heart."[122] What Goodenough rightly recognized as code and innuendo, however, is not Philo's creative contribution to subversive rhetoric; it is, rather, a well-known strategy of resistance among the rhetoricians and philosophers of his day. Philo "poaches" from these traditions to serve his own rhetorical ends: namely, to protect Jewish autonomy and resist assimilation to the dominant imperial culture.

In conclusion, the modus operandi for anti-imperial rhetoric among the literati in the Greco-Roman world was figured speech. Although Philo does not acknowledge this figure explicitly, he does reflect the dangers of frank speech and flattery, opting for a third tactic of caution. The convergence of figured speech and the enclosed idiolect of the Septuagint provided Roman Jews and early Christians with an efficacious rhetorical strategy and intertextual repertoire for resisting imperial authority literarily. While traces of the hidden transcript could certainly merge on stage through allusive rhetoric, we stand on a more firm historical footing by placing early Jewish and Christian resistance literature within the literary culture and resistance strategies of its own day.

4.4 The Political Metaphor of Idolatry and Israelite Kingship

The most important soteriological event in Jewish memory is Yahweh's liberation of Israel from

[121] E. R. Goodenough, *Politics of Philo Judaeus,* 63.
[122] Idem., 63.

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Egypt. The Book of Exodus articulates a so-to-speak foundation narrative of imperial negotiation, including images of Jews' suppression under imperial hegemony (Exod 1:12 - 14), a deified monarch (Exod 7:9 - 11:10) and the articulation of Yahweh's supremacy and ability to override the imperial domination system (Exod 12:1 - 18:27).[123] Although scholars have spent much time deliberating over the sources and redaction of these stories, it is crucial to not lose sight of Exodus's larger narrative logic: Yahweh liberated Israel "out of Egypt from the house of slavery in order that Israel might worship no other gods but Yahweh alone" (Exod 20:2-3; Deut 5:7). The codification of Jews' worship of one God into the lived reality that is Israel emerged out of Jews' subordination to Egyptian empire (along with a deified ruler and his cohort of gods).[124] Since the work of Kitchen it has been noted that the Deuteronomistic historian redacts Exodus's legal documents into the form of an ancient Near Eastern suzerain-vassal covenant between a king and a subordinate people.[125] The suzerain-vassal relationship depicts Yahweh's exclusive kingship over the nation of Israel, other gods and other nations.[126] But how exclusive was the worship of Yahweh alone, and at what point did loyalty to political authority evoke a charge of idolatry? In order to flesh out this question, the discussion that follows draws on

[123] On the Book of Exodus as a metaphor for anti-imperial tendency in Israel, see: Norman K. Gottwald, "Early Israel as an Anti-Imperial Community," in *In the Shadow of Empire: Reclaiming the Bible as a History of Faithful Resistance* (ed. Richard Horsley; Louisville: Westminster John Knox 2008), 9-24, here 15-17.
[124] The concept of "monotheism" demands caution. We know from texts in the Hebrew Bible that Israel's worship could include other deities (e.g., Jer 7:18; Hos 11:2, Judg. 10:6), thus it is more accurate to speak of a "monolatrous henotheism" when talking about ancient Judaism. See Larry Hurtado, "Monotheism" in *The Dictionary of Early Judaism*, 961-964. On the complex development of Jewish monotheism, see: M. S. Smith, *The Origins of Biblical Monotheism: Israel's Polytheistic Background and the Ugaritic Texts* (Oxford: Oxford University, 2001); and Stenly Ned Rosenbaum, *Understanding Biblical Israel: A Reexamination of the Origins of Monotheism* (Macon: Mercer University, 2002).
[125] On the legal structure of Deuteronomy, see: M. G. Kline, *The Treaty of the Great King* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1963). On the Deuteronomic structure around the idea of kingship, see: Moshe Weinfeld, *Deuteronomy and the Deuteronomic School* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1972).
[126] There is no scholarly consensus over the dating of texts depicting Yahweh as king (for examples, see Ex 15:18; Num 23:21; Deut 33:5, 26; Judg 8:23; 1 Sam 8:7; 10:19; 12:12; Ps 93:1; 96:10; 97:1; 99:1). However, the motif clearly materialized during the Second Temple Period. See K. M. Heim, "Kings and Kingship," in *Dictionary of the Old Testament Historical Books,* 610-622. See also, E. Zenger, "Herrschaft Gottes/Reich Gottes II," *TRE* 15 (1986): 176-89.

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Moshe Halbertal and Avishai Margalit's concept of the political metaphor of idolatry. The political metaphor provides a dynamic heuristic metric to discern when Israelite and/or gentile kingship and monarchical forms of government impinged on Yahweh's exclusive political sovereignty. After evaluating the political metaphor and the anti-monarchical tradition in the Hebrew Bible, we will apply the political metaphor of idolatry to Philo of Alexandria's concept of monotheism and imperial authority.

Moshe Halbertal and Avishai Margalit provide the most comprehensive study on the Biblical concept of idolatry. Halbertal and Margalit define idolatry as "an improper conception of God in the mind of the worshiper, thereby internalizing sin."[127] Two metaphors, according to Halbertal and Margalit, provided Jews with a metric for conceptualizing idolatry. The first is the marital metaphor of idolatry and the second is the political metaphor of idolatry. The marital metaphor portrays Israel in an exclusive marital covenant between Yahweh (the husband) and Israel (the wife). The act of idolatry occurs when the unfaithful wife worships another god, thereby fornicating with a lover—the "third partner" (Hos 1:2; 2:9-11, 14-15).[128] The benefit of the marital metaphor is that its metric for discerning idolatry is straightforward. Fornicating with a third partner (a god or other idolatrous object of power) is an obvious infraction against Israel's monogamous and exclusive marital relationship with Yahweh.

In contrast to the marital metaphor, the political metaphor of idolatry depicts Yahweh as Israel's exclusive political sovereign. Whereas the marital metaphor depicts the worship of "other gods" as the threatening third party, the political metaphor understands the threatening third party as "human political institutions that demand a competing political loyalty from people."[129]

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[127] Moshe Halbertal and Avishai Margalit, *Idolatry* (trans. Naomi Goldblum; Harvard: Harvard University, 1998), 2.
[128] Halbertal and Margalt, *Idolatry,* 9-36.
[129] Halbertal and Margalit, *Idolatry,* 215.

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Indeed, what is God's relationship to human dominion? Is the relationship of political loyalty to God so exclusive that other political loyalties are tantamount to betrayal, and therefore a form of idolatry?[130] Halbertal and Margalit observe that religious language is replete with metaphors of political sovereignty: Yahweh is king, shepherd, servant, the Suzerain, Savior, Lord of lords and the commander-in-chief *inter alia.*[131] Such royal titulature staked a claim about divinity and especially political sovereignty. Whereas the marital metaphor is more exclusive in that it prohibits a transfer of power to a third party (according to Biblical law, a man is prohibited from sharing his wives with other men);[132] political authority, in contrast, is divisible, allowed for a transfer of political power to another agent. Within the more complex boundaries of the political metaphor, Yahweh can share/divest his political sovereignty with earthly agents both within Israel's political structures and outside of them, among imperial and non-imperial authorities. As Halbertal and Margalit write, "In the political metaphor there is no need for a third party to create a situation of disloyalty. The subject does not have to transfer the sovereignty of God to another person—he can take it for himself."[133] The allowance of a transfer of power to an individual who can exploit that power created the potential for the intractable problem of deification.

The problem of political agents exploiting the transfer of power is evident among gentile rulers (Isa 14:12-16; Ezek 28:1-2, 6-7; 29:3; Isa 37:18-20; Isa 37:23-24, 29) and Israelite kings in the Hebrew Bible (e.g., 2 Kgs 21:1-15; 23:26-27). Under certain conditions, however, Yahweh could also transfer sovereignty to foreign empires within a master-servant metaphor as an agent

[130] Idem, 215.
[131] On the ancient Near Eastern royal titulature, see William W. Hallo, *Early Mesopotamian Royal Titles: A Philologic and Historical Analysis* (AOS 43; New Haven: Yale University, 1957). On the iconography that communicates the divinity of ancient Near Easter kings, see: Irene J. Winter, "Touched by the Gods: Visual Evidence for the Divine Status of Rulers," in *Religion and Power: Divine Kingship in the Ancient World and Beyond* (ed. Nicole Brisch; Chicago: University of Chicago, 2008), 75-102.
[132] Halbertal and Margalit, *Idolatry*, 215.
[133] Idem, 216.

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to correct Israel (so Nebuchadnezzar, Jer 27:12-13) or liberate her (so Cyrus, Isa 44:24-28; 45;1, 13).[134] The author of 1 *Esdras*, set in the time of Josiah's reforms (621 BCE), but composed ca. second century BCE, also evokes this tradition: “Thus says Cyrus king of the Persians: The Lord of Israel, the Lord Most High, has made me king of the world" (1 Esd 2:3). But within what Halbertal and Margalit call the master-servant metaphor, Yahweh is always the one bestowing sovereignty on the gentile king, which provides the justification for sharing agency (e.g., 2 Sam 12:8; 2 Chron 20:6; Prov 8:15-16; Isa 45:1; Dan 2:21, 37-38; 4:17, 25, 31; 5:21; Wis 6:1-15; Sir 4:17; 10:40; 17:17; *Let. Aris.*129, 224; *1 En.* 46:5; *2 Bar.* 82:9; 4 Macc 12:11).[135] Along similar lines, without Yahweh's consent, Israel's alliances with foreign empires could be considered a breach of Yahweh's exclusive political sovereignty (Isa 31:1-3; Jer 2:17-19; Ezek 16:28).[136] So Isaiah condemns Israel's alliance with Egypt as an act of deification: "The Egyptians are human, and not God; their horses are flesh, and not spirit" (Isa 31:3). Although the political metaphor allows for shared agency, its limitations are predictable: within the contours of a distinctively Jewish cosmology, the ruling power—whether Israelite or gentile—must remain subordinate to the exclusive rule of Yahweh, thereby proscribing its imperial authority from self-deification.

The political metaphor was particularly apt during Israel's transition from a theocracy to a monarchical form of government. As a concession to the Israelites' request for a king, Yahweh transfers power to native kings who ruled Israel from ca. 1000-586 BCE. The impending transition to monarchy can be felt in the Judges cycle—Gideon refuses requests to become king because "the Lord will rule over you" (Judg 8:23) and the Israelites are repeatedly portrayed in an anarchical state "without a king" (Judg 17:6; 18:1; 19:1; 20:25; 21:25). The requests become

[134] Halbertal and Margalt, *Idolatry,* 224. In Isaiah 45:1, Cyrus II is called "my shepherd," a title taken from the ideological vernacular of ancient Near Eastern kingship. See Leo G. Perdue and Warren Carter, *Israel and Empire,* 98.
[135] Halbertal and Margalt, *Idolatry,* 224.
[136] Idem*,* 223-24.

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more overt in 1 Samuel when the Israelites ask for a king to be "like the other nations" (1 Sam 8:5; 10:17-19; 12:12). The composition history of 1 Samuel is complex, including both promonarchical (1 Sam 9:1-10:16; 11; 13-14) and antimonarchical sources (1 Sam 7 - 8; 10:17-27; 12).[137] In a brute critique of unjust imperial hegemony redolent of Israel's experience under Egypt, the prophet Samuel proleptically warns Israel of the hegemonic side of its impending transition to a monarchic constitution:

> These will be the ways of the king who will reign over you: he will take your sons and appoint them to his chariots and to be his horsemen, and to run before his chariots; and he will appoint for himself commanders of thousands and commanders of fifties, and some to plow his ground and to reap his harvest, and to make his implements of war and the equipment of his chariots. He will take your daughters to be perfumers and cooks and bakers. He will take the best of your fields and vineyards and olive orchards and give them to his courtiers. He will take one-tenth of your grain and of your vineyards and give it to his officers and his courtiers. He will take your male and female slaves, and the best of your cattle and donkeys, and put them to his work. He will take one-tenth of your flocks, and you shall be his slaves (1 Sam 8:11-17).

Notwithstanding Samuel's warning against human political monarchy, the Israelites respond that they "are determined to have a king" so that they "may be like other nations" (1 Sam 8:19-20). Yahweh's divestment of his exclusive political sovereignty resulted in the royal ideology of the Davidic monarchy (e.g., 2 Sam 7; 1 Kgs 2:1-4; Pss 2; 72; 89; 110; 132; Isa 9:1-7).[138] But even within this model the king was a mediator (i.e. God's son, 2 Sam 7:14; Ps 2:7) so that "he is empowered to act as God's surrogate on earth."[139] The transfer of power from Yahweh to his surrogate king created a pervasive challenge in ancient Israel: namely, how to place limitations on Israelite kingship to prohibit the king from self-deification and from building his own empire.

[137] Walter Bruegemann, *An Introduction to the Old Testament: The Canon and Christian Imagination* (Louisville: Westminster John Know, 2003), 133.
[138] On the influence of the Davidic royal ideology on early Judaism, see: Kenneth E. Pomykala, *The Davidic Dynasty Tradition in Early Judaism: Its History and Significance for Messianism* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1995).
[139] Adela Yarbro Collins and John J. Collins, *King and Messiah as Son of God: Divine, Human, and Angelic Messianic Figures in Biblical and Related Literature* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2008), 22.

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The transition from a theocracy to a monarchy, then, demanded constitutional strictures to consciously limit the concentration of power in the king's hands.[140]

The so-called Deuteronomic Law of the King (Deut 17:14-20) provides the most sophisticated attempt in the Hebrew Bible to limit the king's power.[141] Jamie A. Grant points out that the Law of the King is the only document in the ancient Near East to consciously limit the power of a king.[142] Grant structures the Law of the King into four primary themes: (1) the king as chosen by Yahweh in v. 15; (2) the king is portrayed as one of the Hebrew brothers in vv. 15, 20; (3) limitations of royal power, stressing dependence on Yahweh in vv. 16-17; and (4) the centrality of Torah in the life of the king in vv. 18-19.[143] These four prohibitions functioned to prevent the Israelite monarch from usurping his role as a subordinate authority-servant of Yahweh, to maintain the centrality of Torah and to resist assimilation to alien kingship models of other empires.[144] Here I quote from the Septuagint translation in order to draw attention to intertextual allusions in subsequent Hellenistic and Roman Jewish literature:

> (14) ἐὰν δὲ εἰσέλθῃς εἰς τὴν γῆν, ἣν κύριος ὁ θεός σου δίδωσίν σοι ἐν κλήρῳ, καὶ κληρονομήσῃς αὐτὴν καὶ κατοικήσῃς ἐπ᾽ αὐτῆς καὶ εἴπῃς καταστήσω ἐπ᾽ ἐμαυτὸν ἄρχοντα καθὰ καὶ τὰ λοιπὰ ἔθνη τὰ κύκλῳ μου, (15) καθιστῶν καταστήσεις ἐπὶ σεαυτὸν ἄρχοντα, ὃν ἂν ἐκλέξηται κύριος ὁ θεός σου αὐτόν. ἐκ τῶν ἀδελφῶν σου καταστήσεις ἐπὶ σεαυτὸν ἄρχοντα· οὐ δυνήσῃ καταστῆσαι ἐπὶ σεαυτὸν ἄνθρωπον ἀλλότριον, ὅτι οὐκ ἀδελφός σού ἐστιν. (16) διότι οὐ πληθυνεῖ ἑαυτῷ ἵππον οὐδὲ μὴ ἀποστρέψῃ τὸν λαὸν εἰς Αἴγυπτον, ὅπως πληθύνῃ ἑαυτῷ ἵππον, ὁ δὲ κύριος εἶπεν οὐ προσθήσετε ἀποστρέψαι τῇ ὁδῷ ταύτῃ ἔτι. (17)

[140] Halbertal and Margalit, *Idolatry*, 220.
[141] The Law of the King is part of a larger section of laws that deal with judiciary and leadership matters, which can be broken down into the following sections: laws that pertain to judges and judicial matters (Deut. 16:18-17:13); the king (17:14-20); the priests (18:1-8); and the prophets (18:9-22). For the composition of this narrative block, see Sarah J. K. Pearce, *The Words of Moses: Studies in the Reception of Deuteronomy in the Second Temple Period* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2013). Pearce suggests that this literary unit belongs to the period during the reforms of Josiah (ca. 648-609 BCE), but were reworked by subsequent generations in the setting of exile (*The Words of Moses,* 3).
[142] Jamie A. Grant, *The King as Examplar: the Function of Deuteronomy's Kingship Law in the Shaping of the Book of Psalms* (Boston: Brill, 2004), 192.
[143] Grant, *King as Examplar,* 193.
[144] On divine kingship in ancient Mesopotamia and Egypt, see the essays in Nicole Brisch, ed., *Religion and Power: Divine Kingship in the Ancient World and Beyond* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 2008), 13-74.

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> καὶ οὐ πληθυνεῖ ἑαυτῷ γυναῖκας, οὐδὲ μεταστήσεται αὐτοῦ ἡ καρδία· καὶ ἀργύριον καὶ χρυσίον οὐ πληθυνεῖ ἑαυτῷ σφόδρα. (18) καὶ ἔσται ὅταν καθίσῃ ἐπὶ τῆς ἀρχῆς αὐτοῦ, καὶ γράψει ἑαυτῷ τὸ δευτερονόμιον τοῦτο εἰς βιβλίον παρὰ τῶν ἱερέων τῶν Λευιτῶν, (19) καὶ ἔσται μετ᾽ αὐτοῦ καὶ ἀναγνώσεται ἐν αὐτῷ πάσας τὰς ἡμέρας τῆς ζωῆς αὐτοῦ, ἵνα μάθῃ φοβεῖσθαι κύριον τὸν θεὸν αὐτοῦ φυλάσσεσθαι πάσας τὰς ἐντολὰς ταύτας καὶ τὰ δικαιώματα ταῦτα ποιεῖν, (20) ἵνα μὴ ὑψωθῇ ἡ καρδία αὐτοῦ ἀπὸ τῶν ἀδελφῶν αὐτοῦ, ἵνα μὴ παραβῇ ἀπὸ τῶν ἐντολῶν δεξιὰ ἢ ἀριστερά, ὅπως ἂν μακροχρονίσῃ ἐπὶ τῆς ἀρχῆς αὐτοῦ, αὐτὸς καὶ οἱ υἱοὶ αὐτοῦ ἐν τοῖς υἱοῖς Ισραηλ.
>
> (14) Now if you come into the land that the Lord your God is giving you and take possession of it and live in it and you say, “I will set a ruler over me, like the rest of the nations that are around me,” (15) by appointing, you shall appoint over you a ruler, him whom the Lord your God may choose. One of your own brothers you shall appoint as ruler over you; you shall not have power to appoint a strange person over you, because he is not your brother. (16) For he shall not multiply cavalry for himself or return the people to Egypt in order to multiply cavalry for himself, but the Lord has said to you, “You shall never add to return that way.” (17) And he shall not multiply wives for himself, neither shall his heart turn away; also silver and gold he shall not multiply exceedingly for himself. (18) And it shall be, when he has sat upon the seat of his rule, that he shall write for himself this second law in a book from the priests, the Leuites. (19) And it shall be with him, and he shall read from it all the days of his life so that he may learn to fear the Lord his God, to keep all these commandments and these statutes to do them (20) so that his heart may not be *exalted above* his brothers so that he not turn aside from the commandments, right or left, in order that he be long–lived in his rule, he and his sons among the sons of Israel. (Deut. 17:14-20; NETS).

The opening line in verse 14 (of Deut 17) already highlights the supremacy of Yahweh's kingship over the Israelite king: the land is Yahweh's to give. Additionally, the phrase "like the other nations" evokes an intertextual allusion to the anti-monarchical tradition. As Jeffrey H. Tigay writes, "Deuteronomy, by mentioning only this motive for wanting a monarchy, characterizes the institution as unnecessary and unworthy."[145] The preface of the Law of the King suggests that monarchy is an unnecessary concession; the ideal is theocracy. Hindsight from the perspective of a redactor, however, is always twenty-twenty.

Most notably for our purposes here, the Law of the King proscribes the monarch from unbridled power and, hence, idolatrous practices. Both the marital metaphor and the political

[145] Jeffrey H. Tigay, *Deuteronomy* דברים (JPSTC; Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1996), 166.

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metaphor can be felt in the proscriptions in Deut 17 vv. 15-17: the ideal monarch should not be a gentile, participate in foreign marriages and military alliances, nor shall he acquire military might and wealth with precious metals (all of which function as the potentially idolatrous third partner). Christopher J. H. Wright poignantly breaks down the counter-cultural nature of these restrictions on the king's power:

> These three restrictions (vv. 16f.) are remarkable because they quite explicitly cut across the accepted pattern of kingship throughout the Ancient Near East. Military power, through building up of a large chariot force (the point of having great numbers of horses), the prestige of a large harem of many wives (frequently related to international marriage alliances), and the enjoyment of great wealth (large amounts of silver and gold)—these were the defining marks of kings worthy of the title. Weapons, women, and wealth: why else be a king?[146]

The accumulation of weapons, women and wealth reflects the hubris of ancient Near Eastern kingship models.[147] Such accumulations of power were incompatible with Deuteronomic legislation since they would co-opt the transfer of power from dependence on Yahweh alone to the Israelite king.[148] To thwart the tendency toward hubris and self-deification, the Law of the King emphasizes the humanity of the king, who is chosen by Yahweh as "one of your own community" (Deut 17:15). The "democratising effect" of this proscription prohibits the ascription of divinized qualities to the Israelite kings; Yahweh alone, rather, is the only sovereign king who

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[146] Christoper J. H. Wright, *Deuteronomy* (NIBCOT; Peabody: Hendrickson, 1996), 209.

[147] Notably, in 2 Sam 24, King David takes a census to presumably build up Israel's military and economic might in the guise of ancient Near Eastern empires. In continuity with the Law of the King David's hubristic campaign is obstructed by Yahweh. On this episode, see Douglas K. Stuart, "The Old Testament Context of David's Costly Flirtation with Empire-Building," in *Empire in the New Testament* (ed. Stanley E. Porter and Cynthia Long Westfall; Eugene: Pickwick, 2011), 17-53. The indictment of such hubris was just as relevant during the Hellenistic and Roman periods. For example, the author of 1 Maccabees characterizes Alexander the Great as one who "fought many battles, conquered strongholds, and put to death the kings of the earth. He advanced to the ends of the earth, and plundered many nations" (1 Macc 1:2-3).

[148] The prohibition against foreign wives stems from Deut 7:3-6. The premise is that marriages with gentiles can incite idolatrous practices with foreign deities. The prohibition to not accumulate horses or return to Egypt to acquire horses most likely alludes to the reality that Yahweh liberated Israel from Egypt without horses. The emphasis again is placed on dependence on Yahweh rather than any human military apparatus. See Grant, *The King as Examplar*, 203; and D. J. Reimer, "Concerning Return to Egypt: Deuteronomy XVII 16 and XXVIII 68 Reconsidered," in *Studies in the Pentateuch* (ed. J. Emerton; VTSup 41: Leiden: Brill, 1990), 217-230.

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is worshiped with divinized qualities.[149] Finally, the king is encouraged to focus his reading energies on the Law of the King so as to make Torah the supreme authority rather than the king alone (Deut 17:18-19).[150] In this way, similar to the Hellenistic treatises on kingship, the king is to read the Law of the King daily to function as an exemplar worshiper of Yahweh.[151] The daily reading of the Law of the King also empowers the king to not "exalt his heart" above other members of the community (לבלתי רום-לבבו אחיומ; ἵνα μὴ ὑψωθῇ ἡ καρδία αὐτοῦ ἀπὸ τῶν ἀδελφῶν αὐτοῦ, Deut 17:20).

Within the elastic boundaries of the political metaphor of idolatry, Yahweh's exclusive political authority is divisible, allowing for both Israelite and gentile kings to share authority. But the political metaphor's flexibility has clear boundaries: the accumulation of material wealth, military might and self-exaltation undermine Yahweh's exclusive political authority and evokes error in the mind of subjects. As Halbertal and Margalit conclude, the idea of Yahweh's exclusive sovereignty associated with the rejection of idolatry in the post-exilic world contained "anarchic dynamite" in that it determined theological limits to the possibility of subjugation—"whether to a king of Israel who has become overly proud, or to a gentile king who attempts to impose his authority.[152]" We see the presence of anarchic dynamite in the sect of Judaism that Josephus calls the fourth philosophy led by Judas the Galilean, who argued that "God is to be

[149] I borrow the phrase "democratizing effect" from Grant, *The King as Examplar,* 205-206.
[150] Bernard M. Levinson argues that the emphasis on reading the Law of the King functions to hamstring the king's authority. "In Deuteronomy's presentation, the king is reduced to a mere titular figurehead of the state, more restricted than potent, more otiose than exercising real military, judicial, executive, and cultic function. The one potent authority is the Torah—the text of Deuteronomy…" ('The Reconceptualization of Kingship in Deuteronomy and the Deuteronomistic History's Transformation of Torah," *Vetus Testamentum* 51.4 [2001]: 511-534, here 522). In this way, the Law of the King functions to legitimate Torah over against the authority of the Israelite monarch.
[151] Erwin R. Goodenough argues that the idea of animate law is present in nascent form in the Law of the King. See "Kingship in Early Israel," *JBL* 48 (1929): 169-205.
[152] Halbertal and Margalit, *Idolatry*, 234.

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their only Ruler and Lord" (μόνον ἡγεμόνα καὶ δεσπότην, Josephus, *Ant.* 18.23).[153] The fourth philosophy's sensitivity to political sovereignty is further felt in their refusal to pay taxes to Rome, which they understood as idolatrous worship of "the Romans rather than god" (*War* 17.5). Although the fourth philosophy represents a highly exclusive view of Yahweh's sovereignty, they well-illustrate how the first commandment could lead to tensions with the ruling power. The political metaphor stood at the center of these tensions, and provides a crucial heuristic metric for interpreting the political attitude of Jewish resistance literature. Before examining Hellenistic and Roman Jewish literature that critiques gentile hubris, an analysis of the political metaphor of idolatry and kingship in early Jewish sources is warranted.

4.5 The Political Metaphor of Idolatry and Early Judaism

Josephus reflects on Jews' consistent allegiance to Torah despite their "countless different fortunes, thanks to the changes among the kings who ruled Asia…" (*C. Ap.* 2.228).[154] Under gentile rule both at home and in the Diaspora, Israel's political sovereignty was transferred from native kings to gentile rulers. The political metaphor of idolatry took on new meaning and significance during the Second Temple period. Without the political autonomy to place

[153] Halbertal and Margalit, *Idolatry*, 234.
[154] When violent conflict did emerge, Josephus suggests that imperial authorities inflicted physical demands on Jewish subjects not out of hatred but a desire to see Jews' steadfast allegiance to their laws, which was "an amazing spectacle" (*C. Ap.* 2.232-233). On the motif of spectacle in Josephus, see Honora H. Chapman, "Spectacle in Josephus' *Jewish War*," in *Flavius Josephus & Flavian Rome* (ed. Jonathan Edmondson and Steve Mason; New York: Oxford University, 2005), 289-313. Josephus further reflects on the political reality of Second Temple Judaism when he defends against Apion's charges that Jewish subjugation to foreign empires was indicative of their moral and religious inferiority. Josephus writes, "For he [Apion] says that it is evidence of the fact that we do not employ just laws or worship God as we should that [we do not govern,] but are subservient to other nations (δουλεύειν δὲ μᾶλλον ἔθνεσιν), one after another, and that we have experienced some misfortunes affecting our city—while they [Egypt], obviously, have become accustomed from the very beginning to ruling over the most dominant city rather than serving the Romans!" (*C. Ap.* 2.125; trans. Barclay). With subtle rhetorical subversion, Josephus turns "the charge back against his accuser" (John M. G. Barclay, "The Empire Writes Back: Josephan Rhetoric in Flavian Rome, " in *Pauline Churches and Diaspora Jews* [WUNT 275; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2011], 301-316, here 309). Apion's own Alexandrian community, so Josephus's logic runs, is also subordinate to Rome's domination.

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limitations on gentile kings—or place an ethnic Jew in the seat of power—Jews were faced with the intractable problem of (1) rationalizing their subordinate social location under gentile imperial authorities (often through the Deuteronomistic theology of divine retribution [cf. 4.3.1]); and (2) developing discursive strategies of royal management, representation and subversion. Since violent resistance was a dangerous option, representing idolatrous imperial power was essential to resist assimilation and uphold boundary maintenance. Admittedly, the option of literary resistance was secluded to the upper echelons of Jewish society. But when the elite took it upon themselves to "write back" to their overlords, we can't preclude the possibility that their message included the sentiments of their students, families, peers and fellow citizens.

In his study of Jews' "art of cultural persistence" during the Second Temple period, Steven Weitzman evaluates "the role of the imagination in the struggle for cultural survival," wherein "the basic options available to Jews were limited—one could ingratiate oneself with foreign rule, operate within its blind spots, or find a way to augment one's power and fight it off."[155] According to Weitzman, imagination and subversion went hand in hand. Literary opposition was designed to invoke the imagination of Jewish subjects and render the ruling power's sovereignty subordinate to the Jewish God. Anathea Portier-Young draws attention to a correlative strategy of resistance that she calls "critical inversion."[156] Under the stressors of imperial hegemony, critical inversion functions as a "strategy for shaping the counter mythologies that make it possible to reimagine a world governed not by empires, but by God."[157] For example, with rhetorical caution, Philo condemns the geographical hubris of Rome's imperial domination by critically inverting political hierarchy:

Let those cease their proud boasting who have acquired royal and imperial sway, some by

[155] Steven Weitzman, *Surviving Sacrilege,* 8-9.
[156] Anathea Portier-Young, *Apocalypse Against Empire,* 14.
[157] Idem., 14.

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> bringing under their authority a single city or country or nation, some by having over and above these, made themselves masters of all earth's regions to its fullest bounds, all nations, Greek and barbarian alike, all rivers, and seas unlimited in number and extent. For even had they, besides controlling these, extended their empire, an idea which it were impious to utter, to the realm of the upper air, alone of all things made by the Creator to enjoy a freedom untouched by bondage—even then, they would be reckoned ordinary citizens when compared with great kings who received God as their portion; for the kingship of these as far surpasses theirs as he that has gained possession is better than the possession, and he that has made than that which he has made (*Plant.* 67-68; trans. F. H. Colson, LCL).[158]

In accord with Philo's views on allusive rhetoric, Philo does not explicitly name Rome in this passage. However, as Katell Berthelot observes, the referent must be Rome since Rome was the only nation to claim universal dominion in the first century CE.[159] For Philo, Rome's successful domination of the inhabited world is an inferior claim to sovereignty compared to Jews' election by God and their consequent spiritual kingship. Philo critically inverts Roman imperial power by suggesting that the kingship of Jewish subjects surpasses their overlords. Philo's counter mythology admittedly demands imagination in the face of Rome's overwhelming imperial power, but with the loss of national autonomy—what other options were available? To further flesh out the relationship between Jewish monotheism and gentile political authority, we turn to Philo of Alexandria.

4.5.1 Philo of Alexandria on Monotheism, Monarchy and Ruler Cults

Philo of Alexandria provides invaluable insight into the inner-workings of Jewish negotiation of Roman emperors and local imperial authorities. Our knowledge about the life of Philo is scant. Josephus writes that Philo was "a man eminent on all accounts, brother to Alexander the alabarch, and one not unskillful in philosophy" (*Ant.* 18:259). Philo no doubt preferred the

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[158] Quoted from Katell Berthelot, "Philo's Perception of the Roman Empire," *Journal for the Study of Judaism 42* (2011): 166-187, here 183.
[159] Idem., 183-84.

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secluded life of the mind (*Leg.* 2.85; *Fug.* 49); but the stressors of a mad emperor, albeit with reticence, could drag Philo from the private to the public into "the vast sea of political cares" (*Spec.* 3.1-6).[160] Notwithstanding Philo's participation in the embassy to Gaius, he well understood the limits of Jewish participation in gentile politics. For Philo, political participation can lead to intoxication with royal hubris, clothed in royal "garment of many colors, deceived by its external splendor, and not perceiving its ugliness" (*Somn.* 1.224).[161] The critique may refer to Philo's nephew, Tiberius Julius Alexander, but it may also reflect Philo's view that royal excess betrays Yahweh's exclusive political sovereignty. To be sure, Philo equated the love of wealth (πλοῦτος) and glory (δόξα) with idols (εἴδωλα) and powerless shadows (ἀμενηναὶ σκιαί) (*Spec.* 1.28). Josephus appeals to a similar mentality, warning that the reward for living exactly according to Jewish ancestral law "is not silver or gold; it is not a crown of olive branches or of parsley, nor any such public sign of commendation" (*C. Ap.* 2.217-218).[162] But how exclusive was Philo's view of monotheism and sovereignty? Did allegiance to an emperor or local imperial authority evoke idolatry in Philo's political cosmology?

Only two of Philo's works bluntly address Roman imperial power: the apologetic works known as *De Legatione ad Gaium* (*Legatio*) and *In Flaccum* (*Flaccus*). Maren Niehoff points out that aside from one reference to the Latin language in *Opificio* 127, there are no direct references to Romans and Roman customs outside of the *Legatio* and *Flaccus*.[163] Philo's reticence to critique the ruling power of the day bluntly in the bulk of his works reflects, in my mind, the art

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[160] For further comment on these passages in relation to Philo's biographical details, see E. R. Goodenough, *An Introduction to Philo Judaeus* (Oxford: Oxford University, 1962), 5-7.
[161] For comment, see Karl-Gustav Sandeln, "The Danger of Idolatry According to Philo of Alexandria," in *Attraction and Danger of Alien Religion: Studies in Early Judaism and Christianity* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2012), 27-59.
[162] Emphasis mine, (*DJS*).
[163] Maren Niehoff, "Roman Benefactors and Friends," in *Philo on Jewish Identity and Culture* (TSAJ 86; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2001), 111-136, here 111 n. 3.

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of safe criticism in antiquity (on which, see above 4.3.3). The traumatic circumstances under Gaius Caligula (37-41 CE) and Philo's direct participation in the embassy to Gaius demanded a more direct political apologetic (it is likely that these treatises were intended to persuade Claudius himself, yet even the blunt speech of the *Legatio,* as we will see below, is not devoid of double speak).[164]

In his interpretation of Philo's emphasis on using "caution" when critiquing rulers in *De Somniis*, Goodenough observed that Philo "loved the Romans no more than the skipper of a tiny boat loves a hurricane."[165] Notwithstanding Goodenough's reading of Philo's politics, the predominant view of Philo's attitude toward Rome has been positive rather than negative among scholars in the past century. Maren Niehoff is representative of this position, arguing that Philo viewed the benefits of Rome toward Judaism and the inhabited world positively—Gaius and Flaccus were "not indicative of the real nature of Roman rule."[166] Niehoff concludes, "Philo's writings are of special value because they are the first detailed expression of a sustained pro-Roman attitude on the part of a Jewish intellectual."[167] Niehoff's interpretation fails to take into account how Philo's more cautious treatises written to the Jewish inner-circle present ideas that are incompatible with Roman religion, political theory and imperial power.

It is only more recently that the *Forschungsgeschichte* that Niehoff and others represent

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[164] Goodenough thinks the *Legatio* was written for Claudius. See *The Politics of Philo Judaeus*, 19, 60. See also, Smallwood, *Legatio,* 182. Maren Niehoff, on the other hand, thinks the *Legatio* was written in Rome for a Jewish audience. It is likely that Philo wrote *Legatio* in Rome because it refers to Gaius's successor (206) and a reversal of Gaius's fortune (373). *Philo on Jewish Identity and Culture,* 39-44, 85 n. 42. But, as Gregory Sterling notes, the composition of *Legatio* for Gaius does not preclude the possibility that it was used by a Jewish audience as well (see "Philo," in *The Dictionary of Early Judaism*, 1063-1069).
[165] E. R. Goodenough, *The Politics of Philo Judaeus,* 7. Goodenough identifies three forms of political discourse in Philo: (1) the avowedly political treatises, for example, *Flaccus* and *Legatio*; (2) portrayals of the ideal ruler written to gentile enquirers, most notably in *On Joseph;* and (3) treatises written to the Jewish inner-circle that reflect the idea of "caution" (the latter form comprises the bulk of Philo's writings). See E. R. Goodenough, *An Introduction to Philo Judaeus,* 57-74.
[166] Niehoff, "Roman Benefactors and Friends," 136.
[167] Niehoff, *Philo on Jewish Identity and Culture,* 112.

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has been called into question, most notably in a recent article by Katell Berthelot.[168] Although Philo appreciated the stability and rights that only gentile rulers could confer on Jews, Berthelot argues that Philo did not affirm Rome's claims to eternal fortune (*tychè*) guided by divine providence (*pronoia*).[169] Moreover, according to Berthelot, Philo understood the eternal kingship of Yahweh—rooted in the Mosaic Law and Israel's election—as superior to the temporary rule of Caesar and the purported election of Rome by the gods.[170] It is worth quoting Berthelot's conclusion:

> Roman claims to being an elected people with a universal mission and a world power destined to rule forever by the will of the gods could not be accepted as such by Philo. He seems to have accepted the weak political situation of Jews within the empire, as long as their religious and community rights were preserved, but nonetheless to have expected all nations to acknowledge one day the superiority and the perfection of the Mosaic laws. In my opinion, it is clear from Philo's work as a whole that he did not consider the Roman Empire as guided by divine providence, nor believed that the Roman Empire would endure forever. On the contrary, he certainly expected it to disappear in the long run, as everything linked to tyche and not to the immutable will of God. Moreover, Philo considered the spiritual and eternal kingship of Israel vastly superior to the terrestrial and provisory rule of Rome.[171]

Berthelot provides a sensible corrective to Niehoff (et al.) who see the bulk of Philo's writings as a positive portrayal of Rome's stable power and benefaction. Although Philo can flatter imperial authority for upholding Law and protecting Jewish worship in the *Legatio*, one needs to be cautious of objectifying this flattery as indicative of Philo's larger views on Rome. In the

[168] Katell Berthelot, "Philo's Perception of the Roman Empire," *Journal for the Study of Judaism* 42 (2011): 166-87. Berthelot points to the following sources that interpret Philo's view of Rome positively: N. R. M. de Lange, "Jewish Attitude to the Roman Empire," in *Imperialism in the Ancient World* (ed. P. D. A. Garnsey and C. R. Whittaker; Cambridge: Cambridge University, 1978), 255-81; F. F. Bruce, "The Romans Through Jewish Eyes," in *Paganisme, judaïsme, christianisme. Influence et affrontements dans le monde antique. Mélanges offerts à Marcel Simon* (Paris: De Boccard, 1978), 3-12; Avi Avidov, "A Marginal Vision of Empire: Philo and Josephus on the Jews' Integration into Imperial Society," in *The Children of Herodotus: Greek and Roman Herodotus: Greek and Roman Historiography and Related Genres* (ed. J. Pigon; Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2008), 162-180, here 162-68; and Maren Niehoff, *Philo on Jewish Identity and Culture* (Tübingen: Morh Siebeck, 2001), 111-12.
[169] Berthelot, "Philo's Perception of the Roman Empire," 177-84.
[170] Idem., 186-87.
[171] Idem., 187.

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discussion that follows, I wish to piggyback on Berthelot's study by investigating Philo's conception of monotheism, monarchy and kingship in his commentary series known as the Exposition of the Law.

A. The Political Metaphor, Gods and Kings in Philo's Cosmology

John W. Martens observes that Philo claims something that no auditor of Greco-Roman religion could: namely, that the Law of Moses comes directly from God (*Sacr.* 131; *Det.* 68; *Mos.* 2.48; *QE* 1.42; *Spec.* 2.129).[172] In Philo's hierarchy of the law, the Law of Moses sits under the Law of Nature. However, Philo claims that the Law of Moses is an exact copy of the Law of Nature (*Opif.* 3, 69, 71; *Abr.* 3; *Mos.* 2.11, 13, 48). The universal nature of Jewish Law is evident in Philo's understanding of the Septuagint translation of the Hebrew Bible in Alexandria. According to Philo, the translation was not the result of Jews' loss of Hebrew idiom. Rather, it was to make known the Law of Moses for the gentile world (*Mos.* 2.25-40).[173] The universal and God-given nature of the Law of Moses could result in violent conflict with the ruling power. Upon receiving orders to accompany Gaius's colossal statue on its way into Jerusalem, Philo observes the hesitation of Petronius, the legate of Syria, who recognized "that the Jews would be prepared to undergo countless deaths" (*Legat.* 209).[174] Jews' willingness to die, Philo argues, is rooted in the superior and surpassing nature of the Law of Moses: "All peoples are tenacious of their own customs, but the Jewish nation is particularly so. For as they maintain that *their Laws are God-*

[172] John W. Martens, *One God, One Law: Philo of Alexandria on the Mosaic and Greco-Roman Law* (Boston: Brill, 2003), 95-96.
[173] See Peder Borgen, "Philo – An Interpreter of the Laws of Moses" in *Reading Philo: A Handbook to Philo of Alexandria* (ed. Torry Seland; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2014), 75-101, here 77. See also Gert J. Steyn, "Reflections on the Reception of the LXX Pentateuch in Philo's *De Vita Mosis*", in *Die Septuaginta - Text, Wirkung, Rezeption* (ed. W. Kraus and S. Kreuzer; WUNT I 325; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2014), 363-380.
[174] Philo also writes that Jews' defense and preservation of the Law through voluntary death "is a kind of life" (*Legat.* 192).

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given oracles and have been educated in this doctrine from their childhood, they bear images of the Commandments imprinted on their souls" (*Legat.* 210; trans. Smallwood). The superior content and divine origins of the Law of Moses created the potential for conflict with imperial authority, especially if imperial authority violated Jews' autonomy and worship of one God without representation.

Monotheism, monarchy and kingship are overlapping ideas in Philo's view of God. For Philo, "God is the first and sole King of the universe" (ἐπειδὴ γὰρ πρῶτος καὶ μόνος τῶν ὅλων βασιλεὺς ὁ θεός ἐστι, *Post.* 101). Philo's identification of God as the only King is integrated with the concept of Yahweh as the true creator and universal benefactor of the cosmos (*Legat.* 118; *Mos.* 2.99-100; *Creat.* 170-72). Thus, just as God is the ideal king, so God is also the ideal benefactor in Philo's thought. Goodneough draws attention to a passage in *De plantatione* that illustrates this point. Philo argues that God, "has no such autocratic rule as a despot, but exercises the beneficent (εὐεργετικόν) rule characterized by a power which is uniformly merciful and gives security (σωτήριον). As such he does away with the fear we might have toward him as a despot, while he puts into the soul the love and good will which go to a Benefactor (Εὐεργέτης)" (*Plant.* 90).[175] Against this backdrop, Gaius's deification reflects "ingratitude to the Benefactor of the whole world" (τὸν τοῦ κόσμου παντὸς εὐεργέτην, *Legat.* 118). Indeed, Gaius embodies the paradigmatic characteristics of a tyrant who exploits the transfer of power between God and subordinate authority. Indeed, for Philo, God's subordinate political authorities are not unaccountable from a distinctively Jewish *and* Hellenistic way of thinking about kingship and law. In Philo's allegorical exegesis of Melchizedek, for example, he writes, "a king is the opposite of a tyrant (βασιλεὺς δὲ ἐχθρὸν τυράννῳ), because the one is the interpreter of law, and

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[175] English translation from Goodenough, *Politics of Philo Judaeus*, 91.

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the other of lawlessness" (*Alleg. Interp.* 3.79). Echoes of the Hellenistic treatises on kingship can be felt here. Philo's ideal king animates Law and benefaction for subjects to imitate, while tyrants animate lawlessness, a point that Philo repeatedly highlights in his portrayal of Gaius in the *Legatio* (see below).[176]

It is important to recognize that Philo's views on kingship are not divorced from Platonic-Pythagorean theories of kingship. As we saw in chapter two, Hellenistic and Roman kingship theories understood the king as semi-divine and a mediator between the divine and human realms. Philo negotiates this ideology by critically inverting the Pythagorean kingship paradigm. Rather than imitate the piety of Greco-Roman deity, Philo suggests that the ideal ruler imitates the "model of the archetypal royal power of [Israel's] God" (πρὸς ἀρχέτυπον τὴν τοῦ θεοῦ βασιλείαν ἀπεικονισθείς, *Spec.* 4.164). Moreover, it is Yahweh who the ideal ruler should imitate (μιμέομαι) in order to experience assimilation (ἐξομοίωσις) to God (*Spec.* 4.186-188).[177] Within this paradigm, Philo can comfortably confer the title θεός on rulers who mediate on behalf of the "Ruler of the universe" in "imitation of the merciful power of the father" to exercise punishment over subjects (*Mut.* 125-29). Remarkably, Philo can confer superhuman status on the patriarchs such as Moses, who is both a "god and king" (θεὸς καὶ βασιλεύς, *Mos.* 1.158; cf. Exod 7:1).[178] The appellation θεός is not applied to Moses to indicate his absolute divinity—rather, Philo interprets Moses within the Pythagorean mimetic paradigm: Moses is a "Godlike work" (θεοειδὲς

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[176] Both Wayne Meeks and E.R. Goodenough rightly recognize that Philo portrays Gaius as one who perverts the idea of animate law in the *peri basileias* literature. See E. R. Goodneough, *Politics of Philo Judaeus*, 101-108; and Wayne Meeks, *The Prophet-King* (Leiden: Brill, 1967), 49-51.
[177] For further comment, see: Jonathan More, "On Kingship in Philo and the Wisdom of Solomon," in *Text-Critical and Hermeneutical Studies in the Septuagint* (eds. Johann Cook and Hermann-Josef Stipp; Leiden: Brill, 2012), 409-426, here 414-15. For the arugment that Philo believes that all humanity can assimilate to God, see: W. E. Helleman, "Philo of Alexandria on Deification and Assimilation to God," *SPhA* 2 (1990): 51-71.
[178] Philo employs what post-colonial theorists call mimicry to create the ideal Jewish king (Moses) and prefect (Joseph). In effect, Philo mimics the strucutures of Hellenistic monarchy but stops short at cult worship to suggest that Judaism contains the exemplar model of kingship.

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ἔργον) so as to function as "a model for all those who were inclined to imitate him" (*Mos.* 1.158).[179] In continuity with the *peri basileias* literature, Philo portrays Moses as the ideal ruler who animates law for subjects to imitate (*Mos.* 1.148-62). With echoes of the Deuteronomic Law of the King, Philo writes that Yahweh chose to share his political sovereignty *and* divinity with Moses because Moses did not pursue kingship by force through arms, cavalry and infantry (*Mos.* 1.148).[180] Rather, Moses embodied virtue, piety and benevolence, and refused to take Yahweh's political sovereignty for himself by building his own empire with silver, gold and heavy taxation (*Mos.* 1.148; 152). Although Philo comes close to conferring divinity on Moses, he is careful to not go too far—the ideal ruler is a mediator between the divine and human realms, a type of relative divinity *who animates Torah on earth.*

Philo's willingness to confer divinity on Moses raises the question of the king's ontological status. Goodenough draws attention to a fragment of Philo, preserved by Antony (*Melissa,* Ser. CIV), that well-articulates Philo's careful negotiation of royal divinity:

> Τῇ μὲν οὐσιᾳ ἴσος τοῦ παντὸς ἀνθρώπου ὁ βασιλυεύς, τῇ ἐξουσία δὲ τοῦ ἀξιώματος ὅμοιός ἐστι τῷ ἐπὶ πάντων θεῷ· οὐκ ἔχει γὰρ ἐπι γῆς αὑτου ὑψηλότερον. χρὴ τοίνυν καὶ ὡς θνητὸν μὴ ἐπαίρεσθαι, καὶ ὡς θεὸν μὴ ὀργίζεσθαι. εἰ γὰρ καὶ εἰκόνι θεϊκῇ τετίμηται, ἀλλὰ καὶ κόνει χοϊκῇ συμπέπληκται, δι᾽ ἧς ἐκδιδάσκεται τὴν πρὸς πάντας ἁπλότητα.
>
> In his material substance the king is *just the same as any man*, but in the authority of his rank he is like God of all. For there is nothing upon earth more exalted than he. Since he is mortal, *he must not vaunt himself*; since he is a god, he must not give way to anger. For if he is honoured as being an image of God, yet he is at the same time fashioned from the

[179] On Moses's ascension and divinity, see also *Sacr.* 8-9. For Philo's view of Moses, see: Wayne A. Meeks, "Moses as God and King," in *Religions in Antiquity: Essays in Memory of Erwin Ramsdell Goodenough* (ed. Jacob Neussner; Leiden: Brill, 1968), 354-71; and Peder Borgen, "Moses, Jesus, and the Roman Emperor: Observations in Philo's Writings and the Revelation of John," *NovT* 38 (1996): 145-59. For comparative analysis of Philo's views on the imperial cult and the New Testament, see: Hans-Georg Gradl, "Kaisertum und Kaiserkult: Ein Vergleich zwischen Philos *Legatio ad Gaium* und der *Offenbarung des Johannes*," *NTS* 56 (2009): 116-38; and Samuel Vollenweider, "Der 'Raub' der Gottgleichheit: Ein Religionsgeschichtlicher Vorschlag zu Phil 2,6(-11)," *NTS* 45 (1999): 413-33.

[180] Aside from *Legatio* and *De vita Mosis,* Philo also articulates his views on the ideal ruler in *De Iosepho* (e.g., *Ios.* 9, 40-53, 32-36, 70, 67). For discussion, see Goodenough, *Politics of Philo Judaeus,* 42-63; and Julien Smith, *Christ the Ideal King* (WUNT 313; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2011), 146-154.

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dust of the earth, from which he should learn simplicity to all.[181]

Philo accepts the Pythagorean position that kingship imitates the divine. But Philo nuances the Pythagorean position with two distinctively Jewish limitations: first, in accord with the Deuteonomic Law of the King, Philo argues that the king must not exalt himself (μὴ ἐπαίρεσθαι; cf. Deut 17:20); and second, Philo draws on Gen 2:7 to argue that the king's material substance is from the earth. Both strictures place limitations on divine associations; whereas Greco-Roman benefactors could receive honors like the gods (ἰσόθεοι τιμαί), Philo suggests that the king's ontological status (οὐσία) is equal (ἴσος) to humans. It is here, as Goodenough suggested, that Philo departs from Ekphantus and others by limiting divine associations to the king's office of rulership rather than their material substance.[182]

Philo's understanding of monotheism is not rigid, nor does it reflect anything close to orthodoxy. A helpful starting point for understanding Philo's cosmology and monotheistic outlook occurs at the end of his commentary on the creation, in *De Opificio Mundi* 172. Goodenough called this passage "the first creed of history."[183] Philo names five foundational points that comprise his concept of God and God's relationship to the cosmos:

1. God is and exists (ὅτι ἔστι καὶ ὑπάρχει θεός), and
2. that he who so exists is really one (ὅτι εἷς ὁ ὢν ὄντως ἐστί), and
3. that he has created the world (ὅτι πεποίηκε τὸν κόσμον), and
4. that he has created it one as has been stated, having made it like to himself in singleness (πεποίηκεν ἕνα, ὡς ἐλέχθη, κατὰ τὴν μόνωσιν ἐξομοιώσας ἑαυτῷ)
5. that he exercises a continual care for that which he has created (ὅτι ἀεὶ προνοεῖ τοῦ γεγονότος).[184]

[181] For Greek text and English translation, see: E. R. Goodenough, *Politics of Philo Judaeus,* 99 and 99 n. 72.
[182] E. R. Goodenough, *Politics of Philo Judaeus,* 99-100. On Philo's relationship to Ekphantus and the *peri basileias* literature, see Francesca Calabi, *God's Acting, Man's Acting: Tradition and Philosophy in Philo of Alexandria* (Leiden: Brill, 2008), 185-216.
[183] Goodenough, *Introduction to Philo Judaeus,* 37.
[184] I adapt the structure of this chart from Peter Frick, "Monotheism and Philosophy: Notes on the Concept of God in Philo and Paul (Romans 1:18-32)," in *Christian Origins and Hellenistic Judaism: Social and Literary Contexts for the New Testament* (Early Christianity in Its Hellenistic Context Vol 2; eds. Stanley E. Porter and

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Points one and two resist atheism and polytheism. Points three through five articulate Philo's theology of creation. Philo resists nature worship by suggesting that the material world reflects the oneness of its creator, and that the creator oversees the creation providentially (in contrast to Epicurean thought). As Peter Frick writes, "the singularity of the cosmos implies for him analogically the singularity of its creator."[185] The singularity of the one God principle, of course, was shared in Stoic thought.[186] But Philo upholds his distinctively Jewish identity by limiting cultic worship to the one God—therefore, rendering all superhuman authorities subordinate.[187] It is here that Philo's monotheism is closer to henotheism. For example, Philo can confer the title θεός to the heavenly bodies (*Opif.* 27) and Moses (*Mos.* 1.158).[188] These occurrences of θεός, however, are not meant in the absolute sense: rather, objects of power and euergetism are subordinate to the one God who alone receives *cultus*.

(i) Monotheism and Monarchy in De Specialibus and De Decalogo

Philo concentrates his interpretive energy on the first commandment most directly in *De specialibus legibus* 1.13-65 and *De Decalogo* 52-65. However, references to the concept of worshiping one God can be found throughout his other works (e.g., *Virt.* 64; *Decal.* 81; *Spec.* 1:28, 332; *Opif* 9; *Leg.* 2:1). The relationship between subordinate beings and the worship of the

Andrew W. Pitts; Leiden: Brill, 2013), 237-58, here 239; and Kenneth Schenk, *A Brief Guide to Philo* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2005), 44.
[185] Frick, "Monotheism and Philosophy", 240.
[186] See Stephen Mitchell and Peter Van Nuffeln eds., *One God: Pagan Monotheism in the Roman Empire* (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 2010). Philo remarks on the Stoic notion of God by claiming that all the Greeks and barbarians worship the Jewish God who is the "highest father of both gods and humans" (*Spec.* 2.165). For comment, see Goodenough, *Introduction to Philo*, 81. Likewise, Josephus suggests that Pythagoras, Anaxagoras, Plato and the Stoic philosophers learned that God is "single and uncreated" from Moses (*C. Ap.* 2.167-68).
[187] It is worth noting that Israelite kings fall under the category of divine beings. On which, see G. Widengren, *Sakrales Königtum im alten Testament und im Judentum* (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1955); and M. David Litwa, *We are Being Transformed: Deification in Paul's Soteriology* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2012), 109-15.
[188] Philo also confers the title θεός on the Logos as a "second god" (δεύτερον θεόν, *QG* 2.62).

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one God is fleshed out in Philo's reflections on monarchy (μοναρχία) in *De Specialibus* 1.12-20. The passage represents a sweeping critique of mythologies that deify and confer absolute power on the four elements, the planets, sun, moon and nature more generally. In order to limit the power of Greco-Egyptian mythology, Philo creates a cosmic portrait of a megalopolis (πόλις ἡ μεγίστη) with rulers (ἄρχοντας) and subjects (ὑπηκόους).[189] Those who rule the megalopolis—the celestial beings—however, are subordinate to the one God. Philo writes,

> Some have supposed that the sun and moon and the other stars were gods with absolute powers and ascribed to them the causation of all events. But Moses held that the universe was created and is in a sense the greatest of commonwealths, having magistrates and subjects… The said magistrates, however, *in his view have not unconditional powers, but are lieutenants of the one Father of All* (τοὺς δὲ λεχθέντας ἄρχοντας οὐκ αὐτεξουσίους, ἀλλ᾽ ἑνὸς τοῦ πάντων πατρὸς ὑπάρχους), and it is by copying the example of His government exercised according to law and justice (οὗ μιμουμένους τὴν ἐπιστασίαν κατορθοῦν πρυτανεύοντος κατὰ δίκην καὶ νόμον) over all created beings that they acquit themselves aright (*Spec.* 1.13-14).

Philo appeals to Moses to limit the power of the gods, who some mistakenly believe are "absolute powers" (εἶναι θεοὺς αὐτοκράτορας, *Spec.* 1.13). The porous boundary between politics and religion is evident in Philo's use of Αὐτοκράτωρ, which he uses throughout *Flaccus* and *Legatio* for the Emperor. Philo critically inverts this cosmology by suggesting that the astral beings do not have absolute power (αὐτεξουσίους) and that they are, in fact, subordinates (ὑπάρχους) of the one Father of all (ἑνὸς τοῦ πάντων πατρός).[190] Similar to the political metaphor, God shares his authority with subordinate deities but only in so far as they "copy the example of His government exercised according to law and justice" (*Spec.* 1.14). Although Philo does not deny the divinity and existence of celestial beings, he appeals to Deut 4:19 to argue that those who believe the heavenly bodies are the only gods have fallen into "inextricable error" (πλάνον

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[189] For further comment, see: See David T. Runia, *Philo of Alexandria and the Timaeus of Plato* (Leiden: Brill, 1986), 250.
[190] Philo, *Spec.* 1.13.

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ἐπλανήθησαν, *Spec.* 1.15-16). The logical conclusion is that cultic worship is only due to the:

> everlasting and invisible Being who can be comprehended and appreciated by the mind alone; who is not only the God of all gods (ὃς οὐ μόνον θεὸς θεῶν), whether appreciable only by the intellect or visible to the outward senses, but is also the creator of them all. And if any one gives up the service due to the everlasting and uncreated God, transferring it [worship] to any more modern and created being, let him be set down as mad and as liable to the charge of the greatest impiety (ἀσεβείᾳ τῇ μεγίστῃ, *Spec.* 1.20).

Monotheism, for Philo, does not deny the existence or divinity of other superhuman beings; however, only ὁ θεὸς θεῶν is worthy of worship, transferring worship to material objects of power is the "greatest impiety" (ἀσεβείᾳ τῇ μεγίστῃ).

Philo places further limitations on God's subordinate authorities by condemning their material representation with gold, silver and stone (*Decal.* 66-81; *Spec.* 1.21-31). Cult images, according to Moses, are "idols, resembling shadows and phantoms" (εἴδωλα, σκιαῖς ἐοικότα καὶ φάσμασιν, *Spec.* 1.26). The second commandment provides a clear metric for discerning false worship. The first commandment, on the other hand, is more complex in that it allows subordinate authorities to share power and divinity with God, but God alone is the absolute Αὐτοκράτωρ worthy of worship. The henotheistic cosmology that Philo puts forth in *De Specialibus* 1.12-20 provides a heuristic blueprint for interpreting Philo's limitations on emperor worship. Indeed, for Philo, Yahweh is not only the God of gods, but also the King of kings (*Dec.* 41). Consequently, like the gods, kings are subordinate authorities that must imitate God's monarchical rule rather than the Greco-Roman pantheon of subordinate beings.

It remains for us to evaluate Philo's view of monotheism in *De Decalogo* against the backdrop of Roman imperial power and ideology. In contrast to *De Specialibus,* Philo employs the office of human kingship in *De Decalogo* to illustrate the limitations of subordinate authorities. For example, Philo asks why the divine voice gave the Decalogue (τῶν δέκα λογίων)

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audibly to individuals rather than one person (*Decal.* 36)? One answer, Philo contends, is that Yahweh will allow "no king or tyrant swollen with arrogance" to despise other members of the community" (*Decal.* 40). Philo takes the analogy a step further: those in power "should study in the school of the divine laws" and "unlearn his self-conceit" (*Decal.* 40). The democratizing effects of the Deuteronomic Law of the King are present here, most notably through the stricture in Deut 17:20 that the king should read the Law of the King daily so he doesn't "exalt himself" above other members of the community. But Philo goes further by placing unnamed subordinate beings under the demands of the Law of Moses. In contrast to Dio Chrysostom's argument that earthly kings should conform their rule to the pattern of Zeus (1 *Regn.* 1.37), Philo suggests that the Law of Moses provides the pattern for subordinate beings to imitate. For Philo, the divine author of universal Law, in both the Law of Nature and the Law of Moses, is also the "maker of the universe, and the benefactor and King of kings, and God of gods…" (ποιητὴς τῶν ὅλων καὶ εὐεργέτης καὶ βασιλεὺς βασιλέων καὶ θεὸς θεῶν, *Decal*. 41). One can sense Philo's caution here, but it is not difficult to conjure up images of the emperor as a subordinate authority under the universal Law, kingship and benefaction of Yahweh. As Goodenough observed, "bold as he [Philo] can be under favourable conditions, he still never loses his astute sense of where to stop."[191]

Philo shifts gears in *Decalogo* 50-153 to discuss the individual laws of the Decalogue, which are broken into sets of five on two separate tablets (*Decal.* 50). The first commandment, located on the "superior set of five," treats "the monarchical principle by which the world is governed" (περὶ μοναρχίας, ᾗ μοναρχεῖται ὁ κόσμος, *Decal.* 51).[192] Philo understands monarchy and monotheism as integrated concepts built into the cosmic structure of the universe, but the

[191] Goodenough, *Introduction to Philo Judaeus,* 60.
[192] On Josephus's view of monarchy, see section 4.5.2.A.

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nations have gone astray by worshiping the four elements, the sun, moon and stars, Demeter, Poseidon, Hera, Hephaestus, Apollo, Artemis, Aphrodite, Hermes and the Dioscuri (*Decal.* 53-56).[193] Philo contends that these appellations are a distraction from the "Creator, the ruler of the great city" (τὸν γεννητήν, τὸν ἄρχοντα τῆς μεγαλοπόλεως, *Decal.* 53). Indeed, if one wishes to follow a "genuine philosophy" they will recognize that these subordinate deities are mere emanations of the creation, lacking absolute autonomy and liable to destruction under the authority of the Creator (*Decal.* 58). It is worth noting that the Ptolemies, Seleucids and Roman imperial cults employed these deities for divine associations and cosmogonic identities. Philo critiques these deities with a diction of speech that employs referential polyvalency (but one should not necessarilly abstract the politicial from his objects of resistance).

The political implications of Philo's monotheism and critique of Greco-Roman religion becomes more evident in *De Decalogo* 61. Here Philo condemns deification and euergetic honors bestowed on Greco-Roman deity (which represent an inferior object of power). To illustrate the gap in power and sovereignty, Philo employs a king parable:[194]

> As, therefore, if any one were to assign the honours of the great king to his satraps and viceroys, he would appear to be not only the most ignorant and senseless of men, but also the most fool-hardy, giving to slaves what belongs to the master; in the same manner, let the man who honours the Creator, with the same honours as those with which he regards the creature, know that he is of all men the most foolish and the most unjust, in giving equal things to unequal persons, and that too not in such a way as to do honour to the inferior, but only to take it from the superior (*Decal.* 61).

Philo appeals to the imperial hierarchy of Persian Empire to make his point: those who transfer

[193] It is against this background in *Opificio Mundi* that Philo compares by analogy the absolute power and oneness of the sun with the "great king" (μεγάλῳ βασιλεῖ, *Opif.* 56). Compared to God's subordinate authorities, represented in the moon and stars of nighttime, the sun is one and single (εἷς γὰρ ὢν καὶ μόνος ἰδίᾳ, *Opif.* 57). When the sun rises its absolute authority is evinced by the moon and stars' obscurity (*Opif.* 57). But the conflict between the sun (the one God) and the stars (gods and kings) lies at the cultic level when the worship and euergetism of subordinate authorities leads subjects to idolatry. For comment, see: Francesca Calabi, *The Language and the Law of God,* 58.
[194] See Niehoff, *Philo on Jewish Identity and Culture*, 239-40.

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"the honours of the great king" (τοῦ μεγάλου βασιλέως τὰς τιμάς) to "subordinate satraps" (τοῖς ὑπάρχοις σατράπαις) are fools. In *Spec.* 1.12-20 Philo used the word ὕπαρχος to condemn subordinate celestial beings, but here Philo uses ὕπαρχος as a descriptor alongside the word σατράπης, which was used for Persian governors. It is worth noting that Philostratus uses σατράπης for a Roman governor (*Vitae sophistarum* 1.22.3). Philo's choice of a Persian political loan word recalls Demetrius's suggestion that, "since powerful men and women dislike hearing their own faults mentioned," the rhetor should not speak openly, but rather "blame others who have acted in a similar way" (*Eloc.* 292). Philo may follow this strategy of circumvention: just as it is foolish to transfer a King's honors onto subordinate prefects; so, too, it is foolish to transfer Yahweh's absolute sovereignty onto gods and Roman imperial authority. The worship of one God, king and universal benefactor is incompatible with conferring "equal things to unequal persons" (ἴσα διδοὺς ἀνίσοις, *Dec.* 61). The danger, according to Philo, is the gravitation toward deification—heaping divine honors on those who are "brothers by nature" (τοὺς ἀδελφοὺς φύσε, *Dec.* 64). Even dynamic brothers who have a more "pure" (καθαρωτέρας) and "immortal" (ἀθανατωτέρας) essence do not deserve divine honors (*Dec.* 64). The referent of "brothers," as Colson suggests in a footnote of his translation, is likely celestial beings. However, Philo's choice of an anthropocentric substantive could evoke multiple referents of euergetic power related to the anthropomorphic narrative of Greco-Roman religion and/or deified imperial authority.

Philo concludes his commentary on the first commandment, writing that it is "the first and most sacred of all the commandments, to think that there is but one God, the most highest, and to honor him alone…" (*Dec.* 65). The political dimensions of this theological claim are fleshed out later when Philo revisits the first commandment in a summary statement on God's

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monarchical rule:

> ὁ μὲν πρῶτος τῶν περὶ μοναρχίας· οὗτοι δὲ δηλοῦσιν, ὅτι ἓν αἴτιον τοῦ κόσμου καὶ ἡγεμὼν καὶ βασιλεὺς εἷς ὁ ἡνιοχῶν καὶ κυβερνῶν τὰ ὅλα σωτηρίως, ὀλιγαρχίαν ἢ ὀχλοκρατίαν, ἐπιβούλους πολιτείας φυομένας παρ' ἀνθρώποις τοῖς κακίστοις ἐξ ἀταξίας καὶ πλεονεξίας, ἐξεληλακὼς ἐκ τοῦ καθαρωτάτου τῆς οὐσίας, οὐρανοῦ.
>
> The first law is the fountain of all those concerning the government of one supreme Ruler, and they show that there is one first cause of the world, one Ruler and King, who guides and governs the universe in such a way as conduces to its preservation, having banished from the pure essence of heaven all oligarchy and aristocracy, those treacherous forms of government which arise among wicked men, as the offspring of disorder and covetousness (C. D. Yonge, LCL; *Decal.* 155).

Philo's concept of monotheism is rooted in the oneness of God's exclusive kingship, divinity and monarchical form of government. Worshiping one God implies giving one's allegiance to "the government of one supreme ruler," wherein God's sovereignty both exceeds and transcends that of subordinate authorities. Although Philo does not deny the existence of superhuman beings, he relegates their power and relative divinity under the absolute authority and divinity of God. Philo's explicit condemnation of the traditional gods, coupled by his implicit critique of deification, articulates a theological outlook that is incompatible with emperor worship. Philo nowhere explicitly names Rome in his Exposition of the Law. However, what Philo communicates by insinuation in the Exposition of the Law is made explicit in the *Legatio ad Gaium*, which we can now examine.

B. Monotheism and Monarchy in Philo's Legatio ad Gaium

It is worth concluding Philo's views on monotheism and monarchy with a discussion of the *Legatio*. Peder Borgen observes that Jews' conflict with Gaius in *Flaccus* and *Legatio* reflects "a struggle for the way in which the Laws of Moses should be interpreted and practiced in

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society..."[195] Here Philo pulls back on the diction of caution found in *De Decalogo*, allowing his audience (presumably Claudius) to gaze into the idolatrous machinery of imperial authority gone-bad. Eric Gruen is rightly critical of Philo's construal of Gaius's purported program of anti-semitism.[196] Gruen observes that the cultic demands of Gaius may have stemmed from local Alexandrians rather than Gaius himself; however, we do have ample evidence of Gaius's audacious claims to divinity (*Cal.* 22.1-4; Dio 59.28.6; Seneca, *De Ira,* 1.20.8-9; Dio, 59.26.5, 59.27.6).[197] Moreover, we know from Tacitus that Gaius's order to put a statue in the Jerusalem temple inspired armed Jewish resistance (Hist. 5.9).[198] Regardless of the historicity of Philo's "tale," the *Legatio* provides us with a highly valuable source for animating the point of conflict between Jewish Law and emperor worship (at least from the perspective of an elite Alexandrian Jew). Two conflicts in the *Legatio* stand out. The first is Caligula's flirtation with deification through divine associations and imperial images destined for Jewish spaces of worship. The second point of conflict relates to Gaius's failure to live up to Jewish and Pythagorean criteria of the ideal ruler. Both conflicts provide important commentary on Philo's views on deification, monotheism and kingship.

Comparison and contrast between the ideal ruler and the angry tyrant comprises a major thrust of Philo's rhetorical strategy of persuasion and resistance in the *Legatio*. Between the dichotomy of the ideal ruler and the angry tyrant, the *Legatio* illustrates that Alexandrian Jews could peacefully co-exist amid emperor worship in so far as their aniconic monotheism is not

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[195] Peder Borgen, *Philo of Alexandria An Exegete For His Time* (New York: Brill, 1997), 176-177; idem., "Philo – An Interpreter of the Laws of Moses," 99.
[196] Erich Gruen, "Caligula, The Imperial Cult and Philo's Legatio," *The Studia Philonica Annual,* 24 (2012): 135-48.
[197] Erich Gruen, "Caligula, " 142.
[198] Tacitus attributes the end of the Jews' conflict with Gaius to his fortuitous death. Josephus, on the other hand, writes that Agrippa persuaded Gaius to write to Petronius and halt the erection of the statue (*Ant.*18:289-304).

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threatened from above. In contrast to the antics of Gaius, Philo eulogizes the Ptolemies (*Legat.* 138), Tiberius (*Legat.* 141-42) and Augustus (*Legat.* 143-153) for protecting Jewish rights and for not imposing imperial images on Jewish spaces of worship. Notwithstanding Philo's knowledge of the colossal *Sebasteion* temple complex honoring Augustus in the harbor of Alexandria (*Legat.* 149-51), Philo eulogizes Augustus for refusing deification: "The clearest proof that he was never elated or made vain by extravagant honors lies in his refusal ever to be addressed as a god, in his annoyance if anyone so addressed him, and in his approval of the Jews, who, as he knew very well, eschewed all such language on religious grounds" (*Legat.* 154; trans. Smallwood).[199] We know that Augustus refused divine honors out of respect for the gods (*Res. Ges.* 24; Suetonius, *Aug.* 52-53). However, Augustus was unable to control subjects in the Greek East and Egypt who naturally absorbed Augustan power into the patterns of the Hellenistic cult of rulers. Subjects' gravitation toward ruler cult in Alexandria is evident when Philo writes that Gaius longed to visit Alexandria because it fostered "the idea of godship which occupied his dreams" and provided "a pattern to other cities of the worship due to him" (*Legat.* 338).[200] Although Philo can eulogize the Ptolemies for protecting Jewish rights, here he allusively condemns the cultic precedent they set for Gaius to imitate. To resist Gaius's excessive hubris,

[199] Augustus is also praised for his benefaction and generosity. For example, when the monthly distribution of corn and money falls on the Sabbath, Augustus asks for the dispenser to save some for the Jews on the following day (*Legat.* 158).
[200] Philo also criticizes the Alexandrians' inclination toward ruler worship by comparing it with Egyptian theriolatry in *Legat.* 162-63: "But Gaius puffed himself up with pride, not only saying, but actually thinking that he was a god. And then he found no people, whether among the Greeks or among the barbarians, more suitable than the Alexandrians to confirm him in his immoderate and unnatural ambition; for they are in an extraordinary degree inclined to flattery, and trick, and hypocrisy, being thoroughly furnished with all kinds of cajoling words, and prone to confuse every thing with their unbridled and licentious talk. And the name of God is held in so little veneration among them, that they have given it to ibises, and to the poisonous asps which are found in their country, and to many other savage beasts which exist in it. So that they, very naturally, giving in to all kinds of addresses and invocations to him, addressed him as God, deceiving men of shallow comprehension, who were wholly inexperienced in the impiety prevailing in Egypt, though they are detected by those who are acquainted with their excessive folly, or, I should rather say, with their preposterous impiety."

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Philo finds common ground with Augustus's iconoclasm and refusal of divine honors, an example that Claudius should imitate. By eulogizing Augustus, Philo is able to simultaneously affirm and critique the excessive institutions of emperor worship as a strategy to "caress" or to "tame" the tyrant (τιθασεῦσαι, *Somn.* 2.92). We know from a papyrus document that Claudius did, in fact, adopt the Augustan precedent in his letter to the Jews written in 41 CE: "But the establishment of a high-priest and temple of myself I decline, not wishing to be offensive to my contemporaries and in the belief that temples and the like have been set apart in all ages for the gods alone" (μόνοις τοῖς θεοῖς).[201]

After Herod Agrippa I collapses at the news of Gaius's desire to desecrate the Temple (*Legat.* 261-275), Philo embeds a letter by Agrippa to Gaius in the *Legatio* that defends Jews' rights (*Legat.* 276-329).[202] In this letter, Philo again employs eulogy by comparison and contrast. In contrast to Pilate's offensive introduction of dedicatory shields into Jerusalem (*Legat.* 299-305), Agrippa I eulogizes Augustus for protecting Jewish synagogues (*Legat.* 311), Jewish envoys to the Temple (*Legat.* 312-13) and for providing benefactions and finances for daily whole burnt offerings in the Temple (*Legat.* 291, 317-18).[203] Augustus's marvel and honor (ἐθαύμαζε καὶ προσεκύνει, *Legat.* 310) of the invisible effigy of the invisible God reflects the virtues of the ideal ruler—or, in Agrippa's words, "this philosopher second to none" (*Legat.* 318).[204] Maren Niehoff interprets Philo's eulogy of Augustus and affirmation of honoring emperors in Jewish synagogues (*Flacc.* 48-9) as an indication that "there did not exist

[201] *CPJ,* 2:39-43 (no. 153, 3.48-51). See also, Elliot and Reasoner, no. 128.
[202] Strikingly, Philo suggests that Agrippa proposes aristocracy over kingship (*Legat.* 278); the tradition, however, is Philo's.
[203] Gaius's great-grandmother Julia Augusta is also eulogized for offering golden bowls and other offerings on the Temple (319-20). Philo and Josephus also observe that Augustus excused Jews from court appearances on the Sabbath (Philo, *Legat.* 23, 58; Josephus, *Ant.* 16.27).
[204] On Plato's philosopher king, see: C. D. C. Reeve, *Philosopher-Kings: The Argument of Plato's Republic* (Princeton: Princeton University, 1988). Notably, Philo also portrays Petronius as an ideal Jewish philosopher (*Legat.* 245).

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beforehand a consistent formulation of a monotheistic dogma which then clashed with the very institution of the imperial cult. On the contrary, the imperial cult under Augustus was remarkably acceptable to Philo."[205] Niehoff is correct that Jewish aniconicism played a more significant role than monotheism in creating conflict with emperor worship.[206] But can we really say that monotheism played a minimal role in the Alexandrian conflicts, and that the imperial cults were remarkably acceptable to Philo?

Philo himself observes that Gaius held special contempt for Jews because they "believe that there was but one God, their Father and the Creator of the world (ἕνα νομίζειν τὸν πατέρα καὶ ποιητὴν τοῦ κόσμου θεόν, *Legat.* 115). While Philo's henotheism allows him to make extraordinary accommodations for the imperial cults, this statement shows that Gaius interpreted Jews' monotheism at least in part as a stumbling block toward acceptance of his deification.[207] Niehoff takes Philo's eulogy of Augustus at face value. But in a world where the "art of sincerity" infused flattery with double-speak, one needs to be cautious of pinning down too narrowly the illocutionary intent of Philo's persuasion strategies.[208] To be sure, Augustus's introduction of the *laographia* tax re-mapped Egypt's social hierarchy, introducing acute ethnic and financial stressors upon Alexandrian Jewish communities (see section 5.3.2 of this study). Either Philo is far enough removed from these stressors; or, more likely, his persuasion strategies overshadow this blemish in the Augustan record.[209] Augustus provides a convenient rhetorical

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205 Maren Niehoff, *Philo on Jewish Identity and Culture,* 81.
206 Idem., 82.
207 That other gentiles recognized the counter-cultural nature of Jewish monotheism is evident in Tacitus: "the Jews conceive of one God only, and that with the mind alone" (*Iudaei mente sola unumque numen intellegunt, Hist.* 5.5.4). From Tacitus's perspective, Jews' belief in one God led to their refusal to honor the emperors with material artistry—a point that further highlights the tension of Jewish aniconicism and emperor worship.
208 Shadi Bartsch, "The Art of Sincerity," 156-57.
209 *Pace* John J. Collins who misses this point, suggesting that Philo's eulogy of Augustus shows that Caligula was an "aberration" from the Augustan ideal. The presence of positive and negative statements about imperial power in the *Legatio* is not justification to underestimate the degree to which Philo's eulogy of Augustus and

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cipher to represent the ideal emperor to Claudius, who brings cosmic order, provides benefaction, refuses deification, protects Jewish ancestral tradition and, ultimately, honors the Jewish God by not introducing imperial images into the Temple (*Legat.* 148-49, 154-58).[210] In this way, Philo's flattery of Augustus contains a note of double entendre: by eulogizing Augustus's refusal of deification and images, Philo simultaneously critiques the idolatrous manifestations of emperor worship (while conveying to his audience that he purportedly honors a particular type of emperor). Philo's portrayal of Augustus is a part of his persuasive *techne*—an act of cultural survival, *not* a blanket statement on Jewish acceptance of the imperial cults.

In contrast to Augustus, Philo gives ample space to the negative characterization of Gaius's health (*Legat.* 14-21), self-deification (*Legat.* 74-112), attitude toward the Jews (*Legat.* 114-119), instructions to defile the Temple (*Legat.* 184-196) and his untrustworthy nature (*Legat.* 339-48).[211] We have already discussed Gaius's assimilation with the demi-gods and traditional deities through role-playing (See 3.8.2). In contrast to the benefits that Greco-Roman deities confer, Philo argues that Gaius functions as their semantic opposite by not emulating their virtues (*Legat.* 92-98). Similar to Philo's views on monotheism and monarchy in *De Decalogo*, Philo believes that God alone is sovereign (*Legat.* 3, 6), and that a monarchical principle pervades the cosmos that the ideal ruler can animate through Law and order for subjects (*Legat.* 149). To illustrate this point, Philo quotes Homer: "the rule of many is not good" (*Il.* 2.204; *Legat.* 149). Gaius fails to live up to the monarchical principle by taking the authority of God for himself through self-deification and lawlessness. Consequently, because of Jewish refusal to

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Tiberius serves a rhetorical end. See John J. Collins, *Between Athens and Jerusalem: Jewish Identity in the Hellenistic Diaspora* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000), 134.

[210] On the Augustan decree spelling out Jewish rights, see Josephus, *Ant.* 16.162-165. While Alexandrian Jews were allowed to maintain their aniconic worship under Augustus, they did experience intensified hegemonic financial and ethnic stressors under the newly instituted poll tax (*laographia*) under Augustus. See chapter five of this study.

[211] See Smallwood, *Philonis Alexandrini,* 51.

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accept Gaius's deification, Philo observes that Gaius held particular contempt for Jews' monotheistic commitments:

> ...for he regarded the Jews with most especial suspicion, as if they were the only persons who cherished wishes opposed to his, and who had been taught in a manner from their very swaddling-clothes by their parents, and teachers, and instructors, and even before that by their holy laws, and also by their unwritten maxims and customs, to believe that there was but one God, their Father and the Creator of the world (ἕνα νομίζειν τὸν πατέρα καὶ ποιητὴν τοῦ κόσμου θεόν, *Legat.* 115).

Jews' worship of "one God" stands in sharp contrast to the whole empire (πᾶσα ἡ οἰκουμένη) who flatters Gaius with excessive honors (*Legat.* 116).[212] Jewish *paideia* and allegiance to their Laws provides the grounds for resisting the Roman imperial cult. And Gaius, Philo contends, is aware of this. Among the nations, Philo writes, "one single race, the chosen people of the Jews, was suspected of being likely to resist, since it was used to accepting death as willingly as if it were immortality in order not to allow any of their ancestral traditions, even the smallest, to be abrogated…" (*Legat.* 117; trans. Smallwood). Gaius abrogates Jewish Law through self-deification and the placement of his statue in synagogues (*Legat.* 134) and the Temple (*Legat.* 188-337, 346). Philo proceeds to articulate the problem with Gaius's deification with descriptive detail:

> …when the created and corruptible nature of man (i.e, Gaius) was made to appear uncreated and incorruptible by a deification which our nation judged to be the most grievous impiety, since sooner could God change into a man than man into a God. Apart from that it included the supremely evil vices of infidelity and ingratitude to the Benefactor of the whole world (τὸν τοῦ κόσμου παντὸς εὐεργέτην) who through His power bestows blessings poured in unstinted abundance on every part of the All" (Colson; *Legat.* 118).

Gaius's deification is the "most grievous impiety" because it embellishes the material substance

[212] Philo observes that some in Italy broke with Roman tradition and prostrated themselves before Gaius (*Legat.* 116). However, it must be noted that Philo's embassy reflects the tradition of *proskynesis* when they bow before the emperor (*Legat.* 352). Whereas the tradition of *proskynesis* is rooted in honorific flattery, it very well may be the case that Gaius intended it as something more. For comment, see Smallwood, *Philonis Alexandrini,* 210-11.

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of human kings, exchanging the mortal nature of human kingship for the immortal nature of the "Benefactor of the whole world." Gaius exploits the transfer of power, taking God's divinity and authority for himself, thereby breaking the boundaries of the political metaphor. Additionally, Gaius violates the Pythagorean kingship ideal by transferring the divine nature of the kingly office to the king himself. Although Philo can ascribe divine nature to the kingly offices of dead Jewish patriarchs, he denies it to the living Gaius to avoid diminishing the unique authority of Abraham, Moses and, ultimately, God himself.[213] In contrast to former emperors who "governed with gentleness and in accordance with laws," Gaius "admired lawlessness" (*παρανομίαν ἐζηλωκότος*) and "considered himself law" (*νόμον γὰρ ἡγούμενος ἑαυτόν*, *Legat*. 119). The hubris and autocratic rule of Gaius breaks the boundaries of the political metaphor, creating a scenario where Jewish "subjects are the slaves of an emperor" rather than God (*δοῦλοι δὲ αὐτοκράτορος οἱ ὑπήκοοι*, *Legat.* 119; trans. Smallwood).[214]

Philo's interpretation of monotheism and monarchy in *De Decalogo* indicates how worshiping one God had implications for Jewish political theory and cosmology under gentile rule. Kingship (politics) and monotheism (religion) went hand in hand. Although Philo allusively makes these connections in *De Specialibus* and *De Decalogo,* his cautious rhetoric becomes frank in the *Legatio*. Goodenough suggested that Jewish patriotism and detestation of Roman rule lay at the heart of the conflict in the *Legatio* rather than monotheism and detestation of images.[215] Certainly one cannot deny that these sentiments contributed to Philo's critique of Gaius—however, Philo's repeated appeal to Jewish Law,[216] lengthy criticism of Gaius's self-

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[213] So E. R. Goodenough, *Politics of Philo Judaeus*, 112-13.
[214] Josephus makes a similar connection between kingship and slavery in *Ant.* 14.41-45.
[215] So E. R. Goodenough, *Politics of Philo Judaeus*, 112-13.
[216] See *Legat.* 115, 152, 161, 195, 210-11, 220, 236, 240, 256, 280, 299-301, 360, 371.

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deification[217] and condemnation of Gaius's attempt to place imperial images in Jewish synagogues and the Temple[218] do not preclude monotheism and aniconicism from playing a role in this conflict. Philo's henotheistic cosmology allowed subordinate gods and kings to share power in the cosmos. But Israel's God *is the ideal king.* Within this model, subordinate powers—both gods and kings—are called to imitate the exemplar rule of Yahweh as agents sharing power. Gaius violates the transaction of power by demanding cult worship and not reflecting the Law of God on earth. In contrast to Augustus who respects the boundaries of the political metaphor, Gaius's hubris reflects that of an "implacable tyrant with a scowl on his despotic brow" (*Legat.* 350; trans. Smallwood).

4.5.2 The Political Metaphor of Idolatry and Jewish Criticism of Regal Hubris

Philo's interpretation of the first commandment shows the elasticity of the political metaphor. It remains for us to evaluate Jewish literature that critiques gentile rulers who exploit the transfer of power as subordinate authorities of Yahweh. Tessa Rajak observes that "rulers are remembered, listed, portrayed, compared, analyzed, addressed, praised, and criticized" in the Septuagint corpus.[219] Jews' interest in the ruling power should not surprise us—without the ability to place limitations on a king's power, Jews had to create a repertory of literature that did so imaginatively and fictively. As Rajak concludes, "…Jews contributed to kingship literature because it mattered to them acutely … they understood that self-preservation meant retaining the favour of the ruling power of the day; but they had few illusions about where they stood … it was necessary therefore to understand their controllers, to avoid complacency, and to develop the

[217] See *Legat.* 75-114, 118, 162-5, 198, 201, 218, 265, 332, 346, 368.
[218] For Gaius's portraits placed in Alexandrian synagogues, see: *Legat.* 134. For Gaius's plan to erect a colossal in the Temple, see *Legat.* 188-337, 346.
[219] Rajak, *Translation and Survival,* 177.

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repertory of their own responses."[220] In the discussion that follows I will evaluate the repertory of Jewish responses that critiqued imperial monarchy and self-deification from three angles: (1) the reception and interpolation of the Law of the King in the Temple Scroll (11Q19=11QT), Josephus and Philo; (2) resistance literature that re-contextualizes the proscription against exaltation through mockery and/or morbid elimination of the king; and (3) the creation of literary paragons of the ideal ruler.

A. The Reception and Interpolation of the Law of the King in Early Judaism

The Deuteronomic Law of the King was not erased from Jewish memory during the Second Temple period. Herod Agrippa I, for example, was remembered as the most pious of the Herodians, who purportedly read Deuteronomy 17 daily (*m. Sotah* 8:8). Josephus, the Temple Scroll, and Philo also provide further material that reflects upon the strictures of the Deuteronomic Law of the King either in whole or in part. Although it is difficult to pin down the rhetorical referent of these texts, they reflect the ongoing desire among Jews to conceptualize limitations on the office of kingship under gentile authority.

(i) The Law of the King in 11Q19=11QT

The oldest interpretation of the Law of the King occurs in the Temple Scroll from Cave 11 at Qumran (11Q19=11QT).[221] Radiocarbon dating places the scroll in the first century BCE.[222] However, a possible fragmentary copy (4Q524) is dated to the second century BCE, and source criticism of the document shows that the composition of 11QT 56:12 – 59:21 pre-dates the

[220] Idem., 180.
[221] See Steven Fraade, "'The Torah of the King' (Deut. 17:14-20) in the Temple Scroll and Early Rabbinic Law," in *The Dead Sea Scrolls as Background to Postbiblical Judaism and Early Christianity: Papers from an International Conference at St. Andrews in 2001* (ed. James R. Davila; Leiden: Brill, 2003), 25-60, here 31.
[222] Fraade, "'The Torah of the King'," 31.

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Temple Scroll as an autonomous unit.[223] The Temple Scroll is critical of the office of kingship, which could reflect its rhetorical setting under the Hasmonean dynasty.[224] The author of the Temple Scroll significantly interpolates and expands the Deuteronomic Law of the King in what Yigael Yadin calls "The Statutes of the King," a section that includes non-Biblical traditions that limit the king's power (11Q 56-59:21).[225] With the exception of the omission of Deut 17:19-20, the Deuteronomic Law of the King is reproduced almost verbatim in 11Q 56:12-19:

> When you enter the land which I give you, take possession of it, dwell in it and say, 'I will appoint a king over me as do all the nations around me!', you may surely appoint over you the king whom I will choose. It is from among your brothers that you shall appoint a king over you. You shall not appoint over you a foreigner who is not your brother. He (the king) shall definitely not acquire many horses, neither shall he lead the people back to Egypt for war to acquire many horses and much silver and gold, for I told you, 'You shall never again go back that way'. He shall not acquire many wives that they may not turn his heart away from me. He shall not acquire very much silver and gold. When he sits upon the throne of his kingdom, they shall write for him this law from the book which is before the priests (11Q LVI, 12-19).[226]

The strictures against a foreign king and the excessive love of weapons, women and wealth mirror Deut 17:14-20. In contrast to Deuteronomy, however, the Temple Scroll subordinates the king to the priests who write out the Law for the king to read. Moreoever, the high priest must be consulted before waging war (11Q LVIII, 16-19). Steven D. Fraade observes, "In Deut 17:18-20, the king sits alone with his Torah, reading it and observing its rules in order not to err and in order not to elevate himself above his fellow Israelites, the king of the Temple Scroll must constantly be guarded by upright men and must submit to a council, made up mainly of priests and Levites."[227] Assuming a dating under the Hasmoneans, the Temple Scroll exposits the

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[223] Idem., 31.
[224] On a Hasmonean setting, see Lawrence H. Schiffman, "The Deuteronomic Paraphrase of the Temple Scroll," *RevQ* 15 (1992): 543-567.
[225] Yigael Yadin, *The Temple Scroll I* (Jerusalem: IES, 1983), 344-90.
[226] English translation, Geza Vermes, *The Complete Dead Sea Scrolls in English* (New York: Allen Lane The Penguin Press, 1997), 212.
[227] Fraade, "'The Torah of the King'," 35.

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Deuteronomic Law of the King to resist intra-Jewish struggles to place limitations on the Hasmonean dynasty (and by circumflection the Roman invaders known as the *Kittim*). The copying of this text into the first century CE represents a continued interest in the Law of the King.

(ii) The Law of the King in Josephus

Before looking at Josephus's interpolation of the Law of the King, a brief reflection on his ideal form of government is necessary. Similar to Philo, Josephus opts for a theocratic form of government in his extended summary of Jewish Law in *Contra Apionem* 2.145-286. In contrast to pagan forms of government received from Jupiter and Apollo (*C. Ap.* 2.162), Josephus defends the God-given origins of Jewish Law and its superior view of God by appeal to Judaism's distinctive theocratic form of government ruled by Yahweh himself. Josephus writes,

> There are infinite varieties in individual customs and laws among humanity as a whole, but in summary one may say: some have entrusted the power of government to monarchies, others to the rule of the few, others again to the masses. But our legislator took no notice of any of these, but instituted the government as what one might call—to force an expression—a "theocracy" (θεοκρατίαν), ascribing to God the rule and power (θεῷ τὴν ἀρχὴν καὶ τὸ κράτος ἀναθείς, Apion 2.164-165).

To articulate Jews' unique form of government, Josephus coins a neologism θεοκρατία (θεός + κράτος).[228] Some scholars interpret θεοκρατία as a reference to a government under priesthood.[229] John M. G. Barclay rightly refutes this position, arguing that (1) there is no reference to priests in the immediate context; (2) Josephus had other terms to describe the role of priests, e.g., aristocracy; and (3) when Josephus later discusses the priesthood (2.184-88) he does not refer to

[228] On the political thought of Josephus's monotheism, see Tessa Rajak, "The *Against Apion* and the Continuities in Josephus's Political Thought," in *Understanding Josephus: Seven Perspective* (ed. Steve Mason; Journal for the Study of the Pseudepigrapha 32; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1998), 222-246, here 229-31.
[229] For references, see John M. G. Barclay, *Flavius Josephus: Against Apion: Translation and Commentary* (Flavius Josephus: Translation and Commentary 10; Leiden: Brill, 2006), 262.

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them as a theocracy.[230] Still, Josephus's ideal constitution is what can be dubbed a theocratic-aristocracy, a form of government Josephus surveys back to Moses and Aaron (*Ant.* 20.224-51).

In Josephus's most explicit affirmation of this form of Judean constitution, he employs the Deuteronomic Law of the king in a similar way as the Temple Scroll to subordinate the Israelite king to the priesthood:

> Aristocracy, and the way of living under it, is the best constitution; and may you never have any inclination to any other form of government; and may you always love that form, and have the laws for your governors, and govern all your actions according to them; for you need no supreme governor but God. But if you shall desire a king, *let him be one of your own nation; let him be always careful of justice and other virtues perpetually; let him submit to the laws, and esteem God's commands to be his highest wisdom; but let him do nothing without the high priest and the votes of the senators; let him not have a great number of wives, nor pursue after abundance of riches, nor a multitude of horses, whereby he may grow too proud to submit to the laws.* And if he affect any such things, let him be restrained, lest he become so potent that his state be inconsistent with your welfare (*Ant.* 4.223-224; italics mine *DJS*).

It is important to emphasize that aristocracy, for Josephus, is a political model under the rule of God: "for you need no supreme governor but God" (ἀρκεῖ γὰρ ὁ θεὸς ἡγεμὼν, *Ant.* 4.223). Josephus's primacy on aristocracy, therefore, is not divorced from theocracy. To resist the institution of human kingship, Josephus appeals to the anti-monarchical tradition of 1 Samuel. But Josephus manipulates this tradition, as Zuleika Rodgers writes, "to convey further his own particular political philosophy that deprecates monarchic rule..."[231] For example, Josephus writes that Samuel had a "hatred to kingly government" (*Ant.* 6.36); that by rejecting the kingship of God, Israel "rejected his benefits" (ἀμνημονήσειαν τῶν εὐεργεσιῶν), opting instead for human-king-benefactors who "use their subjects as beasts" (*Ant.* 6.60-61); and Moses and Aaron

[230] Barclay, *Flavius Josephus,* 262.
[231] Zuleika Rodgers, "Monarchy vs. Priesthood: Josephus, Justus of Tiberias, and Agrippa II," in *A Wandering Galilean: Essays in Honour of Seán Freyne* (eds. Zuleika Rodgers, Margaret Daly-Dento and Anne Fitzpatrick McKinley; Leiden: Brill, 2009), 173-186.

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delivered Israel out of Egypt "without a king" (χωρὶς βασιλέως, *Ant.* 6.89).[232] Josephus's evocation of the Law of the King rationalizes the failure of Israelite kingship; it also functions apologetically to support Josephus's ideal theocratic-aristocracy, a point that is emphasized by Josephus's interpolation of Deuteronomy that the king must "do nothing without the high priest and the votes of the senators" (*Ant.* 4.224). For Josephus, the priesthood is an accountability mechanism to limit the king's power.

Josephus further appeals to the anti-monarchical tradition to condemn the antics of Aristobulus and Hyrcanus who went before Pompey to receive the title king. Josephus even observes that Aristobulus put a royal diadem on his head to imitate the Hellenistic kingship model (*Ant.* 13.301). In reaction to this event, Josephus writes that the Jews "did not desire to be under kingly government (οὐκ ἀξιοῦν βασιλεύεσθαι πάτριον γάρ), because the form of government they received from their forefathers was that of subjection to the priests of that God whom they worshipped; and [they complained], that though these two were the posterity of priests [i.e., Aristobulus and Hyrcanus], yet did they seek to change the government of their nation to another form, in order to enslave them" (ὅπως καὶ δοῦλον γένοιτο, *Ant.* 14.41). The absolute authority of kingship produces enslavement. Although Josephus does not reproduce the Law of the King verbatim, he does reproduce the strictures on war, women and wealth to limit the authority and excessive hubris of Israelite kingship (and, by circumvention, that of gentile rulers). For Josephus, hubristic accessories lead to excessive arrogance (ὑπερήφανος), resulting in failure to "submit to the Laws" (*Ant.* 2.224).

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[232] It is also worth noting that Josephus employs 1 Sam 8:11-17 in *Ant.* 6.40 to condemn hegemonic forms of kingship—e.g., taxation, etc. See also *Ant.* 6.262-68 for Josephus's condemnation of Saul's barbarity and that of humanity in general.

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(iii) The Law of the King in Philo of Alexandria

Philo employs the Law of the King in *Agr.* 84-93 to condemn the ability of horse breeders to govern and devotes a longer excurses on it in *Spec.* 4.157-169.[233] Both pericopes represent Philo's rhetorical emphasis on caution by interpreting the limitations of the Law of the King without naming the object of resistance. In *De Specialibus,* Philo expands on Deut 17:15—"you are not permitted to put a foreigner over you"—by emphasizing the democratic and voluntary election of the king by the people and God (which stands in contrast to the Greek practice of casting lots [*Spec.* 4.157]). Moses gives two reasons, according to Philo, for proscribing a foreigner (ἀλλότριος) from ruling over Israel. First, in accord with Deut 17:17, a foreigner will amass silver, gold and riches "out of the poverty of those who are subjected" to him (ἐκ τῆς πενίας τῶν ὑπηκόων). Second, in accord with Deut 17:16, subjects will imitate the greediness of imperial rule (πλεονεξία) and emigrate, presumably back to Egypt, in search of greater material wealth (*Spec.* 4.158).[234]

For Philo, the Law of Moses is fixed. There is "one constitution and the same law and one God" (ἐστι πολιτεία μία καὶ νόμος ὁ αὐτὸς καὶ εἷς θεός, *Spec.* 4.159). The fixed nature of the Law of Moses hamstrings the king's legal autonomy, a point that is made emphatic by Philo's interpolation that the king himself must write out the Laws to implant their monolithic nature in his soul (*Spec.* 4.160-63). Philo shifts to the first person in this section to present a paragon of the ideal ruler. In contrast to Hellenistic-Roman monarchs who bear the scepter in their hand, Philo's

[233] The excursus in *De Specialibus* is embedded in Philo's larger treatment of justice, which closes the book (*Spec.* 4.133-238).
[234] Philo further expands on the prohibition against foreign rule in his allegorical exegesis of Gen 9:20 in *Agricultura*. Here, Philo focuses on the prohibition against acquiring horses and returning to Egypt in Deut 17:16. By appeal to the authority of Moses, Philo magnifies the ineptitude of horse breeders for royal positions of power because they are "unsuited to exercise authority" (*Agr.* 84), will lead their subjects back to Egypt (*Agr.* 88) and provide spectacle for the games (*Agr.* 91). Underlying Philo's oblique criticism of precious metals and horse breeders is a subtle charge of idolatry against imperial wealth and military domination.

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ideal monarch bears the book of Deuteronomy in his hand:

> …other kings bear sceptres in their hands, and sit upon thrones in royal state, but my sceptre shall be the book of the copy of the law (ἐμοὶ δὲ τὸ σκῆπτρόν ἐστιν ἡ βίβλος τῆς Ἐπινομίδος); that shall be my boast and my incontestible glory, the signal of my irreproachable sovereignty, created after the image and model of the archetypal royal power of God" (πρὸς ἀρχέτυπον τὴν τοῦ θεοῦ βασιλείαν ἀπεικονισθείς, *Spec.* 4.164).

The polemical tone of this passage should not be overlooked. Philo critically inverts the scepter, a well-known imperial accoutrement used in Hellenistic and Roman iconography, opting instead to focus on the king's possession of the Book of Deuteronomy.[235] Moreover, in continuity with Philo's theo-political cosmology in *Spec.* 1.12-20, Philo's exemplar king bears Torah in his hand and imitates "the image and model of the archetypal royal power of God" (*Spec.* 4.164) Again, Philo inverts the cosmic structure of the Platonic-Pythagorean kingship theory by making Yahweh and Torah the pattern of rule and Law that the ideal king animates. The result of Philo's emphasis on the king's possession of Torah is two-fold: first, the king embodies "equality" (ἰσότης, *Spec*. 4.165), which stands in contrast to "inequality" (ἄνισον, *Spec.* 4.166); and second, the king upholds Law by not wavering from the commandments or accepting bribes (*Spec.* 167-69).[236] Philo's emphasis on equality stands in contrast to "mob-rule, which admires inequality" (ὀχλοκρατία, ἣ θαυμάζει τὸ ἄνισον, *Confus*. 108). For Philo, tyranny and ochlocracy bear the earmarks of lawlessness and inequality. By recourse to intertextuality and polemically disguised double innuendo, Philo places limitations on Israelite kings and, by circumvention, gentile rulers for the Jewish inner-circle.

The Temple Scroll, Josephus and Philo's reflections on the Law of the King are apologetically motivated to articulate the superior efficacy of Jewish Law for controlling the

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[235] Although the diadem was the primary symbol of Hellenistic kingship, the scepter could also be used to associate oneself with Zeus. It is attested in Homer, *Il.* 9.99. See Smith, *Hellenistic Royal Portraits,* 34.

[236] For fuller discussion of Philo's political philosophy in relation to inequality, see Mireille Hadas-Lebel, *Philo of Alexandria: A Thinker in the Jewish Diaspora* (Leiden: Brill, 2012), 192-96.

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power of kingship. It is Jewish tradition, not Roman, that possesses the best political theory for governance. Underlying this political apologetic, especially in Philo, may be an argument for the superior qualification of Jewish subjects to lead in positions of imperial power. Goodenough perceptively observed that Philo suggests in *De Iosepho* that Judaism comprised the *real source* for the Hellenistic ideal of kingship.[237] After all, "Egypt had at least once been *ideally* governed—by a Jew [i.e., Joseph]."[238] But Jewish acquisition of positions of imperial power was, for the most part, the stuff of wishful thinking, fictive court tales or failed coups. Without the power to control imperial power from above, another option was to co-opt it from below through literary representation and subversion of imperial hubris. The point of this literature, of course, was not to stir up rebellion but, rather, to resist acculturation and full-assimilation to gentile modes of kingship and culture that corrupt Jews' allegiance to the kingship of the one God. To examples of this literature we now turn.

B. Deuteronomy 17:20 and the Exalted Tyrant

The anti-monarchical tradition in the Book of Deuteronomy condemns the exaltation of Israelite kings. The king is to read the Law of the King daily to avoid "exalting himself above other members of the community" (לבלתי רום-לבבו אחיומ; ἵνα μὴ ὑψωθῇ ἡ καρδία αὐτοῦ ἀπὸ τῶν ἀδελφῶν αὐτοῦ, Deut 17:20). Although this motif is omitted from the Temple Scroll and Josephus, it re-surfaces in Philo through the king's writing out the Law with his own hand as a reminder of his subordination to Israel's God. Indeed, Philo's ideal ruler bears Torah in his hand—*not* the scepter (*Spec.* 4.164).

The prohibition against exaltation in Deut 17:20 using the verb ὑψόω was employed as a

[237] Goodenough, *Politics of Philo Judaeus,* 63.
[238] Idem., 63.

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Stichwort to critique gentile hubris in some texts of the Septuagint.[239] We need to be cautious of not pushing the intertextual allusions too far; however, overlapping ideas are certainly at play. Regal exaltation above the sovereignty of Yahweh is tantamount to idolatry and incompatible with Jewish conceptions of the ideal ruler, especially if it is accompanied by persecution of Jewish communities. The use of ὑψόω to critique regal exaltation is employed most explicitly to condemn Alexander the Great's imperial conquest in the proemium of 1 Maccabees (a text analyzed in more detail in section 2.2). Here we draw attention to verses 1-3:

> (1) καὶ ἐγένετο μετὰ τὸ πατάξαι Ἀλέξανδρον τὸν Φιλίππου Μακεδόνα, ὃς ἐξῆλθεν ἐκ γῆς Χεττιιμ, καὶ ἐπάταξεν τὸν Δαρεῖον βασιλέα Περσῶν καὶ Μήδων καὶ ἐβασίλευσεν ἀντ᾽ αὐτοῦ πρότερον ἐπὶ τὴν Ἑλλάδα. (2) καὶ συνεστήσατο πολέμους πολλοὺς καὶ ἐκράτησεν ὀχυρωμάτων καὶ ἔσφαξεν βασιλεῖς τῆς γῆς· (3) καὶ διῆλθεν ἕως ἄκρων τῆς γῆς καὶ ἔλαβεν σκῦλα πλήθους ἐθνῶν. καὶ ἡσύχασεν ἡ γῆ ἐνώπιον αὐτοῦ, καὶ ὑψώθη, καὶ ἐπήρθη ἡ καρδία αὐτοῦ.
>
> (1) And it happened after the triumph of Alexander the Macedonian the son of Philip, who came out of the land of Chettiim and defeated Darius, king of the Persians and Medes, and became king in his place, formerly being king of Greece— (2) and he conducted many wars and seized fortresses and slaughtered the kings of the earth. (3) And he penetrated to the ends of the earth and took the spoils of a multitude of nations. And the earth became quiet before him, and he was exalted, and his heart was uplifted (1 Macc 1:1-3; trans. NETS).

Alexander's conquest of many nations results in the earth falling into a posture of piety and worship before him.[240] The author uses the verb ὑψόω to condemn Alexander's exaltation directly, with the addendum that his heart was exalted using the verb ἐπαίρω. Although the syntax diverges from Deut 17:20, the author's use of the verb ὑψόω and the substantive καρδία

[239] Tessa Rajak alludes to this point but does not connect ὑψόω to the Law of the King: "The mechanism is generally straightforward: kings elevate themselves (the key verb *hupsoô* is used); then God brings them down, they find themselves in fetters, and He tells them what their offence was" (*Translation and Survival,* 186).

[240] Dio Chrysostom observes that Alexander "did not care to live at all unless he might be king of Europe, Asia, Libya, and of any islands which might lie in the ocean" (*De. Regn.* 4.50). Similarly, Arrian writes, "As for what Alexander had in mind, I have no means of forming an accurate conjecture, nor do I care to speculate. But I would venture to assert that Alexander's plans had nothing small or mean about them, and that he would not have been able to remain satisfied with his conquests so far, not even if he had added Europe to Asia and the British Isles to Europe. He would always have been seeking out some unknown land, attempting to rival himself if not anybody else" (VII.1.1-4; Austin, no. 20).

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brings thematic coherence to the shared motif of anti-exaltation. Whereas Israel proscribes the king from hubris "in order that his heart may *not* be lifted up (ἵνα μὴ ὑψωθῇ ἡ καρδία αὐτοῦ, Deut 17:20); Alexander the Great, in accord with the pattern of exalting objects of euergetism and power in Greco-Roman religion, "was exalted and his heart *was* lifted up" (ὑψώθη, καὶ ἐπήρθη ἡ καρδία αὐτοῦ, 1 Macc 1:3). Here its is suggested that the author of 1 Maccabees alludes to Deut 17:20 to portray Alexander as the antonymn of the Jewish kingship model, thereby proleptically anticipating the author's introduction of the exemplar idolatrous tyrant in Antiochus IV later in the narrative.[241]

When a king's hubris was accompanied by persecution, Jews' vituperation became more subversive through the "death of a tyrant type-scene."[242] As Carol A. Newsom observes, the elimination of the king, sometimes followed by his morbid domination, was the only "ideologically stable option" for resisting tyrants who overstepped their God-given power.[243] Philo observes the savagery of tyrants who "left no form of cruelty untried" (*Prob.* 89). The danger of such cruelty, according to Philo, is that subjects will imitate their overlords and return the favor with the "same calamities" (*Prob.* 89). In a similar manner, the death of the tyrant type-

[241] Other examples of the anti-exaltation motif using ὑψόω and/or ἐπαίρω are scattered throughout texts of the Septuagint. For example, the kings that the Romans put in power were "greatly exalted" (ὑψώθησαν σφόδρα, 1 Macc 8:13). For making plans against Simon and his sons and having a large store of silver and gold, the governor of Jericho, Ptolemy son of Adubus's "heart was exalted" (καὶ ὑψώθη ἡ καρδία αὐτοῦ, 1 Macc 16:13). Antiochus IV claims that "he will be exalted above every god" (ὑψωθήσεται ἐπὶ πάντα θεὸν, Dan 11:36-37). Pharaoh is condemned for being "exalted with lawless insolence…" (ἐπαρθέντα ἀνόμῳ θράσει, 3 Macc 6:4). The author of the Psalms of Solomon suggests the Hasmoneans were "exalted to the stars" **(**ὑψώθησαν ἕως τῶν ἄστρων, *Pss. Sol.* 1.5). And Ptolemy IV Philopator (222-203 BCE) is scourged by God for persecuting the Jews and for "exalting (ἐπηρμένον) himself in hubris and audacity" (3 Macc 2:21). Pompey is critiqued for having a heart that is "alien from God" and especially for introducing foreign cult into Jerusalem (17:13-14). In the Psalms of Solomon, Pompey's arrogance (ὑπερηφανία) is caricatured for having a heart that is alien from God (ἡ καρδία αὐτοῦ ἀλλοτρία ἀπὸ τοῦ θεοῦ ἡμῶν, *Ps. Sol.* 17.13).
[242] On which, see Wesley O. Allen, Jr., *The Death of Herod: The Narrative and Theological Function of Retribution in Luke-Acts* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1997), 29-74.
[243] Newsom, "God's Other," 48. I borrow the categories "elimination" and "elimination plus domination" from Newsom's study.

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scene exemplifies Homi Bhaba's idea of mimicry: in response to the colonizer's persecution, Jews mimicked the oppressors' methods of domination by subjecting their bodies to God's retributive justice (e.g., mimicry is evident in the persecution scenes in 2 Macc 9:5-6 and Philo, *Flacc.* 170).[244] A precedent for the elimination of the king can be traced to Yahweh's destruction of Pharaoh's army in the Song of the Sea (Exod 15). It also surfaces in ancient Judaism during the monarchical period when Isaiah composes a "taunt song" to condemn the arrogance of the oppressive Sargon II (722-705 BCE).[245] During the Hellenistic period the antics of Antiochus IV and Pompey provided particularly apt fodder for this form of resistance.[246]

(i) The Morbid Elimination of Antiochus IV

The Book of Daniel records the morbid elimination of Antiochus IV twice as a component of its apocalyptic strategy of resistance against the Edict of Antiochus. Justification for the first death scene stems from Antiochus's speaking "arrogant words" (τῶν λόγων τῶν μεγάλων, Dan 7:11). The second death scene is prefaced by more overt reference to the hubris and self-deification of Antiochus:

> (36) the king will act according to his will. And he will be enraged and will be exalted over every god (ὑψωθήσεται ἐπὶ πάντα θεὸν) and will speak strange things against the God of gods. And he will succeed until the wrath is completed, for completion pertaining to him is coming. (37) And he will in no way have regard for the gods of his ancestors, and he will give no thought to the desire of a woman. He will be exalted in everything (ἐν παντὶ ὑψωθήσεται), [and strong nations will be subject to him]. (38) And he will honor a

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[244] See Homi K. Bhaba, *The Location of Culture* (New York: Routledge, 1994). For comment on Bhaba's idea of mimicry, see David Huddart, *Homi Bhaba* (New York: Routledge, 2006), 39-51.

[245] Isaiah 14:11-14 provided an important intertextual repertoir for motifs of anti-exaltation and death by maggots: "Your pomp is brought down to Sheol, and the sound of your harps; maggots are the bed beneath you, and worms are your covering. (12) How you are fallen from heaven, O Day Star, son of Dawn! How you are cut down to the ground, you who laid the nations low! (13)You said in your heart, “I will ascend to heaven; I will raise my throne above the stars of God; I will sit on the mount of assembly on the heights of Zaphon; (14) I will ascend to the tops of the clouds, I will make myself like the Most High." For comment, see: Brevard Childs, *Isaiah* (Old Testament Library; Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2001), 126-28.

[246] On the brutality of Antiochus's bodily torture of Jewish subjects, see 2 Macc 7:4-5.

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> strong god in his place [i.e., Olympian Zeus]; even a god whom his ancestors did not know he will honor with gold and silver and valuable stone (Dan 11:36-38; trans. NETS).

The author of Daniel uses ὑψόω twice to articulate Antiochus's inflated sense of self. Antiochus considers himself exalted above the gods, and betrays his own ancestral traditions by honoring Zeus with precious materials (v. 38). We know from other sources that Antiochus attempted to erase Jewish identity by forcing the worship of Olympian Zeus in the Jerusalem Temple, which created the conditions for divine retribution (1 Macc 1:54; 2 Macc 6:2; *Ant.* 12.248-254). Daniel places Antiochus under an eschatological timetable (Dan 11:36), and eliminates him through an apocalyptic judgment where he will die completely isolated and alone (Dan 11:45).[247]

The Maccabean literature provides a more descriptive account of Antiochus's death through elimination plus morbid domination (1 Macc 6:10-13; 2 Macc 9:11-12).[248] Although Antiochus nowhere forces ruler worship on Jewish subjects, the author of Second Maccabees casts Antiochus's death in a two-fold charge of persecution and self-deification. After suffering defeat by a Persian mob, Antiochus's "superhuman arrogance" leads him to change the direction of his chariot toward Judea to "make Jerusalem a cemetery of Jews" (2 Macc 9:4). The consequence is that Antiochus is struck down with a morbid bowel sickness—complete with worms and a rotten stench—resulting in a desperate utterance to Yahweh that exemplifies the political metaphor of idolatry.[249] The author draws on the worm imagery and de-exaltation of the King of Babylon in Isaiah's taunt song (Isa 14:11-15) to condemn Antiochus's hubris.

[247] Portrayals of the eschatological judgment of arrogant rulers rather than their immediate morbid death also surface in Second Temple literature. For examples, see Isa 11:1-10; 1QpHab 13.4; *1 En.* 38:5-6; *Sib. Or.* 3.663-668, 671; Wis 5:23; 6:4-5.

[248] For Josephus's account of Antiochus's death, see *Ant.* 12.354-59. Non-Jewish accounts occur in Diodorus, *Library of History,* 29.15 and Polybius, *Universal History* 31.9. For comment, see Allen, *The Death of Herod,* 56-58.

[249] The association of a dead king's body with worms also occurs in Ben Sira's poem on kingship: "A long illness baffles the physician; the king of today will die tomorrow. For when one is dead he inherits maggots and vermin and worms" (Sir 10:10-11).

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> (8) Thus he, who only a little while before had thought in his superhuman arrogance that he could command the waves of the sea and had imagined that he could weigh the high mountains in a balance, was brought down to earth and carried in a litter, making the power of God manifest to all, (9) so that worms broke out of the unbeliever's eyes, and while he was still living in anguish and pain, his flesh rotted away, and because of his stench the whole army felt revulsion at the decay. (10) Because of the unbearable oppressiveness of the stench no one was able to carry the man who a little while before had thought that he could touch the stars of heaven. (11) Then it was that, broken in spirit, he began to lose much of his arrogance and to come to his senses under the divine scourge, for he was tortured with pain every moment. (12) And when he could not endure his own stench, he uttered these words, "It is right to be subject to God and that a mortal should not think haughtily." (ἔφη δίκαιον ὑποτάσσεσθαι τῷ θεῷ καὶ μὴ θνητὸν ὄντα ἰσόθεα φρονεῖν, 2 Macc 9:8-12; trans. NETS).

Antiochus's repentant utterance in v. 12 represents the clearest articulation of the political metaphor of idolatry from the mouth of a gentile ruler in Second Temple Jewish texts.[250] "It is right to be subject to God; mortals should not think that they are equal to God" (ἔφη δίκαιον ὑποτάσσεσθαι τῷ θεῷ καὶ μὴ θνητὸν ὄντα ἰσόθεα φρονεῖν, 2 Macc 9:12). Antiochus acknowledges his mortality *and* subordinate position in the cosmic hierarchy of the political metaphor. What is more, Antiochus acknowledges that mortals should not think they are equal to God (a polemical parallelism with the Hellenistic cult of rulers' appeal to ἰσόθεοι τιμαί).[251] In accord with the Law of the King, equality with subjects—not God—is a prerequisite toward effectively sharing power

[250] Daniel also records gentile rulers confessing the sovereignty of God (e.g., Dan 2:47; 4:2, 37; 6:26).

[251] Daniel R. Schwartz misses this background. See *2 Maccabees* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2008), 358-59. Jonathan A. Goldstein attributes the phrase to a well-known Greek proverb in Aeschylus *Pers.* 820; *Sophocles*, *Trach.* 472-73; and Aristotle, *Rhet.* ii.21 p. 1394b26. See Goldestein, *II Maccabees: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* (New York: Doubleday & Company, 1983), 355. The occurrence of ἰσόθεος in 2 Macc 9:12 is a hapax legomenon in the LXX. Philo, however, uses ἰσόθεος polemically to condemn Egyptians who confer cult honors on the earth (*Mos.* 2.194), cult statuary (*Dec.* 7), wealth (*Spec.* 1.25) and to inanimate things (*Virt.* 219). Moreover, Philo employs ἰσολύμπιος in the *Legatio* 149 to explain the honors conferred on Augustus at the Sebasteion complex in the harbor of Alexandria. As Philo and the *Letter of Aristeas* argue, the ideal ruler embodies equality with subjects—not God (*Spec*. 4.165; *Let. Aris.* 282). 2 Maccabees' juxtaposition of Antiochus's explicit exploitation of his mortality with the adjective ἰσόθεος evokes an unmistakable criticism of the cult of rulers.

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with the one true Sovereign.[252] Other examples of Jewish *de mortibus persecutorum* literature surface in texts of early Judaism (e.g., Heliodorus [2 Macc 3:26], Flaccus [Philo, *Flacc.* 170], Apion [Jos. *C. Ap.* 2.143], Herod [Jos. *War* 1.656; *Ant.* 17.169]; and Herod Agrippa I [Acts 12:23]). This discussion will conclude with an analysis of the death of Pompey (*Ps. Sol*. 2:25-30) and scourging of Ptolemy IV Philopator in the next section (3 Macc 2:21-24).

(ii) The Morbid Elimination of Pompey

The Psalms of Solomon contain eighteen pseudonymous Jewish poems that reflect a period of Jewish persecution under an unnamed political power.[253] Allusions to Pompey's invasion of Jerusalem in 63 BCE (*Pss. Sol.* 2:1-2; 8:18-22; 17:7-9) and assassination in Egypt in 48 BCE (*Pss. Sol.* 2:26-27) place this text in the immediate years following Pompey's death.[254] In the first Psalm, personified Jerusalem condemns local Jews (the Hasmonean dynasty) who assimilate to the arrogance of the nations through excessive wealth and exaltation (*Pss. Sol.* 1.3-8). Indeed, "they were exalted to the stars" (ὑψώθησαν ἕως τῶν ἄστρων, *Pss. Sol.* 1.5). The Law of the King's proscription against weapons, wealth and exaltation are here applied inwardly toward the Hasmoneans. In accord with the Deuteronomic theology of divine retribution, the opening scene of Hasmonean hubris sets the stage for their punishment by Pompey in *Psalms of Solomon* 2. The divinely orchestrated Roman invasion of Jerusalem, however, leads to a worse calamity: the gentiles defile the Temple (2:2), tattoo the Jews as slaves for "a spectacle among the gentiles" (2:6), and take Jewish women as their wives (2:13). The forced enculturation of the Jews under

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[252] Notwithstanding this point, it is worth observing that the author of 2 Maccabees attributes the antics of Antiochus to the sins of the Jews (2 Macc 5:17-18). The rationalizing hermeneutic of Deuteronomistic theology is at play here.
[253] Kenneth Atkinson, *DEJ,* 1238.
[254] Idem., 1238. On Rodney Allan Werline, "The Psalms of Solomon and the Ideology of Rule," in *Conflicted Boundaries in Wisdom and Apocalypticism* (ed. Benjamin G. Wright III and Lawrence M. Wills; Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2005), 119-40.

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Roman domination leads the Psalmist to cry out for retributive justice against the "arrogance of the dragon" (i.e., Pompey – τὴν ὑπερηφανίαν τοῦ δράκοντος, 2:25). In the guise of allusive speech, Yahweh responds with a mirthful account of Pompey's body drifting in the ocean alone without burial (2:27).[255] The subsequent verses justify Pompey's death, and provide another vivid portrait of a gentile ruler who exploits his subordination to the one God.

> Οὐκ ἐλογίσατο ὅτι ἄνθρωπός ἐστιν, καὶ τὸ ὕστερον οὐκ ἐλογίσατο. (29) εἶπεν Ἐγὼ κύριος γῆς καὶ θαλάσσης ἔσομαι· καὶ οὐκ ἐπέγνω ὅτι ὁ θεὸς μέγας, κραταιὸς ἐν ἰσχύι αὐτοῦ τῇ μεγάλῃ. (30) αὐτὸς βασιλεὺς ἐπὶ τῶν οὐρανῶν καὶ κρίνων βασιλεῖς καὶ ἀρχάς·
>
> He reflected not that he was man. And reflected not on the latter end; He said: "I will be lord of land and sea." And he did not recognize that it is God who is great, mighty in his great strength. He is king over the heavens, and judges kings and kingdoms (*Pss. Sol.* 2:28-30).

In the aftermath of intra-Jewish conflict with the Hasmonean dynasty and the invasion of Pompey, *Psalms of Solomon* 2 embeds an anonymous discourse of resistance in the idiolect of the Psalms.[256] Pompey exploits his humanity by claiming deification; it is God who is the cosmic king ruling over kings and kingdoms. The critique of Pompey's superhuman exaltation reflects the utterance of Antiochus IV in 2 Macc 9:12. Pompey and Antiochus break the boundaries of the political metaphor by equating their humanity with divinity and failing to rule as subordinate authorities of the rightful King of land and sea. The movement of exaltation impinges on Jewish monotheism and the Law of the King's strictures against exaltation.

[255] The focus on isolation reflects the isolated death of Antiochus IV in Dan 11:45.

[256] James Scott understands anonymity as a strategy of infrapolitics—i.e., politics by subordinate groups. By embedding anonymous literary resistance within the idiolect of one's local culture, subordinate groups can circumvent detection by not leaving an obvious paper trail. Scott writes, "The logic of infrapolitics is to leave few traces in the wake of its passage. By covering its tracks it not only minimizes the risks its practitioners run but it also eliminates much of the documentary evidence that might convince social scientists and historians that real politics was taking place" (*Domination and the Arts of Resistance*, 200). The infrapolitics of the *Psalms of Solomon* are complex. Its genre and ambiguous polemic would have been coherent for the Hasmoneans. However, its condemnation of Pompey's hubris and portrayal of his death would have been more disguised.

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C. 3 Maccabees and the Exalted Tyrant

The anonymous text known as 3 Maccabees contains a compendium of traditions that reflect Alexandrian Jews' negotiation of an arrogant ruler. The composition of 3 Maccabees is both complex and heavily debated.[257] Set in the aftermath of the Battle of Raphia, Ptolemy IV Philopator (222-203 BCE) is presented as an exemplum of imperial antagonism whose tyrannical arrogance encroaches on God's sovereignty and, ultimately, Jews' bodies. Although the composition of this text may have arrived in its final form in Roman Egypt, its content would have been relevant for Jews negotiating imperial power under Ptolemaic and Roman rule.[258] Under colonial power, 3 Maccabees served a variety of polemical and apologetic purposes.[259]

The book is broken into three sections: Ptolemy's victory at the Battle of Raphia (1:1 – 7); Ptolemy's visit to Jerusalem and attempt to enter the Temple (1:8 – 2:24); and Ptolemy's persecution of the Jews, followed by God's divine intervention and Ptolemy's change of heart (2:25 – 7:23). Notwithstanding the overt imperial setting of this text, scholars evaluating Jewish resistance literature from a post-colonial/anti-imperial perspective have largely overlooked the

[257] 3 Maccabees' *terminus post quem* is the battle of Raphia in 217 BCE. However, some have suggested that it is dependent on Greek Esther, which would place its composition at 114, 77, or 48 BCE. For discussion, see Clayton Croy, *3 Maccabees,* x-xi. A strong case for a Roman dating has been put forth by John J. Collins, *Between Athens and Jerusalem: Jewish Identity in the Hellenistic Diaspora* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000), 124-5; and Moses Hadas, *The Third and Fourth Book of Maccabees* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1953), 124-25**.** The mention of the λαογραφία tax in 3 Macc 2:28 calls to mind the census of Augustus in 24/23 BCE that re-mapped Alexandrian Jews' social status (see 5.3.2). Admittedly, the parallels between 3 Macc 2:25-30 and the ethnic tensions at the dawn of the Augustan era are strong; however, as Modrzejewski et al. have pointed out, we have evidence of a census on a demotic ostracon from Karnak that dates to the reign of Ptolemy II Philadephus (258/57 BCE). Modrzejewski suggests that it is "highly probable" that the Fourth Syrian War would have warranted a similar census. See Joseph Mélèze Modrzejewski, *The Jews of Egypt,* 150. It is also worth noting that, as Croy observes (xii), the Ptolemies did not use royal epithets until around 100 BCE. It is wise to treat 3 Maccabees as a text that was edited over time as Jews negotiated new imperial circumstances. As John M. G. Barclay observes, "One has the impression of an author stitching together legends of varied origin, creating a patchwork of events which make no historical sense in this strange amalgam" (*Jews in the Mediterranean Diaspora,* 195).
[258] So Clayton Croy, *3 Maccabees*, xiii.
[259] One possible apologetic purpose is etiological to explain the origins of a Jewish festival that resembles Purim and Hannukah. See Croy, *3 Maccabees*, xix.

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resistance strategies of 3 Maccabees.[260] Space precludes the treatment this text deserves. In what follows, I focus on 3 Maccabees' discourse of resistance that critiques Philopator's exaltation. In section 5.3 we will revisit 3 Maccabees' polemic against Philopator's idols.

Imperial power comprises a major subject of 3 Maccabees. Royal epithets for Israel's God are strewn throughout, often in polemical contrast to Ptolemy's tyrannical regime (τυραννική διάθεσις, 3 Macc 3:8).[261] The most common characterization of Philopator in 3 Maccabees is arrogance (e.g., ὑπερήφανος [3 Macc 1:27]; θράσος [3 Macc 1:26; 2:2, 14, 26; 6:20]; ὕβρις [3 Macc 2:3, 21; 3:25]).[262] In contrast to 3 Maccabees' hubristic depiction of Philopator, the Raphia decree eulogizes Philopator as "Pharaoh"" and the son of the "the Benefactor gods" for restoring the cult images of Egyptian deities that were destroyed by Antiochus III Soter during the Fourth Syrian War (Austin, no. 276 lines 1-10, 23, 25-30). Similarly, 3 Maccabees records Ptolemy heaping benefits on the cult and religion of regional gods after his victory (3 Macc 1:7). This tradition accords with the emphasis in the *peri basileias* literature that the king should exemplify *pietas* toward the gods, a point we saw repeatedly in the epigraphic record especially in the aftermath of a Hellenistic king's victory at war. It is in continuity with this tradition that Ptolemy desires to confer benefits on the Jerusalem Temple (2 Macc 1:8-15; 3:16).[263] Initially, Jews

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[260] Oddly, not a single reference is made to 3 Maccabees in Leo G. Perdue and Warren Carter, *Israel and Empire: A Postcolonial History of Israel and Early Judaism* (ed. Coleman Baker; New York: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2015).

[261] Israel's God is characterized by different formulations of the following descriptors: Βασιλεύς (2:2; 2:9; 2:13; 6:2); δεσπότης (2:2; 5:12; 6:5; 6:10); παντοκράτωρ (2:2, 8; 5:7; 6:2; 6:18, 28); μέγας (1:9, 16; 2:6; 9; 3:11; 4:16; 5:25; 7:2, 22); and σωτήρ (3 Macc 6:29, 32; 7:16). On 3 Maccabees' portrayal of the angry tyrant against the backdrop of Jewish-Greek depictions of royal anger, see Tessa Rajak, "The Angry Tyrant," in *Jewish Perspectives on Hellenistic Rulers* (eds. Tessa Rajak et al.; Berkeley: University of California, 2007), 110-127, here 120-24.

[262] For a fuller list, see Philip Alexander and Loveday Alexander, "The Image of the Oriental Monarch in the Third Book of Maccabees," in *Jewish Perspectives on Hellenistic Rulers* (eds. Tessa Rajak et al.; Berkeley: University of California, 2007), 92-109, here 96.

[263] Philip Alexander and Loveday Alexander interpret Philopator's desire to enter the temple as a reflection of his arrogance (3 Macc 1:12-15). When read alongside the Raphia Decree, however, it is worth noting that the Egyptian priesthood readily welcomed Philopator into their temples. The tradition of religious revival that

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receive Ptolemy's sacrifices to the "Supreme God" (τῷ μεγίστῳ θεῷ, 1:9). But when Ptolemy becomes enamored by the "excellence and beauty" of the Temple, he resolves to enter its sanctuary just as "he entered every other temple" (1:13).[264] When the priests fail to thwart Ptolemy's intentions by publicly reading the Law, a variety of Jewish resistance tactics are employed: the priests pray to God with cries and tears (1:16-17); women leave behind their babies and take to the streets in loud lamentation (1:18-20); the bolder citizens call for violent revolt (1:22-23); the elders attempt to persuade the king's "arrogant mind" (ὸν ἀγέρωχον αὐτοῦ νοῦν, 1:24-26); and the crowds pray and wail to God outside the Temple (1:27-29). As a last ditch effort amid the commotion, the high priest Simon II (219-196 BCE) prays for divine intervention (2:1-20). The opening lines of Simon's prayer invoke a polemical dichotomy between the absolute authority of God and the arrogance of Ptolemy:

> Lord, Lord, king of the heavens, and Sovereign of all creation, holy among the holy ones, the only ruler, almighty, give attention to us who are suffering grievously from an impious and profane man, puffed up in his audacity and power (θράσει καὶ σθένει πεφρυαγμένου). For you, the creator of all things and the governor of all, are a just Ruler, and you judge those who have done anything in insolence and arrogance (3 Macc 2:2-3).

Under the political authority of Ptolemy after the Fourth Syrian War, Simon's address to Israel's God as "king," the "only ruler" and the "governor of all" is full of bitter irony and polemical innuendo. Similar to other prayers in Hellenistic Judaism, the author petitions for a reversal of fortune by appeal to the precedent for God's intervention over empires in salvation history (3 Macc 4-8). God flooded the creation (Gen 6-8), destroyed the arrogance of Sodom (Gen 19) and eliminated Pharaoh and his military apparatus (Exod 7-15). The latter example functions as a

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often accompanied a ruler's accession to power is certainly at play here. Philopator's desire to enter into the temple was a normative practice, and one that fills him with consternation when the Jews bar him from entrance. See idem. "The Image of the Oriental Monarch," 96.

[264] Steven Weitzman attributes Romans desire to view the Temple to scopophilia. The eagerness of Roman war generals to view the inner-precincts is evident in Pompey (Josephus, *War* 1.152; *Ant.* 14.71-72), the Romans who aided Herod in the capture of the Temple (*Ant.* 14.482-83, *War* 1.354) and Titus (*War* 6.260). See Weitzman, *Surviving Sacrilege,* 80-81.

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strategy of proleptic classification—like Pharaoh, Ptolemy embodies vestiges of the arrogant tyrant and will meet a similar providential judgment.

The conflict behind Simon's prayer is not one-sided. Strikingly, Simon appeals to the Deuteronomic theology to rationalize the impending calamity, suggesting that Ptolemy's antics are due to "our many and great sins" (3 Macc 2:13).[265] The closing of the prayer immediately transitions to God's providential response (3 Macc 3:21-24). Similar to the death of a tyrant type-scene, Ptolemy experiences bodily torment but without morbid elimination:

> 21) Thereupon God, who oversees all things, the first Father of all, holy among the holy ones, having heard the lawful supplication, scourged him who had exalted himself in insolence and audacity (τὸν ὕβρει καὶ θράσει μεγάλως ἐπηρμένον ἐμάστιξεν αὐτόν). (22) He shook him on this side and that as a reed is shaken by the wind, so that he lay helpless on the ground and, besides being paralyzed in his limbs, was unable even to speak, since he was smitten by a righteous judgment (3 Macc 2:21-22).

The scourging (μαστίζω) of Ptolemy's body finds direct parallels to that of Heliodorus (2 Macc 3:1-40) and Antiochus IV (2 Macc 9:11-12). The author characterizes Ptolemy's exaltation using ἐπαίρω juxtaposed by characterizations of hubris (ὕβρις) and audacity (θράσος). To bring the tyrant back to earth, the "all-seeing" God muzzles Philopator's voice and subjects his body to paralysis (3 Macc 2:23-34). After the king's bodyguards remove his unrepentant body from the Temple, Philopator returns to Egypt to plot retaliation with his drinking companions (3 Macc 2:25-27). The result is a public decree demoting Jews' social status through the λαογραφία tax and the forced subjection of Jews' bodies to the tattoo of the Dionysiac emblem (3 Macc 2:28-29). Jews who wish to maintain their social status—i.e., equality with the Alexandrians (ἰσοπολίτης)—must be initiated into the Dionysiac mysteries (3 Macc 2:30). As I discussed in 4.3.2, the oppressive mechanisms of this decree represent the place of the traditional gods, rather than ruler cults, within the hegemonic and idolatrous machinations of imperial power.

[265] See also the appeal to the Deuteronomic theology of divine retribution in Eleazar's prayer in 3 Macc 6:11.

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Philopator's program of state terror is unsuccessful in persuading the Jews to abandon their ancestral traditions (3 Macc 2:31-33). Consequently, Philopator resolves to eliminate them wholesale in a letter distributed to his generals and soldiers throughout Egypt (3 Macc 3:11-29). Philopator's strategy of elimination includes the gathering and registration of the Jews in the hippodrome at Schedia (3 Macc 4:1-21). But while Philopator arrogantly enjoys the company "of all his idols" (*πάντων τῶν εἰδώλων*, 3 Macc 4:16), the scribes providentially run out of ink (3 Macc 4:17-21). Philopator orders the Jews to be trampled with five hundred drugged elephants, which is twice averted by the king providentially falling into deep sleep (3 Macc 5:11-15) and mental derangement (3 Macc 5:27-30).[266] A third attempt brings the Jews to the brink of death, where they call to the "Ruler over every power" (*τὸν τῆς ἁπάσης δυνάμεως δυνάστην*, 3 Macc 5:51). At this dramatic point, the author interrupts the circus spectacle with a prayer by the priest Eleazar (3 Macc 6:1-15).[267] Eleazar's prayer mirrors the structure and content of Simon's prayer.[268] The invocation appeals to the "King of great power, Almighty God Most High, governing all creation with mercy…" (3 Macc 6:2). The author again invokes a panorama of God's rescue operations in salvation history; this time, the author appeals to God's power over the arrogance of Pharaoh (6:4) and the insolence of Sennecharib who "took control of the world *by the spear*" (6:5). Eleazar also appeals to exemplar Biblical characters that remained steadfast

[266] Josephus records a similar persecution of the Jews with elephants under Ptolemy VIII Euergetes II, the "big bellied," Physkon (145-116 BCE) in *C. Ap.* 2.49-55. Modrzejewski suggests that the "concision" of Josephus's account warrants more historicity than the "romantic pathos" of 3 Maccabees (*The Jews of Egypt: From Rameses II to Emperor Hadrian,* 147). The dual accounts further illustrate the complex traditioning process that 3 Maccabees underwent. Additionally, it is worth noting that the Raphia Decree observes that "Pharaoh [Ptolemy IV Philopator] took as spoil many people and all the elephants. He made himself master of much gold and silver, and valuable possessions, which / were found in the various places which Antiochus had captured, and which had been brought there from his kingdom. Pharaoh caused them all to be carried to Egypt" (Austin, no. 276 lines 14-16). Ptolemy II Philadelphus (283-246 BCE) is remembered as one who was keenly interested in the capture of war elephants (cf. Diodorus III.36.3-5; Auston, no. 263).
[267] On which, see: Judith Newman, "God Condemns the Arrogance of Power: the Prayer in 3 Maccabees 6:2-10," in *Prayer from Alexander to Constantine: A Critical Anthology* (ed. Mark Kiley; New York: Routledge, 1997), 48-52.
[268] Eleazar may be associated with the martyr in 2 Macc 6.18-31 and 4 Macc 5-7.

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before imperial authority and a sea monster: Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego in the furnace (6:6), Daniel in the lion's den (6:7) and Jonah in the belly of a beast (6:8). The amalgam of Biblical events and characters conjures up images of God's power over the deities of the Egyptian, Assyrian and Babylonian empires. The contestation over where true power belongs is evident in Eleazar's petition: "Let not the vain-minded praise their vanities at the destruction of your beloved people, saying, 'Not even their god has rescued them'" (6:11). The defeat of the Jews at the hands of Philopator, according to Eleazar's prayer, is tantamount to a public spectacle of God's inferiority to Greco-Egyptian deity.

After Philopator arrives at the hippodrome with the "arrogance of his forces" (6:16), God responds to the cries of the Jews by sending two angels that instill fear in the elephants and spectators (6:17-21). Philopator immediately backtracks by blaming the calamity on his friends: "You are committing treason and surpassing tyrants in cruelty; and even me, your benefactor, you are now attempting to deprive of dominion and life by secretly devising acts of no advantage to the kingdom" (6:24). Philopator's cognitive change of mind coincides with a fundamentally different outlook on cosmic hierarchy: it is the Jewish God who has granted a "notable stability to our government" (6:28). Though fictional, this utterance critically inverts the cosmology of Ptolemaic monarchy; it is Israel's God—not the royal family—who sustains Ptolemy's government. We know from the Raphia decree that Ptolemy received *cultus* for his benefits on local gods. "Many people brought him a gold crown, and announced that they would set up a royal statue in his honor and build him a temple, as the King was acting in a pious manner [i.e., toward the gods]" (Austin, no. 276 *l.* 17). Against this backdrop, 3 Maccabees' portrayal of Ptolemy's subordination to the one God undercuts his misguided religiosity and exploitation of imperial autonomy. Philopator's circulation of a letter protecting Jewish rights to his generals in

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Egypt makes this point emphatic (7:1-9). Most notably, Philopator warns against harming the Jews, for it is "not a mortal but the Ruler over every power, the Most High God" who is the "antagonist to avenge such acts" (7:9). The political metaphor is here restored to cosmic equilibrium. Ptolemy recognizes his subordination to the "Most High God" (θεὸν ὕψιστον).

The author(s) of 3 Maccabees communicate a multidimensional rhetorical strategy of resisting the exalted tyrant. Most explicitly, Antiochus is represented literarily as arrogant and subordinate to God. When Antiochus oversteps the boundaries of the political metaphor he becomes the object of divine retribution, a warning to the ruling powers of subsequent generations. Underlying this text is also a complex apologetic strategy of legal vindication. Jewish Law, in fact, produces the best kind of citizens:

> The Jews, however, continued to maintain goodwill and unswerving loyalty toward the dynasty; but because they worshiped God and conducted themselves by his law, they kept their separateness with respect to foods. For this reason they appeared hateful to some; but since they adorned their style of life with the good deeds of upright people, they were established in good repute with everyone (3 Macc 3:3-5).

Despite the idiosyncratic nature of Jewish ancestral tradition, Torah produces exemplar citizens through good deeds and repute (3 Macc 3:21; 5:31; 6:25, 28; 7:7). One can sense a dual apologetic focus here: the ideal ruler respects the sovereignty of God and protects Jewish autonomy to maintain Torah obedience. In doing so, the king will govern the ideal subjects.

D. Ps-Solomon's Literary Paragon of the Ideal Ruler

Resisting regal exaltation and deification took on more sophisticated forms in some early Jewish texts. What remains to be discussed is the creation of Jewish literary paragons of the ideal ruler that resist the cult of rulers. We see a move toward this strategy in the Seven Banquets section of the *Letter of Aristeas* (*Let. Aris.* 182-294), and a meditative poem on the ideal ruler in Ben Sira

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(Sir 9:17 – 10:18).[269] Both texts, drawing on sapiential tradition, subordinate human rulers under the authority of Yahweh (*Let. Aris.* 224, 290; Sir 1:8; 10:5; 50:15),[270] and both emphasize the king's utter humanity to resist deification (*Let. Aris*. 262-63, 282; Sir 10:9-11).[271] In accord with the *peri basileias* literature and Philo's comology, Yahweh provides the example that the king must copy (τούτῳ δὲ κατακολουθεῖν ἀναγκαῖόν ἐστί σε, *Let. Aris.* 254).

The Wisdom of Solomon takes this theme to a new level by creating a full-blown paragon of the ideal ruler in a speech by Israel's exemplar King Solomon (Wis 7:1 – 9:18).[272] The use of *prosopoiia* functions to legitimate Jewish ancestral tradition through the voice of Solomon, but it also functions to embed Ps-Solomon's critique of emperor cult in an enclosed

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[269] On Ben Sira's critique of the cult of rulers, see Benjamin Wright, "Ben Sira on Kings and Kingship," in *Jewish Perspectives on Hellenistic Rulers* (eds. Tessa Rajak et al.; Berkeley: University of California, 2007), 76-91. Oddly, Ben Sira's critique of ruler cult is overlooked in Leo G. Perdue's study *The Sword and the Stylus: An Introduction to Wisdom in the Age of Empires* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2008), 256-91.

[270] In Sapiential tradition, the portrayal of God's bestowal of power on kings is especially evident in Proverbs: "By me [ie., Lady Wisdom] kings reign, and rulers decree what is just; by me rulers rule, and nobles, all who govern rightly (κρατοῦσι γῆς)" (Prov 8:15-16). So also, Wis 6:3: "For your dominion was given you from the Lord, and your sovereignty from the Most High; he will search out your works and inquire into your plans." In the Book of Daniel, King Nebuchadnezzar is instructed, "You, O king, the king of kings—to whom the God of heaven has given the kingdom, the power (τὴν ἰσχὺν), the might, and the glory" (Dan 2:37). The *Letter of Aristeas* gives the following advice to the Ptolemaic king when he asks the Jewish sages how he can be free of envy? "If you consider first of all that it is God who bestows on all kings glory and great wealth and no one is king by his own power. All humans wish to share this glory but cannot, since it is the gift of God" (*Arist.* 224). Ben Sira, on the other hand, writes, "Human success is in the hand of the Lord, and it is he who confers honor upon the lawgiver" (Sir 10:5).

[271] Similar to Philo, the *Letter of Aristeas* emphasizes the king's ontological equality with his subjects: "And on the next day the banquet followed the same course as on previous occasions, and when the opportunity presented itself the king proceeded to put questions to the remaining guests. He said to the first: 'How can a man keep himself from pride?' And he answered: 'If he maintains equality (ἰσότητα) and remembers on all occasions that he is a human ruling over humans. And God brings down the proud, and exalts the meek and humble'" (*Let. Aris.* 262-63). And, "(The king) said that he had given a good answer and asked another: 'What man is worthy of admiration?' He said: 'The man who is furnished with reputation and wealth and power and possesses a soul equal to all (καὶ ψυχὴν ἴσον πᾶσιν ὄντα). You yourself show by your actions that you are most worthy of admiration through the help of God who makes you care for these things'" (*Let. Aris.* 282). Ben Sira, on the other hand, emphasizes the king's mortality: "How can dust and ashes be proud? Even in life the human body decays. A long illness baffles the physician; the king of today will die tomorrow. For when one is dead he inherits maggots and vermin and worms" (Sir. 10:9-11).

[272] The author of Wisdom employs "self-praise" (*periautologia*) to persuade his audience to imitate the virtues of Solomon. See Plutarch, *On How to Praise Oneself Inoffensively* (*Mor.* 7); and Leo G. Perdue, *The Sword and the Stylus,* 322.

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intertextual literary environment.[273] It is worth observing that Dio Chrysostom employs a similar strategy of safe speech in his sixth oration *On Tyranny*. From the context of Dio's exile under Domitian, Dio critiques the emperor by communicating his dissent obliquely through deflection and figured speech: rather than narrate the antics of Domitian frankly, Dio criticizes an unidentified "Persian king" through the voice of the cynic-philosopher Diogenes of Sinope. Dio and Ps-Solomon's strategy of circumvention effectively communicates dissent through the authoritative voice of figures of the past.

The composition of the Wisdom of Solomon after Augustus's annexation of Egypt (30 BCE) and the subsequent introduction of the *laographia* tax in Roman-Egypt will be discussed in 5.3.1. Suffice it say, as it will be argued below, that Ps-Solomon articulates a holistic strategy of resistance to Greco-Egyptian and Roman imperial idolatry through an exhortation to the rulers of the earth (Wis 1:1-15; 6:1-21); the subjection of unjust rulers to apocalyptic judgement (5:17-23); the condemnation of deification through the example of Solomon (7:1-9:18); and a caricature of imperial cult media through euhemerism and the icon parody (14:16-21). In response to Augustus's hubris, Maurice Gilbert recognizes: "To remedy these abuses of political power, our author not only threatens divine judgment (Wis 6:5-8; 14:30-31), but proposes the example of Solomon."[274] Joachim Kügel, on the other hand, writes: "Der ganze Abschnitt Weish 7,1-6 der den Rahmen für diese Aussage bildet, muß als groß angelegte Polemik gegen die hellenistische Königsideologie, mit ihrer Rede von der göttlichen Abkunft und wunderbaren

[273] On the speaker in character, see Quintilian *Inst.* 9.2.37.
[274] See Maurice Gilbert, "Your Sovereignty Comes From the Lord," in *La Sagesse de Salomon: Recueil d' etudes* (Rome: Biblical Institute Press, 1973), 121-140, here 127; and U. Wilcken, *Griechische Ostraka aus Aegypten und Nubien* (Berlin: Gieseke & Devrient, 1999), 137. See also Leo Perdue, *The Sword and the Stylus*, 342.

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Geburt des Herrschers gelesen werden."[275] It is suggested in what follows that we can go further—in accord with the Law of the King, Ps-Solomon attacks the love of wealth, military hubris and cosmogonic strategies of divine legitimation:[276]

> (1) εἰμὶ μὲν κἀγὼ θνητὸς ἄνθρωπος ἴσος ἅπασιν καὶ γηγενοῦς ἀπόγονος πρωτοπλάστου· καὶ ἐν κοιλίᾳ μητρὸς ἐγλύφην σὰρξ (2) δεκαμηνιαίῳ χρόνῳ παγεὶς ἐν αἵματι ἐκ σπέρματος ἀνδρὸς καὶ ἡδονῆς ὕπνῳ συνελθούσης. (3) καὶ ἐγὼ δὲ γενόμενος ἔσπασα τὸν κοινὸν ἀέρα καὶ ἐπὶ τὴν ὁμοιοπαθῆ κατέπεσον γῆν πρώτην φωνὴν τὴν ὁμοίαν πᾶσιν ἴσα κλαίων. (4) ἐν σπαργάνοις ἀνετράφην καὶ φροντίσιν. (5) οὐδεὶς γὰρ βασιλέων ἑτέραν ἔσχεν γενέσεως ἀρχήν, (6) μία δὲ πάντων εἴσοδος εἰς τὸν βίον ἔξοδός τε ἴση. (7) διὰ τοῦτο εὐξάμην καὶ φρόνησις ἐδόθη μοι· ἐπεκαλεσάμην καὶ ἦλθέν μοι πνεῦμα σοφίας. (8) προέκρινα αὐτὴν σκήπτρων καὶ θρόνων καὶ πλοῦτον οὐδὲν ἡγησάμην ἐν συγκρίσει αὐτῆς· (9) οὐδὲ ὡμοίωσα αὐτῇ λίθον ἀτίμητον, ὅτι ὁ πᾶς χρυσὸς ἐν ὄψει αὐτῆς ψάμμος ὀλίγη, καὶ ὡς πηλὸς λογισθήσεται ἄργυρος ἐναντίον αὐτῆς· (10) ὑπὲρ ὑγίειαν καὶ εὐμορφίαν ἠγάπησα αὐτὴν καὶ προειλόμην αὐτὴν ἀντὶ φωτὸς ἔχειν, ὅτι ἀκοίμητον τὸ ἐκ ταύτης φέγγος.
>
> (1) I myself also am mortal like everyone, and a descendant of the first–formed individual born on earth, and in the womb of a mother I was molded into flesh, (2) within the period of ten months being compacted of blood, from the seed of man and the pleasure that accompanies intercourse. (3) And I myself, when I was born, drew in the common air and fell upon the kindred earth, with the same first sound crying like everyone. (4) In swaddling clothes I was nursed, and with care. (5) For no king has had a different beginning of existence, (6) but there is for all one entrance into life and the same way out. (7) Therefore I prayed, and understanding was given to me; I called on God, and a spirit of wisdom came to me. (8) I preferred her to scepters and thrones, and wealth I considered nothing in comparison with her. (9) Neither did I compare any priceless gem to her, because all gold in her sight is a little sand, and silver will be counted as clay before her. (10) I loved her more than health and beauty and chose to have her rather than light, because the radiance from her never rests (Wis 7:1-10; trans. NETS).

Mythologies surrounding the impregnation of powerful benefactor's mothers by a traditional deity began with Alexander the Great.[277] It is said that Olympias, the mother of Alexander, was

[275] J. Kügler, "Die Windeln Jesu als Zeichen: Religionsgeschichtliche Anmerkungen zu ΣΠΑΡΓΑΝΟΩ in Lk 2," *Biblische Notizen* 77 (1995): 20-28, here 23.
[276] I take the concept of cosmogonic strategies from Steven Friesen, *Imperial Cults and the Apocalypse of John* (Oxford: Oxford University, 2001), 123-24.
[277] Steven Friesen rightly understands the Roman imperial family's assimilation with the mythic origins of the Olympic pantheon as a "cosmogonic strategy" (*Imperial Cults*, 123). Friesen, however, does not adequately root this phenomenon in the Hellenistic period. It was not uncommon for a Hellenistic ruler's family members to be associated with a traditional god usually posthumously. For one example, Ptolemy II and Berenice are

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impregnated at night by Zeus-Ammon in the form of a snake (Dio Chrys. *4 Regn.*19-20; Plut., *Alex.* 2.2-4).[278] The Tean decree remembers Antiochus I Soter (281-261 BCE) as a descendant of Apollo (*OGIS,* 219 *l.* 25). And Atia, the mother of Augustus, was impregnated by Apollo in the form of a snake (Suet., 94.4; Cassius Dio 45.1.2).[279] Philo records Gaius denouncing the influence of his mentor Macro by appeal to his formation as an emperor inside his mother's womb. Gaius claims, "What is more, I was fashioned to be an Emperor (Αὐτοκράτωρ) even before my birth, in Nature's workship, my mother's womb" (trans. Smallwood; *Legat.* 56). Against the background of imperial cosmogonic associations—and cosmogonic exceptionalism—verses 1-6 of Solomon's speech repudiate any hint at divine origins: Solomon is mortal, equal to everyone (ἴσος ἅπασιν),[280] a descendant of Adam, formed in his mother's womb and conceived by the seed of a man (not a god). For Ps-Solomon, "no king has had a different beginning of existence" (7:4). Solomon maintains the boundaries of the political metaphor, recognizing his subordinate status under Yahweh who Solomon calls to for understanding and the spirit of wisdom.

Wis 7:7-10 critique imperial hubris, wealth and iconographic representation. We saw that Philo's ideal ruler prefers the Law of the King in his hand to the hubris of the scepter (*Spec.* 4.164). Similarly, Ps-Solomon portrays Solomon as one who prefers lady wisdom to "scepters

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assimilated with Zeus and Dionysus (cf. Austin, no. 268). On Alexander's mother being impregnated by Zeus-Ammon in the form of a serpent, see: Plutarch, *Alex.* 2-3.

[278] On this narrative, see Hans-Josef Klauck, *Religious Context*, 268-70. Lily Ross Taylor rightly observes that Alexander's cosmogonic associations were not accompanied by cult. Therefore, according to Taylor, the assocations evoke a "potential divinity" (*The Divinity of the Roman Emperor* [New York: Arno Press, 1975], 17). Plutarch observes that it was toward the barbarians that Alexander publicly displayed his divine birth; while toward the Greeks he was more reserved (*Alex.* 28). Even so, Taylor observes that the painter Apelles painted Alexander with his cosmogonic father's thunderbolt in his hand in the Artemisium at Ephesus (Cicero, *Verr.* 4.135; Pliny, *Nat.* 35.92; and Plutarch, *Mor.* 360D).

[279] It is also striking that the mother of Apollonius of Tyana is said to have been impregnated by Proteus (Philostratus *Vit. Apoll.* 1.4.5-9).

[280] Ps-Solomon's emphasis on equality parallels Philo's emphasis that the king embodies "equality" (ἰσότης, *Spec*. 4.165) by upholding the Law of the King. See also the emphasis on the king's equality in *Let. Aris.* 262-63.

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and thrones" (Wis 7:8). For Ps-Solomon, wealth (πλοῦτος) is accounted as nothing compared to the possession of God's heavenly mediator, lady wisdom (7:8). The repudiation of wealth is not a recurring motif in the *peri basileias* literature; however, Dio Chrysostom records Socrates being asked if he thought a certain Persian king was happy. Socrates responds that "he did not really know, since he had never met him and had no knowledge of his character, implying, no doubt, that a man's happiness is not determined by any external possessions, such as gold plate, cities or lands, for example, or other human beings, but in each case by his own self and his own character" (3 *Regn.* 3.1//Plato, *Gorg.* 470E). Philo also pokes fun at imperial wealth and excessive regalia, suggesting that rulers who are weighted down with golden crowns are "slaves of vain opinion":

> Again, when men wear crowns, they are not content with fragrant garlands of laurel, or ivy, or violets, or lilies, or roses, or of any three whatever, or of any flower, neglecting all the gifts of God, which he bestows upon us as the various seasons of the year, but they put golden crowns on their heads, which are a very grievous weight, wearing them in the middle of the crowded marketplace without any shame. And what can we think of such men, but that they are slaves of vain opinion (ὅτι κενῆς δόξης εἰσὶ δοῦλοι), in spite of their asserting themselves not only to be free, but even to be rulers over many other persons? (*Somn*. 2.62).

In the economy of God's government, wealth creates slaves of vanity and imperial excess according to Philo. An underlying charge of idolatry is present here, which Philo calls out explicitly when he connects wealth to idolatry (*Spec.* 1:23-28; *Ebr.* 54-58), and condemns the idolatrous regalia associated with political participation (*Somn.* 1.224).[281] Ps-Solomon's paragon of the ideal ruler embodies these virtues by accounting wealth as nothing compared to the possession of Lady Wisdom (7:8). In the same breath, it often goes overlooked that Ps-Solomon attacks material representation by refusing to freeze lady wisdom's image in precious materials:

[281] Philo writes, "What reason is there then for our congratulating ourselves on the administration of political affairs as if we were clothed in a garment of many colours, deceived by its external splendour, and not perceiving its ugliness, which is kept out of sight, and hidden, and full of treachery and guile?" (*Somn.* 1.224).

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"Neither did I liken her to any precious material" (*οὐδὲ ὡμοίωσα αὐτῇ λίθον ἀτίμητον*, 7:9). Compared to the possession of God's heavenly mediator, gold and silver are commensurate with "clay/mud" (*πηλός*). Ps-Solomon attacks the iconography of gods and kings, portraying Solomon as the ideal ruler who repudiates the material representation of objects of power—in this case lady wisdom—with gold, silver and stone. Notably, gold, silver and stone are the precious materials that Paul explicitly condemns in Acts 17:29.

E. Summa: Resisting the Exalted Tyrant in Early Judaism

The critique of the exalted tyrant in early Jewish texts reflects Jews' real struggle to negotiate political sovereignty under colonial power. On the one hand, God uses gentile rulers to punish sinful Israel. On the other hand, God can turn the table back on gentile rulers if they exploit their ontological status and/or allotted temporal power under the sovereignty of God.[282] The two sides of this rationalizing hermeneutic allowed Jews living in cognitive dissonance under empire to articulate a theodicy that accounts for their own domination and simultaneously that of their overlords. Although elimination or divine torture of the king does not meet the criteria of safe speech, it is worth remembering that Jewish historiographers employed this strategy *ex post facto* to rationalize God's divine retribution against a *dead* ruler. The privilege of hindsight afforded Jews the opportunity to create scenarios for more open speech with implications for contemporary socio-political circumstances through deflection.

4.6 Summary and Conclusion

As early as 1908, in a generation of scholarship far removed from modern theories of imperial

[282] See further Kazuhiko Yamazaki-Ransom, *The Roman Empire in Luke's Narrative*, 62.

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domination and resistance, Adolf Deissmann made the astute observation that "The deification of the Caesars was an abomination to Christianity from the beginning. It is very probable that this antipathy was inherited by the daughter from monotheistic Judaism."[283] Deissmann overstates the tension between early Christianity and the Roman imperial cults. However, Deissmann rightly recognizes that Jews' allegiance to one God created the potential for tension with deified political authority. The emphasis on "potential" is crucial here. Jewish monotheism during the Second Temple period was diverse, and could allow for subordinate authorities, including gods and kings. The political metaphor of idolatry helps to understand this complex relationship, wherein God can transfer power to subordinate rulers under the stipulation that they do not exploit their God-given political authority. The Israelite monarchy provided the precedent for God's shared power with human political institutions, but this was a concession to the ideal of theocracy and was held in check by the Deuteronomic Law of the King. With the loss of political autonomy during the Second Temple period, Jews were faced with new challenges as subordinate subjects of foreign kings. When imperial authority broke the boundaries of the political metaphor through excessive royal hubris, persecution or self-deification, the Jewish literati responded with a variety of survival tactics to resist political idolatry. In addition to apocalyptic resistance, the preceding discussion has drawn attention to subversive representations of a king's royal and/or economic hubris, portrayals of their morbid death, the critical inversion of kings' purported political authority and literary paragons of the ideal ruler that appeal to the *peri basileias* literature. In short, then, idolatry mattered in the alter-cultural experience of Jews' life together under empire, but one needs to be wary of embellishing the first commandment and ruler cults as a the primary stumbling block between early Judaism and the ruling power.

[283] Adolf Deissmann, *Light from the Ancient East*, 340.

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CHAPTER 5.

THE JEWISH ICON PARODY AND THE ICONIC SPECTACLE OF GODS AND KINGS

> In the monistic, iconic environment of ancient West Asia, ritual and politics were inseparate. Attacks against cult images were political acts, and cult images were frequently targeted by opposing social groups. These acts of "iconic politics" were expressed through both force and discourse.
>
> —Nathaniel B. Levtow[1]

5.1 Introduction

The Jewish icon parody came to full expression in Babylonian exile. Isaiah, in particular, engineered such discourse as a rhetorical strategy to oppose Jewish exiles' assimilation with the *habitus* and iconic culture of the ruling power (Isa 40:18-20; 41:5-7, 21-29; 42:8, 17; 45:16-17, 20-21; 46:1-7; and 48:5). By rendering the ritual practices and media of Babylon's idols powerless and deaf, the Isaianic icon parody functioned as a "political act of power" to legitimate the superior power and benefaction of Yahweh for exiled Jews teetering toward apostasy. The impact of Isaiah's anti-idol polemic on subsequent Jewish literature can be felt throughout the Second Temple period.[2] During the Hellenistic period, however, Isaiah's icon parody was re-tooled—under the influence of Hellenistic philosophy—with an apologetic emphasis.[3] Rather than oppose the Israelite community *per se*, Isaiah's icon parody was re-contextualized to

[1] Nathaniel B. Levtow, *Images of Others: Iconic Politics in Ancient Israel* (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 2008), 15.
[2] For a diachronic analysis, see M. W. Roth, "For Life He Appeals to Death (Wis 13:18): A Study of Old Testament Idol Parodies," CBQ 37 (1975): 21-47; and H. D. Preuss, *Verspottung fremder Religionen im Alten Testament* (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1971).
[3] For the philosophical critique of images, see: Harrold W. Attridge, "The Philosophical critique of Religion under the Early Empire," in *ANRW II*, Principat, 16.1 (Berlin and New York, 1978), 45-78.

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condemn gentile religiosity by articulating the theological superiority and philosophical consistency of Judaism over against their pagan contemporaries (e.g., Ep Jer; Bel; 3 Macc 4:16; Wis 13:1 – 15:19; Philo, *Decal*. 52-81; *Contempl.* 3-9; *Spec.* 1.13-29; 2.255; *Let. Aris.* 134-138; *Sib. Or.* 3.29-35, 5.403-407; 1 *En.* 99.7; Ps.-Hec. 4.2).[4] As discussed in the previous chapters, the re-contextualization of the Hebrew Bible's icon parodies amid the hybrid iconography of gods and kings during the Hellenistic and Roman periods placed such polemic in a new hermeneutical context. In what follows, we can turn to investigate the research question put forth at the beginning of this study: namely, when Second Temple Jewish Jews allusively employed the icon parody to oppose art, statuary, temples and precious metals for material representation, what was the object of resistance—a god, a king or both at the same time?

Before turning to an analysis of the Hellenistic- and Roman-Jewish icon parodies, with a particular emphasis on the Wisdom of Solomon, the relationship between the second commandment and the iconography of imperial power in early Judaism is examined. Such an analysis is requisite for two reasons. First, it is necessary to reconstruct an accurate portrayal of how and when imperial cult media conflicted with Jewish sensibilities about right and wrong worship. Second, such an analysis is warranted because the second commandment shaped Jewish identity and funded its discursive strategies for mocking and resisting the iconic manifestations of alien religion. Because of the regional variation of ruler cults, the chapter concludes with a more detailed analysis of the Wisdom of Solomon's socio-political setting in Augustan Egypt, including an excursus on the Wisdom of Solomon's mini-apocalypse (Wis 5:17-23). This groundwork aims to supplement our understanding of Ps-Solomon's program of resistance

[4] See John J. Collins, *Jewish Wisdom in the Hellenistic Age* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1997), 212-23.

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toward unjust rulers and political idolatry before comparing it with the Areopagus speech in the next chapter.

5.2 The Second Commandment, Empire and Idolatry

In the previous chapter the relationship between the first commandment and political authority was investigated. Whereas the political metaphor of idolatry contains a degree of elasticity and accommodation toward gentile rulers; the prohibition against cult images, on the other hand, is more definite and exclusive. The ban against images is rooted in Torah's emphasis that Yahweh had no image or shape at Sinai (Exod 3:1-6; Deut 4:12, 15-16; Philo, *Mos.* 1.66-67). Similarity-based representations of Yahweh or another object of power, therefore, could internalize sin through what Moshe Halbertal and Avishai Margalit call "subsitutive error."[5] The cognitive error of substitution takes place when the Israelite worshiper projects an image of Yahweh onto malleable wood and stone, thereby shaping a fetishistic and erroneous substitute for Yahweh (e.g., the golden calf, Exod 32:1-15; Deut 9:15-21).[6] To investigate the Jewish concept of idolatry, therefore, is to enter into an unfolding polemical discourse in the Biblical narrative that determined identity and belonging, center from periphery, and exclusivity from inclusivity. As Halbertal and Margalit write, "The ban on idolatry is an attempt to dictate exclusivity, to map the unique territory of the one God."[7] John M. G. Barclay, on the other hand, writes that the word idolatry "has always conveyed a polemical tone … In Jewish polemics, the term conveys a sneer, a claim to superior piety or truth. It thereby stakes out a terrain on which Jewish self-definition

[5] On similarity-based representation, see: Moshe Halbertal and Avishai Margalit, *Idolatry* (trans. Naomi Goldblum; Harvard: Harvard University, 1998), 37-48.
[6] On the impact of the golden calf episode on Jewish conceptions of idolatry, see Nathan McDonald, "Recasting the Golden Calf: The Imaginative Potential of the Old Testament's Portrayal of Idolatry," in *Idolatry: False Worship in the Bible, Early Judaism and Christianity* (ed. Stephen C. Barton; New York: T&T Clark, 2007), 22-39.
[7] Halbertal and Margalit, *Idolatry,* 7.

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was (and still is) constructed."[8] Before exploring the terrain of Jewish anti-idol polemics in subsequent sections, the origins of Jewish aniconicism and its polemical codification in the Septuagint translation of the Decalogue deserves our consideration.

Although the origins of Jewish aniconic religion is heavily debated, it did not materialize apart from the iconic politics of ancient Near Eastern empires.[9] Ronald S. Hendel, for example, has persuasively argued that Jewish aniconic religion was in part a product of Jewish anti-monarchical tradition during an early phase of Israelite history.[10] Hendel, preceeded by Albright, shows that the chief iconic symbol of the cult of Yahweh—the empty cherub throne of Yahweh on the ark of the covenant (Exod 25:10-22; 37:1-9)—finds its earliest iconographic parallel in the Phoenician king Ahiram, whose sarcophagus depicts him seated on a throne flanked by cherubim ca. 1000 BCE.[11] Hendel also draws attention to numerous examples of the bearded Baal Hammon (a later representation of El) seated on a cherub throne holding a scepter in the years following

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[8] John M. G. Barclay, "Snarling Sweetly: Josephus on Images and Idolatry," in *Idolatry: False Worship in the Bible, Early Judaism and Christianity* (ed. Stephen C. Barton; New York: T&T Clark, 2007), 73-87, here 73.
[9] For an overview of the different theories, see Brian B. Schmidt, "The Aniconic Tradition: On Reading Images and Viewing Texts," in *The Triumph of Elohim: From Yahwisms to Judaisms* (ed. Diana Vikander Edelman; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995), 75-78.
[10] Ronald S. Hendel, "The Social Origins of the Aniconic Tradition in Early Israel," *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 50 (1988): 365-82; and "Aniconicism and Anthropomorphism in Ancient Israel," in *The Image and the Book: Iconic Cults, Aniconicism, and the Rise of Book Religion in Israel and the Ancient Near East,* (ed. K. van der Toorn; Leuven: Peeters, 1997), 205-228, here 225-228. On the influence of Israel's anti-monarchical tradition and the development of Jewish aniconicism, see further: W. W. Hallo, "Texts, Statues and the Cult of the Divine King," in *Congress Volume 1986* (ed. J. A. Emerton; VTSupp 40; Leiden: Brill, 1988), 54-66. Hallo perceptively illuminates the anthropomorphic characterization of divine kingship in the Ancient Near East: "The new ideology of the deified king … implied an assimilation of god and king that worked both ways—the king became more like a god but at the same time the gods became more like kings and, inevitably, like human beings generally" ("Texts, Statues and the Cult of the Divine King," 60). Thus one can identify continuity between the anthropomorphic representation of gods and kings in the ancient Near East and the Greco-Roman worlds. On the central place of the image of the king and their ritual function in ancient Mesopotamian society, see the important article by Irene J. Winter, "'Idols of the King': Royal Images as Recipients of Ritual Action in Ancient Mesopotamia," *Journal of Ritual Studies* 6.1 (1992): 13-42. On the royal ideology of ancient Near Eastern kingship, see Henri Frankfort, *Kingship and the Gods: A Study of Ancient Near Eastern Religion as the Integration of Society and Nature* (Chicago: University of Chicago, Press, 1948).
[11] Hendel, " Social Origins of the Aniconic Tradition," 376; and W. F. Albright, "What were the Cherubim?" *BA* 1 (1938): 1-3.

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600 BCE.[12] What can be deduced from these anthropomorphic representations of gods and kings is that Israel's aniconic God developed in polemical response to ancient Near Eastern models of divine kingship. In Hendel's own words, "The prohibition of the figure seated on the throne extends in two directions: the rejection of the human king and the origin of the aniconic God."[13] Against this backdrop, the "basileiomorphic" depiction of an imageless "LORD of hosts, who is enthroned on the cherubim" (1 Sam 4:4) is an early articulation of Israelite political theology and polemic against the cult imagery of gods and kings.[14]

The so-called Decalogue codified Jewish aniconic religion into what we often anachronistically call the second commandment. Because the prohibition against worshiping other gods logically implies the prohibition against material representation, the separation of the first commandment (Exod 20:3 =Deut 5:7) from the second commandment (Exod 20:4-6 = Deut 5:8-10) is disputed.[15] Here this study breaks from later Jewish tradition, following the enumeration of the Protestant tradition, along with Josephus and Philo of Alexandria in treating the first commandment separately from the second commandment (Philo, *Decal.* 65, 82; Jos., *Ant.* 3.91).[16] This enumeration is not to say that the first and second commandments were independent thought forms: to worship other gods than Yahweh, and represent those gods through material representation, was an indisputable act of betrayal.[17]

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[12] Hendel, " Social Origins of the Aniconic Tradition," 376-77.
[13] Idem., 381.
[14] I take the descriptor "basileiomorphic" from Tryggve N. D. Mettinger, "The Elusive Essence: YHWH, El and Baal and the Distinctiveness of Israelite Faith," in *Die Hebräische Bibel und ihre zweifache Nachgeschichte: Festschrift fur Rold Rendtorff* (ed. E. Blum et al.; Neukirchen-Vluyn, 1990), 393-417, here 396-98.
[15] For further comment on the enumeration of the second commandment, see: Jason von Ehrenkrook, *Sculpting Idolatry in Flavian Rome: (An)Iconic Rhetoric in the Writings of Flavius Josephus* (Boston: Brill, 2012), 66 n. 17.
[16] Halbertal and Margalit also treat the commandments separately. See *Idolatry,* 37.
[17] On the connection between the two commandments, see further Brevard Childs, *The Book of Exodus* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1974), 406-409; and Moshe Halbertal and Avishai Margalit, "Idolatry and Representation," *Anthropology and Aesthetics* 22 (1992): 19-32, here 19.

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In a highly influential study, Mettinger draws attention to the presence of a *de facto* tradition of aniconicism in early Israel that resembled West Semitic aniconic open-air sanctuaries.[18] Mettinger contrasts this de facto tradition with the more stringent programmatic tradition that developed in the later Deuteronomistic theology and the Prophets (e.g., Deut 4:12-20; Jer 10:1-16; Isa 44:9-20). Mettinger differentiates between the *de facto* tradition and the programmatic tradition with the following set of descriptions:[19]

de facto tradition	*programmatic tradition*
indifference to icons	repudiation of images
mere absence of images	iconophobia
tolerant aniconicism	iconoclasm

It is with an eye toward the development of Jewish repudiation of images that this study is concerned with, especially as it manifested in discourses of resistance against idols under empire during the Second Temple period. As Levtow has argued, the Jewish icon parody's portrayal of the physical mutilation and lifelessness of imperial statuary reflected the iconoclastic practices of West Asian imperial war strategies.[20] In this sense, the icon parody, in its earliest forms, was a literary medium for programmatic aniconicism through its repudiation and mockery of the nations' gods.

Jewish aniconicism cut against the grain of what Walter Burkert identified as the "temple culture" of Greco-Roman religion.[21] Indeed, as Diaspora Jews made linguistic and cultural accommodations to survive under the Successor kingdoms, how did they re-contextualize the second commandment to confront the religion of the iconic culture of the ruling power and resist

[18] Tryggve N. D. Mettinger, *No Graven Image? Israelite Aniconism in Its Ancient Near Eastern Context* (ConBOT 42; Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiksell, 1995).
[19] Table adapted from Mettinger, *No Graven Image?* 18.
[20] Nathaniel B. Levtow, *Images of Others: Iconic Politics in Ancient Israel*, 100-118. Levtow's study, however, does not evaluate Jewish re-contextualizations of the icon parody during the Hellenistic period.
[21] I take this phrase from Walter Burkert, *Greek Religion*, 88.

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their own assimilation to it? Following the Hebrew grammar of Exod 20:4-6, the LXX translation of the second commandment includes three prohibitions: (1) the prohibition against making an idol; (2) the prohibition against worshiping an idol; and (3) the prohibition against bowing down to an idol.[22] I quote from the LXX in order to draw attention to the important choice of the polemical term εἴδωλον ("idol") in place of the Hebrew פסל ("sculptured image"):

> (4) οὐ ποιήσεις σεαυτῷ εἴδωλον, οὐδὲ παντὸς ὁμοίωμα, ὅσα ἐν τῷ οὐρανῷ ἄνω, καὶ ὅσα ἐν τῇ γῇ κάτω, καὶ ὅσα ἐν τοῖς ὕδασιν ὑποκάτω τῆς γῆς.
>
> (5) οὐ προσκυνήσεις αὐτοῖς, οὐδὲ μὴ λατρεύσης αὐτοῖς, ἐγὼ γάρ εἰμι κύριος ὁ θεός σου θεὸς ζηλωτὴς, ἀποδιδοὺς ἁμαρτίας πατέρων ἐπὶ τέκνα ἕως τρίτης καὶ τετάρτης γενεᾶς τοῖς μισοῦσίν με,
>
> (6) καὶ ποιῶν ἔλεος εἰς χιλιάδας τοῖς ἀγαπῶσίν με καὶ τοῖς φυλάσσουσιν τὰ προστάγματά μου.

Recent scholarship has argued that the referent of the second commandment in the Hebrew Bible and the Septuagint are against alien deity—not all-figurative representation.[23] This reading is supported by the framing of Exod 20:4 between the prohibition against having other gods besides Yahweh (the first commandment, 20:3), and the prohibition against worshipping and bowing down to idols in Exod 20:5. It is also supported by the discovery of Jewish aniconic art from the Second Temple and post-destruction eras.[24] Notwithstanding the presence of a Jewish art tradition during the Second Temple period, it remains commonplace for scholars to interpret Second Temple Judaism as a time of strict aniconicism in contrast to a more lenient attitude toward art in the post-destruction world.[25] Emil Schürer, for example, represents this view in a

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[22] On the Hebrew grammar of the three volitional clauses, see the excellent discussion in Jason von Ehrenkrook, *Sculpting Idolatry*, 64-68.
[23] W. Barnes Tatum, "The LXX Version of the Second Commandment (Ex. 20:3-6=Deut. 5:7-10): A Polemic Against Idols, Not Images," *Journal for the Study of Judaism* 17.2 (1986): 177-195, here 184.
[24] The relationship between Jewish aniconicism and art has been reassessed *en lieu* of E. R. Goodenough's *Jewish Symbols in the Greco-Roman World* (13 vols; New York: Pantheon Books, 1953-1968). For an overview of the archaeological evidence for Jewish aniconic art in early Judaism, see: Rachel Hachlili, "Art," in *The Eerdmans Dictionary of Early Judaism*, 381-386.
[25] For further comment see, Jason von Ehrenkrook, *Sculpting Idolatry*, 61-98.

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parenthetical note on the spread of Hellenism:

> The use of representational art was nevertheless extremely restricted up to the end of the first century A.D. There was however, a substantial change in the second and third centuries. In this period there is significant evidence, not least from tombs and synagogues, of the acceptance of representational forms, including those of the human figure. With this went a more lenient attitude on the part of the rabbis, who, in effect, drew the line only at the actual worship of images, especially those of the emperor.[26]

In a recent monograph, Jason von Ehrenkrook challenges this consensus, suggesting that a pre- and post-destruction era dichotomy does not account for the complexity of Hellenistic Jewish literature, which prohibits cultic imagery—not imagery *in toto*. Ehrenkrook argues that in both eras the question was not over iconography, "but *iconolatry*, whether an image is in some sense cultic or noncultic."[27] Perhaps Ehrenkrook's most important hermeneutical contribution is the recognition that Jewish attitudes toward images included regional variation; attitudes toward images could be more sensitive in Jerusalem than Alexandria, thereby demanding that one investigate Hellenistic Jewish sources according to regional nuances.[28] Notwithstanding this variation, to borrow a phrase from Schmidt, the "triadic cosmological schema" of Exod 20:4 proscribed the representation of cultic objects in heaven, on earth and under the earth.[29] In its most basic form, then, we can define Jewish aniconicism as the proscription against the representation of alien deity in anthropomorphic, theriomorphic or physiomorphic form for purposes of cult and ritual worship.[30]

Where the LXX translation of the second commandment differs from the Hebrew is in its

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[26] Emil Schürer, *History of the Jewish People*, 2.81. Also quoted in Jason von Ehrenkrook, *Sculpting Idolatry*, 63.
[27] Ehrenkrook, *Sculpting Idolatry*, 97.
[28] Idem., 38-45.
[29] On the triadic cosmological schema, see: Brian B. Schmidt, "The Aniconic Tradition," 81.
[30] Similarly, Schmidt writes: "aniconicism refers to the imposition of a ban against the use of anthropomorphic, theriomorphic, or physiomorphic images to represent or house the deity as an object of worship in ritual performance" (Brian B. Schmidt, "The Aniconic Tradition," 77). See also, Yitzhaq Feder's definition of the term "aniconcism" as "worship without the use of iconic (anthropomorphic or theriomorphic) symbols" ("The Aniconic Tradition, Deuteronomy 4, and the Politics of Israelite Identity," *JBL* 132.2 [2013]: 251-274, here 253).

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choice of language for images. As Barnes Tatum has argued at length, the LXX translators employed the term εἴδωλον ninety seven times in place of seven pre-existing Hebrew words of derision that were used as descriptors for alien deity.[31] The choice of εἴδωλον to replace the Hebrew פסל ("sculptured image") in the second commandment is especially striking given the more frequent usage of words such as ἄγαλμα, ξόανον, ἀνδριάς, γλυπτός, εἰκών and ὁμοίωμα to characterize honorific and cult images in Greco-Roman literature.[32] From the root εἴδεσθαι (to "appear," "seem to be"), the word εἴδωλον in classical Greek was often used to depict phantoms and shadows; it is from this Greco-Roman background that Hellenistic Jews discovered a polemical term to associate alien cult images with superstition, the "less than real."[33] To take one example, the pejorative Greco-Roman background of εἴδωλον is reflected in Philo: "These are the things which Moses calls idols (εἴδωλα), resembling shadows and phantoms (σκιαῖς ἐοικότα καὶ φάσμασιν, *Leg.* 1.25).[34] In choosing εἴδωλον, the LXX translators placed the second commandment in a new rhetorical context; one that, according to Tatum, "is not only anti-idolic

[31] W. Barnes Tatum, "The LXX Version of the Second Commandment (Ex. 20:3-6=Deut. 5:7-10): A Polemic Against Idols, Not Images," *JSJ* 17.2 (1986): 177-95.
[32] The terminology for a portrait or statue in reference to a ruler was usually *andrias, eikon* or *agalma.* On the semantic difference between these words, see Simon Price, *Rituals and Power,* 176-79. The word *agalma* was typically reserved for an image in a religious context inside of a temple; however, as Price points out, exceptions exist in the literary and epigraphical record, cautioning one from making too sharp of a distinction. See also R. R. R. Smith, *Hellenistic Royal Portraits* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1988), 16.
[33] Tatum, " LXX Version of the Second Commandment," 185-86. For an impressive overview of the Jewish and Greco-Roman occurrences of εἴδωλον, see: Terry Griffith, *Keep Yourselves from Idols: A New Look at 1 John* (JSNTSupp 233; London: Sheffield, 2002), 28-57; idem. "ΕΙΔΩΛΟΝ as 'Idol' in Non-Jewish and Non-Christian Greek," *Journal of Theological Studies* 53.1 (2002): 95-101. Although it was uncommon to use εἴδωλον for imperial images, Griffith points to a passage in Plutarch that uses the word for an image of Cleopatra in an imperial procession (Plut., *Ant.* 86.3).
[34] As Tatum acknowledges, Philo does not explicitly quote from the LXX translation of the second commandment, nor does he employ εἴδωλον consistently, opting instead to use more traditional terms for images such as ἄγαλμα and ἀνδριάς. Philo's use of more traditional terms may reflect his apologetic desire to polemicize against images in a more Greco-Roman philosophical and Platonic setting. See Tatum, "LXX Version of the Second Commandment," 187-89.

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but *polemically* anti-idolic."[35]

Tatum's thesis deserves criticism at only two points. First, Hayward has persuasively argued that Tatum overlooks the influence of the Hebrew term הבל (vapor – breath) to deride "not-gods" in the LXX translation of the Song of Moses in Exod 32:21. Hayward's thesis suggests that the Song of Moses may provide the original context for the use εἴδωλον as a term of derision in Jewish discourses against alien religion.[36] Secondly, although Tatum rightly animates the polemical tone of εἴδωλον, he narrowly reduces its referent to a critique of religion *sensu stricto*. Tatum writes, "with the adoption of one central term [εἴδωλον] in the LXX, this polemic against other gods becomes more focused. The God of Israel may have many rivals: Baal, Astarte, Zeus, Hermes, Osiris, etc. But the many rivals now have one name. They are 'idols' – the 'unreal.'"[37] This statement overlooks the integration of politics and religion in the built environment of Alexandria and other Greco-Roman urban spaces, and fails to take into account the polyvalent referents of Jewish polemic against idols. The prohibition against images evoked a hypothetical denunciation against the visual theology of emperor worship and its concurrently communicated royal ideology of power. Tessa Rajak appropriately makes this connection when she writes: "Denunciation of 'idols' and 'idol worship' had new force and point when linked with the vanity of rulers in a period in which manifestations of the imperial cult impinged on everyone."[38] Hans-Josef Klauck also makes this connection: "A theoretically based critique of the cult of rulers occurs within the broader context of polemic against Gentile polytheism and the worship of idols."[39] Rajak's and Klauck's terse comments are perceptive, however, they do not

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[35] W. Barnes Tatum, " LXX Version of the Second Comandment," 184.
[36] Robert Hayward, "Observations on Idols in Septuagint Pentateuch," in *Idolatry: False Worship in the Bible, Early Judaism and Christianity* (ed. Stephen C. Barton; New York: T&T Clark, 2007), 40-57, here 53.
[37] W. Barnes Tatum, " LXX Version of the Second Comandment," 186.
[38] Tessa Rajak, *Translation and Survival*," 11.
[39] Hans-Josef Klauck, *Religious Context*, 280.

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adequately investigate the hybrid iconography of gods and kings, nor the icon parody's objects of resistance. Before turning to the icon parody, an analysis of Philo and Josephus's interpretation of the second commandment aims to animate the limits of Jewish tolerance and intolerance for imperial iconography.

5.2.1 Philo of Alexandria on Representation and Imperial Power

Philo of Alexandria (ca. 20 BCE – ca. 50 CE) provides a crucial witness for the investigation of early Jewish interpretation of the second commandment. Philo wrote our earliest extended commentary on the second commandment in *De Decalogo*. Philo also provides the most detailed apologetic narration of Jewish negotiation of imperial images under the antics of Gaius Caligula in the *Legatio ad Gaium.*[40] We have already investigated the relationship between monarchy, monotheism and political authority in these writings; it remains for us now to investigate Philo's attitude toward representation and imperial power. How exclusive was Philo's views on representation? At what point did the presence of imperial images encroach on Jews' social embodiment of aniconic religion? And to what extent did Philo's views on representation evoke an attitude of cultural antagonism toward the Roman imperial cults?

These questions are complicated by what Goodenough provocatively discerned as "Philo's considerable liking for art."[41] Goodenough, however, may overstate the case—refracting Philo's "ambivalence towards statues," to borrow a phrase from Karl-Gustav Sandeln, through

[40] On the dating of *De Decalogo*, see Sarah Pearce, who also suggests that "the treatise as a whole remains much neglected" ("Philo of Alexandria on the Second Commandment" in *The Image and Its Prohibition in Jewish Antiquity"* [Oxford: Journal of Jewish Studies, 2013], 49-76, here 49-50).
[41] Edwin R. Goodenough, *Jewish Symbols in the Greco-Roman Period* (vol. 4; New York: Pantheon, 1953-68), 11. Philo's appreciation for art is also evident in his positive admiration of Phidias (*Ebr.* 88-89).

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the more robust material culture of post-destruction Jews.[42] Notwithstanding Philo's deep enculturation in Hellenistic philosophy and art, which he uses to serve his rhetorical and apologetic purposes, Philo adopts the anti-*idolic* attitude of the LXX translators toward cult images.[43] As Goodenough acknowledges elsewhere, Philo treats "the whole pagan cultus … with scorn."[44] Philo's scorn for pagan religiosity is especially evident in his caricature of Gaius's self-deification (*Legat.* 74-112), and attempt to erect images of himself in the Jerusalem Temple (*Legat.* 184-196). En lieu of Philo's vituperative critique of Gaius in the *Legatio*, Maren Niehoff rightly observes: "Aniconicism may have played a considerable, yet hitherto overlooked role in this conflict."[45] The role of Jewish aniconic religion in the conflict with Gaius is indubitable. What is lacking in Philonic scholarship is an analysis of the relationship between Philo's commentary on the second commandment in the *Exposition of the Law* and his polemic against imperial cult media in the *Legatio ad Gaium*.[46] Such an analysis will show that imperial images

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[42] Karl-Gustav Sandeln, "Philo's Ambivalence Towards Statues," *The Studia Philonica Annual* 13 (2001): 122-38.

[43] Although Philo nowhere explicitly quotes from the Decalogue, he adopts the LXX reading of Exod 22:27 to not revile "the gods" (*theous*) rather than the MT "God" (*elohim*). The interpolation reflects the new socio-political circumstances of the LXX translators in Hellenistic Egypt (see also *Spec.* 1.53; Josephus, *C. Ap.* 2.237; *Ant.* 4.207). Philo's allusion to the ban against mocking other gods is inconsistent with his practices elsewhere. As Robert Goldenberg writes, "One gets the impression that Philo cites the LXX ban on idol-mocking as a great virtue of Judaism but then seeks every opportunity he can find to escape its constraints" ("The Septuagint Ban on Cursing the Gods," *JSJ* 28 [1997]: 381-389, here 385). See also P. W. van der Horst, "'Thou shalt not revile Gods': The LXX Translation of Exodus 22:28 (27), its Background and Influence," in *Hellenism – Judaism – Christianity: Essays on Their Interaction* (Kampen: Kok Pharos, 1994), 112-21.

[44] Edwin R. Goodenough, *An Introduction to Philo Judaeus* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1962), 10. Maren R. Niehoff argues that, for Philo, "Paganism consists of two aspects: on a practical level it involves the production and worship of idols, and on a literary level it means writing myths and/or accepting their authority" ("Philo's View on Paganism," in *Tolerance and Intolerance in Early Judaism and Christianity* [eds. Graham N. Stanton and Guy G. Strousma; Cambridge: Cambridge University, 1998], 135-158, here 157).

[45] Maren Niehoff, *Philo on Jewish Identity and Culture*, 82. John M. G. Barclay also gets this point right: "Philo shows that aniconic worship and the emperor cult were issues of central importance to his embassy" (*Jews in the Mediterranean Diaspora,* 55). Edwin R. Goodenough, on the other hand, downplays the role of Jews' aniconic worship in the struggle with Gaius. See, Goodenough, *Introduction*, 72.

[46] But see Peder Borgen, "The Conflict" in *"Philo of Alexandria an Exegete for His Time* (Leiden: Brill, 1997), 176-93; and idem. "Application and Commitment to the Law of Moses: Observations on Philo's Treatise *On the Embassy to Gaius*," in *In the Spirit of Faith: Studies in Philo and Early Christianity in Honor of David Hay* (eds. David T. Runia and Gregory E. Sterling); *Studia Philonica Annual* 18 (2001): 122-38.

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did not fall outside of the strictures of the second commandment, and further place Jewish polemic against idolatry in its political setting.

A. The Second Commandment and Philo's Exposition of the Law

Philo observes that Moses forbade painting and statuary because it would lead to error "through the eyes" (δι᾽ ὀφθαλμῶν, *Gig.* 59).[47] The relationship between sight and erroneous perception of divinity held added meaning for Diaspora Jews living in the Greco-Roman polis. Alexandria, Egypt, was no exception—a locale that absorbed the image and power of Augustus into the patterns of the deified Pharaohs and the Hellenistic cult or of rulers. Like other cities in the Greek East, space and time was re-mapped around Augustus in Alexandria, including the addition of the impressive Augustan *Sebasteion* complex in the harbor of Alexandria (Philo, *Legat.* 150-51; Strabo, *Geogr.* 17.1.9). As Deacy writes, "Among the most notable developments of research into Greek religion in recent decades has been the identification of the polis as the principle constituent of religious life."[48] We have had ample space to explore the religious dimensions of the Greco-Roman polis, a space wherein the ruling power exploited the plastic arts to sculpt a narrative of domination, religious piety and benefaction alongside the gods. The shared vernacular and visual honors accorded to gods overlapped with ruler cults, making the referent of Jewish criticism of statues, images, artists and ritual culture difficult to distinguish into rigid referents of political and/or religious objects. What follows investigates Philo's allusive

[47] The relationship between the eyes and cognitive error is also present in the *Legatio ad Gaium*. When the Jewish leaders hear of Gaius's command to erect a colossal statue in Jerusalem, Philo portrays their response as an offense to their eyes: "In the time of our great prosperity we have made many contributions towards a happy old age, only to behold now what none of our forefathers ever saw. But with what eyes shall we behold it (ἡμεῖς θεασώμεθα τίσιν ὀφθαλμοῖς)? Our eyes shall be torn out together with our unhappy souls and our pain-filled lives, before they see such an evil (τοιοῦτον ὄψονται κακόν), a sight not fit to be seen, which it would be wrong even to hear or think about" (*Legat.* 224).

[48] Susan Deacy, "Famous Athens, Divine Polis: The Religious System at Athens," in *A Companion to Greek Religion* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2010), 221-235, here 221.

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language in his explicit comments on the second commandment in his *Exposition of the Law* (i.e., *Dec.* 51, 66-81, 156; *Spec.* 1.21-31).

(i) The Second Commandment in Philo's De Decalogo

Philo's *De Decalogo* contains no extended quotations of the second commandment.[49] Even so, Philo's comments on the prohibition against images overlaps with the polemical tone of the LXX translators of the second commandment. Indeed, for Philo, to discuss the second commandment was to partake in parody of alien religion. In the opening of *De Decalogo*, Philo asks why Moses gave the Law in the deep wilderness as opposed to Greco-Roman legislators who gave their laws in the city? Philo's answer lies in the visual ostentation of the Greco-Roman city's built environment: "cities are full of unspeakable evils, and of acts of audacious impiety towards the Deity (τὸ θεῖον)..." (*Decal.* 2).[50] It is for this reason that Moses gave his laws outside of the cities (ἔξω πόλεων, *Decal.* 9).[51] Philo correlates the city's material culture with pride (τύφος), which is especially exemplified by the royal hubris and hegemony of the city's ruling power who wear "golden crowns and purple robes" and assemble "servants and chariots … sometimes harnessing mules or horses to their chariots, and sometimes even men, who bear their burdens on their necks..." (*Decal.* 4). In addition to the ruling power's hegemony, pride in the city also results in "contempt for things divine" through the city's iconic culture (*Decal.* 7). Philo writes,

For men have employed sculpture and painting to fashion (μορφώσαντες) innumerable

[49] See Sarah Pearce, "Philo of Alexandria on the Second Commandment," 49-76, here 52-53.
[50] Against this backdrop, Philo narrates the conversion of Tamar as a transition from a city full of images and statues to the worship of one God (*Vir.* 221). The conversion of Tamar represents a transition from iconic culture of alien religion to the aniconic culture of Jewish identity.
[51] Philo similarly writes that the LXX translators chose to work outside the city (ἔξω πόλεως), "For the places within the walls, as being filled with all kinds of animals, were held in suspicion by them by reason of the diseases and deaths of some, and the accursed actions of those who were in health (*Mos.* 2.34). On Philo's views of the city, see David T. Runia, "The Idea and the Reality of the City in the Thought of Philo of Alexandira," *The Journal of the History of Ideas* 38 (2000): 361-79.

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> forms which they have enclosed in shrines and temples and after building altars have assigned celestial (τιμὰς ἰσολυμπίους) and divine honours (ἰσόθεος) to idols of stone and wood and suchlike images, all of them lifeless things (ἅπασιν ἀψύχοις, *Decal.* 7; Trans. F. H. Colson, LCL).

Falling on the heels of Philo's direct criticism of ruler's hegemonic τύφος over subjects, how is one to take this passage? Sarah Pearce suggests that Philo draws on Plato's criticism of artists' corruption of the ideal polis (*Rep.* 373b).[52] One cannot deny the influence of Plato, but Philo's polemic against the city's visual ostentation is almost indistinguishable from traditional Biblical idol polemic. As Philo re-contextualizes this polemic for his Greco-Egyptian context, the allusive and universalizing condemnation of the city's visual τύφος evokes an ambiguous referent that is evocative of the material culture used to honor both gods and Hellenistic and Roman rulers. No matter the object of this polemic, Philo classifies the Hellenistic polis's images as "lifeless."

One of the contributions of Philo's *De Decalogo* is that, for the first time, a numeric system is given to the Ten Commandments.[53] The division of the first commandment from the second does not undermine their coherence in Philo's exposition. This point is made manifest in two summary statements (*Decal.* 51, 156). According to the first summary statement, the subject of the first commandment is "the monarchical principle by which the world is governed"; and the subject of the second commandment, "is idols of stone and wood and images in general made by human hands" (*Decal.* 51). The second summary statement expands on the material referents of the second commandment:

> And the second commandment is the summary of all those laws which can possibly be enacted, about all the things made by hands (χειροκμήτων), such as images and statues (ἀγάλματα καὶ ξόανα), and, in short, erections (ἀφιδρύματα) of any kind, of which the painters' and statuaries' arts are pernicious creators, for that commandment forbids such images to be made, and prohibits the cleaving to any of the fabulous inventions about the marriage of gods (θεογαμίαν) and the birth of gods (θεογονίαν), and the number of

[52] See Sarah Pearce, "Philo of Alexandria on the Second Commandment," 59.
[53] Idem., "Philo of Alexandria on the Second Commandment," 56.

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> indescribable and painful calamities which are represented to have ensued from both such circumstances (*Decal.* 156).

For Philo, theologizing about the gods' marriages and their origins with the plastic arts (πλαστική) and painting (γραφική) is forbidden according to the second commandment. Although the explicit referent of Philo's polemic is against Greco-Roman mythology, it is worth remembering that the words ἄγαλμα and ξόανον were also used for imperial images. Philo himself is aware of this usage in the *Legatio* when he condemns those who adorn Gaius's images and statues (ξοάνοις καὶ ἀγάλμασι) with the adornments of the traditional gods (*Legat.* 98). Later on Philo again juxtaposes the terms to defend the aniconic precincts of the Jerusalem Temple from Gaius's threat to place an image in its precincts (*Legat.*148, 292). Imperial images, therefore, do not fall outside of the semantic domain of ἄγαλμα and ξόανον in Philo's understanding of what is prohibited by the second commandment. For Philo, cult images for gods and kings fall under the ambit of the second commandment's strictures, especially if they encroach on Jewish worship space and autonomy.

Sandwiched between Philo's two summary statements lies a longer commentary on the second commandment (*Decal.* 66-81). The section is polemical throughout, and can be broken into three sections: a universal critique of idols (*Decal.* 66-69); a critique of idol makers and the superstition of idolaters (*Decal.* 70-76a); and a more targeted critique of Egyptian theriolatry (*Decal.* 76b-81). To transition from the first to the second commandments, Philo argues that the offense of those who worship subordinate beings rather than the one ruler is "less" than those who represent objects of power with the arts (*Decal.* 66). The gravity of representation is then spelled out in vivid and programmatic detail:

> those who have fashioned stocks (ξύλα), and stones (λίθους), and silver (ἄργυρόν), and gold (χρυσόν), and similar materials according to their own pleasure, making images, and statues (ἀγαλμάτων καὶ ξοάνων), and all kinds of other things wrought by the hand; the

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> workmanship in which, whether by statuary, or painter, or artisan, has done great injury to the life of man, having filled the whole habitable world (*Decal.* 66).

Philo's critique of precious materials—especially gold, silver and stone—finds precedent in a repository of literary sources, including the Old Testament icon parody (Ps 115:4; Isa 40:19; 46:6; Hab 2:19), Hellenistic- and Roman-Jewish icon parodies (*Arist.* 135; Wis 13:10; 14:21; 15:9, etc.) and Greco-Roman philosophical icon parodies (Epictetus, *Diatr.* 2.8.13-14; Plutarch, *Is. Os.* 171; Ps-Heraclitus, *Ep.* 4:10-18, 20-21; Lucian, *Philops.* 20; *Jupp. conf.* 8; *Sacr.* 11; and *Pro imag.* 23).[54] The critique of precious materials, a topic that will occupy a major emphasis in the remainder of this study, was not without political ramifications in the Hellenistic and Roman worlds. As Simon Price suggests, the use of gold to represent emperors with chryselephantine sculpture and colossal statuary was "surely significant" since it associated the emperor with the visual theology of the gods.[55] Evidence for chryselephantine honors is evident in numerous literary sources.[56] Against this backdrop, Philo does not qualify the objects of gold, silver and stone. Nor does he qualify the object of "images and statues" (ἀγαλμάτων καὶ ξοάνων). The allusive language stands in continuity with other icon parodies, but is polyvalent—leaving space for Philo's audience to discern its referent. What matters for Philo, at least under the conditions he wrote *De Decalogo*, is that images (ἀγαλματα), statues (ξόανα) and things "wrought by the hand" (χειρόκμητα) have "filled the empire" (καταπλησάντων τὴν οἰκουμένην, *Decal.* 66), thereby leading subjects into cognitive error.[57]

[54] For further references, see Johannes Tromp, "Critique of Idolatry," in *Aspects of Religious Contact and Conflict in the Ancient World* (ed. Pieter W. van der Horst; Utrecht: Utrechtse Theologische Reeks, 1995), 105-17.
[55] Simon Price, *Rituals and Power,* 186.
[56] For an exhaustive catalogue, see Appendix 1 in Keneth D. Lapatin, *Chryselephantine Statuary,* 193-97.
[57] The LXX typically employs χειροποίητος to caricature the handwork of idolaters (e.g., Isa 46:6; Dan 5:4, 23; 6:28). Ps-Solomon writes: "But the idol made with hands (χειροποίητον) is accursed, and so is the one who made it—he for having made it, and the perishable thing because it was named a god" (Wis 14:8). In her brilliant article, Sarah Pearce argues that Philo employs χειρόκμητα to associate his discourse with Aristotle,

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Philo's polemic against the iconic culture of alien religion in *De Decalogo* crescendos in intensity and parodic tone as Philo's argument unfolds. First, Philo appeals to an old argument among Jewish and Greco-Roman philosophers that the idol artisan is superior to the thing made (*Ep. Jer.* 46; *Arist.* 136; Wis 12:24; 15:14-17). Therefore, as the logic goes, idolaters should have "deified the sculptors and painters with exceeding honors" (ἀνδριαντοποιους ὑπερβολαῖς τιμῶν ἐκτεθειωκέναι, *Decal.* 70). The irony is that while the idol artists (τεχνῖται) grow old in poverty, their statuary is gilded and adorned "with purple cloth and gold and other extravagances" (πορφύρᾳ καὶ χρυσῷ καὶ ταῖς ἄλλαις πολυτελείαις, *Decal.* 71). Meanwhile, the priesthoods that oversee the artists' handwork enjoy nobility (*Decal.* 71). Philo's critique of this excess finds a counterpart in Suetonius's critique of Gaius Caligula. Suetonius speaks of a gold colossal statue of Gaius that "was dressed each day in clothing such as he wore himself. The richest citizens used all their influence to secure the priesthoods of his cult and bid high for the honour " (*Gai.* 22). Similarly, for Philo, such superstition and excessive displays of wealth is horrible (δεινόν); but what is even worse (παγχάλεπον) is idolaters' failure to assimilate and become like the lifeless objects they worship (*Decal.* 73-74). Drawing on Ps 115:5-8 and Platonic notions of assimilation to God, Philo suggests that if idolaters were consistent they would become impotent like their images—immobile in a temple "drinking in the smoke of the victims" (*Legat.* 74).[58] Such worshipers are "demented" (ἀπονοηθέντας)—a descriptor of derision that comes to full fruition as Philo vilifies Egyptian animal worshipers in his concluding comments on the second

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who argues that the shape of the cosmos surpasses things wrought by the hand (χειρόκμητον, Aristotle, *Cael.* 287b 16). See Pearce, "Philo of Alexandria on the Second Commandment," 63-64. Luke follows the tradition of the LXX in Acts. In Acts 7:48, Luke writes: ἀλλ᾽ οὐχ ὁ ὕψιστος ἐν χειροποιήτοις κατοικεῖ. In the Areopagus speech, Luke writes: "The God who made the world and everything in it, he who is Lord of heaven and earth, does not live in shrines made by human hands (χειροποιήτοις)" (17:48).

[58] However, Sarah Pearce make an impressive argument that Philo also draws on Plato's argument that the philosopher's goal is to become like God (ἡ πρὸς θεὸν ἐξομοίωσις, *Phaed.* 252d; cf. also *Tht.* 176a; *Leg.* 716cd**)**. See Pearce, "Philo of Alexandria on the Second Commandment," 66.

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commandment. For Philo, visitors to Egypt are likely to die from laughter when they see the souls of animal worshipers that have become "like beasts in human shape" (ὡς ἀνθρωποειδῆ θηρία, *Decal.* 80).[59] Philo's interpretation of the second commandment in *De Decalogo* follows Jewish convention and Greco-Roman philosophers in its critique of idols, idol worshipers and idol makers within a polemical setting.

(ii) The Second Commandment in Philo's De Specialibus Legibus

Philo continues his exposition of the Ten Commandments in books 1-4 of *De Specialibus Legibus.* In the first treatise, Philo focuses on the first and second commandments. Similar to *De Decalogo*, Philo considers the first commandment (*Spec.* 1.12-20, cf. section 4.5.1.A of this study) separately from the second commandment (*Spec.* 1.21-31). Philo's exposition of the second commandment differs slightly from *De Decalogo*, focusing on the representation of gods (*Spec.* 1.21-22); the love of wealth (*Spec.* 1.23-27); and a critique of mythmakers (*Spec.* 1.28-31).[60] Philo opens his reflections on the second commandment with a holistic critique of the material culture and inner-workings of Greco-Roman religion, including artists, temples, images, sacrifices, processions, priesthoods and purification ceremonies. Given the impact of the Roman imperial cults on space and time through temples, images, sacrifices and calendrical festivals, how is one to take Philo's allusive polemic? Philo writes,

> But there are some persons who have given gold and silver to sculptors and statuaries, as people able to fashion gods (θεοπλαστεῖν) for them. And they, taking the lifeless materials and using a mortal model (θνητῷ παραδείγματι), have (which is a most extraordinary thing) made gods, as far as appearance went, and have built temples and erected altars, and dedicated them to them, honouring them with excessive pains and diligence, with sacrifices and processions, and all kinds of other sacred ceremonies and purifications; the

[59] The *Legatio* also employs a vituperative polemic against Egyptian theriolatry (*Legat.* 139, 163, 166).
[60] My structure of this passage agrees with that of Richard Liong-Seng-Phua, *Idolatry and Authority: A Study of 1 Corinthians 8.1-11.1 in the Light of the Jewish Diaspora* (*LNTS* 299; London: T&T Clark, 2005), 63-64.

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> priests and priestesses exciting themselves to the very extremity of their power to extend this kind of pride and vanity. To whom the Father of the universe thus speaks, saying: "You shall not make for yourselves gods of silver and gold;" (οὐ ποιήσετε μετ᾽ ἐμοῦ θεοὺς ἀργυροῦς καὶ χρυσοῦς) all but teaching them in express words, "You shall not make to yourselves any gods whatever of this or of any other material, nor shall you worship anything made with hands," being forbidden expressly with respect to the two most excellent materials; for silver and gold are esteemed the most honourable of all materials (*Spec.* 1.21-22).

Philo's opening remarks on representation employs the critique of precious materials in a highly allusive way. Philo critiques material theologizing (θεωπλαστέω) with gold and silver; he also critiques the representation of objects of power that utilize a "mortal model" (θνητῷ παραδείγματι). The referent is presumably the anthropomorphic narrative of Greco-Roman religion. However, given the elision of gods and kings in Hellenistic and Roman material culture, the objects of resistance could evoke a political ramification in this passage (especially given Philo's criticism of Gaius's representation in the *Legatio*). Philo proceeds to correct the "pride" of the priesthoods that proliferate images and alien religion by quoting the second commandment (*Spec*. 1.22). However, Philo strays from the LXX translation, offering his own rendering: "You shall not make for yourselves gods of silver and gold" (οὐ ποιήσετε μετ᾽ ἐμοῦ θεοὺς ἀργυροῦς καὶ χρυσοῦς, *Spec.* 1.22).[61] Philo employs θεούς in place of εἴδωλον, and adds a critique of silver and gold—materials that Philo acknowledges "hold first place among the sculptor's materials" (*Spec.* 1.22). Although the referent of θεούς, gold and silver is left unstated in *De Specialibus Legibus*, it is worth observing that the *Legatio* critiques Gaius's command to erect a colossal statue of himself gilded in gold (κελεύει κολοσσιαῖον ἀνδριάντα ἐπίχρυσον, *Legat.* 203, 337), and employs θεός to critique Gaius's association with divinity (*Legat.* 75, 91, 114, 162, 163, 164, 198, 218, 265, 353, 367, 372). The second commandment, therefore, mattered in Jewish negotiation of

[61] For further comment, see W. Barnes Tatum, "The LXX Version of the Second Comandment," 184.

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imperial images. And Philo's exposition of the second commandment, although allusively, critiques the machinery and material culture underlying the visual system of honors related to emperor worship.

Philo continues his critique of idolatry in *De Specialibus Legibus* by condemning money lovers (φιλοχρημάτους, 1.23).[62] Money lovers, according to Philo, are those who stockpile gold and silver coins and treat the hoard "like a divine image" (ὡς ἄγαλμα θεῖον). Such behavior is tantamount to those who find themselves begging for money at the houses of their wealthy neighbors as if their homes were temples and occupants were gods (*Spec.* 1.24). Toward lovers of money, Philo writes that Moses taught the second commandment: “You shall not follow images, and you shall not make for yourselves molten gods" (οὐκ ἐπακολουθήσετε εἰδώλοις καὶ θεοὺς χωνευτοὺς οὐ ποιήσετε, *Spec.* 1.25). Philo again nuances the LXX translation of the second commandment, but employs *eidolon* which he quickly equates in philosophical terms as a "shadow and a phantom" (*Spec.* 1.26). For Philo, the second commandment proscribes one from assigning "divine honors to wealth" (πλούτῳ τιμὰς ἰσοθέους, *Spec.* 1.25). The "love of wealth" (φιλαργυρία, 24), therefore, can become an idolatrous third partner within the paradigm of the marital metaphor of idolatry, a critique that perhaps fits better with the first commandment. Nonetheless, Philo associates wealth with the second commandment—perhaps because of its frequent manifestation in the city's visual media.

In the previous chapters we discussed the identity of the ideal ruler as a benefactor over the city's material culture and the well being of its subjects (Arist., *Pol.* 1286b; 5.1310b; Stob.

[62] On Philo's views on wealth, see: T. E. Schmidt, "Hostility to Wealth in Philo of Alexandria," *JSNT* 19 (1983): 85-97.

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4.7.62; Pliny, *Pan.* 6.3-4; 28-31; 36.5; 37 50; 52.6-7; 80.3-5; Dio Chrys., *Or.* 1.23-25; 2.26).[63] The king's beneficence was especially manifest through out-of-pocket expenses for building projects often related to native cult spaces (e.g. *OGIS* 56, 90, 219, 332, 383, 458; Austin no. 191; *SEG* 41.1003; *Res Gest.* post. 1-4). Against this backdrop, how is one to take Philo's allusive polemic against wealth-idolatry? Although Philo can eulogize the beneficence of imperial power when Jews are recipients of imperial patronage (*Legat*. 148-49, 157-58, 291, 309-319; *Flacc*. 48), he can also critique rulers who exploit wealth for hegemonic or iconic purposes (*Legat.* 14, 137, 188, 198, 203, 299, 346; *Flacc.* 77; *Somn.* 2.48, 53, 55, 57).[64] To take one example in more detail, Philo narrates Flaccus's infatuation with his wealth when he narrates his downfall:

> And then see what an abundance of disasters came upon him, for he was immediately stripped of all his possessions, both of those which he inherited from his parents and of all that he had acquired himself, having been a man who took especial delight in luxury and ornament; for he was not like some rich men, to whom wealth is an inactive material (οὐ γὰρ ὡς ἐνίων πολυχρημάτων ὁ πλοῦτος ἀργὸς ἦν ὕλη), but he was continually acquiring things of every useful kind in all imaginable abundance; cups, garments, couches, miniatures, and everything else which was any ornament to a house (*Flacc*. 148).

Flaccus represents one who obsessively accumulates wealth in contrast to wealthy persons who see it as inactive material. We see a similar caricature of the ruling power's wealth in Ps-Solomon's literary paragon of the ideal ruler. Ps-Solomon represents the ideal king who prioritizes the love of wisdom over wealth: "I preferred her to scepters and thrones, and I accounted wealth (πλοῦτον) as nothing in comparison with her" (Wis 7:8). Notwithstanding Philo's own privileged familial status (Jos., *Ant.* 18.159-60, 259; 20.100), Philo sees into material riches a potential for idolatry. Philo does not flesh out the exact referent of his polemic against wealth in *De Specialibus Legibus.* However, the continuity in Philo's argument between the

[63] For further primary sources, see chapter 2.3.2 and F. W. Walbank, "Monarchies and Monarchic Ideas," in *The Cambridge Ancient History*, vol. 7, 1 (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 1982), 62-100, here 72-73.
[64] Philo's purported positive comments on the Augustan *Sebasteion* is an exception to this rule but one must remember that it is rooted in Philo's rhetorically charged eulogy of Augustus in contrast to the mad emperor Gaius (*Legat.* 151-52).

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second commandment's proscription against images (1.21-22) *and* money lovers (1.23) evokes an oblique criticism of the iconic spectacle of gods and kings that underlay monarchical ideology.

The preceding discussion suggests that Philo's exposition of the second commandment in *De Decalogo* and *De Specialibus Legibus* is not without political referent. To suggest otherwise is to misconstrue the integration of imperial power and local religion in the visual theology of Alexandria and the Greco-Roman city. Although Philo nowhere explicitly names rulers in these two treatises, his criticism of the city's pride (*Dec.* 2-7), cult images (*Dec* 7, 51, 66, 156*; Spec.* 1.21-22), things made with human hands (*Dec.* 66, 156; *Spec.* 1.22), precious materials (*Dec.* 7, 51, 66; *Spec.* 1.21-22), temples (*Dec.* 7; *Spec.* 1.21), priesthoods (*Dec.* 71; *Spec.* 1.21) and processions (*Spec.* 1.21) contains referential polyvalence against the hybrid material culture and rituals of honor that gods and kings shared. Philo's critique of "money lovers" (*Spec.* 1.23) further evokes an oblique criticism of imperial power; yet Philo leaves the referents undisclosed for his audience to discern their identity. Since it is impossible to confirm the exact referents that Philo had in mind, it is necessary to return again to the *Legatio* to compare the relationship between Philo's interpretation of the second commandment in his Exposition of the Law and his more open polemic against the excessive hubris of Gaius Caligula.

B. The Second Commandment in the Legatio ad Gaium

The anti-Jewish pogrom in Alexandria during the summer of 38 CE and the ensuing hubris of Gaius Caligula created the conditions for Philo's more open resistance to the Roman imperial cults in the treatises known as *In Flaccum* and the *Legatio ad Gaium.*[65] Both treatises break with

[65] On Philo's view of Roman authority in *In Flaccus*, see Joshua Yoder, "Sympathy for the Devil? Philo on Flaccus and Rome,"*Studia Philonica Annual* 24 (2012): 167-82. Yoder's conclusion is cautious, yet perceptive:

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Philo's principle of caution when speaking about political tyrants (*Somn.* 2.81-92). Even aware of the potential for Gaius to retaliate (*Legat.* 184, 366), Philo employs freedom of speech (παρρησία) to show that he could "fish with skill in the troubled water of imperial politics."[66] Philo commits ample space to caricaturing Gaius's self-deification (*Legat.* 74-12). The treatise, therefore, may be written to Jews "who needed assurance for their monotheistic belief."[67] Two stressors related to imperial images, however, comprise a more palpable stressor and motivating factor for Philo's embassy and composition of the *Legatio*. The first stressor pertains to the erection of imperial images in Alexandrian synagogues during the summer of 38 CE under the leadership of Aulus Avillius Flaccus (*Legat*. 132-37; *Flacc*. 41-52).[68] The second stressor pertains to the plans of Gaius to erect a colossal gold statue of Zeus in the Jerusalem temple during the winter of 39/40 CE (*Legat.* 188, 203, 265, 347). To this one could add Gaius's instructions to Petronius to allow residents outside of Jerusalem to set up cult to Gaius, and extemporaneous erection of images and statues of himself in the synagogues of Alexandria and other Greco-Roman cities (*Legat.* 334, 346). Taken together, these events infringed directly on the second commandment, a point Philo makes emphatic in Herod Agrippa's embedded letter to Gaius (*Legat.* 276-329), wherein Philo compares and contrasts the idolic-Gaius with the exemplar Augustus and Tiberius who protected Jews' aniconic worship (*Legat.* 299-305; 309-18).

"Philo's view of Roman rule, as of the political life in general, can best be described neither as 'appreciative' nor 'hostile,' but as 'cautious' and 'hesitant'" (182). Philo holds a similar ambivalence toward images, which reflects his enculturation as an affluent Jew amid the politics and culture of the Greco-Roman world. See Karl-Gustav Sandeln, "Philo's Ambivalence Towards Statues," 122-38.

[66] Edwin R. Goodenough, *An Introduction to Philo Judaeus,* 129.

[67] Ray Barraclough, "Philo's Politics: Roman Rule and Hellenistic Judaism," *ANRW* 2.21.2 (1984): 450.

[68] On the pogrom, see John M. G. Barclay, *Jews in the Mediterranean Diaspora: From Alexander to Trajan (323 BCE – 117 CE)* [Berkeley: University of California, 1996]), 48-81; James S. McLaren, "Jews and the Imperial Cult: From Augustus to Domitian," *JSNT* 27.3 (2005): 257-278, here 262-69; Sandra Gambetti, *The Alexandrian Riots of 38 C.E. and the Persecution of the Jews: A Historical Reconstruction* (JSJSup 135; Leiden: Brill, 2009); Mary Smallwood, *Philonis Alexandrini,* 3-23; and Ray Barraclough, "Philo's Politics: Roman Rule and Hellenistic Judaism," 429-35.

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A major emphasis of the *Legatio* is to defend Jewish rights and citizenship (*Legat.* 196, 209, 245, 293, 336, 365; *Flacc.* 170).[69] Strewn throughout Philo's apologetic is also a polemical critique of imperial excess and idolatry or, what Mary Smallwood rightly called, "an invective against Gaius."[70] Philo's invective is rooted in Jews' supra-imperial allegiance to Jewish Law.[71] Petronius, the legate of Syria, whom Gaius charged with accompanying his colossal into Judea, recognized the gravity of Gaius's request to erect a colossal in the Jerusalem Temple (*Legat.* 207-224). With significant cognitive dissonance, Petronius suggests that the Jews would "be prepared to undergo countless deaths" because "they maintain that their Laws are God-given oracles" and "they bear images of the Commandments imprinted on their souls" (ἐν ταῖς ψυχαῖς ἀγαλματοφοροῦσι τὰς τῶν διατεταγμένων εἰκόνας*, Legat*. 209-10; trans. Smallwood).[72] Consequently, Petronius attempts to prolong the calamity by hiring out artists in Sidon of Phoenicia to sculpt the colossal with "artistic perfection" (*Legat.* 222, 246). The delay allows Jews space to organize and openly demonstrate resistance in Phoenicia before Petronius. Through weeping, lamentation and the offering of their possessions and bodies to death, the Jews plead with Petronius to preserve their Temple "just as we inherited it from our grandfathers and ancestors" (*Legat.* 232).[73] The Jewish demonstrators have two concerns: "respect for the Emperor and obedience to our hallowed Laws" (*Legat.* 236). No more palpable comment in early Jewish texts exists that articulates so succinctly the tension of political demands placed on Jewish subjects. Indeed, if the Jews see an image (τὸν ἀνδριάντα) carried into their temple they themselves would turn into lifeless stones (πέτρους) unable to move (*Legat.* 238). Ultimately,

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[69] So Mireille Hadas-Lebel, *Philo of Alexandria,* 88-89.
[70] Mary Smallwood, *Philonis Alexandrini,* 3.
[71] On Jews' allegiance to their Law over against political tyrants, see especially Jos., *C. Ap.* 2.277.
[72] See also Jos. *C. Ap.* 2.178 for the motif of the commandments imprinted on Jewish souls.
[73] Notably, the resistance strategies before Petronius comport with the account of Jews resisting Ptolemy IV Philopator in 3 Macc 1:16-20; 27-29. For further comment, see section 4.5.2.C of the present study.

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Petronius—a man with "some glimmerings of Jewish philosophy and religion" (*Legat.* 245)—writes to ask Gaius to delay the erection to avoid Jewish resistance movements that could ravage the fields during the impending harvest (*Legat.* 249). Gaius interprets Petronius's letter as a challenge to his political sovereignty, suggesting that Petronius is more concerned with Jewish Law than "the sovereign commands of your ruler" (*Legat.* 256; trans. Smallwood). In the guise of the arrogant Tyrant, Gaius orders Petronius to proceed with "the speedy dedication of the statue" (θᾶττον ἀνατεθῆναι τὸν ἀνδριάντα, *Legat.* 260; trans. Smallwood).

For Philo, one of the great ironies of the Alexandrian riots is that Greco-Egyptians destroyed and burned material *timai* set up in Jewish synagogues to honor Roman benefactors (*Legat.* 133; *Flacc.* 48-49, 97). Philo observes that Alexandrian synagogues housed "gilded shields, crowns, monuments, and inscriptions" (ἀσπίδων καὶ στεφάνων ἐπιχρύσων καὶ στηλῶν καὶ ἐπιγραφῶν, *Legat.* 133). Synagogue dedications reflect the pagan practice of setting up honorific objects on behalf of the ruling power spaces of worship (for examples, see 3.3ff). Jews' participation in this practice reflects a remarkable accommodation. As Fraser writes, "The Hellenism of these [Jewish] dedications is therefore pronounced in all external respects, and the Judaism, whatever its nature, was largely concealed beneath the pagan exterior."[74] Fraser's comments may be a bit strong, but Philo can also eulogizes Augustus for conferring "expensive dedications" on the Jerusalem Temple (*Legat.* 157), and Julia Augusta who "had enriched the Temple with gold bowls and cups and a number of other costly offerings" (*Legat.* 319; trans. Smallwood).[75] Jewish dedications conferred from above and below, however, were not cultic, and show the degree with which Jews were willing to make accommodations to maintain their

[74] P. M. Fraser, *Ptolemaic Alexandria*, 283.
[75] On the tradition of pagan benefactors conferring gifts on the Jerusalem Temple, see the examples put forth by Mary Smallwood, *Philonis Alexandrini,* 240. Smallwood rightly observes that "Jews not only permitted but welcomed the practice" (240). Smallwood, however, misses the important witness of 3 Macc 1:8-15 and 3:16, which I discuss in section 4.5.2.C.

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cultural identity and autonomy amid imperial power. Even more remarkably, in Philo's panegyric of Augustus he includes an uncritical first-hand account of the Augustan *Sebasteion's* architecture, including its "paintings, statues, and objects of gold and silver" (*Legat.* 151).

In light of the proliferation of the imperial cults under Augustus, along with Alexandrian Jews' ethnic demotion after Augustus's annexation of Egypt, one would think that Philo would heap criticism on the *Sebasteion* as an iconic symbol of Augustan idolatry and hegemony (especially en lieu of Philo's exposition of the second commandment and critique of precious materials in the Exposition of the Law). Philo's positive third person description of the *Sebasteion* has suggested to some that Philo is borrowing the account from a gentile source.[76] Maren Niehoff, on the other hand, contrasts Philo's positive attitude with Josephus's criticism of the *Sebasteion* (*Ant.* 15:328-29, 39), arguing that, for Philo, "The cultic veneration of Augustus in the Alexandrian *Caesareium* was in his view compatible with Jewish values and Jewish identity."[77] This thesis is unacceptable for two reasons. First, after Philo's panegyrical flattery of the *Sebasteion* complex, Philo eulogizes Augustus for refusing deification (*Legat.* 154). Second, as Mary Smallwood rightly observes, "Augustus, as a champion of Jewish religious liberty, can do no wrong in Philo's eyes."[78] Whatever stressors the cult of Augustus (and Tiberius) caused Jews is drowned out by Philo's rhetorical ends: Augustus serves as the exemplar emperor in contrast to the hubristic Gaius by respecting Jews' aniconic Temple (*Legat.* 148, 310) and refusing deification (*Legat.* 154) and material representation (*Legat.* 318).[79]

[76] See Ray Barraclough, "Philo's Politics," 453-54; and Gerhard Delling, "Philons Enkomion auf Augustus," *Klio* 54 (1972): 175-87.
[77] Maren Niehoff, *Philo on Jewish Identity and Culture*, 131.
[78] Mary Smallwood, *Philonis Alexandrini*, 231.
[79] On this point Ray Barraclough is right in his observation that Philo "drew upon contemporary eulogies for his terminology and reproduced their inflated terms of praise" ("Philo's Politics," 453-54). On Philo's portrayal of Augustus and Tiberius, see further Ray Barraclough, "Philo's Politics," 453-56. On the stressors that Augustus's annexation of Egypt caused for Alexandrian Jews, see section 5.5.1-2. Although Philo praises Tiberius, we have evidence that Tiberius expelled Jews from Rome in 19 CE. On the episode, see Jos., *Ant.*

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Philo's positive portrayal of imperial honors and media in the preceding examples must be held in tension with Philo's awareness of Jewish sensitivity to aniconic imperial images. In Agrippa's letter to Gaius, for example, Philo eulogizes Tiberius for removing Pontius Pilate's offensive erection of aniconic gold shields in Herod's palace in Jerusalem that contained terse honorific inscriptions (*Legat*. 299).[80] En lieu of Philo's endorsement of gilded shields in Alexandrian synagogues and Julia Augusta's offering of golden bowls and cups in the Jerusalem Temple, why did Jews respond so strongly to Pilate's actions? Jews' strong response is likely due to two points of contention. First, as Philo attests in his criticism of the hierarchy of materials used to theologize about divinity (*Spec.* 1.22), gold was particularly distasteful; the Jews, therefore, may have seen into Pilate's gold shields a dangerous precedent for the infiltration of Roman imperial cult media into the heart of the Jewish nation.[81] Second, as Helen Bond suggests, the inscription on the shields likely read: *Tiberius Caesar divi Augusti filius Augustus*.[82] Tiberius's association as the son of the divine Augustus would have caused Jews' offense, which is ameliorated when the standards are moved to Caesarea (*Legat.* 305). Bond makes one further suggestion that the inscription may have included the status *Pontifex Maximus*. This title of priestly authority over the imperial cult would be highly offensive in the vicinity of Jerusalem.[83]

The episode illuminates how Jewish sensitivity to imperial images could fluctuate in

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18.3.4-5; and Tac., *Ann.* 2.85. Philo's failure to consider the darker side of Tiberius is not the product of ignorance or oversight; rather, Philo manipulates the image of Tiberius to meet his rhetorical needs and, ultimately, condemn Gaius.

[80] On this episode, see Helen K. Bond, "Standards, Shields and Coins: Jewish Reactions to Aspects of the Roman Cult in the Time of Pilate," in *Idolatry: False Worship in the Bible, Early Judaism and Christianity* (ed. Stephen C. Barton; London: T&T Clark, 2007), 88-106; P. S. Davies, “The Meaning of Philo's Text about the Gilded Shields," *JThS* 37.1 (1986): 109-14; and KazuhikoYamazaki-Ransom, *The Roman Empire in Luke’s Narrative* (LNTS 404; New York: T&T, 2001), 53-56.

[81] So Mary Smallwood: "The episode of the iconic military standards may have awakened the Jews to the fact that aniconic objects also could have religious significance for the Romans, and made them anxious to keep even those out of Jerusalem…" (*Philonis Alexandrini*, 304). Smallwood, however, overlooks the offense of precious materials used for theologizing about divinity—a point that strengthens her argument.

[82] Helen K. Bond, "Standards, Shields and Coins," 96.

[83] Idem., "Standards, Shields and Coins," 96-97.

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spatial proximity to the Jerusalem Temple (the attitude toward images in Judea was more conservative than Alexandria).[84] The politics of space is especially evident in Philo's contrast between Pilate's standards in the governor's mansion and the worse offense of Gaius's colossal: "Now on that occasion it was a question of shields bearing no representation of any living creature; this time it is a colossal statue. On that occasion the dedication was made in the residence of the procurators; this time the proposed dedication is to be made, we are told, right inside the Temple…" (*Legat.* 306). Philo's comparison and contrast shows how the placement and design of imperial cult media could contribute to Jews' perception and classification of media on a scale of offensive to highly offensive. Moreover, the incident with Pilate functions rhetorically within Agrippa's embedded letter to eulogize Tiberius's protection of Jews' aniconic religion, but also to illustrate the gravity of Gaius's threats against the Temple.

Gaius's plans to desecrate the Temple with his colossal image commenced during the winter of 39-40 CE. Instigated by an anti-semitic tax collector named Capito, gentile immigrants in Jamnia erected a brick altar to honor Gaius Caligula (*Legat.* 198-207). Local Jews resisted the Greeks by destroying the altar—thereby affording Capito an opportune moment to slander the

[84] Jason von Ehrenkrook perceptively writes that "…the restrictive approach to figurative art seemingly attested in a variety of sources may be indicative of a Second Temple *Judean* phenomenon and not a Second Temple *Jewish* phenomenon" (*Sculpting Idolatry*, 173). This statement, however, does not adequately account for Alexandrian Jewish texts such as the Wisdom of Solomon that vituperate against images within an enclosed literary circle. Josephus observes that Pilate was the first to introduce images of Caesar in Jerusalem in what is most likely a different episode: "But now Pilate, the procurator of Judea, removed the army from Cesarea to Jerusalem, to take their winter quarters there, in order to abolish the Jewish laws. So he introduced Caesar's effigies, which were upon the ensigns, and brought them into the city; whereas our law forbids us the very making of images; on which account the former procurators were wont to make their entry into the city with such ensigns as had not those ornaments. Pilate was the first who brought those images to Jerusalem, and set them up there; which was done without the knowledge of the people, because it was done in the nighttime" (*Ant.* 18.55-56). For further comment on Philo and Josephus's memory of Pilate's antics, see E. M. Smallwood, "Philo and Josephus as Historians of the Same Events," in *Josephus, Judaism and Christianity* (eds. L. H. Feldman and G. Hata; Leiden: Brill, 1987), 114-29; and James S. McLaren, *Power and Politics in Palestine* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1991), 114-26.

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Jews before Gaius (*Legat.* 201-202).[85] The episode accords with the pattern of the Roman imperial cults in the Greek East, where cult is set up from below by Greek subjects rather than from above by the ruling power.[86] Jews' act of iconoclasm, however, offends Gaius's growing sense of self, which inspires his desire to erect in Jerusalem a "gilded statue of superhuman size" (κολοσσιαῖον ἀνδριάντα ἐπίχρυσον, *Legat.* 203; trans. Smallwood).[87] Aside from Philo's extended caricature of Gaius's association with the gods (*Legat.* 74-112), it is worth observing, as discussed elsewhere, that Gaius intended to erect a colossal of Zeus—not himself—in a Temple dedicated to "Gaius, the New Zeus made Manifest" (Διὸς Ἐπιφανοῦς Νέου χρηματίζῃ Γαΐου, *Legat.* 347).[88] Philo's account of Gaius's colossal further shows how important the traditional gods were for the patterns of design and epigraphic honors carved into imperial images. Moreover, Philo's open polemic against Gaius's colossal provides further evidence that Philo's allusive polemic against statuary and precious materials in his Exposition of the Law could evoke a political referent for his Jewish audience.

The strongest overlap between Philo's polemic against idols in the Exposition of the Law and the *Legatio* occurs in Agrippa's letter to Gaius (*Legat*. 276-329). After Agrippa's nervous system shuts down at the news of Gaius's plans (*Legat.* 261-75), Agrippa defends Jews' reverence for the emperor (*Legat.* 280) as a prelude to his full-blown polemical defense of the aniconic precincts of the Jewish Temple. Philo, through the voice of the client-king Herod,

[85] Tacitus suggests that the Jews were armed (*Hist.* 5.9). Josephus, on the other hand, suggests the large Jewish crowds—including children!—were peaceful (*Ant.* 18:289-304).
[86] So Simon Price, "The accommodation of external authority within local traditions is a widespread phenomenon ... In other words, the Greek subjects of the Roman empire attempted to relate their ruler to their own dominant symbolic system" (*Rituals and Power*, 234-35).
[87] Jason von Ehrenkrook makes the perceptive suggestion that the Romans may have interpreted Jews' iconoclastic activity (i.e., resistance to Pilate's standards, images in Alexandrian synagogues and Gaius's colossal) through the lens of *damnatio memoriae* not toward a given emperor but at Roman hegemony at large. See *Sculpting Idolatry*, 175
[88] Eric Gruen rightly observes: "It is worth observing—what is rarely noted—that the statue designed for the Temple was apparently not one of Gaius at all but one of Jupiter" ("Caligula, the Imperial Cult, and Philo's *Legatio,*" 142).

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writes:

> My Lord Gaius, this Temple has never from the beginning admitted any man-made image (χειρόκμητον), because it is the dwelling-place of the true God. The works of painters and sculptors are copies of gods perceived by the senses. But the making of any picture or sculpture of the invisible God was considered by our forefathers to be blasphemous … no Greek, barbarian, satrap, king, or bitter enemy, and no revolution, war, capture, sack, or anything else at all ever caused such a violation of the Temple as the introduction of a statue, an image, or any man-made work of art into it (ὡς ἄγαλμα ἢ ξόανον ἤ τι τῶν χειροκμήτων ἱδρύσασθαι; *Legat.* 290-92; trans. Smallwood).

The pericope's referents comport with Philo's polemic against idols in *De Decalogo* and *De Specialibus*: painters and sculptors (*Dec.* 7, 66, 156), cult images (*Dec* 7, 51, 66, 156*; Spec.* 1.21-22) and things made with human hands (*Dec.* 66, 156; *Spec.* 1.22). The overlap shows how Philo's Exposition of the Law functions as a hermeneutical lens for interpreting Gaius's hubris. For Philo, Gaius is the parody of the Hellenistic kingship ideal. The ideal ruler should follow the precedent of the Ptolemies (*Legat.* 138),[89] Augustus (*Legat* 148, 309-10, 318), M. Vispanius Agrippa (*Legat* 291), Tiberius (*Legat* 299-305) and the proconsul of Asia C. Norbanus Flaccus (*Legat* 315) in protecting Jewish aniconic worship and, thus, animating *Jewish* Law. Philo's eulogy of these rulers, however, is an idealization—a projection for rhetorical effect to meet Philo's polemical and apologetic interests under the existential crisis that Gaius imposed. Under the shadow of Gaius's idolic hubris, the *Legatio* ultimately articulates a distinctively Jewish re-appropriation of the Hellenistic kingship ideal, and God's providential protection of Jews under Roman imperial rule (*Legat.* 196, 245, 293, 336, 365; see also *Flacc.* 170).

The oppressive circumstances under Gaius should not be embellished to encapsulate the totality of Jewish experience under Roman rule, nor taken as an indication that imperial images were a pervasive problem for Jewish cultural survival amid Diaspora. As Mireille Hadas-Lebel

[89] *Pace* Maren Niehoff who suggests that Philo understood Roman rule as "far more stable" than Ptolemaic rule. See *Philo on Jewish Identity and Culture*, 113. Niehoff does, however, rightly draw attention to Philo's criticism of the Macedonians in *Jos.* 135-36, which reminds us that his eulogies of imperial authority are often rooted in his polemical and apologetic purposes.

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observes, "The Jews did not show any particular repulsion for the imperial images as such. They were rejected simply because they entered into the category of graven images forbidden by the second commandment."[90] What evokes such a strong response from Philo and his embassy is not the presence of imperial images in Alexandria or Judea but, rather, their *placement* and cultic *function*.[91] The aniconic attitude of the *Legatio*, therefore, aligns with the polemical setting of the LXX translation of the second commandment. Philo's invective against imperial images is anti-*idolic*—not anti-iconic.[92]

5.2.2 Josephus on Representation and Imperial Power

T. Flavius Josephus (37-95/96 CE) provides further witness to Jewish interpretation of the second commandment under the shadow of colonial power. Written from the vantage point of his own captivity in Rome, Josephus skillfully defends Jewish aniconic religion—even critiquing imperial images funded by Herod, Pontius Pilate and Gaius Caligula at different points in his *Antiquities of the Jews* (Herod, *Ant.* 15.276-279, 328-329; 16.158; 17.150-151; Pilate, *Ant.* 18.55; and Gaius Caligula, *Ant.* 18.256-309).[93] Of particular interest, Josephus provides an additional witness to Philo's *Legatio ad Gaium* and *In Flaccum* with regard to the imposition of imperial cult media on Jewish subjects under the reign of Gaius Caligula (*Ant.* 18.256-309). Although Josephus conflates the erection of statues in Alexandria with Gaius's erection of a colossal in Jerusalem, he narrates the conflict with Gaius in detail, including terse references to

[90] Mireille Hadas-Lebel, *Jerusalem Against Rome*, 351.
[91] So also Helen K. Bond: "it was not just the *presence* of imperial images, but their *function*" ("Standards, Shields and Coins, 96).
[92] So Tatum, " LXX Version of the Second Comandment," 189.
[93] Additionally, Josephus criticizes images on the Roman army's standards (*Ant.* 18.121) and a situation in Dora where locals erected an image of Claudius in a Jewish synagogue (*Ant.* 19.299-311). At other points, Josephus criticizes images more indirectly. See *War* 1.403-14, 648-55; 2.169-74, 184-203. Citations from Barclay, "Snarlying Sweetly," 78.

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Philo's embassy (*Ant.* 18:259). From Josephus's perspective, the Roman imperial cults stood at the heart of the conflict. Josephus argues this point in his response to the slanders of the Alexandrian scholar and politician Apion, who suggests that the Jews' failure to confer *timai* on the emperors was an indication of their disloyalty to Rome (*Ant.* 18.257-58). In light of these accusations, Josephus is forced to walk a narrow ridge—namely, to defend Jews' aniconic religion without offending the iconic culture of the ruling power. In the discussion that follows, Josephus's strategies of safe speech in his response to Apion in *Contra Apionem* 2.1-144 are examined.[94]

Josephus's *Contra Apionem* was penned after the composition of his *Antiquities* toward the end of his life (c. 93-96 CE). In response to the negative reception of the *Antiquities* (*C. Ap.* 1.1-5), Josephus sets out to vindicate his historiography in two parts. First, Josephus appeals to the antiquity of Judaism and the veracity of Jewish sources (*C. Ap.* 1.6-218). Second, Josephus responds to various accusations against the Jews (*C. Ap.* 1.219-2.286).[95] The project takes its title from this latter section, when Josephus formally responds to Apion's vituperations against the Jews (*C. Ap.* 2.1-144).[96] According to the *Antiquities*, Apion condemned the Jews for "neglecting the honors that belonged to Caesar" (ὡς τῶν Καίσαρος τιμῶν περιορῷεν); for failing to honor the emperor with statues (ἀνδριᾶσι τιμᾶν); and for refusing to swear by his name (ὅρκιον αὐτοῦ τὸ ὄνομα ποιεῖσθαι, *Ant.* 18.257-58). To refute this position, Josephus enters into the circumstances that called for figured speech—that is, in the words of Quintilian, a scenerio when "it is unsafe to

[94] For a compelling post-colonial reading of Josephus's critique of Roman hegemony and imperialism in *C. Ap.* 2.125-32, see John M. G. Barclay, "The Empire Writes Back: Josephan Rhetoric in Flavian Rome," in *Flavius Josephus and Flavian Rome* (ed. Jonathan Edmondson et al.; Oxford: Oxford University, 2005), 315-332.
[95] For structure, see John M. G. Barclay, "Josephus, Against Apion," *The Dictionary of Early Judaism*, 832-834.
[96] Apion's accusations include slanders against the story of Moses (*C. Ap.* 8-32); slanders against Alexandrian Jews (*C. Ap.* 33-78); and slanders against the Temple (*C. Ap.* 79-144).

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speak openly" (Quintilian, *Inst. Or.* 9.2.66). Josephus's response to Apion is worth quoting in full:

> (73) Likewise, Apion attempted to denounce us because we do not set up statues of the emperors—as if they did not know this or needed Apion to mount their defense, when he ought rather to have admired the magnanimity and moderation of the Romans, since they do not compel their subjects to transgress their ancestral laws, but accept such honors as it is pious and legitimate for their donors to offer; for honors provide no gratification if conferred under compulsion or force. (74) The Greeks and some others consider it good to erect statues; indeed, they take pride in painting portraits of their fathers, wives and children; some also acquire statues of people with whom they have no connection, while others do the same even for favorite slaves. So what is surprising if they appear to rend this honor to their rulers and masters? (75) On the other hand, our legislator—not as if he were prophesying that Roman authority should not be honored, but because he disdained a means that is useful neither to God nor to human beings, and because an inanimate object is proved to be inferior to every animate creature, and much more to God—forbade the making of statues. (76) He did not prohibit that good men be paid homage with other honors, secondary to God: with such expressions of respect we give glory to the emperors and to the Roman people. (77) We offer on their behalf perpetual sacrifices, and not only do we conduct such rites every day at the common expense of all Judeans, but we perform no other sacrifices on a common basis, not even for children; it is only for the emperors that we collectively exhibit this exceptional honor, which we render to no (other) human being. (78) Let these remarks together form a sufficient rebuttal of Apion's statements on Alexandria (*C. Ap.* 2.73-78; trans. Barclay).[97]

Josephus navigates Apion's charges of disloyalty masterfully, rooting Jewish detestation of images in Jewish Law rather than a detestation of Roman hegemony.[98] The rhetorical move is an act of deflection, turning the table back on Apion who fails to recognize that Rome has a magnanimous precedent for protecting the native traditions of subject peoples, in this case the second commandment (*C. Ap.* 2.73).[99] Josephus proceeds to broaden the topic from Roman

[97] John M. G. Barclay, *Flavius Josephus: Against Apion: Translation and Commentary* (Flavius Josephus: Translation and Commentary 10; Leiden: Brill, 2006).

[98] In his study of early Jewish attitudes toward art and images, Joseph Gutmann was the first to draw attention to Josephus's act of circumvention in *Contra Apionem*. Gutmann suggests that Josephus's strict aniconicism reflects his own apologetic interests rather than actual attitudes of early Jewish communities. In Gutmann's comments on *C. Ap.* 2.75, he argues that Josephus deceptively roots Jewish resistance to imperial images in Jews' "strict observance of the Second Commandment rather than to a Jewish hatred of Rome's oppressive rule" ("The 'Second Commandment' and the Image in Judaism," *Hebrew Union College Annual* 32 [1961]: 161-174, here 170).

[99] Josephus further defends Jews' civic rights by appeal to Hellenistic and Roman rulers who protected Jewish citizenship rights; this point is especially lucid in Josephus's claims that "If Apion had read the letters of

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imperial images to the material honors associated with the system of benefaction, which he attributes to the "Greeks and some others" (*C Ap.* 2.74).[100] Barclay rightly recognizes in the phrase the "Greeks and some others" an act of circumspection that allows Josephus to critique material honors without recourse to actually naming Rome.[101] The circumspection is further evident in Josephus's sudden move from the topic of Roman imperial images to more innocuous content: family portraits and statues of benefactors and slaves on *Greek soil*. Barclay supports this reading by appeal to Scott's theory of hidden transcripts; in this case, Jewish detestation of Roman imperial images (the hidden transcript) emerges on-stage through an allusive critique of the Greeks and their portraiture. Barclay is certainly correct to identify an allusive critique of Rome, however, the passage's "ambiguity of expression" (Quint., *Inst. Or.* 9.2.67) better suites the rhetorical strategies of figured speech where "hidden meaning is extracted from some phrase" (*Inst. Or.* 9.2.64).[102] The figured phrase "Greeks and some others," therefore, carves out a safe space for Josephus to indirectly critique the material representation of Roman benefactors without actually naming them openly.

Alexander the king, and of Ptolemy, son of Lagus; if he had read the documents of his successors as king of Egypt and the monument that stands in Alexandria and records the rights that Caesar the Great gave to the Judeans—if, I say, he knew all these things but had the effrontery to contradict them, he was malicious…" (*C. Ap.* 2.37; cf. also 2.61). For Josephus's other examples of Hellenistic and Roman rulers who confer honors/benefits on Jews, see his references to Antiochus (*C. Ap.* 2.39); Alexander and Ptolemy son of Lagus (*C. Ap.* 2.43-44); Ptolemy Philadelphus (*C. Ap.* 2.45-47); Ptolemy III Euergetes (*C. Ap.* 2.48); Ptolemy Philopator and Cleopatra (*C. Ap.* 2.49). En lieu of these examples, Josephus condemns Apion for not recognizing that "none of the kings seems to have bestowed civic rights on Egyptians" (*C. Ap.* 45-47; trans. Barclay). For further comment on the historicity of Josephus's claims, see Barclay, *Flavius Josephus*, 185-207.

[100] On the system of benefaction and especially Aristotle's definition of visual honors, see my discussion of *Rhet.* 1.5.9 in chapter 2.3.2.

[101] Notably, we find a similar act of circumspection in the Third Sibyl when the author critiques the royal hubris of Greek rulers and Greek subjects despite its composition during the battle of Actium in 31 BCE (*Sib. Or*. 3.545-555). John M. G. Barclay, "Snarling Sweetly, 79.

[102] On figured speech, see section 4.3.3. Steve Mason makes a strong case for Josephus's use of figured speech in his exceptional essay, "Figured Speech and Irony in T. Flavius Josephus," in *Flavius Josephus and Flavian Rome* (ed. Jonathan Edmondson et al.; Oxford: Oxford University, 2005), 243-88. Mason, however, focuses his study on Josephus's use of figured speech in *War* and *Antiquities.*

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Apion's accusation that the Jews refuse to represent the Roman emperors with statues is similar to that of Tacitus (discussed at the opening of chapter four; Tac., *Hist.* 5.5.4).[103] Josephus defends against this accusation with a concluding two-fold argument. First, Josephus clarifies that Moses's ban on images does not prohibit Jews from conferring honors on the emperor in so far as those honors are "secondary to God" (*C. Ap* 2.75-76). Josephus's clarification reflects the political metaphor's exclusivity: Jews honor imperial authority in so far as the ruling power does not force Jews to honor their self-deification or cultic material representation. Furthermore, Josephus defends Jews' prohibition against *cult*-images by aligning himself with contemporary Greco-Roman criticism of images and Rome's idealized aniconic past (Varro in Aug., *Civ.* 4.27, 31; Dio Chrys., *Or.* 12).[104] The interpretive move is an attempt to gain allies among Josephus's interlocutors, yet Josephus still has to clarify that through the ban on images, Moses was not "prophesying that Roman authority should not be honored" (*C. Ap.* 2.75; trans Barclay). This statement provides some of our clearest evidence from Second Temple Judaism that Jewish aniconic conviction had implications for how gentiles perceived Jews' participation in the system

[103] Strikingly, both authors also appeal to a popular slander that a golden ass inhabited the precincts of the Jerusalem Temple (Jos., *C. Ap.* 2.80-81; Tac., *Hist.* 5.2-5). See also Dio, *Hist. rom.* 37.17.2. In response to this claim, Josephus responds with incredulity: although Antiochus IV, Pompey, Licinius Crassus and Titus "conquered us in war," and entered the Temple precincts, "none of them found any such thing there" (Josephus, *C. Ap.* 2.80-82). Philo also appeals to the aniconic precincts of the Temple (*Legat.* 289-92).
[104] For Jewish criticism of idols by appeal to the superiority of the idol maker to inanimate objects, see *Ep. Jer.* 46; *Let. Aris.*136; Wis 15:17. Josephus explicitly links Greco-Roman philosophical aniconicism with Mosaic Law in *C. Ap.* 2.168. After expositing on the aniconic nature of God (2.167), Josephus rather remarkably argues that "the wisest among the Greeks were taught theses ideas about God … For Pythagoras, Anaxagoras, Plato, and, after him, the Stoic philosophers practically all seem to have thought in this way about the nature of God" (*C. Ap.* 2.168; trans. Barclay). For further comment on the Greco-Roman philosophical context on *C. Ap.* 2.75, see Barclay, "Snarling Sweetly, 81-83; and idem., *Flavius Josephus,* 209. Jason von Ehrenkrook draws attention to the ways Josephus "Romanizes Jewish aniconicism" as a means to align Jewish identity with Rome's idealized aniconic past. Ehrenkrook writes, "…Josephus presents the Jewish resistance to images as the preservation of an ancestral system of values, akin to the Roman notion of the *mos maiorum*, thus framing iconoclastic behavior not as an expression of cultural otherness, a peculiarity of strange foreigners from the East, but as an expression of cultural sameness, an element that binds Jewish and Roman identities" (*Sculpting Idolatry*, 174). Josephus's appeal to Greco-Roman and Jewish aniconic tradition in *C. Ap.* 2.75 is an example of Josephus's apologetic attempt to align Jewish Law with Roman tradition. Although Ehrenkrook makes passing references to *C. Ap.* 2.75 (pp. 4, 176), the bulk of his study focuses on Josephus's Romanizing rhetorical motif in *Bellum Judaicum* and *Antiquitates Judaicae*.

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of visual honors so crucial to imperial power.[105] Even with this clarification, Barclay discerns one small "barb." Josephus writes that Moses banned images because he "disdained" them (*despiciens*, 2.75).[106] Barclay suggests that "There is venom in that term, a cultural snarl: but so sweet is the smile on this Jewish face turned towards Rome that the sneer can pass almost unnoticed."[107] Any presence of venom is quickly ameliorated in Josephus's second concluding argument, which, similar to Philo, appeals to Jews' loyalty to Rome through their daily sacrifices on behalf of the emperor (C. Ap. 2.76-77; Philo, *Legat*. 157, 291, 317; *Flacc*. 48-49). When taken together, Josephus's two-fold argument carefully negotiates Josephus's dual loyalties to Mosaic Law and Rome in figured rhetorical overtones. On the one hand, Jewish resistance to images is a product of Mosaic Law rather than hatred of Rome; on the other hand, Jews aniconic convictions align with Greco-Roman philosophy and do not proscribe Jewish subjects from honoring the emperor with daily sacrifices.

Both Philo and Josephus employ the arts of persuasion to defend, conciliate and resist the idolatry and hegemonic cosmologies of the angry tyrant. As Mireille Hadas-Lebel observes, "Philo and Josephus have left a witness of the extreme repulsion that the very idea of honouring the master of the Empire as a god could incite among the Jews."[108] Although both represent the upper echelons of Jewish society, one cannot preclude the possibility that their attitude(s) toward Rome represent a large sector of Jewish society. Underlying their repulsion at the sight Gaius's deification and representation stands the first and second commandments. Both authors, although willing to make significant accommodations within the political metaphor of idolatry, do not see deification and/or material representation as compatible with Jewish models of kingship,

[105] But see Ptolemy IV Philopator's claim that the Jews are "the only people among all nations who hold their heads high in defiance of kings and their benefactors" (βασιλεῦσιν καὶ τοῖς ἑαυτῶν εὐεργέταις, 3 Macc 3:19).
[106] John M. G. Barclay, "Snarling Sweetly, 81.
[107] Idem. 81.
[108] Mireille Hadas-Lebel, *Jerusalem Against Rome,* 352.

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especially if the cultic manifestation of the monarch's divinity is forced on Jewish subjects. Having investigated these themes, we can now turn to an analysis of the Jewish icon parody within the setting of Jewish aniconic-monotheism and imperial rule. Indeed, under the domestic rule of deified rulers, what did it mean both at home in Judea and in Diaspora to employ the icon parody to mock the iconic culture of the other?

5.3 The Hellenistic- and Roman-Jewish Icon Parodies and the Iconography of Empire

The Hebrew Bible's icon parodies provided Hellenistic and Roman Jews with a depository of literary devices for resisting the material culture of alien religion (Hab 2:18-19; Deut 4:27-28; Pss 115:3-8; 135:15-18; Isa 40:18-20; 41:7; 44:9-20; 46:1-7; Jer 10:1-15). Developed predominantly under the stressors of Babylonian exile, the icon parodies emerged to resist Jews' assimilation to alien religion by (1) exalting the power of Yahweh over the nations and (2) animating the impotence of Babylonian deity.[109] In the setting of exile, the icon parodies were not developed in a religious vacuum. As Perdue recently suggested,

> The idol satires were directed not only against the gods of Babylonia in a merely theological dispute to deny they were indeed deities, but also, more importantly, against the imperial ideology that stressed Babylonian kings ruled by means of the decision of the gods, in particular Marduk … This attack against the idols had the major object of undermining the divine legitimation of Babylonian imperial power and cultural supremacy and at the same time damaged the vitality of idol crafting in the Babylonian temples.[110]

[109] The latter motif was articulated through a variety of common parodies. Terry Griffith provides a helpful taxonomy of this polemic: "(1) the equation of idols with the gods themselves; (2) an emphasis on their material and perishable nature; (3) their origin in the mind and skills of the artificer; (4) their lifelessness and their consequent ability only to disappoint those who put their trust in them; and (5), their unreal and consequently deceptive nature" (*Keep Yourselves from Idols,* 37-39). Another prophetic strategy for resisting the power of the nations was to highlight their impotence (Isa 40:15, 17). See Norman K. Gottwald, *All the Kingdoms of the Earth: Israelite Prophecy and International Relations in the Ancient Near East* (New York: Harper & Row, 1964), 330-332. For a discussion of the sovereignty and power of God in Deutero-Isaiah's polemic against idols, see David W. Pao, *Acts and The Isaianic New Exodus*, 183-93.
[110] Leo G. Perdue and Warren Carter, *Israel and Empire: A Postcolonial History of Israel and Early Judaism*, 104.

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By attacking the cult media underlying imperial rule, the icon parodies simultaneously attacked Babylonian hegemony, economy and political ideology. Outnumbered and overpowered by colonial power, subjugated Jews could not safely partake in iconoclastic resistance. Therefore, they did so discursively by classifying Babylonian deity as impotent and dead within the echo chamber of the Jewish inner-circle. Levtow suggests that the Jewish icon parodies mirrored Neo-Assyrian and Babylonian iconoclastic warfare strategies, which sought the iconoclastic mutilation—or what Alasdair Livingston called "godnapping"—of the enemy's cult statues so as to render their gods' power obsolete.[111] The Jewish icon parodies' caricature of deity through fictive mutilation reflects the "West Asian practice of removing eyes, ears, heads, and hands from an enemy's statuary…"[112] In so doing, the icon parodies reconfigured the cosmology of empire, subverting representations of Babylonian deity and imperial power away from temple, image and sacrifice toward the one God. The Hebrew Bible's icon parodies, therefore, represent an early form of Jewish resistance literature—an art of cultural survival.

In their early forms, the Hebrew Bible's icon parodies targeted a Jewish audience rather than a Babylonian one. The internalized target does not mitigate the icon parodies intended attack on Mesopotamian deity but, rather, reflects the Israelites' real-lived struggle to define social boundaries and group identity amid the religions of colonial power. Put more simply, the Hebrew Bible's icon parodies reflect the Israelites own participation in the ritual practices of

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[111] On Neo-Assyrian and Babylonian iconoclastic warfare, see: Nathaniel B. Levtow, *Images of Others,* 100-118. On "god-napping," see: Alasdair Livingstone, "New Dimensions in the Study of Assyrian Religion," in *Assyria 1995:Proceedings of the 10th Anniversary Symposium of the Neo-Assyrian Text Corpus Project* (ed. Simo Parpola and Robert McCray Whiting; Helsinki: University of Helsinki, 1995), 165-77.

[112] Levtow, *Images of Others,* 167. The motif of mutilation is especially evident in Ps 115:2-8: "Why should the nations say, 'Where is their God?' Our God is in the heavens; he does whatever he pleases. Their idols are silver and gold, the work of human hands. They have mouths, but do not speak; eyes, but do not see. They have ears, but do not hear; noses, but do not smell. They have hands, but do not feel; feet, but do not walk; they make no sound in their throats. Those who make them are like them; so are all who trust in them." See also Isa 44:18 and Ps 135:15-18.

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Babylonian religion rather than their own adherence to a strict aniconicism.[113] Jews' fight against assimilation to other nations' idols is anticipated by the Deuteronomist (presumably from the vantage point of the post-exilic context):

> (27) And the Lord will scatter you among all the nations (διασπερεῖ κύριος ὑμᾶς ἐν πᾶσιν τοῖς ἔθνεσιν), and you will be left few in number among the nations into which the Lord will bring you there. (28) And there you will serve other gods, works of human hands, wood and stone, who will neither see nor hear nor eat nor smell (καὶ λατρεύσετε ἐκεῖ θεοῖς ἑτέροις ἔργοις χειρῶν ἀνθρώπων ξύλοις καὶ λίθοις οἳ οὐκ ὄψονται οὐδὲ μὴ ἀκούσωσιν οὔτε μὴ φάγωσιν οὔτε μὴ ὀσφρανθῶσιν). (29) And there you will seek the Lord your God, and you will find him when you seek him out with your whole heart and with your whole soul… (Deut 4:27-29; trans. NETS).

Through retrospection, the Deuteronomist employs the icon parody to resist Israelite worship of other nations' gods in the context of Diaspora. The overt connection between idolatry and Diaspora is an important one: with the loss of political autonomy, Jews were at the mercy of gentile kings' legal protection as a minority group.[114] The internal referent of the icon parody is also preserved in the *Letter of Jeremiah*, written ca. 300 BCE from the vantage point of Israel's entrance into Babylon (Jer 29): "Now in Babylon you [exiled Jews] will see gods made of silver, of gold, of wood, being carried shoulder-high, and filling the pagans with fear. Be on your guard. Do not imitate the foreigners, do not have any fear of their gods… (*Let. Jer.* 6).[115] Both the Deuteronomist and the *Letter of Jeremiah* employ the icon parody as a means of self-differentiation, to posit the differences between Jewish aniconic-monotheism and gentile modes of iconic worship.[116] With the dawn of Hellenism, however, the inward focus of the icon parody

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[113] On this point, see Levtow's important comments in *Images of Others,* 18.
[114] On the connection between Diaspora and idolatry, see the perceptive comments by Tessak Rajak, *Translation and Survival*, 194-95.
[115] On the idol polemic of the *Letter of Jeremiah*, see P. C. Beentjes, "Satirical Polemics Against Idols and Idolatry in the Letter of Jeremiah (Baruch CH. 6)," in *Aspects of Religious Contact and Conflict in the Ancient World* (ed. P. W. van der Horst; Utrecht: Universiteit Utrecht, 1995), 121-34; H. D. Preuss, *Verspottung fremder Religionen im Alten Testament* (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1971), 262-64; and Jason von Ehrenkrook, *Sculpting Idolatry*, 49-55.
[116] I take the notion of self-differentiation from Levtow, *Images of Others,* 17.

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shifted polemically outward in coordination with some crucial developments in Jewish theology and social setting. Although it is highly doubtful this literature was intended for the eyes of gentiles, the icon parody ceased to denounce the Jewish believers *per se* and became, as John Barton and others have suggested, "a stick with which to beat foreign nations."[117]

The shift in rhetorical direction can be attributed to at least two factors. First, the crises of exile and subjugation to foreign monarchies during the Second Temple period demanded innovations in how Jews defended their exclusive monotheism amid the religions of the other. This point is especially evident among elite Diaspora Jews negotiating alien cult images within their own civic spaces (e.g., *Let. Aris.* 134-38; Wis 13-15; Philo, *Dec.* 51, 66-81, 156; *Spec.* 1.21-31; Jos., *C. Ap.* 2.236-49). The shift also mirrors early Judaism's more exclusive monotheism and aggressive stance toward cult-images; which, at this stage of history, were classified and indexed under the more polemically freighted term εἴδωλον (see 5.2).[118] Secondly, Jews' encounter with Hellenism exposed Jews to Greco-Roman philosophical monotheism and polemic against religious superstition.[119] On the one hand, Jews "poached" from this material to supplement their

[117] John Barton, "'The work of Humans Hands' in (Ps. 115.4): Idolatry in the Old Testament," *Ex Auditu* 15 (1999): 63-72, esp. 68. Johannes Tromp makes a similar point, but with more emphasis on the philosophical context: "The Hellenistic-Jewish polemics against idolatry are usually defensive and try to shield the Jewish believers against attacks from outside *by elevating the Jewish religion intellectually above the pagan religions.* In this respect, the later polemics [against images] differ fundamentally from the earlier examples in the Old Testament, which usually are aggressively directed against the Israelite believers themselves" (J. Tromp, "Critique of Idolatry," 105-120, here 118). See also the important comments by Daniel C. Harlow, quoted in section 4.3 of the previous chapter: "Idolatry and Alterity: Israel and the Nations in the *Apocalypse of Abraham*," in *The Other" in Second Temple Judaism: Essays in Honor of John J. Collins* (eds. Daniel C. Harlow et al., Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2011), 302-330, here 302. The association of idols with nations is found already in the Hebrew Bible (1 Chr 16:26; Pss 113:12; 134:15); it also surfaces in the Qumran community's pesher on Hab 2:18: "*Of what use is an idol that its maker should shape it, a molten image, a fatling of lies? For the craftsmen puts his trust in his own creation when he makes dumb idols [Hab 2:18]*. Interpreted, this saying concerns all the idols of the nations which they make so that they may serve and worship them. But they shall not deliver them on the Day of Judgment" (1QpHab 2:18; trans. Vermes).
[118] For an impressive overview of the Jewish usage of this term, see Terry Griffith, *Keep Yourselves from Idols,* 28-57.
[119] See M. P. Nilsson, *Geschichte der Griechischen Religion. 2. Die hellenistische und römische Zeit* (Munich: Beck, 1974), 569-78; Harrold W. Attridge, "The Philosophical critique of Religion under the Early Empire,"

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polemic against idols; on the other hand, the exposure to Greco-Roman philosophical reflections on monotheism demanded a proper Jewish response and re-appropriation to resist pagan culture *and* Jews assimilation to it.[120] To take one example from the Cynic-Stoic milieu, in the fourth epistle of the pre-Socratic Greek philosopher Heraclitus (ca. 535 – ca. 475 BCE), preserved in Diogenes Laertius, the materiality and temple culture of the cult of images is heavily criticized:

> You stupid men, teach us first what god is, so that you may be trusted when you speak of committing impiety. Secondly, where is God? Is he shut up in temples? (ποῦ δ'ἐστὶν ὁ θεός; ἐν τοῖς ναοῖς ἀποκεκλεισμένος;) You are a fine sort of pious men, who set up god in darkness! A man takes it as an insult if he is said to be stony (λίθινος εἰ λέγοιτο); but is a god truly spoken of whose honorific title is "He is born from crags?" You ignorant men, don't you know that god is not wrought by hands (οὐκ ἔστι θεὸς χειρότμητος), and has not from the beginning had a pedestal, and does not have a single enclosure? Rather the whole world is his temple, decorated with animals, plants, and stars.[121]

Heraclitus's critique of temples only finds one parallel in the Hebrew Bible (Isa 66:1-2). One can, however, find explicit critique of temples in the *Sibylline Oracles* (4.8-11), Josephus (*Ant.* 8.227-29), the Acts of the Apostles (in Stephen's speech in Acts 7:48) and Paul's speech on the Areopagus (in Acts 17:24). The critique of stone and images "wrought by the hands," however, finds significant counterpart in the Hebrew Bible, along with the Hellenistic- and Roman-Jewish icon parodies.[122] The striking overlap led Bernays in 1869 to suggest that Heraclitus's polemic is the product of a Bible reading author.[123] More recently, Attridge laid this theory to rest, showing that Heraclitus's polemic aligns with other Cynic-Stoic philosophers.[124] In the icon parodies of

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45-78; idem. *First-Century Cynicism in the Epistles of Heraclitus*, 13-23; and Stephen Mitchell and Peter Van Nuffeln eds., *One God: Pagan Monotheism in the Roman Empire* (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 2010).

[120] See, for example, Josephus's philosophical criticism of Greco-Roman religion in *C. Ap.* 2.236-49. For further discussion, especially on Jewish attempts to associate Yahweh with Zeus (e.g., *Arist.* 16; Josephus, *C. Ap.* 2.168ff), see Martin Hengel, *Judaism and Hellenism: Studies in their Encounter in Palestine during the Early Hellenistic Period* (trans. John Bowden; London: SCM Press, 1974), 261-67.

[121] English translation and Greek text taken from Harold W. Attridge, *First-Century Cynicism in the Epistles of Heraclitus*, 13ff., 59. See also A. M. Denis, *Fragmenta pseudepigraphorum quae supersunt Graeca* (Pseudepigrapha Veteris Testamenti Graece 3; Leiden, 1970), 157-60.

[122] See Harold W. Attridge, *First-Century Cynicism*, 13-23.

[123] Jacob Bernays, *Die heraklitischen Briefe* (Berlin: Hertz, 1869), 27-28.

[124] A number of these philosophical parodies are covered in section 6.4.4.D.

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the Hebrew Bible, therefore, Jewish apologists found a convenient literary medium from their own tradition that happened to coincide with Greco-Roman philosophical debates to meet their apologetic needs: namely, to attack the superstition of the religions of the Hellenistic and Roman empires as a means to defend and legitimate the philosophical superiority of Judaism's concept of God.[125] This strategy of resistance among Hellenistic Jews underlies the persuasive strategies of Paul's polemic against idols in the Areaopagus speech—a point that is especially evident in Luke's explicit polemic against temples (a concept he likely adopts from philosophers, not Judaism [e.g., Seneca, *Ep.* 95.47-50]).

The bulk of Jewish idol polemic is either universal in focus or targets mythmakers (Philo, *Spec.* 1.28-31), anthropomorphic images (*Let. Aris.* 134-36; Wis 13:13; 14:15; 15:16; Bar. 6:11 *Sib. Or.* 3.29-34, 3.721-23; Philo, *Prov.* 2.15; *Spec*. 1:10; Jos., *C. Ap.* 2.167) and Egyptian theriolatry (Wis 15:18-9; *Sib. Or.* 3.29-31; Philo, *Dec.* 76b-81; Jos., *C. Ap.* 2.81).[126] We also have evidence of the icon parody's re-contextualization during the Hellenistic and Roman periods to explicitly critique regal hubris. As Tessa Rajak observes, "In post-exilic literature, the kings were regularly, and graphically, epitomized by their idols."[127] To epitomize the antics of Gaius, Philo repeatedly polemicizes against his excessive associations with divinity (see sections 4.5.1.B and 5.2.1.B of our study). Other post-exilic authors employ typical motifs of the icon parody more explicitly to epitomize hubristic rulers. The Book of Daniel's resistance to Nebuchadnezzar's gold colossal (Daniel 1 – 7), for example, provided important material for an addition to Daniel in the Greek version called *Bel and the Dragon*. The text sets Daniel in the court of the Persian king Cyrus, who encourages Daniel to worship the Babylonian god Bel. Notably, Herodotus

[125] On Hellenistic Jews' attempt to make "common cause" with Greco-Roman philosophers through the icon parody, see John J. Collins, *Jewish Wisdom in the Hellenistic Age*, 212.
[126] On Jewish derision of Egyptians, see the chapter titled "The Egyptians as Ultimate Other" in Maren Niehoff, *Philo on Jewish Identity and Culture*, 45-74.
[127] Tessa Rajak, *Translation and Survival,* 194.

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observes that the Babylonians had a colossal of Bel eighteen feet tall in the "figure of a man" (*Hist.* 1.183). Daniel employs the critique of precious material to resist proskynesis before the idol: "Do not be deceived, O king, for this thing is only clay inside and bronze outside, and it never ate or drank anything" (*Bel*. 6). Although the Third Sibyl can view the Ptolemies in Messianic terms (*Sib. Or.* 3.652-56), the author suggests that anonymous Greek kings proliferated "many idols of dead gods" (πολλὰ θεῶν εἴδωλα καταφθιμένων θανεόντων) (*Sib. Or.* 3.545-555, see 4.3.2). The *Letter of Jeremiah*, drawing on Jer 10:5, associates idols with scarecrows in a cucumber patch (*Let. Jer.* 6.70), and polemicizes against deified rulers with a tripartite schema: (1) idols cannot elect kings to power (βασιλέα γὰρ χώρας οὐ μὴ ἀναστήσωσιν, *Let. Jer.* 6.52); (2) idols are visibly powerless before nations and kings and cannot offer resistance to kings (*Let. Jer.* 6.52, 56); and (3) idols cannot bless or curse kings (οὔτε γὰρ βασιλεῦσιν οὐ μὴ καταράσωνται οὔτε μὴ εὐλογήσωσι, *Let. Jer.* 6.65 LXX).[128]

Perhaps our best example of the icon parodies re-contextualization to critique royal hubris surfaces in 3 Maccabees (a text examined in detail in section 4.5.2.C of this study). After a detailed description of Ptolemy's persecution of Jews stemming from the *laographia* tax—including the branding of Jews with the ivy leaf of Dionysius (3 Macc 2:25-30)—the author of 3 Maccabees employs the icon parody to condemn Ptolemy's idolatry:

> The king was greatly and continually filled with joy, organizing feasts in honor of all his idols (πάντων τῶν εἰδώλων), with a mind alienated from truth and with a profane mouth, *praising speechless things that are not able even to communicate or to come to one's help*, and uttering improper words against the supreme God (τὰ μὲν κωφὰ καὶ μὴ δυνάμενα αὐτοῖς λαλεῖν ἢ ἀρήγειν ἐπαινῶν εἰς δὲ τὸν μέγιστον θεὸν τὰ μὴ καθήκοντα λαλῶν, 3 Macc 4:16).

[128] In contrast, Daniel claims that it is the God of Israel who ordains kings and brings rain: "He changes times and seasons, deposes kings and sets up kings…" (Dan 2:21). I adapt this tripartite schema from Rajak, *Translation and Survival,* 200.

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Idols' muteness is a recurrent motif of the icon parody (Isa 41:21-24; 44:9-20; 45:20-25; 46:1-13; Hab 2:18; Ps 115:1-8; Wis 13:10-19; *Jos. As.* 8:5; 12:5; 13:11; *Sib. Or.* 3.31; 4.7; 4.9, 28; 5.84; *Ep. Jer.* 6:7).[129] The scene draws similar paint strokes as the parody of King Belshazzar's impotent idols of precious material in the Book of Daniel (5:4, 23). The motif of muteness is employed to epitomize Ptolemy IV Philopator's idolatry. Although 3 Maccabees may have been written during the Roman era, the Raphia Decree sheds valuable light on the historical memory of Ptolemy IV. To be sure, we know from the Raphia Decree that Ptolemy IV received cult after the Battle of Raphia (June 22nd 217 BCE). Moreover, the Raphia Decree attributes Ptolemy's success in battle (Polybius V.85.5) to the gods, who give Ptolemy supernatural revelation and oracular visions so as to slay his enemies (Antiochus III) like Horus, the son of Isis (Austin, no. 276 lines 10ff). The remainder of the decree honors Ptolemy IV for his benefits and piety toward the gods. Because of Ptolemy's protection of Egyptian temples and benefits on cult and religion, "Many people brought him a gold crown, and announced that they would set up a royal statue in his honor and build him a temple, as the King was acting in a pious manner [i.e., toward the gods]" (Austin, no. 276). Notwithstanding the presence of Ptolemy's ruler cult, the author of Third Maccabees directs his polemic toward Ptolemy's idols (LXX, εἴδωλον). The episode shows how the icon parody could be employed in new imperial contexts to characterize and resist the ruling power.

The form and content of the Jewish icon parodies in their exilic and post-exilic contexts has been sufficiently explored by others.[130] What is lacking is an evaluation of how the hermeneutical context of this material changed as the elision of gods and kings became more

[129] N. Clayton Croy, *3 Maccabees*, 80.
[130] For a diachronic analysis, see M. W. Roth, "For Life He Appeals to Death," 21-47; H. D. Preuss, *Verspottung fremder Religionen*; Richard Liong-Seng Phua, *Idolatry and Authority,* 50-90; and Mireille Hadas-Lebel, *Jerusalem Against Rome,* 305-11.

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prevalent during the Hellenistic and Roman periods (see 2.3.1). In chapter two of the present study, an analysis of the system of benefaction revealed that parodying the material culture representing objects of power had implications for benefactors, gods, kings and the ideologies of power communicated through their representation in precious material (see 2.3.2).[131] The third chapter of this study, on the other hand, tested these relationships in the epigraphic record. The epigraphic record showed that gods and kings were not independent, ontologically compartmentalized modes of visual and epigraphic thought. Rather, they were an integrated and interdependent matrix of power represented in a hybrid iconography and epigraphy with honors like the gods (ἰσόθεοι τιμαί; *SEG* 41.75), as temple-sharing gods (σύνναος θεός; *OGIS* 332) and, in at least one case, as σύνθρονος with the gods (*OGIS* 383). The integration of royal ideology and divine power evaluated in chapters two and three can be summarized by a provocative second century CE papyrus manuscript quoted by Simon Price: “What is a god? Wielding power. What is a king? Like a god" (τὶ θεός; τὸ κρατοῦν. τὶ βασιλεύς; ἰσόθεος).[132] With this background in mind, the descriptor "anti-imperial" is too reductionistic for the universal scope and allusive diction of the icon parody since it would reduce its referent to Caesar/empire alone. Rather, it is argued in the remainder of this study that the icon parody is a discourse of power that functioned more universally as an "alter-cultural" medium of resistance wherein the *Weltanschauung* of early Judaism confronts Greco-Roman conceptions of deity, monarchy and euergetic cult honors that underlie the visibility of gods and kings.[133]

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[131] If one takes Olivier Hekster and Richard Fowler's definition of royal ideology at face-value—"as the entire scheme or structure of pubic images, utterances and manifestations by which a monarchical regime depicts itself and asserts and justifies its right to rule"—then one must take into account that, in certain settings, Jews' critique of allusive images could evoke a critique of imperial ideology. See Olivier Hekster and Richard Fowler, *Imaginary Kings: Royal Images in the Ancient Near East, Greece and Rome* (München: Franz Steiner Verlag, 2005), 16.
[132] Quoted from S. R. F. Price, *Rituals and Power,* 234. Price quotes from *Philogus* 80 (1925): 339.
[133] The phrase "counter cosmology" is also used by Anathea Portier-Young, *Apocalpyse Against Empire,* 383.

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The polyvalent rhetorical texture of the LXX icon parody ought not lead to interpretative paralysis. By the time of the composition of the Wisdom of Solomon at the dawn of the Augustan era we have full-blown evidence that the icon parody was re-contextualized to overtly critique emperor worship (Wis 14:16-21). The remainder of this study will focus on Ps-Solomon's polemic against idolatry and its potential for animating Paul's polemic against idols in Romanized Athens. Because of the regional variation of ruler cults, the remainder of this chapter aims to read the Wisdom of Solomon's dissertation against idols within the setting of Roman Egypt and Ps-Solomon's larger program to resist unjust rulers. The neglect of the Wisdom of Solomon among Biblical scholars interested in Jewish resistance literature is striking. For example, McClaren's recent article on Jews and the imperial cult does not mention the Wisdom of Solomon.[134] Likewise, Leo Perdue's recent book on wisdom literature and empire situates the Wisdom of Solomon in its historical context, but fails to identify *what* Ps-Solomon resists, *what* his literary strategy of resistance is, and what *exactly* the political attitude of Ps-Solomon is altogether.[135] Even more recently, Perdue and Carter's post-colonial reading of Israel and early Judaism make no mention of the Wisdom of Solomon (nor Philo for that matter).[136] Finally, despite Ps-Solomon's evocation of apocalyptic motifs, both Portier-Young and Horsley fail to discuss Wisdom in their respective book-length studies on empire and apocalyptic literature. Though the Wisdom of Solomon is not a full-blown apocalypse, its attitude of cultural antagonism and mixed genre—including sapiential, rhetorical and apocalyptic motifs—raises an important question in light of Horsley and Portier-Young's work: namely, does Ps-Solomon employ apocalyptic imagery and judgment in Wis 5:17-23 as a strategy for resisting empire?[137]

[134] McLaren, "Jews and the Imperial Cult," 257-278.
[135] Leo G. Perdue, *The Sword and the Stylus*, 292-355
[136] Leo G. Perdue and Warren Carter, *Israel and Empire* (ed. Colemand Baker).
[137] See Anathea-Portier Young, *Apocalypse Against Empire;* and Richard Horsley, *Revolt of the Scribes.*

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Before turning to a comparative analysis of Ps-Solomon's polemic against idols and the Areopagus speech in the next chapter, what follows aims to (1) reconstruct the socio-political conditions of Augustan Egypt for Diaspora Jews and (2) evaluate Ps-Solomon's mini-apocalypse against the backdrop of Augustan and Greco-Egyptian hegemony in Alexandria, Egypt. Such an analysis is justified in order to better understand the Wisdom of Solomon's attitude toward Rome and how the excursus on idolatry fits into Ps-Solomon's larger program to oppose political idolatry and unjust rulers.

5.3.1 The Wisdom of Solomon and Alexandrian Judaism

The Wisdom of Solomon is traditionally divided into three sections: 1:1 – 6:21 (Book of Eschatology); 6:22 – 10:21 (Book of Wisdom); and 11 – 19 (Book of History).[138] A recurring motif in all three sections is a negative portrayal of gentile rulers, including a criticism of Roman hegemony through a mini-apocalyptic scenario, where the creation itself will rise up to "overturn the thrones of rulers" (Wis 5:17-23); a censure of rulers' embellished ontological status through the example of Solomon (Wis 7:1-6, see section 4.5.2.D of our study)[139]; and, ultimately, a polemic against rulers' cultic media (Wis 14:16-21). That Ps-Solomon directs his criticism toward the Roman imperial cults becomes acute in the Book of History's *digressio* on pagan idolatry (13:1 – 15:19). In reaction to the ethnic tensions that Alexandrian Jews experienced after Augustus's annexation of Egypt, Ps-Solomon blends philosophical and Jewish anti-idol polemic into what Barclay calls, "The most sustained attack on gentile religiosity that we have from the

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[138] See Addison Wright, "The Structure of the Book of Wisdom," *Bib* 48 (1967) 165-84. On the *Forschungsgeschichte* of Wisdom's structure, see the helpful article by Maurice Gilbert, "The Literary Structure of the Book of Wisdom," in *Deuterocanonical and Cognate Literature Yearbook 2005* (ed. Angelo Passaro and Giuseppe Bellia; New York: Walter de Gruyter, 2005), 19-32.
[139] See Maurice Gilbert, "Your Sovereignty Comes From the Lord," in *La Sagesse de Salomon: Recueil d' etudes* (Rome: Biblical Institute Press, 1973), 121-140, here 127; and U. Wilcken, *Griechische Ostraka aus Aegypten und Nubien* (Berlin: Gieseke & Devrient, 1999), 787-89.

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pen of a Diaspora Jew."[140] Ps-Solomon's criticism of monarchs who "lived at a distance" (14:17) and subjects who "flatter the absent one as though present" (14:17) provides an unmistakable reference to the Roman era.[141] It is noteworthy that Ps-Solomon embeds his criticism of Rome within a larger parody of various forms of Greco-Egyptian idolatry. For Ps-Solomon, emperor worship did not have a preeminent place in Greco-Egyptian religion—rather, it stood alongside the superstition associated with Egyptian theriolatry (13:14), Castor and Pollux (14:1), hero cults (14:15), Dionysus (14:23) and the universal *τέχνη* of the idol artisan (15:9, etc).[142] To criticize these false forms of worship, Ps-Solomon blends Isaiah's polemic against idolatry with Greco-Roman philosophical traditions for a new imperial context in Roman Egypt.

The social setting of the Wisdom of Solomon is often discerned based on a recognizable conflict in the world behind the text. David Winston, followed by others, argues that Ps-Solomon's apocalyptic vision of the wicked's destruction in Wis 5:17-23 could only be evoked by a "desperate historical situation."[143] Not surprisingly, Winston pinpoints the historical situation to the stressors of Gaius Caligula in 37-41 CE. Since the publication of Winston's commentary, scholars have become increasingly reticent to pinpoint Wisdom's setting to the time of Caligula, opting instead for a more ambiguous date around the dawn of the Roman era.[144]

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[140] See John M. G. Barclay, *Jews in the Mediterranean Diaspora*, 181-191.
[141] On the imperial cults in Egypt, see Fritz Blumenthal, *Der ägyptische Kaiserkult AfP* 5 (1913): 317-345; Gregory Steven Dundas, *Pharaoh, Basileus and Imperator: The Roman Imperial Cult in Egypt* (Los Angeles: University of California, 1994); and Frederike Herklotz, *Prinzeps und Pharao: Der Kult Des Augustus in Ägypten* (Frankfurt: Verlag Antike, 2007).
[142] On the Greco-Egyptian gods that Ps-Solomon criticizes, see: Marir Françoise Baslez, "The Author of Wisdom and the Cultured Environment of Alexandria," in *The Book of Wisdom in Modern Research: Studies on Tradition, Redaction, and Theology* (ed. Angelo Passaro and Giuseppe Bellia; New York: Walter de Gruyter, 2005), 83-116.
[143] David Winston, *The Wisdom of Solomon: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* (New York: DoubleDay, 1979), 23.
[144] So John J. Collins, *Jewish Wisdom in the Hellenistic Age,* 178-79; and John M. G. Barclay, *Jews in the Mediterranean Diaspora*, 191.

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Alternatively, other scholars like David DeSilva affirm a Roman setting yet leave room for ambiguity by appealing to Jews' conflict with Hellenism. DeSilva writes:

> A situation of open persecution is not required in order to understand the ferocious passion with which the author [Pseudo-Solomon] narrates the 'annihilation of the wicked' ... For centuries, the Jews under the cultural hegemony of Hellenism had been struggling to find ways to reaffirm their ancestral heritage ... Such rhetoric as we find in Wisdom would have been a welcome reinforcement for Jewish commitment *at any period.*[145]

While it is true that the Wisdom of Solomon does not need a situation of open persecution to explain the cosmic judgment of the wicked, it is hard to imagine that Alexandrian Jews' acculturation to Hellenism could stimulate such vituperative invective. Ps-Solomon's adoption of Greek language, Stoic philosophy and Greco-Roman rhetorical conventions betrays a purported negative attitude toward the "cultural hegemony of Hellenism." Ps-Solomon *is* an acculturated Hellenistic Jew who is more likely responding to local ethnic tensions under the hegemony of imperial power. DeSilva's assertion that Wisdom's rhetoric would be welcome "at any period" also overlooks the remarkable religious and political autonomy Alexandrian Jews experienced during the Ptolemaic dynasty. Lambasting the Ptolemaic kings would be rhetorical suicide for Jews living in Egypt, resulting in a loss rather than affirmation of their religious autonomy.

That the Wisdom of Solomon was written in Alexandria, Egypt is indicated by Wisdom's invective toward Egyptian theriolatry (Wis 13 – 14), animosity toward Egypt through its retelling of the Exodus narrative (Wis 10 – 19) and parallels with Philo (e.g., Wis 7:22//*Spec.* 1.80-81). Founded in 331 BCE by Alexander the Great, the Hellenization of Alexandria in the aftermath of Alexander's military conquests is acutely described by the first century BCE Greek historian, Diodorus Siculus:

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[145] David DeSilva, *Introducing the Apocrypha: Message, Context and Significance* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2002), 133. Conversely, John Collins argues that the judgment of the wicked evokes a "quasi-philosophical argument about the profitability of justice, rather than a veiled historical commentary" (*Jewish Wisdom in the Hellenistic Age*, 179).

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YUNIBESITHI YA PRETORIA

> And not only Alexander, but those who after him ruled Egypt down to our own time, with few exceptions have enlarged this with lavish additions. The city in general has grown so much in later times that many reckon it to be the first city of the civilized world, and it is certainly far ahead of all the rest in elegance and extent and riches and luxury. The number of its inhabitants surpasses that of those in other cities. At the time when we were in Egypt, those who kept the census returns of the population said that its free residents were more than three hundred thousand, and that the king received from the revenues of the country more than six thousand talents (Diod. Sic. 17.52.5-6).[146]

Dio's observation that Alexander and his Successor kings enlarged the city with "lavish additions" indicates the degree to which Alexandria was imbued with the Hellenistic spirit. Moreover, Dio's knowledge of a census with its impressive tax returns evokes the sheer wealth and power of the Ptolemaic Kings who oversaw Egypt from 302-31 BCE. As Victor Tcherikover comments, "The Ptolemies were also regarded in principle as the owners of all the soil of Egypt."[147] The mentality of ownership is also reflected in the Roman era; for example, Philo records Flaccus saying that the emperor has given him rule over "the greatest of all his possessions, namely, Egypt" (*Flacc.* 158). Though Alexandria was in Egypt, its Latin name *Alexandria ad Aegyptum* (Alexandria near Egypt) clarifies that it was distinct from its surroundings in North Africa.[148] That is to say, the eponymously named Alexandria, after Alexander himself, was an outpost of Hellenistic culture and imperial ideology on the continent of Africa that Dio considered "the first city of the civilized world."

Aside from Alexandria's vibrant intellectual culture centered in the *mouseion*, Alexandria also had a famous lighthouse (the *pharos*) and the *Sema,* which held the bodies of the Ptolemaic kings, including the body of Alexander the Great.[149] Alexandria's possession of Alexander's body

[146] See also Strabo's description of Alexandria (*Geogr.* 17.1.8).
[147] Victor Tcherikover, *Hellenistic Civilization and the Jews* (Grand Rapids: Baker 1999), 11.
[148] See Marjoria S. Venit, "Alexandria" in *The Dictionary of Early Judaism,* 319-322.
[149] Allan B. Lloyd, "The Ptolemaic Period (332-30BC)," in *The Oxford History of Ancient Egypt* (Oxford: Oxford University, 2000), 395-421, here 404.

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was a powerful stimulus for Ptolemaic political propaganda.[150] Indeed, Alexandria's commitment to architecture and the life of the mind "should in ideological terms be understood as an effort to promulgate the exemplary wisdom expected of the king."[151] The Wisdom of Solomon's pseudepigraphy, therefore, effectively embeds its exhortation in the exemplar King of ancient Israel—King Solomon—whose wisdom and architectural accomplishments create a stark contrast to the wisdom, power and extravagant lifestyle of the Ptolemaic and Roman rulers.

The strong presence of Jews in Alexandria during the Ptolemaic and Roman eras creates a complex imperial context for the Wisdom of Solomon. As discussed in chapters two and three, it is important to recognize that Egypt had a long history of deifying their rulers long before the arrival of Augustus. For example, the long history of deifying the Egyptian Pharaohs set a precedent for the deification of Alexander the Great and his Successor kings for their benefaction and raw military power. In his monumental study on Alexandria, Fraser observes: "The dynastic cult nowhere found fuller and more complex expression than in Ptolemaic Egypt."[152] Imperial titles like savior, benefactor, and Lord find their origins in the Ptolemaic and Seleucid warrior Kings rather than the Roman imperial cults. To be sure, Alexander's first successor king in Alexandria, Ptolemy Lagos, changed his name to Ptolemy I Soter in 305 BCE, and thereafter claimed to be the dynastic successor of Alexander the Great and the Egyptian Pharaohs (other popular religious titles for Ptolemaic kings were *euergetes*, "benefactor"; and *epiphanes,* "the god manifest").[153] Beyond the evocation of titles derived from Greek religion, the Ptolemaic dynasty was able to strategically ratify its hegemonic authority over Egypt by embedding itself in

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[150] Allan B. Lloyd, "The Ptolemaic Period," 404.
[151] Gunther Hölbl, *A History of Ptolemaic Egypt* (trans. Tina Saavedra; New York: Routledge, 2001), 91.
[152] P. M. Fraser, *Ptolemaic Egypt*, 214.
[153] For Egyptian influence on Ptolemaic titulary, see: Hölbl, *A History of Ptolemaic Egypt*, 111-12.

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the cults of the Egyptian *and* Greek traditional gods (see the Canopus decree and Rosetta stone in 3.4.1-2).

It would be easy to embellish the relationship between Ptolemaic rulers and the Alexandrian Jewish community to depict an a-historical situation of forced ruler worship. But this would be to have an *a priori* hermeneutical agenda. Aside from the anti-Jewish campaign of Ptolemy IV Philopator (221 – 203 BCE) in 3 Maccabees (which likely reflects a Roman dating, see section 4.5.2.C), the Ptolemaic period was a time of relative peace for Jews in Alexandria who were afforded religious and political rights.[154] Naturally, Alexandrian Jews' exclusive monotheism prohibited their participation in the cultic honors of Greco-Egyptian gods. However, as Fraser has noted, "there was one important aspect of religious life in the capital which the Jews could not ignore: the cult of the Ptolemies."[155] The primary evidence for Jews' relationship with the Ptolemaic rulers comes from inscriptions on synagogues and their furniture honoring the king as a benefactor. Though the majority of the inscriptions come from the *chora* rather than Alexandria, the formula employed overlaps enough in each inscription to imply their agreement in form and content.[156] In order to preserve fidelity to Jews' monotheism, the inscriptions carefully employ ὑπέρ with the genitive rather than the dative "to the king." Nine of the primary inscriptions from Ptolemaic Egypt are reproduced as follows:[157]

1. Schedia (246-221 BCE): "On behalf of King Ptolemy and Queen Berenice, his sister and wife, and their children, the Jews [dedicated] this prayerhouse" (Horbury and Noy, 22).

[154] Notably, Josephus places the persecution against Alexandrian Jews under the reign of Ptolemy VII Physcon (146-117 BCE) in *C. Ap.* 2.49-56. Both accounts may reflect legendary embellishments.
[155] P. M. Fraser, *Ptolemaic Egypt*, 282.
[156] See P. M. Fraser, *Ptolemaic Egypt*, 226, 282-83.
[157] For English translations of nos. 1-8 (my list, *DJS*), see: Leo Perdue, *The Sword and the Stylus*, 332-34. For Greek, see William Horbury and David Noy, *Jewish Inscriptions of Graeco-Roman Egypt: With An Index of the Jewish Inscriptions of Egypt and Cyrenaica* (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 1992).

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2. Athribis (ca. 180-145 BCE): "On behalf of King Ptolemy and Queen Cleopatra, Ptolemy son of Epicydus, the commander of the guard, and the Jews in Athribis [dedicated] the prayerhouse to the Highest God" (Horbury and Noy, 27).[158]

3. Athribis (180-145BCE): "On behalf of King Ptolemy and Queen Cleopatra and their children, Hermias and his wife Philotera and their children [dedicated] this *exedra* for the prayerhouse" (Horbury and Noy, 28).

4. Nitriai (ca. 140-116 BCE): "On behalf of King Ptolemy and Queen Cleopatra, his sister, and Queen Cleopatra, his wife, (our) Benefactors, the Jews of Nitriai (dedicated) the prayerhall and its appurtenances" (Horbury and Noy, 25).

5. Xenephris (144-116 BCE): "the Jews of Xenephris [dedicated] the gateway of the prayerhosue when Theodorus and Achillion were benefactors" (Horbury and Noy, 24).

6. Alexandria: (ca. 2nd cent. BCE): "To the highest God [who hears prayer] the holy [precinct and] the prayer[house and the app]urtenances [were dedicated]" (Horbury and Noy, 9).

[158] The sentiment of underprivileged Jews toward the ruling power behind these dedications is lost to us. However, we are on more certain exegetical ground within the literary culture of the Septuagint. With this in mind, it is striking that the synagogue inscription at Athribis juxtaposes the phrase "On behalf of King Ptolemy and Queen Cleopatra" with "to God Most High" (θεῶι ὑψίστωι), a frequent LXX adjective for exalting Yahweh (e.g., Gen 14:18, 19, 20, 22; Num 25:16; Deut 32:8; 2 Sam 22:14; 1 Esdras 2:3; 6:31; 8:19; 8:21; 9:46; Jud 18:18; Tob 1:13; 4:11; 2 Macc 3:31; 3 Macc 6:2; 7:9; Pss 7:17; 9:2; 13:6, etc.; Wis 5:15; 6:3; 9:17; Sir 4:10; 7:9, 15; 9:15; 12:2, etc.; Mic 6:6; Isa 14:14; 57:15; Lam 3:35, 38; Dan 2:18, 19; 3:26; 4:14, 24, 34, 37; 7:18, 22, 25, 27). That ὕψιστος could be used subversively is evident in Alexandrian Jewish literature from the dawn of the Augustan era. The Wisdom of Solomon's closing address to rulers in the "Book of Eschatology" (1:1–6:21) uses the word ὕψιστος to critically invert notions of imperial power: "For your dominion (ἡ κράτησις) was given you from the Lord, and your sovereignty (ἡ δυναστεία) from the Most High (παρὰ ὑψίστου); he will search out your works and inquire into your plans" (Wis 6:3). The use of κράτησις here recalls the Jewish conviction that the purported might of earthly kings is subordinate to the "Most High" (ὕψιστος), reminding us that Jews versed in the idiolect of the LXX may not have read the dedication "to the Most High God" at Athribis innocuously. For further comment, see section 5.3.3 below. The word ὕψιστος is also used subversively in an embedded letter from Ptolemy IV Philopator (222-203 BCE) to the Alexandrian Jews in the final chapter of 3 Maccabees. In response to Ptolemy's failed persecution of the Jews, Ptolemy warns against future attempts to "devise any evil against them" because the Jews "always shall have not a mortal but the Ruler over every power, the Most High God…" (θεὸν ὕψιστον, 3 Macc 7:9). The episode again highlights the subordinate status of imperial authorities and, as N. Clayton Croy points out, it warns those who might attempt to "fight against God" (e.g., 2 Macc 7:19; Acts 5:39). See N. Clayton Croy, *3 Maccabees*, 112. The idiosyncratic and allusive language of the Septuagint created flexible semantic domains—notably, Zeus was also given the epithet ὕψιστος (Pindar *Nem.* 1.60; Aeschylus, *Eum.* 28; Sophocles, *Phil.* 1289; Paus. 9.8.5). The hybrid usage of these epithets provides an overlooked backdrop for Luke's polemical use of ὕψιστος against Greco-Roman religion in the Acts of the Apostles. For example, Stephen proclaims: Yet the Most High (ὁ ὕψιστος) does not dwell in houses made with human hands" (Acts 7:48). Moreover, the girl possessed by the spirit of Apollo proclaims that Paul and his travelling companions "are slaves of the Most High God (δοῦλοι τοῦ θεοῦ τοῦ ὑψίστου) who proclaim to you a way of salvation" (Acts 16:17). For further comment on the LXX usage of the title *Ho theos ho hupsistos*, see Rajak, *Translation and Survival,* 187-88.

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7. Arsinoe-Crocodilopolis in the Fayum (246-221 BCE): "On behalf of King Ptolemy son of Ptolemy and Queen Berenice his wife and sister and their children, the Jews of the city of the Crocodiles [dedicated] the prayerhouse" (*CPJ* 3:164, 1532A).

8. Alexandria (ca. 37 BCE): "On behalf of the Qu[een] and K[ing], Alypsus made the prayer ho[use] for the Highest God who hears prayer, in the fifteenth year in the month Mecheir" (*CIJ* 1432; Horbury and Noy, 13).

9. Alexandria (ca. 47-31 BCE): "On the orders of the Queen and king, in place of the previous plaque about the dedication of the prayer hall let what is written below be inscribed. King Ptolemy Euergetes (proclaimed) the prayer hall inviolate" (Horbury and Noy, 125).[159]

The inscriptions are, for the most part, politically innocuous, showing the degree with which Jews were willing to accommodate to empire for the sake of preserving their right to practice their ancestral traditions (and achieve the coveted right of *asylia*).[160] But as Barclay notes, the synagogue inscriptions never refer to the kings by their full divine titles, opting instead to acknowledge them simply as βασιλεύς and βασίλισσα.[161] It is worth noting that the nuance in syntax was not lost on the ruling power. The mad Gaius, for example, articulates his discontent that Jews did not sacrifice "to me" (οὐ γὰρ ἐμοὶ τεθύκατε, *Legat.* 357). In this way, the formulas employed in the dedications were an act of circumvention: an attempt to conciliate the good will of the ruling power without compromising Jewish aniconic-monotheistic convictions.

Jewish inscriptions in Egypt illuminate the Jews' right to practice their exclusive monotheism under the Ptolemies.[162] Of the extant literature available, there is little evidence that

[159] English translation from Michael White, "Capitalizing on the Imperial Cult: Some Jewish Perspectives," 173-214, here 204.
[160] P. M. Fraser points to an inscription probably under Euergetes II, which confers *asylia* on a Jewish synagogue. See *OGIS* 761 lines 1ff. *Ptolemaic Alexandria*, 283 n. 772. For further comment, see also Smallwood, *Philonis Alexandrini,* 225.
[161] John M. G. Barclay, *Jews in the Mediterranean Diaspora*, 31.
[162] But see the accusations of Jews being "misanthropic and inhospitable" in Diodorus 40.3.

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the Ptolemaic ruler cults impinged upon Jewish worship practices.[163] This is corroborated by Philo of Alexandria who, responding to Gaius Caligula's attempt to erect images of himself in Alexandrian synagogues, reflects favorably on Jews' right to worship Yahweh alone during the Ptolemaic period. Philo writes,

> In three hundred years there was a succession of ten Ptolemies, yet they [Alexandrian Jews] made no dedication of images or statues in synagogues (εἰκόνων ἢ ἀνδριάντων ἐν προσευχαῖς), although they were of the same race and kin to them, and they were regarded by them as gods, and described and spoken of as gods (*Legat.* 138).

Likewise, Josephus records that, in contrast to Apion, the Successors practiced "extreme kindness" toward the Jews (*C. Ap.* 2.48).[164] Although Philo's and Josephus's appreciation for Jews' situation under the Ptolemies is influenced by their rhetorical interests, the memory of the privileged status of Jews during the period leading up to Rome's annexation of Egypt is, for the most part, historically accurate. But Jews' experience of autonomy amid Ptolemaic power does not negate the possibility that the Septuagint allowed for allusive, polyvalent strategies of literary opposition toward those parts of Ptolemaic imperial ideology and power that were incompatible with Jewish identity. Though the exact nature of Jews' citizenship rights (*politeuma*) in Alexandria are muddled by apologetic aims (Jos. *War* 2.487), legendary embellishments (*Aristeas*), and fragmentary sources (Jos. *Ant.* 14.187), it is clear from Strabo, reported through Josephus, that Jews were allowed to have their own Ethnarch in Alexandria who governed "just as if he were the head of a sovereign state" (*Ant.* 14.114-18). The Jews' privileged status and freedom to function almost as a "state within the state" under the Ptolemies does not engender

[163] The only exceptions are the persecutions of the Jews, including their purported trampling by elephants. The same event is recorded under different rulers: Ptolemy IV Philopator (221-203 BCE) in 3 Maccabbees and Ptolemy VII Physcon (146-117 BCE) in *C. Ap*. 2.49-56.

[164] Additional examples of positive Jewish portrayals of the Ptolemies include Josephus, *War* 2.437-89 and *C. Ap.* 2.69; Ptolemy VI Philometor (180-145 BCE) in *Sib. Or.* 3.652-56; and Ptolemy II Philadelphus in Philo, *Mos.* 2:28-31.

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the tensions found between rulers and the ruled in the Wisdom of Solomon.[165] Even so, the cultic honor of the Ptolemaic kings and the privileged status of Jews likely shaped pseudo-Solomon's memory and, thus—his political and theological imagination.

5.3.2 The AEGVPTO CAPTA and Alexandrian Judaism

The socio-political conditions of Alexandrian Jews changed remarkably after Augustus's annexation of Egypt in 30 BCE. Augustus's defeat of Marc Antony and Cleoptra devastated Greek hopes that Cleopatra would restore the Ptolemaic dynasty to its former glory.[166] That Roman rule was resisted by native Egyptians and some Greeks is indicated by Dio Cassius: "Thus was Egypt enslaved. All the inhabitants who resisted for a time were finally subdued..." (51.17.4).[167] The enslavement and imperial domination of Egypt by Augustus is exemplified by silver denarius minted by Augustus with the phrase AEGVPTO CAPTA (Egypt captured) over the image of a wild crocodile (e.g., BM Coins, Rom. Emp. I 106 nos. 650-5).[168] This numismatic message evoked a powerful image of Egypt—the wild crocodile—as tamed and subdued by the superior power of Augustus.[169] Although Augustus' visit to Egypt is not well attested in extant literature, the Res Gestae provides a terse note that "I [Augustus] handed Egypt over to the rule of the Roman people" (Αἴγυπτον δήμου Ῥωμαίων ἡγεμονίαι προσέθηκα; *Aegyptum imperio populi [Ro]mani adieci*, trans. Cooley; Res Gest. 27).[170] The sentiment of domination is also reproduced on the base of an obelisk, which reads that Egypt "had been reduced to the power of the Roman

[165] Barclay, *Jews in the Mediterranean Diaspora,* 43.
[166] Idem., 48.
[167] Strabo reports that the first Roman prefect, C. Cornelius Gallus, had to put down a rebellion in Thebaid due to Roman taxes imposed on them (17.1.53). See Friederike Herklotz, "*Aegypto Capta:* Augustus and the Annexation of Egypt," 17.
[168] H. Mattingly, *Coins of the Roman Empire in the British Museum* I. *Augustus to Vitellius* (London: British Museum, 1923). For comment, see Hölbl, *A History of the Ptolemaic Empire,* 311.
[169] For comment, see Friederike Herklotz, "*Aegypto Capta*, 18.
[170] Text and translation from Alison E. Cooley, *Res Gestae,* 93.

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people" (*Aegypto in potestatem populi Romani redacta* [CIL VI 702]).[171] The hubris of Augustus is further indicated in a telling passage from Suetonius, who records that Augustus asked to see the body of Alexander the Great in the Sema when he visited Alexandria:

> At this time he [Augustus] had a desire to see the sarcophagus and body of Alexander the Great, which, for that purpose, were taken out of the cell in which they rested; and after viewing them for some time, he paid honours to the memory of that prince, by offering a golden crown, and scattering flowers upon the body. Being asked if he wished to see the tombs of the Ptolemies also; he replied, *"I wish to see a king, not dead men.*" (*Aug.*18.1).

Cassius Dio, on the other hand, records that Augustus felt Alexander's body so forcefully that "a piece of his nose was broken off!" (Dio 51.16:5). In Suetonius's account, Augustus belittles the Ptolemaic kings as "dead men," which indicates Augustus's superior power and political vision of world conquest akin to Alexander the Great. The status of Augustus as a deified military king like Alexander the Great is further indicated by the inauguration of an officially Roman era in Egypt, titled *kaisaros kratesis theou huiou,* which reoriented cosmic time around the beginning of Augustus' *dominio* over Egypt (Cass. Dio 51.19.6).[172]

The *Aegypto capta* interrupted Egypt's long tradition of organizing its cosmic order around the Pharaoh and, subsequently, the Ptolemaic kings. The cosmic order of Egypt, centered around the highpriesthood in Memphis, was intimately bound up with the physical presence of a king. As Gregory S. Dundas writes, "The most fundamental role of the king was to preserve the cosmic order, known as *maat,* the loss of which signified a reversion to chaos. The preservation of *maat* was effected in numerous ways, the most important of which was the carrying out of innumerable rituals and festivals."[173] One such ritual was the coronation of the Phaoronic king through an offering to the Apis bull in Memphis, which was administered by the Egyptian high

[171] Quoted from Alison E. Cooley, *Res Gestae,* 229.
[172] Herklotz, "*Aegypto Capta*, 15.
[173] Gregory S. Dundas, "Augustus and the Kingship of Egypt," *Historia*: *Zeitschrift für Alte Geschichte* 51 (2002): 433-448, here 444.

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priest. Unlike the Ptolemaic kings who submitted to this ritual, Augustus refused to honor the Apis bull in Memphis because "he was accustomed to worship gods, not cattle" (Cass. Dio 51.16.5).[174] Scholars have historically interpreted Cassius Dio's remarks as an indication of Augustus' hatred for all things Egyptian; however, as Dundas argues, Augustus's refusal to honor the Apis bull illustrates his vision of superseding the Ptolemaic kings by "indicating to a newly conquered people that they were now entering an entirely new era in their history, as a province in the huge Roman Empire."[175] The *Aegypto capta* did not revert Egypt to a state of chaos, but it did fundamentally restructure its cosmic hierarchy: for the first time in five millennia, Egypt was ruled by a distant king.

Despite Augustus's refusal to be officially coronated as a Pharaonic King, he still received a divine titulary, an honor usually bestowed at the coronation service in Memphis. Notably, far from an act of political flattery by the Egyptian high priesthood, it is now accepted that Augustus himself influenced his titulary due to its radical break with those used for the Pharaohs and Ptolemaic kings. Like the Ptolemaic kings, Augustus upheld the two faces of the king—one that was Roman and the other Egyptian—but altered the traditional titulary to three components: the Horus name, the dual king title and the Son of Re' title.[176] According to Herklotz, by the year 9 of Augustus' rule, the dual king name was radically altered to include "the Roman" and *"autokrator."*[177] Furthermore, the Romanization of traditional Phaoraonic titulature is evident in several inscriptions that bear the title, "whose power is incomparable in

[174] For the Ptolemaic Kings sacrificing to Apis, see: Hölbl, *A History of the Ptolemaic Empire*, 81.
[175] Dundas, "Augustus and the Kingship of Egypt" 442. Furthermore, according to Dundas, all Pharaohs had a set of five names in the following order: "1) Horus name; (2) Two Goddesses name; (3) Golden Horus name; (4) Crown name; and (5) given name…" (p. 445 n. 60).
[176] Herklotz, "*Aegypto Capta*, 14.
[177] Idem., 14.

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the city par excellence that he loves, Rome" (no. 142 [=*IGRR* 1295]).[178] The introduction of Roman motifs to Augustus' titulary—which supplanted the Egyptian traditional gods—relocated power from Memphis to the new conqueror, centered in Rome. This relocation of power subordinated Egypt under Caesar's *κράτησις*, introducing into Egypt a power over the cosmos that was alien to its ancestral traditions.

That Augustus cared about his image in Egypt is indicated by the introduction of official imperial cults that, naturally, replaced Ptolemaic ruler cults. Augustus' brilliance in construing symbols in service of his power is evident in Egypt. Much like his unprecedented transformation of public space through temple, image and sacrifice in the Greek East; Egypt, too, experienced the introduction of Roman imperial cult media.[179] It is notable that Philo of Alexandria observes that "the whole world gives honors to Augustus equal to those of the Olympian gods" (*πᾶσα ἡ οἰκουμένη τὰς ἰσολυμπίους αὐτῷ τιμὰς ἐψηφίσαντο*, *Legat.* 149). To illustrate the honors given to Augustus, Philo further comments on the imperial cult media present in the city of Alexandria itself, including an official imperial cult temple elevated along the harbor of the city (i.e., *ὁ ναὼς τοῦ Σεβαστοῦ*; Pliny, *Nat.* 36.69; Strabo, *Geogr.* 17.1.9; C Pap. Jud. II 153.60-1). Philo provides the most descriptive extant comments on the complex:

> (150) *καὶ μαρτυροῦσι ναοί, προπύλαια, προτεμενίσματα στοαί, ὡς ὅσαι τῶν πόλεων ἢ νέα ἢ παλαιά ἔργα φέρουσι μεγαλοπρεπῆ τῷ κάλλει καὶ μεγέθει τῶν Καισαρείων παρευημερεῖσθαι, καὶ μάλιστα κατὰ τὴν ἡμετέραν Ἀλεξάνδρειαν.* (151) *οὐδὲν γὰρ τοιοῦτόν ἐστι τέμενος, οἷον τὸ λεγόμενον Σεβαστεῖον, ἐπιβατηρίου Καίσαρος νεώς ὃς ἀντικρὺ τῶν εὐορμοτάτων λιμένων μετέωρος ἵδρυται μέγιστος καὶ ἐπιφανέστατος καὶ οἷος οὐχ ἑτέρωθι*

[178] Dundas, "Augustus and the Kingship of Egypt," 444.
[179] The deification of the Pharaohs and the Ptolemies set a strong pattern for ruler worship in Egypt, a point that was not lost on Gaius Caligula according to Philo: "He [Gaius] had an indescribable passion for Alexandria, and was extremely anxious to visit it and to stay for a very long time when he got there. He believed that this city alone had originated the deification of which he dreamed and would foster it, and that by reason of its great size and commanding position in the world it had provided other cities with an example of how he should be worshipped, since inferior men and cities try to emulate the action of great ones" (*Legat.* 338; trans. Smallwood).

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> κατάπλεως ἀναθημάτων, ἐν γραφαῖς καὶ ἀνδριάσι καὶ ἀργύρῳ καὶ χρυσῷ περιβεβλημένος ἐν κύκλῳ τέμενος εὐρύτατον στοαῖς, βιβλιοθήκαις, ἀνδρῶσιν, ἄλσεσι, προπυλαίοις, εὐρυχωρίαις, ὑπαίθροις, ἅπασι τοῖς εἰς πολυτελέστατον κόσμον ἠσκημένον, ἐλπὶς καὶ ἀναγομένοις καὶ καταπλέουσι σωτήριος.
>
> It was because the whole world voted him honours equal to those of the Olympians. Temples, gateways, vestibules, and colonnades bear witness to this, so that the imposing buildings erected in any city, new or old, are surpassed by the beauty and size of the temples of Caesar, especially in our own Alexandria. There is no other precinct like our so-called "Augusteum"[τὸ λεγόμενον Σεβαστεῖον], the temple of Caesar, the protector of sailors. It is situated high up, opposite the sheltered harbours, and is very large and conspicuous; it is filled with dedications on a unique scale, and is surrounded on all sides by paintings, statues, and objects of gold and silver. The extensive precinct is furnished with colonnades, libraries, banqueting-halls, groves, gateways, open spaces, unroofed enclosures, and everything that makes for lavish decoration. It gives hope of safety to sailors when they set out to sea and when they return (Philo, *Legat.* 150-51; trans. Smallwood).[180]

Sailors ability to see the *Sebasteion* from the ocean indicates the distant emperor's prestigious place in the city.[181] The presence of the *Sebasteion* in the center of the city recalls Paul Zanker's memorable remarks: "The physical setting of the cult of the emperor was usually in the middle of the city, integrated into the center of religious, political, and economic life … a permanent architectural stage set, against which people lived out their lives, was a constant reminder of the emperor."[182] Alexandria was no exception: the distant emperor's presence was at the center of daily life.

The Wisdom of Solomon reflects Egypt's new political—and cosmic—arrangement in its *digressio* on pagan idolatry (Wis 13:1 – 15:19). As is well noted by scholars, the emphasis on monarchs who "lived at a distance" is an unmistakable reference to the Roman emperors.[183] Ps-

[180] For further comment on the *Sebasteion*, see especially H. Hänlein-Schäfer, *Veneratio Augusti. Eine Studie zu den Tempeln des ersten römischen Kaisers* (Rome: Giorgio Bretschneider, 1985), 205-9.
[181] Philo's remarks call to mind Josephus' similar comment regarding the temple of Augustus and Roma in Caesarea (*Ant.* 15.339).
[182] Paul Zanker, *The Power of Images,* 299. In the same vein, Simon Price writes: "Imperial temples and sanctuaries were generally located in the most prominent and prestigious positions available within the city" (Price, *Rituals and Power*, 61).
[183] Winston, *The Wisdom of Solomon,* 22.

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Solomon's criticism of monarchs who "lived at a distance" (Wis 14:17) and subjects who "flatter the absent one as though present" (14:17) implies the presence of the Roman imperial cults in Alexandria.[184] It is possible that the *Sebasteion* in Alexandria partly influenced Ps-Solomon's idol polemic. As Winston has pointed out, the assiduous choice of the word σέβασμα in Wis 14:20—rather than the more typical *agalma or eikon*—evokes a word unique to the reign of Augustus, which is likely coined after the appelation σεβαστός (see section 6.4.3).[185] Moreover, Philo reports that the *Sebasteion* was inlaid with precious metals of silver, gold and, presumably, the porticoes he acknowledges are built of stone (*Legat.* 151). Ps-Solomon's criticism of objects (σέβασμα) on stone or wood (14:20) and, at the beginning and end of the *digressio*, universal critique of silver and gold (Wis 13:10 and 15:19) recalls the materials used for the *Sebasteion*.[186] It is unnecessary to prove this parallel, the more pressing point is that Wis 14:16-20 is aware of and criticizes Rome's distinctive cosmology centered on the "distant king."

The association of idolatry with peace in Wis 14:22 further places Ps-Solomon's *digressio* on idolatry in a Roman setting. After a euhemeristic attribution of the origins of

[184] Notably, even Simon Price acknowledges Wisdom here, noting that Pseudo-Solomon is criticizing Augustus by "stressing the gap between image and reality" (*Rituals and Power,* 200).
[185] See Winston, *Wisdom of Solomon*, 279. Augustus' impact on civic space is indicated in an oft-quoted line from Nicolaus of Damascus: "The whole of humanity turns to the *Sebastos* (σεβαστός) filled with reverence. Cities and provincial councils honor him with temples and sacrifices, for this is his due. In this way do they give thanks to him everywhere for his benevolence" (F. Jacoby, *Die Fragmente der griechischen Historiker* [Leiden: Brill, 1923–1958], 90 F 125). On the role of *agalma* in imperial cult media, see the excellent discussion in Price, *Rituals and Power,* 170-206.
[186] Simon Price argues that there was a "hierarchy of materials, the highest of which was gold" (*Rituals and Power,* 186). Kenneth Scott shows that the tradition of gold effigies of the emperor stem from Egypt. See, "The Significance of Statues in Precious Metals in Emperor Worship," *Transactions and Proceedings of the American Philological Association*, 62 (1931): 101-123. In light of Ps-Solomon's aniconicism and emphasis on enemies, John M. G. Barclay calls the Wisdom of Solomon a "deeply Hellenized exercise in cultural aggression" (*Jews in the Mediterranean Diaspora*, 184). John Collins, in response to Barclay, argues that Barclay has failed to recognize Ps-Solomon's desire "to make common cause with enlightened Greeks who would share his contempt for popular superstition..." (*Jewish Wisdom in the Hellenistic Age,* 212). Collins is correct to recognize overlap in the aniconicism of Greco-Roman philosophers and Ps-Solomon. However, he fails to recognize that Greco-Roman philosophers could also be culturally antagonistic and critical of political tyrants. See C. W. Steel's discussion on Cicero, for example, in *Cicero, Rhetoric and Empire* (Oxford: Oxford University, 2002).

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idolatry to a father who honors a dead child and deified rulers, Ps-Solomon caricatures idolaters who associate their ignorance with peace: "Then it was not enough for them to err about the knowledge of God, but though living in great strife due to ignorance, they call such great evils peace" (τὰ τοσαῦτα κακὰ εἰρήνην προσαγορεύουσιν, Wis 14:22). As Winston et al. have pointed out, Ps-Solomon's reference to peace recalls the *pax romana* (cf. Tacitus, *Agr.* 30).[187] Hans Hübner is reticent to attribute the identity of kings to the Roman imperial cults in Wis 14:16-21. Hübner writes, "Und wenn dann in 17 vom geehrten König die Rede ist, so dürfte dieser einer dieser Tyrannen sein, nämlich der Pharao (oder der römische Imperator?).[188] Hübner proceeds to juxtapose Wis 14:16-21 with the Canopus decree (discussed in section 3.4.1), which records the deification of Ptolemy III along with his wife and daughter Berenice. Hübner rightly observes parallels between Ps-Solomon's etiological criticism of a father who deifies his dead child (Wis 14:15) and the Canopus decree's conferral of a gold cult image (ἄγαλμα χρυσοῦν) to honor Berenice in all the temples of Egypt (*OGIS* 56 lines 54-64). Hübner does not, however, acknowledge that the Roman emperors' wives and children could be deified. Upon Claudius's accession to power, for example, his grandmother Livia Drusilla was deified (Suetonius, *Claud.* 11.2). By the mid-first century it is notable that eleven imperial family members received cultus.[189]

When Wis 14:16-20 is read on its own, it evokes clear anti-imperial sentiment. However, when it is read in its narrative context, embedded in the criticism of other Greco-Egyptian gods, its invective is toned down. For Ps-Solomon, emperor worship was one form of superstition among others that undermined Yahweh's cosmic order, which comports with what we know

[187] For other references to peace, see David Winston, *The Wisdom of Solomon,* 279; and Maurice Gilbert, *Critique des dieux*, 172.
[188] Hans Hübner, *Die Weisheit Salomons* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1999), 179.
[189] Price, *Rituals and Power,* 57; and idem. "From Noble Funerals to Divine Cult."

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about ruler cults on the ground—namely, that emperor worship was often accompanied by honors given to other traditional gods.[190] As is well known, Winston argued that Wis 14:16-20 was composed under Caligula's command to have images of himself set up in Alexandrian synagogues (Philo, *Legat.* 133-34, etc). The phrases "kept as a law" and "at the command of monarchs" (Wis 14:16) certainly point in this direction. However, Winston fails to recognize that the imperial cult in Egypt was set up from above and locally organized already by the reign of Augustus.[191] In the case of the *Sebasteion*, for example, an obelisk bore the inscription: "Year 18 [12 BCE] of Caesar, Barbarus erected it under the overall supervision of Pontus" (Ἔτους ιή Καίσαρος | Βάρβαρος ἀνέθηκε | ἀρχιτεκτονοῦντος | Ποντίου., *OGIS* II, 656 = *I Alex.* 2). The mention of two Roman officials in this inscription indicates Roman oversight and funding for the erection of the *Sebasteion*.[192] Moreover, Alföldy provides an ingenious reading of a palimpsest on a third obelisk from the *Sebasteion*, now at the Vatican, which reads: "By order of the Emperor Caesar, son of god, Caius Cornelius Gallus, son of Gnaeus, *the praefectus fabrum,* constructed the *forum Iulium* for Caesar, the son of god."[193] This inscription clearly shows that before the reign of Caligula, Augustus could "order" the construction of official imperial cult media.[194] Augustus's direct oversight of Egypt is further illustrated in his institution of a travel ban that prohibited senators from living in Egypt (Cass. Dio 51.17.1). This ban was instituted as

[190] Moreover, Ps-Solomon's polemic againt ruler worship overlaps with the idol polemics of Greco-Roman philosophers and other early Jewish sources, cautioning one from mirror reading Wisdom's anti-idol polemic with the antics of Caligula (For further comment, see section 6.4.4.D).

[191] Stefan Pfeiffer, "The Imperial Cult in Egypt," in *The Oxford Handbook of Roman Egypt* (ed. Christina Riggs; Oxord: Oxford University, 2012), 83-102, here 96.

[192] Pfeiffer, "The Imperial Cult in Egypt," 86.

[193] Quoted from Stefan Pfeiffer, "The Imperial Cult in Egypt," 87. G. Alföldy, *Der Obelisk auf dem Petersplatz in Rom: Ein historisches Monument der Antike* (Heidelberg: Winter, 1990), 41-42. The emperor's direct oversight of temple guardians (*neokoroi*) in Alexandria is further indicated by a letter from Claudius to the Alexandrians who had to create a lottery process to obstruct infighting over the *neokoroi* position (*CPJ* II 153).

[194] F. Blumenthal argues csonvincingly that every Roman appointed region in Egypt (or, *nomos*) had a *sebasteia* that was organized from above. See "Der ägyptische Kaiserkult," *Archiv für Papyrusforschung* 5 (1913): 317-345, here 322.

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a result of Augustus' desire to consolidate his *dominio* over Egypt's grain supply and because of the "fickle character of the inhabitants" (Cass. Dio 51.17.1; Tac., *Ann.* 2.59.3). Notably, the goddess Roma, whose worship was overseen by the senate, is completely absent from imperial cult temples in Egypt at Alexandria, Philae and the chapel in Karnak.[195] This absence, according to Stefan Pfeiffer, likely reflects the senates' ban from Egyptian religious and political matters. Augustus's direct oversight of Egypt cautions one from attributing Wis 14:16 to Caligula's antics. While Caligula's rule created the conditions one would expect for Ps-Solomon's mini-apocalypse, the phrase "kept as a law" or "at the command of monarchs" fits just as well during the Augustan era.

That emperor worship violated Yahweh's cosmic order is further evident in the pseudepigraphical speech of King Solomon in Wisdom 7 – 9, which we discussed in detail in 4.5.2.D. In contrast to the emperor's deified superhuman status and love of *kratesis*, Ps-Solomon emphasizes his mortal origins (Wis 7:1) and preference for wisdom over "thrones and sceptres" (7:8).[196] Within the sapiential cosmology that Ps-Solomon inhabits, false worship of cultic imagery, along with the deification of rulers, is "the beginning and cause and end of every evil" (Wis 14:27). Ps-Solomon's exhortation to rulers in the Book of Eschatology and the speech of King Solomon in the Book of Wisdom create a narrative framework for understanding why the deification of rulers is an infraction against Yahweh's cosmic order; an order that is mediated by Lady Wisdom who "reaches mightily from one end of the earth to the other and *order all things well*" (Wis 8:1). While emperor worship violated Yahweh's cosmic hierarchy, here it is contended that it did not generate *the* stressor that Ps-Solomon resists. Indeed, the injustices that

[195] Stefan Pfeiffer writes, "The worship of Roma was closely connected with the senate, which is why Augustus did not introduce it in Egypt" ("The Imperial Cult in Egypt," 88).
[196] In response to Augustus's abuse of political power, Maurice Gilbert writes, "To remedy these abuses of political power, our author not only threatens divine judgment (Wis 6:5-8; 14:30-31), but proposes the example of Solomon ("Your Sovereignty Comes From the Lord," 121-140, here 137).

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are criticized in the Wisdom of Solomon betray a simple theological dichotomy between Caesar and Yahweh. For Alexandrian Jews, the conflict with the Roman Empire was not over theology alone, but the corporate injustices experienced under Rome's *dominio.* To be sure, starting with the Augustan era, the *Aegypto capta* assaulted Jews' minds and bodies through economic, ethnic and cultural reforms that erased their privileged status in society under the Ptolemies. The reordering of Egypt under Augustus' power began with his replacement of the Ptolemaic army with Roman legions (Strab. 17.1.12) and division of Egypt into four regions administered by an Equestrian *epistrategoi*. Each city—or cities grouped into administrative units called a *nomos*—were governed by Greco-Egyptian *strategoi*, which created a thick layer of political bureaucracy between the Jews and Caesar himself. It is against this web of political power that Ps-Solomon's exhortation to the "rulers of the earth" (Wis 1:1), "kings" and "judges" (Wis 6:1) and criticism of monarchs who "live at a distance" (Wis 14:17) is brought into dramatic relief.[197] The address to rulers is not a politically innocuous literary device as Reese argued,[198] nor is it, as Edwards more recently argued, the memory of "multiple Hellenistic kingdoms."[199] Rather, Ps-Solomon's exhortation is aimed at Caesar *and* the more tangible presence of his political puppets who upheld Rome's *dominio* over Alexandrian Jews.

As discussed above, the Ptolemaic era afforded Alexandrian Jews the privilege of being considered intellectual and social peers of the conquering Hellenes. Through the eyes of

[197] Notably, the use of οἱ κρίνοντες in Wis 1:1 could just as well be translated "those who judge the earth." Also, ps-Solomon's second address to rulers evokes "kings" and "judges" (Wis 6:1).
[198] Reese argues that the rulers are a literary device following the Hellenistic *peri basileias* literature. The influence of kingship tractates upon Ps-Solomon cannot be denied, however, Reese goes too far in his statement that "it is erroneous to look for actual historical kings or lesser public officials…" (149). This assertion de-politicizes the Wisdom of Solomon, assuming that Ps-Solomon's Jewish audience is detached from political reality. The connection of Roman rulers and judges with Ps-Solomon's exhortation would only serve to bolster its rhetorical effect on Jews living under imperial hegemony. See James M. Reese, *Hellenistc Influence on the Book of Wisdom and Its Consequences* (Rome: Biblical Institute Press, 1970), 148-149.
[199] Matthew Edwards, *Pneuma and Realized Eschatology in the Book of Wisdom* (Bristol: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2012), 25.

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Augustus, however, the variegated social makeup of the Hellenes did not merit legal status for individual citizenship.[200] Consequently, in contrast to the Ptolemies, Augustus made a social-distinction between the Hellenes and the Jews. The mechanism for making this ethnic distinction official was a poll tax instituted by Augustus, called the *laographia.* The *laographia* re-mapped Egypt's social-hierarchy by placing the burden of taxation on Jews and native Egyptians who were now placed together at the bottom of society as foreigners (*peregrini*). As Modrzejewski writes,

> The coming of the Romans sounded the death knell of the 'Hellenes.' Under Roman rule, they were literally pulverized. Provincial society was totally restructured. For the Jews of Egypt, it was a veritable disaster ... They had been 'Hellenes'; now they had suddenly become 'Egyptians.'[201]

For acculturated Hellenistic Jews like Ps-Solomon, whose intellectual accomplishments were on par with Alexandria's elite, the *laographia* evoked a situation of total humiliation, including possible loss of access to the gymnasium.[202] As Tcherikover writes, "The question [of the *laographia*] was not merely financial; it was much more cultural: where did a cultivated Jew belong[?]"[203] For Ps-Solomon, cultivated Jews belonged at the top of society, yet now they were forced by Caesar's *dominio* into a cosmic order at the bottom of society. Thus, well before the antics of Caligula, as early as 25/24 BCE, Augustus implemented a non-violent form of oppression, centered on a hegemonic cosmology that did not reflect the just rule demanded by Yahweh's cosmic order. The cosmic disorder generated by Augustus had four identifiable stressors for Alexandrian Jews: (1) the idolatrous rule and power of the distant king; (2) the presence of unjust local rulers who upheld Caesar's *dominio*; (3) a radical demotion of

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[200] This privileged status, from the time of Alexander on, put Jews, as foreign immigrants now considered Greeks, in a tense relationship with the conquered native Egyptians. See Wisdom 19 and Joseph Méléze Modrzejewski, *The Jews of Egypt,* 163.
[201] Modrzejewski, *The Jews of Egypt,* 163.
[202] See Wisdom 19.
[203] Tcherikover, *Hellenistic Civilization and the Jews*, 311.

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ethnic/social status, which exacerbated preexisting tensions with native Egyptians;[204] and (4) the financial burden of the *laographia* tax. By discerning these hegemonic stressors, it is possible to move beyond an abstract, undefined notion of empire, to a more nuanced definition of what *exactly* Ps-Solomon is resisting. Far from resisting a period of persecution, Ps-Solomon is very rationally resisting Rome's hegemonic cosmology with a tri-partite resistance program consisting of the cosmic judgment of the wicked (Wis 5:17-23), a literary paragon of the ideal ruler (Wis 7:1-10) and polemic against the cult-media of gods and kings (Wis 13:1 – 15:19). At the heart of Ps-Solomon's resistance strategies lies a counter cosmology, where Ps-Solomon blends sapiential and apocalyptic motifs in service of exhorting Alexandrian Jews with a message of hope that the cosmic structure of this world, governed by Lady Wisdom, will rise up to defeat the wicked.[205]

5.3.3 Excursus: Apocalyptic Cosmology: Resisting Unjust Rule in Wisdom 5:17-23

Wisdom 5:17-23 is framed between an opening and closing exhortation to rulers in the Book of Eschatology (Wis 1:1 – 6:21). The concentric design of the Book of Eschatology is carefully composed, with an A, B, C, B[1], A[1] structure that places the opening and closing exhortations in parallel with one another.[206] Moreover, the speech of the wicked (sect. B) parallels with the judgment of the wicked (sect. B[1]). The narrative logic of this structure highlights the tension between the righteous and the wicked—a dichotomy that includes unjust rulers with the wicked. One does not have to read further than the first verse to notice the convergence of rulers and cosmological motifs: Ἀγαπήσατε δικαιοσύνην οἱ κρίνοντες τὴν γῆν (Wis 1:1a).[207] In sapiential tradition, as Perdue has pointed out, the word righteousness

[204] See Luca Mazzinghi, "Wis 19:14-17 and the Civil Rights of the Jews of Alexandria," in *Deuterocanonical and Cognate Literature Yearbook 2005* (New York: Walter de Gruyter, 2005), 53-82.
[205] I borrow the phrase "counter cosmology" from Anathea Portier-Young, *Apocalpyse Against Empire,* 383.
[206] Addison Wright, "The Structure of the Book of Wisdom," *Bib* 48 (1967): 165-84.
[207] David Volgger thinks the address literally addresses the speech to rulers, see: "Die Adressaten des Weisheitsbuches," *Bib* 82 (2001): 153-77. This interpretation seems far-fetched given the profoundly Jewish nature of the Wisdom of Solomon. It is possible, however, that 1:1 is addressing Jewish leaders who work in

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(δικαιοσύνη) "refers to the 'rightoues order' of the cosmos that is to permeate social institutions, particularly the rule and judicial decisions of kings (Prov 8:15-16, 25:5, 31:9)."[208] In this sense, Ps-Solomon's exhortation is an appeal for rulers to conform to Yahweh's cosmic order of creation. John Collins puts things slightly differently, "The exhortation to love righteousness is … an urging to put oneself in tune with that force in the world which is immortal and leads to immortality [ie., Lady Wisdom]."[209] Ps-Solomon's exhortation for his audience to tune oneself to Yahweh's cosmic order is reinforced by his use of protreptic rhetoric (*logos protreptikos*).[210] Thomas Habinek notes that rhetoric was often employed "as an activity that orders the community in the face of primordial chaos."[211] It is here, under the stressors of hegemonic disorder, that the "allusive" nature of the Wisdom of Solomon's genre can at least partly be explained.[212] Ps-Solomon employs the literary tools available to him, including rhetorical, sapiential and apocalyptic motifs, in service of empowering Jews to take up a certain course of life: namely, to resist assimilation to the dominant imperial culture and live in tune with Lady Wisdom and Yahweh's cosmic order.

The role of personified Lady Wisdom is present in the opening and closing address to rulers in the Book of Eschatology (1:1-15; 6:1-21).[213] In Wis 1:4 we learn that Lady Wisdom will not "enter a deceitful soul or dwell in a body enslaved to sin." She is the expression of Yahweh's love for creation (φιλάνθρωπος; 1:6), and the divine agent of Yahweh's spirit that has filled the whole world (1:7). The

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the civic administration of Egypt. As Maurice Gilbert has pointed out, this interpretation makes sense given Ps-Solomon's exhortation to Jewish apostates in 2:1-5 ("Your Sovereignty Comes from the Lord" 121-140, here 122).

[208] Leo Perdue, "Cosmology and the Social Order in the Wisdom Tradition," in *The Sage in Israel and the Ancient Near East* (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 1990), 457-478, here 458. See also, Ps 72:1-3; Prov 28-29; Qoh 8:2-4; 9:13-18; 10:16-17, 20.

[209] John Collins, "Cosmos and Salvation: Jewish Wisdom and Apocalypticism in the Hellenistic Age" in *Seers, Sibyls and Sages in Hellenistic-Roman Judaism* (Boston: Brill, 2001), 317-338, here 320.

[210] Leo Perdue, *The Sword and the Stylus*, 322. Idem, "Rhetoric and the Art of Persuasion in the Wisdom of Solomon," in *Text, Images and Christians in the Graeco-Roman World: A Festschrift in Honor of David Lee Balch* (ed. Aliou Cissé Niang and Carolyn Osiek; Eugene: Pickwick, 2012), 183-198.

[211] Thomas Habinek, *Ancient Rhetoric and Oratory* (Malden: Blackwell, 2005), 3.

[212] Barclay, *Jews in the Mediterranean Diaspora,* 181.

[213] On the *Forschungsgeschichte* of Wisdom's structure, see Maurice Gilbert, "The Literary Structure of the Book of Wisdom" in *Deuterocanonical and Cognate Literature Yearbook 2005* (New York: Walter de Gruyter, 2005), 19-32.

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mediatorial role of Lady Wisdom functions as an accountability mechanism, ensuring that "those who utter unrighteous things will not escape notice" (1:8). As Winston points out, Lady Wisdom's role of listening, reporting and punishing recalls the personification of justice (δίκη) in Greek literature.[214] Her role in the execution of justice becomes certain in the mini-apocalypse, when a mighty wind (πνεῦμα δυνάμεως) rises up against the wicked and unjust rulers and destroys them (Wis 5:23). For Ps-Solomon, the cosmos is a positive force in the world (1:14), and one's relationship to Lady Wisdom serves as the litmus test for interpreting the divine structure of the cosmos and one's place in it.

The closing exhortation opens with an address to "kings" and "judges of the ends of the earth" (Wis 6:1). Maurice Gilbert rightly interprets that addresses as a reference to Augustus and his local rulers in Egypt.[215] Wis 6:9 and 6:21 directly exhort monarchs to learn and honor wisdom:

> To you then, O monarchs, my words are directed, so that you may learn wisdom and not transgress (πρὸς ὑμᾶς οὖν ὦ τύραννοι οἱ λόγοι μου ἵνα μάθητε σοφίαν καὶ μὴ παραπέσητε, Wis 6:9).
>
> Therefore if you delight in thrones and scepters, O monarchs over the peoples, honor wisdom, so that you may reign forever (εἰ οὖν ἥδεσθε ἐπὶ θρόνοις καὶ σκήπτροις τύραννοι λαῶν τιμήσατε σοφίαν ἵνα εἰς τὸν αἰῶνα βασιλεύσητε, Wis 6:21).

Ps-Solomon's exhortation is an appeal for rulers to conform to Yahweh's cosmic order of creation, an order that is distinguished by Yahweh's absolute sovereignty, and rulers' subordinate status as "servants of his kingdom" (Wis 6:4). Ps-Solomon highlights the absolute sovereignty of the monarch by using the flexible, yet potentially subversive title τύραννος.[216] Though τύραννος is typically translated as monarch, the LXX usage of this word shows that Jews could employ it in the truly tyrannical sense—for example, the exemplar tyrant of Second Temple Judaism, Antiochus IV, is referred to as ὁ τύραννος Ἀντίοχος (4 Macc 5:1). Conversely, Josephus, in his typical apologetic fashion, uses the word to describe Jewish tyrants who evoked the wrath of Rome (Ant. 18.169; 19.2.2). Philo gives a telling definition of tyranny when he is reflecting on the ideal Hellenistic King: "For he is called a just king [Melchizedek], and a king

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[214] See David Winston, *The Wisdom of Solomon*, 105. See also Moyna McGlynn, *Divine Judgment and Divine Benevolence in the Book of Wisdom* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2001), 90.
[215] Gilbert, "Your Sovereignty Comes from the Lord," 125.
[216] See Tessa Rajak, "The Angry Tyrant," 110-27.

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is the opposite of a tyrant (τυράννῳ), because the one is the interpreter of law, and the other of lawlessness" (*Alleg* 3.79). When Philo comes face to face with Gaius Caligula in Rome to defend Alexandrian Jews' religious autonomy, he calls the Emperor Caligula "an implacable tyrant (τυράννου), exhibiting uncontrolled authority and displeasure and pride" (*Legat.* 350). For Philo, Gaius Caligula embodies tyranny by impinging on Jewish religious rights and, thus, practicing cosmic disorder (lawlessness). Intra-Jewish usage of the word τύραννος cautions one from taking τύραννος in Wis 6:9 and 6:21 as a politically innocuous title. To be sure, the *digressio* on pagan idolatry uses the word τύραννος as a title for monarchs who "lived at a distance" (Wis 14:17), a clear reference to the Roman emperor.

The identity of the monarchs take on Augustan character in Wis 6:3. As discussed above, Augustus initiated a new era in Egypt, titled—ἡ Καίσαρος κράτησις. Ps-Solomon's exhortation to rulers errs on the side of rash boldness against the backdrop of Augustan power: "For your dominion was given you from the Lord, and your sovereignty from the Most High" (ὅτι ἐδόθη παρὰ κυρίου ἡ κράτησις ὑμῖν καὶ ἡ δυναστεία παρὰ ὑψίστου, Wis 6:3). Ps-Solomon, aware of the appellation ἡ Καίσαρος κράτησις, critically inverts Augustan cosmology and propaganda to say that Augustus's κράτησις belongs to Yahweh. Several scholars since the work of U. Wilcken in 1899 have made this connection.[217] The discovery of papyri in Egypt serves to corroborate this thesis, which reveals the abandonment of the word after Augustus's death in 14 CE.[218] The use of κράτησις here recalls the Jewish conviction that the rule of earthly kings is subordinate to Yahweh, but also evokes Portier-Young's idea of "critical inversion" (see also 4.5).[219] Under the stressors of imperial hegemony, critical inversion functions as a "strategy for shaping the

[217] U. Wilcken, *Griechische Ostraka aus Aegypten und Nubien* (Leipzig/Berlin,1899), 787-89.
[218] Gilbert, using the detailed study of Geraci, compiles an impressive list of papyri for this claim. See Gilbert, "Your Sovereignty Comes From the Lord," 127. Maurice Gilbert et al. argue that the occurrence of this word during the reign of Augustus posits a *terminus a quo* and a *terminus ad quem* for the Wisdom of Solomon. Establishing a *terminus ad quem* based on the usage of one word, however, overcooks the evidence. See Gilbert, "Your Soverignty Comes From the Lord," 129.
[219] A literary precedent for depicting Yahweh's bestowal of power on kings in the Septuagint brings theological coherence to the argument as well. For examples, see chapter 4.5.

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counter mythologies that make it possible to reimagine a world governed not by empires, but by God."[220] The critical inversion of Augustus and his local rulers under the authority of Yahweh is further highlighted in Wis 6:4, where they are called "servants of his kingdom." Augustus's abuse of κράτησις and failure to "rule rightly" justifies severe judgment according to Wis 6:4-5. Indeed, love of κράτησις has no place in Yahweh's cosmic order; it is "desire for wisdom that leads to a kingdom" (Wis 6:20). One can sense how Ps-Solomon's familiarity with the *peri basileias* literature: the address to rulers serves to philosophically reflect on kingship in a Jewish milieu. Wis 1:1-15 and 6:1-21 frame the cosmic judgment of the wicked within an exhortation that charges imperial rulers to seek righteousness and Lady Wisdom. The exhortation exposes the unjust rule of monarchs, while simultaneously spelling out the criteria and justification for their cosmic destruction.

It has long been recognized that Jewish apocalyptic and Wisdom literature share an interrelated and overlapping relationship. In particular, as John Collins writes, "they share a 'cosmological conviction' by which the way to salvation lies in understanding the structure of the universe and adapting to it."[221] It is here that Ps-Solomon converges sapiential and apocalyptic traditions in Wis 5:17-23 as a strategy to resist Rome's violation of Yahweh's cosmic order. Roman rulers' failure to understand Yahweh's structure of the universe (1:1; 6:4), failure to honor Lady Wisdom (6:21) and, not least, their deified superhuman status (14:16-20) evokes the cosmic wrath of Yahweh. Unlike the genre apocalypse, however, the Wisdom of Solomon does not anticipate the eschatological destruction of empire through a spacio-temporal transcendent reality; rather, the very cosmic structure of *this* world is the theatre in which Yahweh will "overturn the thrones of rulers" (Wis 5:23). Burton Mack helpfully remarks, "All of the functions characteristic and necessary for the structuring of a just, humane society have been transferred

[220] Portier-Young, *Apocalypse Against Empire,* 14.
[221] John Collins, *Seers, Sibyls, and Sages,* 337. Notably, the only overlapping motif in all historical and otherworldly apocalypses is the idea of eschatological judgment. See, idem., *The Apocalyptic Imagination* (2nd ed.; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), 270-71. For the relationship between apocalyptic and the Wisdom of Solomon, see: Michael Kolarcik, "Sapiential Values and Apocalyptic Imagery in the Wisdom of Solomon," in *Studies in the Book of Wisdom* (Boston: Brill, 2010), 23-36; and Shannon Burkes, "Wisdom and Apocalypticism in the Wisdom of Solomon," *HTR* 95.1 [2002]: 21-44.

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to the level of cosmic potentiality."[222] The cosmic potentiality of the creation is in full effect in Wis 5:17-23, where the natural order becomes the medium for cosmic judgment.

> (17) λήμψεται πανοπλίαν τὸν ζῆλον αὐτοῦ καὶ ὁπλοποιήσει τὴν κτίσιν εἰς ἄμυναν ἐχθρῶν· (18) ἐνδύσεται θώρακα δικαιοσύνην καὶ περιθήσεται κόρυθα κρίσιν ἀνυπόκριτον· (19) λήμψεται ἀσπίδα ἀκαταμάχητον ὁσιότητα, (20) ὀξυνεῖ δὲ ἀπότομον ὀργὴν εἰς ῥομφαίαν, συνεκπολεμήσει δὲ αὐτῷ ὁ κόσμος ἐπὶ τοὺς παράφρονας. (21) πορεύσονται εὔστοχοι βολίδες ἀστραπῶν καὶ ὡς ἀπὸ εὐκύκλου τόξου τῶν νεφῶν ἐπὶ σκοπὸν ἁλοῦνται, (22) καὶ ἐκ πετροβόλου θυμοῦ πλήρεις ῥιφήσονται χάλαζαι· ἀγανακτήσει κατ᾽ αὐτῶν ὕδωρ θαλάσσης, ποταμοὶ δὲ συγκλύσουσιν ἀποτόμως· (23) ἀντιστήσεται αὐτοῖς πνεῦμα δυνάμεως καὶ ὡς λαῖλαψ ἐκλικμήσει αὐτούς· καὶ ἐρημώσει πᾶσαν τὴν γῆν ἀνομία, καὶ ἡ κακοπραγία περιτρέψει θρόνους δυναστῶν.
>
> (17) He will take his zeal as his whole armor and make creation his weapons for vengeance on his enemies; (18) he will put on righteousness as a breastplate and wear impartial justice as a helmet; (19) he will take holiness as an invincible shield (20) and will sharpen stern anger for a sword, and creation will fight with him against those without sense. (21) Well–aimed shafts of lightning will fly out and from the clouds, as from a well–drawn bow, will leap to the target, (22) and hailstones full of wrath will be hurled as from a catapult; the water of the sea will rage against them, and rivers will overwhelm them relentlessly; (23) a mighty wind will rise against them and like a hurricane will winnow them away. And lawlessness will make the whole earth a desert, and evil–doing will overturn the thrones of rulers (Wis 5:17-23; trans. NETS).

The scene of cosmic judgment opens with Yahweh dressing up in the military garb of the Isaianic divine warrior (Isa 59:16-18 // Eph 6:13-17), while simultaneously arming the creation itself (ὁπλοποιήσει τὴν κτίσιν εἰς ἄμυναν ἐχθρῶν, Wis 5:17). Creation's participation in Yahweh's cosmic judgment becomes explicit in Wis 5:20: "and the cosmos (ὁ κόσμος) will wage war with him against the insane" (trans. my own, DS).[223] The ensuing war against the wicked is not fought through transcendent realities; it is the natural elements of lightning, hailstones, the raging sea, rivers, wind and, finally, lawlessness that will "lay waste the whole earth" and "overturn the thrones of rulers" (5:23). Echoes of the *peri basileias* literature can be felt in this passage—the rulers of the earth fail to animate Law on earth by imitating the righteousness of God for subjects. To revisit a passage from Philo, "a king is the opposite of a tyrant

[222] Burton Mack, "Wisdom Makes a Difference: Alternatives to 'Messianic' Configurations," in *Judaisms and Their Messiahs at the Turn of the Christian Era* (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 1987), 27. See also A. T. Goodrick's comment, "Even miracles are regarded by 'Wisdom' not as a derangement of the universe, but as a rearrangement of it" (*The Book of Wisdom* [New York: MacMillian, 1913], 251). The role of the cosmos in enacting judgment is also evident in Wisdom 11-19's retelling of the Exodus narrative. See Perdue, *The Sword and the Stylus,* 351.
[223] συνεκπολεμήσει δὲ αὐτῷ ὁ κόσμος ἐπὶ τοὺς παράφρονας (Wis 5:20).

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(βασιλεὺς δὲ ἐχθρὸν τυράννῳ), because the one is the interpreter of law, and the other of lawlessness" (ὅτι ὁ μὲν νόμων, ὁ δὲ ἀνομίας ἐστὶν εἰσηγητής, *Alleg. Interp.* 3.79). Ps-Solomon and Philo are in striking agreement on this point: imperial tyrants embody ἄνομος toward the watching world. There is a hint of irony here—the divine structure of the cosmos that rulers' violated is now fighting back with the very primordial chaos that their lawlessness initiated. Indeed, those who exploited the cosmos (Wis 2:6) and oppressed the vulnerable (2:10) are now being swept away by their own failure to live within Yahweh's cosmic design. Ps-Solomon's identity as a Jewish sage is evident here: the scene of cosmic judgment provides didactic material for his pupils or, what is termed here, a counter cosmology.

The efficacy of the cosmos in affecting cosmic judgment marks a radical departure from the genre apocalypse. Apocalypse understands eschatological salvation through otherworldly mediators and transcendent realties that usher in a new just world.[224] In John Collins's seminal study on the genre apocalypse, he notes that the only overlapping motif in all historical and otherworldly apocalypses is judgment/destruction of the wicked.[225] Wis 5:17-23 shares the motif of judgment of the wicked, yet apocalyptic judgment usually carries with it the idea of apocalyptic eschatology—that is, a negative view of the world that anticipates a new age. In contrast to apocalyptic eschatology, Ps-Solomon understands the creation positively (Wis 1:14) and eschatological judgment as a phenomenon that the creation itself commences under the direction of Yahweh, mediated by Lady Wisdom.[226] It is here, at the point of eschatology, that the Wisdom of Solomon ruptures both sapiential and apocalyptic traditions. Unlike sapiential tradition, Ps-Solomon cares about eschatology, yet the medium for eschatological judgment in

[224] John Collins, in the 1979 Apocalypse Group of the SBL Genres Project, defined apocalypse as follows: "Apocalypse is a genre of revelatory literature with a narrative framework, in which a revelation is mediated by an otherworldly being to a human recipient, disclosing a transcendent reality which is both temporal, insofar as it envisages eschatological salvation, and spatial, insofar as it involves another, supernatural world" (John J. Collins, “Apocalypse: Toward the Morphology of a Genre,” *Semeia*, 14 [1979]: 1-20, here 9).
[225] John J. Collins, *The Apocalyptic Imagination* (2nd ed.; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), 7.
[226] Wisdom 1:14 reads, "For he created all things so that they might exist; the generative forces of the world are wholesome, and there is no destructive poison in them, and the dominion of Hades is not on earth."

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Wisdom differs from the genre apocalypse in that Ps-Solomon does not anticipate a new world.[227] One has to ask, then, what are we dealing with in Wis 5:17-23?

In light of the above background and exegesis, four overlapping motifs between Wis 5:17-23 and the genre apocalypse can be discerned. First and foremost is the shared understanding of the cosmic structure of the universe. Second is the evocation of apocalyptic imagery. Third is eschatological judgment, albeit through different modes of revelation and conceptions of time. And fourth is the shared background of imperial hegemony that creates the conditions and, in large part, the objects of resistance for Ps-Solomon's use of apocalyptic judgment (a point that has, thus far, gone insufficiently explored by scholars interested in early Jewish resistance literature).[228] In order to bring the background of empire into focus, it has been shown how imperial hegemony experienced under Augustus's *laographia* introduced the conditions for cosmic disorder that Ps-Solomon resists with a counter cosmology.[229] It was also shown that the context of cosmic judgment in Wis 5:17-23 is framed by a rhetorically crafted exhortation for rulers to abide by the justice and character of Lady Wisdom embedded in Yahweh's cosmic order. Notably, the exhortation to rulers recalls the prevalence of the *peri basileias* literature during the Hellenistic and Roman periods, but re-contextualizes the genre within a distinctively Jewish view of kingship under the authority of Yahweh. The use of royal language in 5:16 and 5:23 further frames the

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[227] Perdue, *The Sword and the Stylus,* 371.
[228] David Winston, Michael Kolarcik and Leo Perdue all situate the composition of Wisdom under imperial persecution—yet, strikingly, none of them sufficiently explain *how* imperial hegemony impacted Alexandrian Jews, nor *what* Pseudo-Solomon's larger strategy of resistance is. David Winston argues that Wisdom was composed under a "desperate historical situation" during the reign of Caligula (*The Wisdom of Solomon,* 22-23). Michael Kolarcik argues that Ps-Solomon uses apocalyptic because of "political unrest in Jewish communities" (Kolarcik, "Sapiential Values," 24). Leo Perdue argues that Wisdom was composed during a time of "intense persecution" (Perdue, *The Sword and the Stylus,* 355). But Ps-Solomon's attitude toward Rome, as Matthew Edwards rightly notes, is one of "calm rational consideration" (*Pneuma and Realized Eschatology*, 25), which better fits a dating under the Augustan era.
[229] Shannon Burkes best captures the Wisdom of Solomon's transformative use of wisdom and apocalpytic in service of cultural preservation: "Wisdom literature has assumed a new dimension, and this literary development suggests that a transformative moment in the religious and philosophical cultural discussion is underway in this time period where, for the ancient authors, older literary types were pressed into service to express evolving worldviews in a search for credible methods of cultural self preservation" ("Wisdom and Apocalypticism in the Wisdom of Solomon," *HTR* 95.1 [2002]: 21-44, here 44). Here I contend that imperial hegemony functioned as one of the changing cultural conditions that evoked Ps-Solomon's transformative use of wisdom and apocalyptic.

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cosmic judgment scene in an imperial context.[230] The Book of Eschatology unmasks the identity of unjust rulers, subjects them to their demise in a cosmic judgment scene and, ultimately, empowers Alexandrian Jews to re-imagine society under the cosmic order of Yahweh. On this point, Vilchez rightly recognizes that Ps-Solomon creates a literary image of Yahweh as a deity who is not indifferent to injustice: "…Dios no le es indiferente la situación creada por el hombre, el estado de injusticias humanas. Dios quiere que se restablezca el orden y la paz en todos lo órdenes; por esto hace intervenir también a la creación o cosmos…".[231]

With this backdrop in mind, the Wisdom of Solomon is an exhortation (*logos protreptikos*) that critically inverts the cosmology of empire. The imperial rulers of the earth are surpassed by the superior wisdom and authority of Yahweh embedded in creation and mediated by Lady Wisdom. The Wisdom of Solomon, then, is not aimed at an imperial readership, but Alexandrian Jews who are struggling to maintain allegiance to ancestral tradition in the face of crumbling religious and political autonomy under Roman hegemony. As Peter Enns writes,

> …though Wis is addressed to pagan rulers, it is not likely that they were the actual, intended audience, but merely provided the literary context in which Ps-Solomon could address his beleagured countrymen. Could he really expect rulers of his day to have been moved by admonitions to follow the ways of wisdom? The likelihood is rather that Ps-Solomon was telling his audience that these pagan rulers were in reality doomed to certain judgment and destruction.[232]

The rhetorical and philosophical sophistication of the Wisdom of Solomon, however, raises deeper questions about the social status of Wisdom's implied audience. Lest one think that Wisdom is a political treatise to evoke a grass roots anti-imperial movement among the poor or disenfranchised—it is more likely that Wisdom is written by and for a Jewish elite who had the most to lose by Rome's encroachment on their privileged status under the Ptolemaic dynasty. At the center of Ps-Solomon's strategy of resistance is a carefully crafted counter cosmology, refracted through both sapiential and apocalyptic

[230] The same word for power/sovereignty – δυναστεία – is used in Wis 5:23 and 6:3, which again brings an Augustan character to the cosmic judgment scene. Moreover the use of κτίσις in 2:6 and in 5:17 brings the wickeds' abuse of creation into literary relationship with the creation's cosmic judgment.
[231] Jose Vilchez Lindez, *Sabiduria* (Navarra: Editorial Verbo Divino, 1990), 221.
[232] Peter Enns, *Exodus Retold: Ancient Exegesis of the Departure From Egypt in Wis 10:15-21 and 19:1-9* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1997), 135-54.

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tradition. Within the cosmology that Ps-Solomon inhabits, the proleptic demise of empire is guaranteed through the very structure of the universe.

It is at this juncture that it is important to be clear. When imperial powers obstructed Jewish autonomy, the preferred genre of resistance was apocalyptic, not the icon parody. However, the Jewish icon parody's allusive cult referents—within the idiolect of the Septuagint—provided Hellenistic Jews with a contextually flexible literary strategy for opposing the material culture of gods and the ruling power in the face of the one true God (in the Hellenistic Jewish context) and the crucified Jewish messiah (in the early Christian context). Having established the importance of imperial authority for Ps-Solomon's mini-apocalypse (Wis 5:17-23) and his literary paragon of the ideal ruler (Wis 7:1-10), we can now examine Ps-Solomon's polemic against idols in more detail in the next chapter.

5.4 Summary and Conclusion

The preceding investigation of the second commandment and the icon parody has admittedly covered a lot of ground. In chapter four of this study the relationship between the first commandment, Jews' exclusive monotheism and their negotiation of political authority was investigated. This chapter, on the other hand, sought to understand the relationship between Jewish aniconicism and imperial images through an analysis of Philo and Josephus. Jews' social embodiment of aniconic-monotheism represented an alter-cultural and, at times, subversive worldview in contrast to the deification and representation of powerful rulers; this point was not lost on the likes of a Tacitus (*Hist.* 5.5.4), Apion (Jos., *C. Ap.* 2.65) and Gaius Caligula (Philo, *Legat.* 330-38). But as we saw especially in Philo, the Roman imperial cults did not cause significant existential angst for Alexandrian Jews unless *cultic*-manifestations of it were forced on their spaces of worship, which was rare. Still, even under times of cosmic equilibrium with the ruling power, Philo re-contextualized the Hebrew Bible's icon parodies to resist the temple

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culture of Greco-Roman religion and, more allusively, the hybrid iconography of deified rulers. Under the hegemony of imperial authority, the icon parody provided Jewish sages with a didactic method of boundary maintenance—to posit the uniqueness of Jewish identity and align Jewish aniconic-monotheism with contemporary Cynic-Stoic philosophical reflections on God. It is for this reason that the icon parody was particularly popular among Diaspora authors. To be sure, the Wisdom of Solomon represents the most sophisticated re-contextualization of the icon parody in early Judaism, including an innovation in the tradition: the critique of ruler cults through euhemerism and parody (Wis 14:16-20). Having established the *Sitz im Leben* for Ps-Solomon's strategies of resistance against unjust rulers, we can now shift our focus to a comparative analysis of Ps-Solomon's polemic against idols and Paul's speech on the Areopagus.

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CHAPTER 6.

EARLY JUDAISM, RULER CULTS AND PAUL'S POLEMIC AGAINST IDOLS IN THE AREOPAGUS SPEECH

> To view Luke as an interpreter of Israel is by no means to underestimate the Hellenistic environment of his project. The volumes are redolent with the tropes and *topoi* of Hellenism and the Hellenistic Judaism of the Mediterranean basin.
>
> —David Tiede and David Moessner[1]

6.1 Introduction

The literary culture of early Judaism and the Greco-Roman world provided Luke with a repository of strategies for resisting imperial authority. In previous chapters, we focused particular attention on early Judaism's conflict with (a) deified political authority, which violated Jewish monotheism; and (b) the material representation of political authority, which violated Jewish aniconic worship. Both the first and second commandments inscribed Jewish identity with an alter-cultural vision of monarchy, monotheism and representation. This distinctive identity carries over to Luke's presentation of the early Jewish-Christian movement, where the Apostles are portrayed confronting deified political authority (Acts 12:21-23), anthropomorphism (Acts 14:8-18) and iconic spectacle (Acts 17:16-32; 19:21-41). The Areopagus speech represents something of a climax to the Apostles' confrontation with alien religion. To confront Athens's forest of idols, Luke composes a précis of Paul's preaching by weaving together Jewish and Greco-Roman sources. Scholars have long suggested that the

[1] David Tiede and David Moessner, "Conclusion," in *Jesus and the Heritage of Israel: Luke's Narrative Claims Upon Israel's Legacy* (ed. David Moessner and David Tiede; Harrisburg: Trinity Press International, 1999).

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Isaianic icon parody comprises one of Luke's *topoi* in the Areopagus speech. The intertextual relationship between Isaiah and the Hellenistic- and Roman-Jewish icon parodies, however, remains poorly understood: as we have argued throughout this study, when early Jews and Christians re-contextualized Isaiah's polemic amid the hybrid iconography of ruler cults, and placed it in an overtly philosophical context, the referent(s) took on new hermeneutical potentiality. Although the content and methods of resistance did not differ—the outcome and referents could evoke different objects. Identifying the Hellenistic and Roman-Jewish icon parody's objects of resistance, however, is complicated by the allusive referents inherent to the bulk of Jewish idol polemic, wherein adjectival descriptors that constitute a specific object—for example, "the gold colossal of Augustus or Zeus"—are rarely employed. The referential ambiguity created a safe space for the speaker, leaving the object of resistance open to interpretation. How, then, can one better discern *what* Luke's polyvalent parody of Greco-Roman religion resists in Athens?

The argument that follows investigates the referents of the Areopagus speech for political import through a methodologically triangulated approach. First, the Areopagus speech will be placed within Luke's larger narratological presentation of the Jesus movement in its Roman imperial context. Second, an examination of the built environment of Roman Athens will show that, in accord with the epigraphic record evaluated in chapter three of this study, Athens also comprised an urban space stamped with the iconographic insignia of gods and imperial authority. Third, a comparative analysis of the Areopagus speech with Ps-Solomon's implicit and explicit polemic against imperial cult media provides the material for a more detailed comparative analysis of the icon parody's re-contextualization in the Greco-Roman world. Luke's polemic against idols evokes a range of religious and political inter-textual and extra-textual motifs,

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thereby leaving space for Luke's dramatic audience to discern the identity of cultic images "formed by the art and imagination of mortals" (Acts 17:29). Although the speech does not propound an attitude of anti-imperialism in the form of sedition, it does articulate a worldview that is incompatible with the representation and deification of gods and imperial authority. For Luke, the deification and representation of gods and kings is incompatible with the worship of the one God's incarnation in the Christ.

6.2 Acts and the Roman Imperial Cults

Luke provides our only narrative portrayal of Paul's missionary travels into the Roman Empire. As Paul travels throughout the Roman Empire, he visits numerous cities that housed the Roman imperial cults. If one compares Acts with Simon Price's catalogue of imperial temples and shrines in Asia Minor, Paul visits no less than sixteen cities with imperial cult media.[2] This figure, however, does not include Paul's travels to cities outside of Asia Minor that experienced Romanization in the aftermath of Augustus's rise to power: Caesarea (Acts 18:22), Philippi (Acts 16:12), Athens (17:15-16), Corinth (Acts 18:1) and Rome (Acts 28:14).[3] Despite our knowledge

[2] See Tarsus (Acts 9:30; Price nos. 154-56); Perge (Acts 13:13; Price no. 140); Antioch in Pisidia (Acts 14:19; Price no. 123); Thyatira (Acts 16:14; Price, no 59); Ephesus (Acts 19; Price, nos. 27-36); Assos (Acts 20:13; Price no. 13); Chios (Acts 20:13; Price no. 2); Miletus (Acts 20:14; Price nos. 38-42); Mitylene (Acts 20:14; Price nos. 7f.); Samos (Acts 20:15; Price no. 10); Cos (Acts 21:1; Price no. 3f.); Rhodes (Acts 21:1; Price no 9). Additionally, according to Price's maps, one could add: Iconium (Acts 13:51; no. 162); Derbe (Acts 14:6; no. 163); Patara (Acts 21:1; no. 118); and Adramyttium (Acts 27:2; no. 7). For a similar list, see Klauck, *Religious Context,* 324. For Price's catalogue, see: *Rituals and Power,* 249-274. It is important to note that the temporal period of the imperial cult is not reflected in Price's list of maps. On the temporal duration of the imperial cults in the cities through which Paul travels, see Colin F. Miller, "The Imperial Cult in the Pauline Cities of Asia Minor and Greece," *CBQ* 72:2 Ap (2010): 314-332, here 329. Miller takes a negative view on the presence of the imperial cults in many of the above cities during Paul's lifetime. However, Miller overlooks important evidence for the imperial cults—especially in the city of Athens (see below).
[3] On Caesarea, see: Joan E. Taylor, "Pontius Pilate and the Imperial Cult in Roman Judaea," *NTS* 52.4 (2006): 555-82; and Lucinda Dirven, "The Imperial Cult in the Cities of the Decapolis, Caesarea Maritima and Palmyra," *ARAM* 23 (2011): 141-56. On Philippi, see: Peter Oakes, *Philippians: From People to Letter* (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 2001). On Corinth, see: Barbette Stanley Spaeth, "Imperial Cult in Roman Corinth: A Response to Karl Galinsky's 'The Cult of the Roman Emperor: Uniter or Divider?'" in *Rome and Religion: A Cross-Disciplinary Dialogue on the Imperial Cult* (ed. Jeffrey Brodd and Jonathan L. Reed;

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of the imperial cults, along with their presence in many of the cities that dot the missionary travels of Paul, it is striking that Luke *only* highlights Paul interacting with the cults of other traditional gods (e.g., Zeus and Hermes [Acts 14:12], Python [Acts 16:16], Artemis of Ephesus [Acts 19:28], Justice [Acts 28:4] and Castor and Pollux [Acts 28:11]). This observation puts the scholar evaluating Acts for anti-imperial motifs in a conundrum: *nowhere in Luke-Acts are the imperial cults explicitly criticized.*[4] The best one can do is to identify "allusions" to the Roman imperial authority through political synchronisms (Luke 2:1),[5] conflicting cosmologies (Luke 4:1-14),[6] subversion of benefaction (e.g., Luke 22:24-30),[7] Roman imperial *Entrückungserzählung* (Acts 1:9-11),[8] Roman political propaganda (Acts 2:9-11),[9] Christological

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Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2011), 61-82. On Rome, see: Diane Favro, *The Urban Image of Augustan Rome* (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 1996).

[4] For a critical evaluation of recent anti-imperial readings of Acts, see: Drew J. Strait, "Another King Named Jesus? The Acts of the Apostles and the Roman Imperial Cult(s)," in *Jesus is Lord, Caesar is Not! Evaluating Empire in New Testament Studies* (ed. Scot McKnight and Joseph B. Modica; Downers Grove: IVP Academic, 2013), 130-45. See also, Steve Walton, "The State They Were in: Luke's View of the Roman Empire," in *Rome in the Bible and the Early Church* (ed. Peter Oakes; Grand Rapids: Baker, 2002), 1-41; Kavin Rowe, "Luke-Acts and the Imperial Cult: A Way Through the Conundrum?" *JSNT* 27.3 (2005): 279-300; idem. *World Upside Down: Reading Acts in the Graeco-Roman Age* (New York: Oxford University, 2009); Brigitte Kahl, "Acts of the Apostles: Pro(to)-Imperial Script and Hidden Transcript," in *In the Shadow of Empire: Reclaiming the Bible as a History of Faithful Resistance* (ed. Richard Horsley; Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2008), 137-56; Seyoon Kim, *Christ and Caesar: The Gospel and the Roman Empire in the Writings of Paul and Luke* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2008); Laura Nasrallah, "The Acts of the Apostles, Greek Cities, and Hadrian's Panhellenion," *JBL* 127.3 (2008): 533-566; David Rhoades, David Esterline and Jae Won eds., *Luke-Acts and Empire: Essays in Honor of Robert L. Brawley* (Eugene: Pickwick, 2011); Loveday Alexander, "Luke's Political Vision," *Interpretation* 66 (2012): 283-293; Richarch Pervo, "(Not) 'Appealing to the Emperor': Acts (and the *Acts of Paul*)," in *Paul and the Heritage of Israel* (ed. David Moessner et al.; New York: T&T Clark, 2012), 165-179; Loveday Alexander, "Luke's Political Vision," *Interpretation* 66 (2012): 283-293; Steve Walton, "What Does Mission in Acts Mean in Relation to the 'Powers that Be'"? *ETS* 55.3 (2012): 537-556; and Laurie Brink, *Soldiers in Luke-Acts: Engaging, Contradicting, and Transcending the Stereotypes* (WUNT 2.362; Tübingen: Mohr-Siebeck, 2014).

[5] Christian Blumenthal, "Augustus' Erlass und Gottes Macht: Überlegungen zur Charakterisierung der Augustusfigur und ihrer erzählstrategischen Funktion in der lukanischen Erzählung," *NTS* 57 (2010): 1-30.

[6] Richard Hays, "The Liberation of Israel in Luke-Acts: Intertextual Narration as Countercultural Practice," in *Reading the Bible Intertextually* (ed. Richard B. Hays et al.; Waco: Baylor University, 2009), 101-118; and Kazuhiko Yamazaki-Ransom, *The Roman Empire in Luke's Narrative* (LNTS 404; New York: T&T Clark, 2011), 87-97.

[7] Craig A. Evans, "King Jesus," 120-139.

[8] 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), 242-47.

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titles (Acts 10:36)[10] and criticism of human deification (Acts 12:20-23).[11]

The lack of explicit critique of Caesar in Luke-Acts has been labeled a "conundrum" among New Testament scholars.[12] Construing the lack of explicit critique as a conundrum, however, is to refract Luke's rhetorical interests through our modern standards of blunt, open and free speech under the authority of modern democracy. As discussed in 4.3.3, under monarchical power in Greco-Roman antiquity, speaking openly (παρρησία) was considered both dangerous and artless (Aristotle, *Rhet.* 1382B; Philo, *Somn.* 2.83). The preferred rhetorical discourse of subversion was figured speech (ἐσκηματισμένος ἐν λογῳ), where an author disguises criticism in figured phrases, words and sometimes flattering doublespeak (see 4.3.3). Therefore, *not* openly critiquing the emperor is what one would expect from a Hellenistic-Jewish historiographer attempting to criticize the Roman imperial cults artfully with hidden polemic. Before applying Quintilian and Amit's criteria to the built environment of Roman Athens and the Areopagus speech, what follows is a critical evaluation of recent scholarship on Luke's attitudes toward Rome through a consideration of three layers of Luke's presentation of the early Christian movement: (1) the impact of Jesus' ascent to heaven and its challenge to the cosmology of empire in the narrative of Acts, (2) the political metaphor of idolatry and Luke's presentation of Roman rulers and officials and (3) the missionary preaching of Peter and Paul. The sketch that follows is by no means exhaustive. It is, rather, intended to help frame the Areopagus speech in Luke's larger narratological presentation of the early Jesus movement *in* empire.

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[9] Gary Gilbert, "The List of Nations in Acts 2: Roman Propaganda and the Lukan Response," *JBL* 121.3 (2002): 497-529.
[10] Kavin Rowe, "Luke-Acts and the Imperial Cult" 279-300; and Justin Howell, "The Imperial Authority and Benefaction of Centurions and Acts 10:34-43: A Response to C. Kavin Rowe," *JSNT* 31.1 (2008): 25-51.
[11] Hans-Josef Klauck, *Magic and Paganism in Earliest Christianity* (London: T&T Clark, 2003), 38-44; idem. "Des Kaisers schöne Stimme. Herrscherkritik in Apg 12, 20-23," in *Religion und Gesellschaft im frühen Christentum: Neutestamentliche Studien* (WUNT, 152; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2003), 251-67.
[12] Kavin Rowe, "Luke-Acts and the Imperial Cult," 279-300, here 289.

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6.2.1 The Ascension of Jesus and Imperial Apotheosis Rituals

The Jewish precedents for Jesus' ascent to heaven are well documented. The traditions of both Elijah (2 Kgs 2:1-11) and Enoch (Gen 5:22, 24; *1 En.* 39:3) *inter alia* provide a rich framework for interpreting Jesus' ascent.[13] Although the dominant trend in scholarship is to read Jesus' ascent through a Jewish lens, it is important to recognize that the narrative of Luke-Acts was not written in a Jewish vacuum.[14] Luke is deeply influenced by the spread of Hellenism—that is, the intersection of Jewish and Greco-Roman traditions—and, therefore, creatively reconfigures these traditions into a *tertium quid*.[15] While not wishing to deny a Jewish influence upon Jesus' ascent, the Greco-Roman phenomenon of imperial apotheosis provides a helpful framework for our understanding of Lucan Christology and Luke's political orientation to the Roman Empire. What

[13] For further citations, see Daniel C. Harlow, "Ascent to Heaven," in *The Dictionary of Early Judaism*, 387-390. On Philo's view of ascension see Peder Borgen, "Illegimite and Legitimate Ascents," in *Philo of Alexandria an Exegete for His Time* (Leiden: Brill, 1997), 194-205. In her study of Jewish, Christian, Gnostic and Hekhalot heavenly ascent texts, Paula Gooder concludes that there are four similar characteristics shared by most Jewish ascent texts: (1) a first person account written pseudepigraphically; (2) an angelic guide and visions of other angels in heaven; (3) a vision of God seated on the throne; and (4) a particular vision as a result of the ascent (Paula R. Gooder, *Only the Third Heaven: 2 Corinthians 12.1-10 and Heavenly Ascent* [LNTS 313; New York: T & T Clark, 2006], 156). The only occurrence of a heavenly ascent in the canonical Jewish Bible is: Enoch (Gen 5:24) and Elijah (2 Kgs 2:1-12). However, there are four accounts of people who experience the heavenly court of Yahweh: Moses, Aaron, and the elders of Israel (Exod 24:9-11); Micaiah (1 Kgs 22:19-23); Isaiah (Isa 6:1-13); and Ezekiel (Ezk 1, 10). See, James Tabor, "Heavenly Ascent," *ABD* 3.91.

[14] Gerhard Lohfink, *Die Himmelfahrt Jesu: Unstersuchungen zu den Himmelfahrts und Erhöhungstexten bei Lukas* (München: Kösel-Verlag, 1971). A. W. Zwiep interprets Acts 1:9-11 through the lens of Jewish rapture stories, suggesting that the ascension brings unity to salvation history under the delay of the *parousia*. Still, Zwiep recognizes the Greco-Roman dimension when he writes: "After all, the rapture repertoire of Greeks and Romans was infinitely much larger than that of Jews and Christians put together" (A. W. Zwiep, *The Ascension of the Messiah in Lukan Christology* [Leiden: Brill, 1997], 195).

[15] *Pace* Howard Marshall: "There is, incidentally, no obviously 'non-Jewish' element in the Christology of Acts, though it is plausible that the concepts of lordship and saviorhood were more transparent to a Gentile" (I. Howard Marshall, "The Christology of Luke's Gospel and Acts," in *Contours of Christology in the New Testament* [ed. Richard N. Longenecker; Eerdmans: Grand Rapids, 2005], 144-45). See also Martin Hengel's striking comment on New Testament Christology leaving "every possible form of pagan-polytheistic apotheosis far behind" (Martin Hengel, *Studies in Early Christology* [Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1995], 383). In her analysis of the imperial cult and the Christ Hymn (Phil 2:6-11), Adela Yarbro Collin's sagely advises: "As at many points in the history of the religion of Israel and of Second Temple Judaism, innovations develop in dialogue with the religious traditions of another people" (Adela Yarbro Collins, "The Worship of Jesus and the Imperial Cult," in *The Jewish Roots of Christological Monotheism* [ed. Carey C. Newman et al.; Leiden: Brill, 1999], 234-257, here 251).

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follows suggests that Luke's portrayal of Jesus' ascent to heaven functions to reorient cult space heavenward, away from Jewish *and* Greco-Roman institutions of temple, image and sacrifice.

En lieu of Adolf Deissmann's observation of polemical parallelisms between the shared cultic vernacular conferred on the cult of Caesar and that of Christ, Peter Oakes suggests that "To detect such actual comparison … we need to look for details that go beyond general discourse: for example, details such as the form of accession to power (or possibly apotheosis)."[16] A narrative account of Jesus' ascension only occurs in the New Testament at the end of Luke's Gospel (Luke 24:50-53) and the beginning of Acts (Acts 1:9-11). In the Greco-Roman world, ascension into heaven traditionally accompanied the process of becoming a god, which in Greek was called apotheosis and in Latin *consecratio*. Plutarch reflects on the quench for immortality among monarchs:

> This [the appellation ὁ Δίκαιος - "The Just"] no kings or tyrants ever coveted; rather, they rejoiced to be surnamed Besieger, Thunderbolt, Conqueror, Eagle, or Hawk—cultivating the reputation which is based on violence and power, as it seems, instead of on virtue. And yet divinity (θεῖον) to which such men are eager to adapt and conform themselves, evidently has three distinctive characteristics—immortality (ἀφθαρσία) power (δύναμις) and virtue (ἀρετή); the most awesome of and divine of these is virtue… What men most eagerly desire is immortality, of which is in the hand of fortune; virtue, the only divine excellence within our reach, they put at the bottom of the list" (Plutarch, *Arist.* 6).

With echoes of the *peri basileias* literature, Plutarch condemns rulers for striving after immortality rather than the things that make for the νόμος ἔμψυχος ideal centered on the ruler's ἀρετή.[17] But Plutarch circumvents a Roman referent by critiquing dead Hellenistic kings. As

[16] Peter Oakes, "Re-mapping the Universe: Paul and the Emperor in 1 Thessalonians and Philippians," *JSNT* 27.3 (2005): 301-322, here 315.

[17] Kenneth Scott suggests that Plutarch heaps "only scorn for the ruler cult" and by deflection is critiquing Nero. See "Plutarch and the Ruler Cult," *TPAPA* 60 (1929): 117-135. G. W. Bowersock, on the other hand, takes Scott's proposal as "inconceivable" due to Plutarch's close relationship with emperors and Roman aristocrats ("Greek Intellectuals and the Imperial Cult," in *Le Culte Des Souverains Dan L'Empire Romain* [Genève: Fondation Hart,1973], 179-206, here 188-89). Bowersock, however, underestimates opposition movements from philosophers and members of the emperor's inner-circle. As Ramsay MacMullen perceptively

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Nock observed, "It is to be noted that Plutarch makes outspoken criticisms of the self-deification of Hellenistic kings without any feeling that what he says might be taken as reflecting on Roman practice."[18] The association of immortality with funerary ritual finds precedent in Roman aristocratic funerals (Polybius, *Hist.* VI.53-54.3), philosophical reflections on the statesman's afterlife (Cicero, *Rep.* 6.13-16) and especially Rome's mythical founder Romulus (Livy, *Ab urb condita*, 1.16.1-3; Ovid, *Metam.* 14.804-51; Plut., *Rom.* 27.7).[19] Caesar Augustus in particular took advantage of the political ramifications of heavenly ascent when he put on games to honor his stepfather, Julius Caesar, for his military victories.[20] At the games a comet appeared which, according to Augustus, was a sign that Julius Caesar had ascended into heaven (Pliny, *Nat.* 2.93-94; Suet., *Jul.* 88). Thereafter, Augustus was able to push the senate to confirm Julius's heavenly ascent and exploit his newfound status as the adopted son of a god (*Divi filius*).[21]

The ritual of apotheosis became more sophisticated and ritualized over time. According to Simon Price, thirty-six of the sixty emperors in the period between 14 BCE and 337 CE ascended to heaven and received the title *divus.*[22] The institutionalization of apotheosis rituals is

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wrote, "The foes of the monarch rise from the midst of his friends" (*Enemies of the Roman Order: Treason, Unrest, and Alienation in the Empire* [Cambridge: Harvard University, 1966], viii).

[18] A. D. Nock, *Cambridge Ancient History*, vol. 10, 188 n. 2.

[19] Roman authors who write about Romulus's apotheosis likely rely on Ennius (259-169 BCE), which is no longer extant.

[20] That plans were likely made for Caesar's deification during his lifetime is evident in a speech delivered by Cicero in the Autumn of 44 BCE. See Cicero, Philippic, II.110-11. See Beard, North and Price, *Religions of Rome: Volume 2 – A Sourcebook*, 9.2a. Already when Augustus was an infant, his father dreamt that "his son appeared in superhuman majesty, armed with the thunderbolt, scepter and regal ornaments of Jupiter Optimus Maximus, wearing a radiate crown, and riding in a belaurelled chariot drawn by twelve dazzlingly white horses" (Suet. *Aug.* 95.6 trans. Graves, LCL).

[21] The symbol of the star appears on coins minted by Augustus as early as 19-18 BCE with a comet and the inscription DIVVS IVLIVS (Divine Julius). On the obverse, there is a portrait of Augustus with the inscription, CAESAR AVGVSTVS. See Kreitzer, *Striking New Images: Roman Imperial Coinage and the New Testament World* (*JSNT* 134; Sheffield Academic, 1996), 84-85. Remarkably, the language of adoption was translated into the title θεὸς ἐκ θεοῦ for Augustus in 30/29 BCE in a papyrus in Egypt (cf. POxy 1453.11) and in an inscription in Egypt from 24 BCE (cf. *OGIS* 655.2). See Klauck, *Religious Context*, 293.

[22] Price also notes that twenty-seven of their family members were apotheosized during this period. See Simon Price, "Noble Funerals to Divine Cult: The Consecration of Roman Emperors," in *Rituals of Royalty* (ed. D. Canadine and S. Price; Cambridge: Cambridge University, 1987), 56-105, here 57. For further comment on

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evident in the third century biographer Herodian of Syria who records the apotheosis ceremony of Septimius Severus (193-211 BCE):[23]

> It is normal Roman practice to deify emperors who die leaving behind children to succeed them. The name they give to this ceremony is apotheosis … the body of the dead emperor is buried with a very expensive funeral in the normal human way. But then they make a wax model of him. Then from the very top storey [of the pyre] an eagle is released, as if from a battlement, and soars up into the sky with the flames; the Romans believe it takes the soul of the emperor from earth to heaven. After that he is worshipped with the rest of the gods (Herodian, *History,* IV.2.1-2).

While Herodian's account postdates the New Testament, the report gives a lucid picture of the apotheosis rituals in their more standardized forms. In the second century, more attention was given to the role of the pyre, which could be up to three stories or even five stories high.[24] As Simon Price puts it, "the pyre became a dramatic enactment of imperial apotheosis."[25] Moreover, the release of an eagle, symbolizing the emperor's soul ascending to heaven, created a space for all present to serve as witnesses. The institutionalization of imperial apotheosis rituals attests to its fundamental importance in Roman religion and politics. That apotheosis rituals were sophisticated enough by the first century CE to cause offense to Jews' aniconic-monotheism is evident in Josephus: "Our law hath also taken care of the decent burial of the dead, but without any extravagant expenses for their funerals, and without the erection of any illustrious

extant full-descriptions of imperial funerary rituals, see the important discussion in Ittai Gradel, *Emperor Worship and Roman Religion* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2002), 282ff.

[23] Additionally, the apotheosis of Pertinax (193 CE) is vividly portrayed in Cassius Dio 75.4.2—5.5. See no. 9.3b in Beard, North and Price in *Religions of Rome: Volume 2*.

[24] See Price, "Noble Funerals," 93.

[25] Price, "Noble Funerals," 97. A further development in the apotheosis process was the relationship between the emperor's behavior and the senatorial decision to bestow divine honors. For example, of the first twelve emperors, Suetonius writes that only Julius Caesar, Augustus, Claudius, Vespasian and Titus received apotheosis. It is not surprising, then, that the contentious reigns of Caligula, Nero and Domitian are absent. Seneca's *Apocolocyntosis,* however, provides a blazing critique of Claudius. Seneca writes that, upon arrival to heaven, Diespiter presented the case for Claudius' apotheosis. However, August interjects, pointing out that Claudius' cruelty and murderous behavior is not worthy of deification. Consequently, Claudius descends to the underworld, where he is put on trial for the murder of thirty-five senators and two hundred and twenty-one knights. See Price, "Noble Funerals," 82-91.

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monuments (μνημείων ἐπιφανῶν) for them" (Jos., *C. Ap.* 2.205). Is it possible that the phenomenon of imperial ascent influenced Luke's characterization of Jesus' ascent to heaven?

One of the more creative anti-imperial interpreters of Acts, Gary Gilbert, argues that by construing Jesus' ascent in the language of Roman imperial propaganda, Luke is able to make a profound theological claim: that Jesus is the true ascended Lord of the empire and Caesar is not.[26] At the beginning of Acts, the disciples ask Jesus a religious and political question before Jesus ascends into heaven: "Lord, is this the time when you will restore the kingdom to Israel?" (Acts 1:6). Still confused by the aims of Jesus, the disciples are prepared for Jesus to initiate the overthrow of Rome and the restoration of Israel to political independence. Jesus quickly corrects the disciples and commissions them not to violent resistance in an apocalyptic scenario but rather to missional witness in "Jerusalem, . . . Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth" (Acts 1:8). The disciples' commission is immediately followed by Jesus' ascent to heaven. Until recently, the heavenly dimension of Acts has been largely neglected by scholars.[27] The geographical arc of Acts as it extends from Jerusalem to Rome is well noted, but heaven is an

[26] Gary Gilbert, "Roman Propaganda and Christian Identity in the Worldview of Luke-Acts," in *Contextualizing Acts: Lukan Narrative and Greco-Roman Discourse* (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2003), 233-56. See also Ilze Kezbere, *Umstrittener Monotheismus: wahre und falsche Apotheose im lukanischen Doppelwerk* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2007). Kezbere's study, however, focuses on true and false forms of apotheosis in the narrative of Acts. A major shortfall of her study is the failure to engage with recent work on the imperial cult by classicists—especially the work of Simon Price.

[27] In a recent study by Matthew Sleeman, the impact of the ascension on Luke's narrative is evaluated through the lens of geographical and spatial theory. At the outset, Sleeman acknowledges that there has been no "sustained attempt … to trace the impact of the ascension through the course of the ensuing Acts narrative" (p. 4). Of particular interest is Sleeman's application of Edward Soja's idea of third space, which allows for "an absent-but-active ascending Christ functioning thirdspatially within the narrative" (p. 49). Sleeman argues that the ascension creates a thirdspatial "heavenward Christocentric orientation" in the narrative of Acts (p. 73). Sleeman's study opens up new ways of thinking about the correlation between Jesus' Lordship in heaven and its impact on the ground in Acts. Yet Sleeman fails to engage the ascent's impact on the imperial cult and Greco-Roman religion. Moreover, Sleeman's study focuses on Acts 1:1–11:18, which gives it a primarily Jewish focus. The impact of third space on Greco-Roman religion and the missionary journeys of Paul would be a fascinating point of departure for future study. See, *Geography and the Ascension Narrative in Acts* (*SNTS* 146; Cambridge: Cambridge University, 2009).

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equally important geographical point for Luke, where Jesus sits at the right hand of the Father and empowers the disciples' witness "with power from on high" (Luke 24:49).

For Luke's audience to affiliate Jesus' ascent with imperial apotheosis is plausible—as the church father Justin Martyr did—but Jesus' ascent cannot be divorced from its Judaic roots.[28] Still, Gilbert rightly acknowledges key parallels between Caesar's and Jesus' ascents, such as the presence of an eyewitness.[29] In the case of Caesar this witness was usually a member of the senate; in a similar way, the apostles witness Jesus' ascent. A key difference, however, and one that Gilbert does not adequately address, is that beyond this witness, Caesar's ascent had to be approved by a posthumous senatorial vote based on a given emperor's behavior. The importance of an emperor's behavior for achieving apotheosis is evident in the Roman politician Seneca's parody of the tyrannical emperor Claudius, humorously titled *The Pumpkinification of the Divine Claudius* (*Apolocyntosis*). For Seneca, the behavior of Claudius is an embarrassment to the institution of apotheosis: "'Once,' said he, 'it was a great thing to be made a god, but now you have made the distinction a farce'" (*Apoc.* 9.3). Seneca critiques Claudius by portraying his banishment from heaven to the underworld because of his tyrannical behavior. This parody illustrates that an emperor's behavior had significant implications for convincing the senate that they deserved apotheosis. For the senate, heavenly ascension, then, was a powerful political ritual, for it gave the senate political power over the emperor while simultaneously encouraging

[28] Justin Martyr writes, "And when we say also that the Word … Jesus Christ, our teacher, was crucified and died, and rose again and ascended into heaven, we propound nothing different from what you believe … And what of the emperors who die among yourselves, whom you deem worthy of deification, and in whose behalf you produce some one who swears he has seen the burning Caesar rise to heaven from the funeral pyre?" (Justin Martyr, 1 *Apol.* 21). Gilbert does not mention that some early fathers also critique the apotheosis of Romulus. To take one example, Tertullian ridicules Romulus for being a murderer, "In like manner, Romulus posthumously becomes a god. Was it because he founded the city? … To be sure Romulus slew his brother in the bargain, and trickishly he ravished some foreign virgins. Therefore of course he becomes a god, and therefore a Quirinus, because then their fathers had to use the spear on his account" (Tertullian, *Nat.* 3.2.9; see also Minucius Felix, *Oct.* 4.23; Augustine, *Civ.* 6).
[29] Notably, Ovid records the presence of a witness, Julius Proculus, for the ascent of Romulus (*Metam.* 28.1-3).

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emperors to act with ἀρετή.[30] What Gilbert fails to note is that before Jesus ascends to heaven, there is no apostolic vote to decide if Jesus is deemed worthy to ascend into the abode of the gods. It is not Jesus' band of misfit disciples who hold authority to sanction Jesus' ascent but rather the God of Israel who raised Jesus from the dead (Luke 24:44; Acts 3:15). That Jesus' ascent is determined by the God of Israel is further evident in Peter's sermon to the people of Jerusalem in Acts 2. Peter preaches about Jesus' ascension to the right hand of God in tandem with Ps 110:1 (Acts 2:34-35) and attributes Jesus' ascension to "God [who] made him [Jesus] both Lord and Messiah" (Acts 2:36).

A Jewish framework for interpreting Jesus' ascent is further evident when Stephen experiences a post-ascension vision of the ascended Jesus. Before his Jewish persecutors—including Paul—Stephen looks up to the ascended Jesus and says, "Look, I see the heavens opened and the son of Man standing at the right hand of God" (Acts 7:56). Stephen's reference to the Son of Man evokes Jewish apocalyptic traditions from Dan 7:13, where the Son of Man will come on the clouds of heaven. Consistent with Stephen's vision of the Danielic Son of Man, Jesus ascends to heaven on a cloud (Acts 1:9), distinguishing his ascent from the emperors who were said to have ascended on the back of an eagle.[31] Moreover, unlike Caesar, Jesus is resurrected and ascended in bodily form (as opposed to the ascension of an emperor's soul) and continues to rule as the absent-yet-present King who empowers disciples' witness with power from heaven. Stephen's vision of the ascended Jesus cautions one from embellishing parallels with Caesar. For Luke, Jesus' ascent is the fulfillment of God's promises to Israel, functioning to

[30] Price, "From Noble Funerals to Divine Cult," 91. On the relationship between the emperor's behavior and apotheosis, see also Pliny, *Pan.* 35.4. The importance of an emperor's behavior is acutely articulated by Appian: "Every holder of the imperial office, unless he has been a tyrant or a blameworthy man, is paid divine honours by the Romans after his death, although these same people once upon a time could not even endure to give them the title 'kings' during their lifetime" (*Bell. Civil.* 2.148).

[31] It is worth noting that the ascension of Romulus is accompanied by clouds (Livy, *Ab urb condita*, 1.16.1-3) and Plutarch also depicts it with "peals of thunder and driving rain" (*Rom.* 27.6).

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call both worshipers of Yahweh and Caesar to change their posture heavenward—toward the Messiah, who will one day return on a cloud (Acts 1:11). This point is especially clear when Stephen employs the icon parody to challenge temple culture to suggest that "the Most High does not dwell in houses made with human hands" (ἀλλ᾽ οὐχ ὁ ὕψιστος ἐν χειροποιήτοις κατοικεῖ, Acts 7:48).

Aside from Greco-Roman apotheosis rituals, an additional but heretofore neglected set of Jewish texts infuse Jesus' ascension with a political dimension. In section 4.5.2.B we discussed the Deuteronomic Law of the King's anti-exaltation motif. To avoid Israelite regal hubris, Jews built into their Law a mechanism for proscribing the king from self-deification. That is, the king is to read the Law of the King daily to avoid "exalting his heart above other members of the community" (ἵνα μὴ ὑψωθῇ ἡ καρδία αὐτοῦ ἀπὸ τῶν ἀδελφῶν αὐτοῦ, Deut 17:20). Examples of the anti-exaltation motif using ὑψόω and/or ἐπαίρω to critique regal hubris are scattered throughout texts of the Septuagint. The best example comes from 1 Maccabees, where Alexander the Great "was exalted and his heart was lifted up" (ὑψώθη, καὶ ἐπήρθη ἡ καρδία αὐτοῦ, 1 Macc 1:3). In addition, the kings that the Romans put in power were "greatly exalted" (ὑψώθησαν σφόδρα, 1 Macc 8:13). For making plans against Simon and his sons and having a large store of silver and gold, the governor of Jericho, Ptolemy son of Adubus's "heart was exalted" (καὶ ὑψώθη ἡ καρδία αὐτοῦ, 1 Macc 16:13). Antiochus IV claims that "he will be exalted above every god" (ὑψωθήσεται ἐπὶ πάντα θεόν, Dan 11:36-37). The author of the Psalms of Solomon suggests the Hasmoneans were "exalted to the stars" (ὑψώθησαν ἕως τῶν ἄστρων, *Pss. Sol.* 1.5). Ptolemy IV Philopator (222-203 BCE) is scourged by God for persecuting the Jews and for "exalting (ἐπηρμένον) himself in hubris and audacity" (3 Macc 2:21). Finally, Pharaoh is condemned for

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being "exalted with lawless insolence…" (ἐπαρθέντα ἀνόμῳ θράσει, 3 Macc 6:4). Against this intertextual background, Luke's positive presentation of Jesus' ascension using the verb ἐπαίρω in Acts 1:9 is striking.[32] In contrast to Second Temple Jewish sensitivities to the exaltation of the angry tyrant, Luke presents Jesus' exaltation positively. The ascension of Jesus turns the political metaphor of idolatry on its head: the exclusivity of Israel's monotheism is now redefined around the ascended Messiah.

Notwithstanding the Jewish and Greco-Roman precedents for Jesus' ascension, Gary Gilbert is partly correct to write, “Ascending into heaven and being seated among the gods, in the political language of the day, marks one off as the legitimate ruler of the inhabited world.”[33] Gilbert overlooks the posthumous context of imperial apotheosis, but rightly associates ascension with divinity and rule. Gilbert, however, stops short of exploring what Jesus’ ascension means programmatically for the rest of the narrative of Acts. One observation is worth our consideration. As Steven Friesen suggests, cosmology was "the primary religious concern of imperial cults … in various ways, imperial cult institutions defined how space and time were to be experienced."[34] While the ubiquity of the imperial cults cannot be exaggerated, and the diversity of the cult from East to West underestimated, the imperial cults' transformation of civic space and time through temple, image, sacrifice and calendrical festival is well documented in

[32] Elsewhere, Luke uses ἀναφέρω (Luke 24:51) and ἀναλαμβάνω (Acts 1:2, 11) for the upward movement of Jesus' ascent.
[33] Gary Gilbert, "Roman Propaganda," 245.
[34] See Steven Friesen, *Imperial Cults and the Apocalypse of John: Reading Revelation From the Ruins* (Oxford: Oxford University, 2001), 124. We also know that cosmic order was a primary vocation of gods and kings in Hellenistic and Roman antiquity. In Cleanthes Hymn to Zeus, for example, Zeus is praised as an object of power that makes "straight that which is crooked and to order that which is disordered…" Quoted from Klauck, *Religious Context,* 352. Plutarch, on the other hand, observes that the ideal ruler is "the image of God who orders all things" (ἄρχων δ’ εἰκὼν θεοῦ τοῦ πάντα κοσμοῦντες, Plutarch, *Princ. iner.* 780E). Philo eulogizes Augustus as one "who brought disorder into order" (ὁ τὴν ἀταξίαν εἰς τάξιν ἀγαγών, *Legat.* 147).

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several cities in Asia Minor.[35] Moreover, in continuity with the *peri basileias* literature, the emperor incarnated and animated Law and order for subjects through justice and piety (cf. Philo, *Legat*. 145-47). Furthermore, imperial festivals, according to Simon Price, functioned as the "embodiment" of "the conceptual systems of temple, image and sacrifice."[36] In this way, imperial festivals functioned to synchronize subjects' spacio-temporal reality around the emperor and Rome.[37] Against this backdrop, the ascension of Jesus presents a "counter-cosmology" to the temple culture underlying the visual euergetism of Greco-Roman religion. The ascension critically inverts the cosmology of empire, reorienting power heavenward—away from temple, image, sacrifice and deified human political authority. Put another way, the ascension is an act of critical inversion—an act of employing the myths, symbols and ideologies of Roman power to subversively re-depict the world as governed by "another king" (Acts 17:7). By making this claim at the outset of Acts, Luke presents his audience with an alternative cosmology; one that reorients the auditor away from temple culture of urban spaces and synchronizes time with the

[35] See, for example, the calendar from Cumae (4-14 CE) that celebrates events in the career of Augustus. See Beard, North and Price, *Religions of Rome: Volume 2* no. 3.4.
[36] Simon R. F. Price, "Rituals and Power," in *Paul and Empire: Religion and Power in Roman Society* (ed. Richard Horsley; Harrisburg: Trinity, 1997) 47-71, here 57.
[37] Aside from civic space, the imperial cult also impacted the relationship between power and deified rulers. The transition from the Republic to the Principate, as discussed above, initiated an unprecedented power shift from the senate to the Emperor. This power transition, according to Price, "created a relationship of power between subject and ruler. It also enhanced the dominance of local elites over the populace, of cities over other cities, and of Greek over indigenous cultures. That is, the cult was a major part of the web of power that formed the fabric of society" (Price, *Rituals and Power,* 248). While Price may be embellishing the facts for rhetorical effect, there is no question that the imperial cult held significance for one's status and place in the ordering of interpersonal relationships. It is striking, then, that Luke-Acts associates Jesus with power and as "one who serves" (Luke 22:24-27). In Luke 24:49, the disciples are proleptically commanded to sit until they are clothed with power from on high (ἕως οὗ ἐνδύσησθε ἐξ ὕψους δύναμιν). Thereafter, in Acts 1:11, as if to make sure the reader understands, Luke reemphasizes that Jesus is now in heaven and, eschatologically speaking, he will return in the same way as he was seen going into heaven. Then, in Acts 2:2, it is from heaven that the Holy Spirit descends, evoking an intra-textual connection back to Jesus' promise in Luke 24:49 that the disciples will be "clothed with power from on high." What is clear from these passages is that, according to the narrative of Acts, the locus of power is "from on high" in heaven with the ascended Jesus who, according to Stephen, stands at the right hand of God (Acts 7:55). When Jesus' ascent is read in conjunction with Jesus' acceptance of outsiders and teaching on benefaction, a powerful image emerges: namely, a servant-ascended-Lord who relocates power from imperial institutions heavenward. For other passages referring to Jesus' location in heaven, see: Acts 2:34; 3:21; 7:55-56; Acts 9:3.

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eschatological *parousia* of Christ. The ascension, therefore, is programmatic: it challenges Jewish and Gentile notions of power, and thereby prepares Luke's audience for the coming confrontations with political authority and Greco-Roman religion later in the narrative.

6.2.2 The Political Metaphor of Idolatry and Luke-Acts

The book of Acts displays an extraordinary tension between two dimensions: namely, the kingdom of God and the kingdoms of Satan. If a Lucan cosmology of the world exists, one statement from Luke's Gospel should capture our imaginations. During Jesus' temptation with Satan, Luke writes: "Then the devil led him [Jesus] up and showed him in an instant all the kingdoms of the *empire* (πάσας τὰς βασιλείας τῆς οἰκουμένης). And the devil said to him, 'To you I will give their glory and all this authority; for it has been given over to me, and I give it to anyone I please'" (Luke 4:6, emphasis mine, *DJS*). Prior to this passage in Luke's infancy narrative, Jesus' birth was synchronized with the Augustan census of "the whole empire" (πᾶσαν τὴν οἰκουμένην, 2:1).[38] For Luke, the οἰκουμένη lies under the authority of Satan; the extent of which, under the rule of Gaius, Philo calls "an empire stretching from the sunrise to the sunset and comprising lands both within and beyond the Ocean" (*Legat*. 10; trans. Smallwood). At the outset of Jesus' public ministry, Luke maps the cosmology of the οἰκουμένη—that is, the kingdoms of this world—and places them under the authority of Satan. The implications of this audacious claim defy our expectations in Luke's second volume: though Luke claims that the Roman Empire is under the authority of Satan, Luke portrays *some* Roman officials positively and several pronounce Paul innocent (*dikaios*). The political metaphor of idolatry provides a dynamic heuristic model for interpreting Luke's attitude toward gentile political authority.

[38] For comment on the imperial setting of this passage, see Christian Blumenthal, "Augustus' Erlass und Gottes Macht," 1-30.

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Indeed, at what point do Roman rulers and officials exploit the transfer of power between the exclusive political authority of the ascended Christ and the imperial authority of Satan's οἰκουμένη?

A. Luke's Presentation of Roman Rulers and Officials

According to previous generations of scholars, Luke intentionally paints the Roman Empire as the church's friend to show Roman officials that Christianity is politically harmless (*apologia pro ecclesia*).[39] In the past decade, however, scholars have painted a much more complex picture of Luke's portrayal of Roman rulers and officials. The Gospel of Luke anticipates the apostles' testimony before Roman rulers in Acts. Jesus warns the disciples prior to his death: "they will arrest you and persecute you; they will hand you over to synagogues and prisons, and you will be brought before kings and governors (βασιλεῖς καὶ ἡγεμόνας) because of my name. This will give you an opportunity to testify" (Luke 21:12-13). In Luke's second volume, the emphasis on witnessing before imperial authority is transferred to Paul in particular when Ananias is prodded to visit the blinded Saul in Damascus: "But the Lord said to him, 'Go, for he [Paul] is an instrument whom I have chosen to bring my name before Gentiles and kings (ἐνώπιον ἐθνῶν τε καὶ βασιλέω) and before the people of Israel; I myself will show him how much he must suffer for the sake of my name'" (Acts 9:15-16).

The testimony of the apostles before imperial authority is apparent in an oft-noted event at Thessalonica in Acts 17. Incited by jealous Jews, a lynch mob drags Jason and some other believers before the Roman city authorities, saying: "These people who have been turning the world (τὴν οἰκουμένην) upside down have come here also, and Jason has entertained them as

[39] For a good overview of political apology readings, see: Alexandru Neagoe, *The Trial of the Gospel: An Apologetic Reading of Luke's Trial Narratives* (*SNTS* 116; Cambridge: Cambridge University, 2002), 4-21.

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guests. *They are all acting contrary to the decrees of the emperor, saying that there is another king named Jesus*" (Acts 17:6-7, italics mine *DJS*). On the surface, this passage implies that Paul was preaching a subversive gospel.[40] It often goes unacknowledged, however, that the accusations come from Jews, not Romans, and the Roman authorities, though disturbed, dismiss the charges after receiving bail. The pattern here is typical of Acts: accusations against Christians come from Jews, not Romans, and Roman officials step in as mediators. Luke shows a remarkable concern to highlight the intra-Jewish conflicts that took place between churches and synagogues. As Loveday Alexander argues, if Luke is writing a political defense of the church, his primary focus is toward Judaism rather than Rome.[41]

Still, the conflicts between church and synagogue do not take place "in a corner" (Acts 26:26). Luke spends more verses in Acts narrating Paul in Roman custody because of "accusation from the Jews" than he does on Paul's missionary travels. As Robert Maddox points out, "it is Paul the prisoner even more than Paul the missionary whom we are meant to remember."[42] How we remember Paul's experience in Roman custody is a critical component of how we interpret Luke's attitude toward Caesar. As Paul is passed through three layers of Caesar's agents—Lysias, Festus and Agrippa II—all three pronounce that Paul "has done nothing deserving death" (Acts 23:29; 25:25; 26:31-32). Are we to think, then, that Caesar and his agents are friends of the church or that their authority is under Satan? Put another way, does Luke consistently present imperial authority in an amicable relationship with God's exclusive political sovereignty manifested in the Christ event?

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[40] So C. Kavin Rowe, *World Upside Down*, 97.
[41] Loveday Alexander, "The Acts of the Apostles as an Apologetic Text," in *Apologetics in the Roman Empire* (Oxford: Oxford University, 1999), 42-44.
[42] Robert Maddox, *The Purpose of Luke-Acts* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1982), 66-67.

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It cannot be denied that Luke portrays some of Caesar's agents positively. The proconsul Sergius Paulus (Acts 13:12), for example, becomes a believer, and though we know centurions were not known for their character in the ancient world, Luke consistently portrays them positively (Acts 10:1 – 11:18; 27:42-43).[43] Moreover, Claudius Lysias (Acts 21:31-34) and the centurion Julius protect Paul from being murdered (Acts 27:43). In a mysterious way, God is able to use Caesar's agents to protect Paul. Appeal to these passages in favor of a pro-empire reading of Acts, however, without acknowledgment of Luke's less favorable characterizations of Roman officials lacks hermeneutical discipline. Walton points out that Gallio acts with anti-Semitic motives and turns a blind eye to the beating of Sosthenes (Acts 18:17); Lysias transfers Paul to Caesarea in spite of Paul's innocence (Acts 23:27); Felix hopes for a bribe from Paul and keeps Paul in prison for two years despite his innocence (Acts 24:26-27); and Festus appears more concerned about the Jews than Paul's justice (Acts 25:25), which forces Paul to appeal to Caesar for justice (Acts 25:11).[44] These negative features of Roman rulers are hardly flattering and, as Kazuhiko Yamazaki-Ransom suggests, Luke redefines the people of God as those who follow Jesus as Lord. Based on Luke's redefinition of the people of God and aside from the conversion of Sergius Paulus, Roman rulers in Acts continue to operate under the realm of Satan.[45] Indeed, Paul even appeals to Agrippa to convert (Acts 26:28), but Agrippa's silent response proves that his citizenship remains in the kingdoms of the world.

[43] But see role of irony in Luke's presentation of Roman rulers and officials, see Laurie Brink, *Soldiers in Luke-Acts: Engaging, Contradicting, and Transcending the Stereotypes* (WUNT 2.362; Tübingen: Mohr-Siebeck, 2014).
[44] Steve Walton, "The State They Were in," 27; idem., "Trying Paul or Trying Rome? Judges and the Accused in the Roman Trials of Paul in Acts," in *Luke-Acts and Empire* (Eugene, OR: Pickwick, 2011), 122-41.
[45] Kazuhiko Yamazaki-Ransom, *The Roman Empire in Luke's Narrative*. (LNTS 404; New York: T & T Clark, 2010), 201-202.

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B. The Death of Herod and Luke's Critique of Deification

The death of Herod Agrippa I in Acts 12:20-23 reflects Luke's most explicit critique of human deification in Luke-Acts.[46] It also provides insightful commentary on the boundaries of the political metaphor of idolatry within Luke's political perspective. In Acts 12:1 the Jewish client king of Rome, Herod Agrippa I, martyrs the apostle James with the sword and shuts Peter in prison (Acts 12:2-3). After Peter escapes from prison by an angel of God, Luke records the death of Herod while giving a speech to the people of Tyre and Sidon:

> (21) τακτῇ δὲ ἡμέρᾳ ὁ Ἡρῴδης ἐνδυσάμενος ἐσθῆτα βασιλικὴν [καὶ] καθίσας ἐπὶ τοῦ βήματος ἐδημηγόρει πρὸς αὐτούς, (22) ὁ δὲ δῆμος ἐπεφώνει· θεοῦ φωνὴ καὶ οὐκ ἀνθρώπου. (23) παραχρῆμα δὲ ἐπάταξεν αὐτὸν ἄγγελος κυρίου ἀνθ' ὧν οὐκ ἔδωκεν τὴν δόξαν τῷ θεῷ, καὶ γενόμενος σκωληκόβρωτος ἐξέψυξεν.
>
> (21) On an appointed day Herod put on his royal robes, took his seat on the platform, and delivered a public address to them. (22) *The people kept shouting, "The voice of a god, and not of a mortal!"* (23) *And immediately, because he had not given the glory to God, an angel of the Lord struck him down, and he was eaten by worms and died* (Acts 12:21-23, italics mine *DJS*).

The scene draws on the anti-exaltation literature and the death of a tyrant type-scene from Second Temple literature (see section 4.5.2 of this study). As others have noted, the morbid elimination of Agrippa I has strong resonances with the death wrought on Antiochus IV in 2 Macc 9:8-12; consequently, the death of Herod is typically interpreted as God's vengeance on a ruthless persecutor of the church.[47] The episode, however, is equally a critique of rulers' embellished ontological status and flirtation with ἰσόθεοι τιμαί. To be sure, the envoy from Tyre and Sidon sense the qualities of a god in Herod Agrippa because of his benefaction of food and royal presence. In response to Herod's rhetorical performance and benefaction, the crowd begins

[46] On Herod's death, see Lynn Allan Kauppi, *Foreign But Familiar Gods: Greco-Romans Read Religion in Acts* (London: T&T Clark, 2006), 42-63; and Wesley O. Allen, Jr., *The Death of Herod: The Narrative and Theological Function of Retribution in Luke-Acts* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1997), 29-74.
[47] See Kazuhiko Yamazaki-Ransom, "Paul, Agrippa I, and Antiochus IV: Two Persecutors in Acts in Light of 2 Maccabees 9," in *Luke-Acts and Empire* (ed. David Rhoades et al.; Eugene, OR: Pickwick, 2011), 107-21.

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to shout, "the voice of a god, and not a mortal (θεοῦ φωνὴ καὶ οὐκ ἀνθρώπου)!" Hans Josef-Klauck interprets Luke's peculiar emphasis on Herod's voice as an implicit critique of the egocentric emperor Nero, who was infatuated with the beauty of his voice.[48] A popular legend circulated during Luke's day that Nero would return to life (i.e., Nero Redivivus). Given these popular traditions about Nero, Klauck argues that Luke employs figured speech, and thereby critiques the angry tyrant by saying one thing (e.g., Herod's voice was like a god) when in reality saying something else (e.g., Herod's voice was like Nero!).[49]

Whatever one makes of Klauck's thesis, the death of Herod critiques the porous boundary between humanity and divinity in Greco-Roman antiquity. The critical nature of the passage can be felt when it is read alongside a constellation of similar accusations against rulers' embellished ontological status in Second Temple Jewish texts (Deut 17:20; 1 Macc 1:1-3; Dan 11:36-38; 2 Macc 9:12; *Pss. Sol.* 2:28-30; 3 Macc 2:21-22; Wis 7:1-10). Although Josephus's account of Agrippa's death diverges from Luke's in some significant ways (*Ant*. 19.343-51), Josephus also associates Herod's morbid punishment with deification. Dressed in silver regalia that distorts the boundary between human and divine before the masses in Caesarea, Josephus writes that the crowds transition from treating Agrippa I "as a man" (ὡς ἄνθρωπον) to one who is "superior to mortal nature" (κρείττονά σε θνητῆς φύσεως, *Ant*. 19.345). Against this backdrop, Ps-Solomon's literary paragon of the ideal ruler animates Luke and Josephus's critique of deified human political authority. In the voice of Israel's exemplar king, Ps-Solomon writes: "I also am mortal, like everyone else" (εἰμὶ μὲν κἀγὼ θνητὸς ἄνθρωπος ἴσος ἅπασιν, Wis 7:1). In contrast to King

[48] Klauck points to Cassius Dio, 62.20.5; Tac. *Ann.* 14.15, 16.22; Philostratus, *Vit. Apoll.* 4.39, 5.7.
[49] See Quintillian, *Inst.* 9.2.67. Hans-Josef Klauck, *Magic and Paganism in Earliest Christianity* (London: T& TClark, 2003), 38-44; "Des Kaisers schöne Stimme. Herrscherkritik in Apg 12, 20-23" in *Religion und Gesellschaft im frühen Christentum: Neutestamentliche Studien*. (WUNT 152; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2003), 251-67.

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Solomon, Antiochus IV's utterance reflects similar diction: “It is right to be subject to God; mortals should not think that they are equal to God" (ἔφη δίκαιον ὑποτάσσεσθαι τῷ θεῷ καὶ μὴ θνητὸν ὄντα ἰσόθεα φρονεῖν, 2 Macc 9:8-12). With similar emphasis, Luke paints Herod as one who "did not give glory to God" (Acts 12:23). For Luke and Josephus, along with the Jewish anti-exaltation literature that was composed before them, honors like the gods have no place in the economy of human political authority. Rather than target a full-blown Roman official with this strategy of resistance, Luke eliminates a *Jewish* client-king through divine retribution. The circumvention, however, is clear: Agrippa I, like the Roman officials that he both imitates and represents, stand under the retributive justice of the one God when they coopt the exclusive rule and divinity of Israel's God.

C. Summa

Luke’s presentation of Roman rulers and officials leaves the community of God in profound tension with imperial powers. In the end, God can use imperial authority to restrain evil in such a way as to make space for the growth of the church, but on the other hand, Caesar and his agents lie under the authority of Satan. The empire Luke portrays is reoriented around the ascended Jesus, not Caesar, and the apostles are prepared to “obey God rather than any human authority” (πειθαρχεῖν δεῖ θεῷ μᾶλλον ἢ ἀνθρώποις, Acts 5:29) when political powers—Jewish or pagan—obstruct the mission of God. For Luke, the kingdoms of this world stand under the authority of Satan; however, Israel's God continues to share power with subordinate authorities despite their corruption. Luke's understanding of the political metaphor is exclusive: the line between rulers and the divine cannot be blurred—the suffering Jewish Messiah is the only apotheosized, ascended Lord of all. The exclusivity of Luke's view of Jesus' divinity, however, does not

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exclude God's use of imperial authority in the kingdoms of this world. The strategy of resistance here is key: the apostles' obedience to God is not a call to violent sedition but to faithful witness to God's ways in Jesus. As Kavin Rowe memorably asserts: "new culture, yes—coup, no."[50] Given the Jewish precedent for violent revolt against imperial powers in both Jewish and Greco-Roman contexts, Luke's emphasis on nonviolent witness is a striking feature of Acts. Though the apostles do not teach on nonviolence in Acts, they lead by example, facing persecution in ways that uphold Jesus' teaching in Luke's Gospel. Still, embellishing imperial powers as the primary obstacle to Jesus' mission is misguided; it is more accurate to recognize with Luke that, "both Herod and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles and the peoples of Israel, gathered together against your holy servant Jesus . . . to do whatever your hand and your plan had predestined to take place" (Acts 4:27-28). Luke understands the enemies of God more holistically than is often acknowledged.

6.2.3 Confrontation: Iconic Spectacle and the Missionary Preaching of the Apostles

The missionary sermons in Acts give us a unique opportunity to assess the political attitude of early Christian preaching. For many years the work of form and source critics, such as Martin Dibelius and others, tended to detach the speeches of Acts from their narrative context and read them for their historicity, sources, overlap with ancient historiographical practices and the pattern of the early kerygma.[51] The popular consensus among German and some American scholars was

[50] Rowe, *World Upside Down*, 91.
[51] See especially Henry Joel Cadbury, "The Speeches in Acts," in *The Acts of the Apostles* (ed. F. J. Foakes Jackson and Kirsopp Lake), vol. 5; *Additional Notes to the Commentary* (ed. Kirsopp Lake and H. J. Cadbury; *Beginnings of Christianity,* pt. 1, London: Macmillan, 1933), 402-27; Martin Dibelius, "The Speeches in Acts," in *Studies in the Acts of the Apostles* (ed. Heinrich Greevan; London: SCM Press, 1956), 138-45; Ulrich Wilckens, *Die Missionsreden der Apostelgeschichte: Form- und traditionsgeschichtliche Untersuchungen* (WMAN*T* 5; Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener, 1974); idem, Kerygma und Evangelium bei Lukas," *ZNW* 49 (1958): 223-37. For a good research history of the speeches, see: Marion Soards, *The Speeches in Acts: Their Content, Context and Concerns* (Louisville: Westminster, 1994), 1-11. For a more recent study on the early

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that the speeches were the free inventions of Luke and, consequently, the epicenter of Luke's own theology. Gerhard Schneider, for example, argued that the speeches were written for Luke's audience: "Die Reden der Apostelgeschichte sind nicht an Hörer der vorausgesetzten Situation Gerichtet, sondern von Lukas an die Leser seines Werkes."[52] In more recent years, however, the fruitless pursuit of a special source behind the speeches has been exchanged for a narratological approach. Todd Penner has persuasively argued that ancient historiographers wrote speeches with attention to narrative setting and their primary concern was not historicity, but to compose a persuasive and useful document for their readers.[53] The question of historicity, according to Penner, is anachronistic; it is better to evaluate the speeches based on their narrative setting and rhetorical persuasiveness.[54] With Penner's approach in mind, how do the missionary sermons to gentile audiences in Acts confront the temple culture utilized for gods and kings in Greco-Roman religion?

A. Polemical Parallelism and the Preaching of the Apostles

Of the eight missionary sermons Luke records, Peter preaches five times to Jews in Jerusalem (Acts 2:14-36, 38-39; 3:12-26; 4:8-12, 19-20; 5:29-32) and once to a Roman centurion's household (Acts 10:34-43). Paul, on the other hand, preaches once to a Jewish audience (Acts

kerygma in the speeches, see: Richard Bauckham, "Kerygmatic Summaries in the Speeches of Acts" in *History, Literature and Society in the Book of Acts* (ed. Ben Witherington; Cambridge: Cambridge University, 1996), 185-217.

[52] Gerhard Schneider, *Apostelgeschichte* (Freiburg im Breisgau: Herder, 1982), 1:97.

[53] Todd Penner, *In Praise of Christian Origins: Stephen and the Hellenists in Lukan Apologetic Historiography* (ESEC 10; New York: T&T Clark, 2004), 8-59. For other studies on the speeches that pay attention to narrative setting, see: Marion Soards, *The Speeches in Acts*; Conrad Gempf, *Historical and Literary Appropriateness in the Mission Speeches in Acts* (Ph.D. diss., The University of Aberdeen, 1988).

[54] See also Conrad Gempf's similar line of argumentation in the article, "Public Speaking and Published Accounts," in *The Book of Acts in Its Ancient Literary Setting* (ed. Bruce W. Winter & Andrew Clarke; vol. 1 of *The Book of Acts in its First Century Setting,* ed. Bruce W. Winter; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1993), 259-304.

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13:16-41) and twice to pagan audiences (Acts 14:15-17; 17:22-31). The content of Peter's preaching in the first five chapters of Acts repeatedly appeal to Jewish themes—the Old Testament prophets (Acts 2:16), Davidic kingship (Acts 2:34) and God's promises to Abraham (Acts 3:25). Most of these Jewish concepts, including resurrection (Acts 3:15), have no counterpart in Roman imperial theology. A Roman reader of Peter's sermons would likely have felt like the Ethiopian Eunuch reading the prophet Isaiah in Acts 8: "How can I [understand it], unless someone guides me?" (Acts 8:31). Nock appropriately comments, "If it [Luke-Acts] had come into the hands of a pagan, would he have understood it unless he was already half-converted?"[55] Though a pagan may have had a hard time making sense of Luke's Jewish theological jargon, we cannot preclude the possibility that Luke's intent was for believers, rather than unbelievers, to sense an anti-imperial motif.

It is possible that believers could sense an anti-imperial motif when Peter and Paul apply the imperial title *Soter* to Jesus in three sermons to Jewish audiences.[56] Just as Augustus and other emperors were hailed as *Soter* in several imperial inscriptions, Peter too calls Jesus *Soter* before the Jewish high council in Jerusalem (Acts 5:31) and boldly preaches that, "There is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among mortals by which we must be saved" (*οὐκ ἔστιν ἐν ἄλλῳ οὐδενὶ ἡ σωτηρία, οὐδὲ γὰρ ὄνομά ἐστιν ἕτερον ὑπὸ τὸν οὐρανὸν τὸ δεδομένον ἐν ἀνθρώποις ἐν ᾧ δεῖ σωθῆναι ἡμᾶς*, Acts 4:12). In a synagogue at Pisidian Antioch, where Roman imperial architecture rivaled that of Rome—including a massive temple to Augustus connected to the colonnaded Augusta Platea—Paul boldly claims that through David

[55] Arthur D. Nock, "Acts," in *Essays on Religion and the Ancient World* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1972), 825.
[56] The tradition of juxtaposing *Soter* and *Euergetes* as a royal epithet is a common epigraphic honor throughout the age of the Successors, but also during the Roman era as early as the reign of Julius Caesar (e.g., in Greece: *I.G.* VII; in Athens *C.I.A.* III; *I.O.* 365; in Asia *I.G.R.* 4.57; *I.G.R.* 4.303; *I.G.R.* 4.305). For epigraphic inscriptions recording divine honors toward the Roman emperors, see Appendix III in Lily Ross Taylor, *The Divinity of the Roman Emperor* (New York: Arno Press, 1975), 267ff.

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God has brought to Israel a Savior (Acts 13:23). What is curious is that Luke only employs *Soter* before Jewish audiences and, even then, embeds it within Jewish salvation history, which should caution us against reading too far into these titles.

As it becomes increasingly fashionable to read imperial titles like *Soter* anti-imperially—as Steve Walton, Gary Gilbert and Bridgitte Kahl do—it will be important to better identify if Luke is evoking the Jewish or Greco-Roman meaning of *Soter*.[57] Luke's use of *Soter* may have stemmed from either Greek pagan cults or the Septuagint.[58] In Greek culture, for example, *Soter* had been applied to Zeus Soter, Artemis Soter and the Ptolemaic and Seleucid kings in Egypt well before the rise of Roman imperial cults (e.g., an inscription in Greece ca. 250 BCE describes "the sacrifice makers of Savior Zeus" [τοὺς ἱεροποιοὺς τῶι Διὶ τῶι | Σωτῆρι, IG II² 1291]). Moreover, as discussed in 3.8.2, royal epithets were rarely a descriptor denoting ontological status—rather, they articulated the pragmatic function associated with a given object of power. Nock is again insightful on this point: "*Soter* was a word which took much of its color from its context. It could be used of gods and men alike, and, when applied to the latter, it did not necessarily suggest that they belonged or approximated to the category of the former."[59] The descriptive hybridity underlying the epithets of gods and kings, along with their overlapping pragmatic functions in society, muddles the referent. Still, whether by happenstance or intention,

[57] Steve Walton, "The State They Were in," 1-41; Brigitte Kahl, "Acts of the Apostles: Pro(to)-Imperial Script and Hidden Transcript," 137-56; Gary Gilbert, "Roman Propaganda and Christian Identity," 242-47.
[58] In the case of Luke-Acts, Luke employs *σωτήρ* as a Christological title four times (Luke 1:47; 2:11; Acts 5:31; 13:23). Additionally, Luke is the only author in the New Testament to employ the substantive εὐεργέτης (Luke 22:25) and the verb εὐεργετέω (Acts 10:38) to critique gentile power dynamics.
[59] Arthur Darby Nock "Soter and Euergetes," in *Essays on Religion and the Ancient World II* (ed. Zeph Stewart; Oxford: Oxford University, 1972), 720.

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Luke's use of *Soter* could have evoked a powerful sense of exclusivity: in Luke's own words, "There is salvation in no one else" (*ἐν ἄλλῳ οὐδενὶ ἡ σωτηρία*, Acts 4:12).[60]

B. Peter's Missionary Speech in Cornelius's Household

As the gospel moves away from the heart of the Jewish world, Peter makes a provocative theological claim that Jesus is Lord of all in an imperial context—a Roman centurion's household. The story takes place in Caesarea, where we know Herod built a colossal statue of and temple for Caesar Augustus, which, according to Josephus, could be seen by sailors from miles away (*Ant.* 15.339). Cornelius's status as a Roman Gentile is evident when he falls down to worship Peter as a god (Acts 10:25). After commanding Cornelius to stand up—because Cornelius's attempt at deification is incompatible with Peter's identity as a representative and subordinate follower of the ascended Christ—Peter proceeds to preach in Cornelius's house. One verse of Peter's sermon, in particular, deserves our attention: "You know the message he sent to the people of Israel, preaching peace by Jesus Christ—this one is Lord [*kyrios*] of all" (*τὸν λόγον [ὃν] ἀπέστειλεν τοῖς υἱοῖς Ἰσραὴλ εὐαγγελιζόμενος εἰρήνην διὰ Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ, οὗτός ἐστιν πάντων κύριος*, Acts 10:36). Rowe draws attention to this verse as a point of entry for understanding Luke's attitude toward the imperial cults. Drawing on inscriptional evidence that Caesar was understood as "Lord of all," Rowe argues that Peter's phrase "this one is Lord of all" is not a parenthetical remark but a profound theological claim: namely, that "this one," being Jesus of Nazareth, is Lord of all rather than Caesar.[61] Rowe is correct to identify polemical parallelism in

[60] On salvation in Luke's Gospel, see Gert J. Steyn, "Soteriological Perspectives in Luke's Gospel," in *Salvation in the New Testament: Perspectives on Soteriology* (ed. Jan Van der Watt; Leiden: Brill, 2005), 47-71.
[61] Kavin Rowe, "Luke-Acts and the Imperial Cult: A Way Through the Conundrum?" *JSNT* 27.3 (2005): 279-33.

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YUNIBESITHI YA PRETORIA

this phrase, but he overlooks the use of the demonstrative as a means to implicate the angry tyrant with allusive innuendo. In Demetrius's *On Style*, for example, he writes that Demetrius of Phaleron[62] (ca. 360-280 BCE) censured the hubristic Craterus (370-321 BCE) who sat on a gold couch in purple regalia while receiving the Greek envoys with the following address: "'We ourselves once welcomed these men as envoys, including *this man*, Craterus.' By the use of the demonstrative, 'this man' (τοῦτον), all the pride of Craterus is implicitly indicated and allusively censured" (ἐν σχήματι, Dem. *Eloc.* 289). For Demetrius, the demonstrative evokes a larger critique of Craterus's hubris as a foreign monarch. In a similar way, Luke employs the demonstrative to evoke an allusive critique of the emperor cult.

Howell takes Rowe's thesis further, making three critical points about Roman centurions: (1) centurions functioned as benefactors and judges for their local communities; (2) they were often active participants in Roman imperial cults; and (3) they were notorious for using unjust means to acquire wealth (Luke 3:14).[63] Howell argues that Luke's polemic is not aimed at Caesar alone but also at Caesar's subordinate authorities—that is to say, both Caesar and centurions are subordinate to the authority of Israel's God. Rowe and Howell focus so much on the latter half of Acts 10:36, however, that they fail to highlight Luke's equally important message of "peace by Jesus Christ" (εὐαγγελιζόμενος εἰρήνην διὰ Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ, v. 36a). The emperor, of course, was famous for providing the benefit of peace (*pax Romana*) in the form of cosmic equilibrium between nations, subjects and seas (e.g., Tac., *Agr.* 30-32; *OGIS* 458 lines 4-11, 32-41; Philo,

[62] Not to be confused with author of *On Style* as some mss. suggest. For comment, see Doreen C. Innes, *Demetrius: On Style*, LCL, 310-311; and D. M. Schenkenveld, *Studies in Demetrius On Style*, 135-48.

[63] Justin Howell, "The Imperial Authority and Benefaction of Centurions," 25-51, here 39.

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Legat. 10-13, 43-53).[64] For Luke, however, Jesus is the true provider of the benefit of peace between God, creation and the nations.[65]

Rowe and Howell also overlook Luke's critique of benefaction in Acts 10:38.[66] Strikingly, Luke is the only author in the New Testament to employ the entire *euerg*- family (εὐεργέτης [Luke 22:25]; εὐεργεσία [Acts 4:9]; εὐεργετέω [Acts 10:38]).[67] In Luke 22:25, Luke explicitly associates the angry tyrant with the royal epithet εὐεργέτης. To rebuke the disciples' quench for power, Luke writes: "The kings of the Gentiles lord it over them; and those in authority over them are called benefactors" (ὁ δὲ εἶπεν αὐτοῖς· οἱ βασιλεῖς τῶν ἐθνῶν κυριεύουσιν αὐτῶν καὶ οἱ ἐξουσιάζοντες αὐτῶν εὐεργέται καλοῦνται, Luke 22:25). The verse provides a terse but shocking critique of political authority. As discussed in chapters two and three, the Ptolemies, Seleucids and Roman imperial cults employed the word εὐεργέτης in their public titulature, and εὐεργεσία is used frequently in the epigraphic record to eulogize king's benefits on subjects and cult and religion. In continuity with this passage—and in contrast to the benefaction of Cornelius—Peter proceeds to proclaims in Cornelius's household that "God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power; how he went about providing benefits (εὐεργετῶν) and healing all who were oppressed by the devil, for God was with him" (Acts 10:38). In a similar manner, Philo employs εὐεργετέω to articulate the benefaction of political authority (*Legat*. 51, 283, 297). For example, Philo eulogizes Augustus for "rejoicing and delighting in nothing more than in

[64] Philo is dramatic on this point in his eulogy of Gaius: "On this occasion the rich were not better off than the poor, nor the men of high rank than the lowly, nor the creditors than the debtors, nor the masters than the slaves, since the occasion gave equal privileges and communities to all men…" (*Legat.* 13).
[65] See also Seyoon Kim, *Christ and Caesar* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2008), 84.
[66] See the excellent discussion and primary sources in Craig A. Evans, "King Jesus and His Ambassadors: Empire and Luke-Acts," in *Empire in the New Testament* (ed. by Stanley Porter and Cynthia Long Westfall; Eugene: Pickwick Publications, 2011), 125-37.
[67] See Frederick W. Danker, *Benefactor: Epigraphic Study of a Graeco-Roman and New Testament Semantic Field* (St. Louis: Clayton, 1982), 323-24. The words εὐεργέτης and εὐεργετέω are hapax legomena in the New Testament. However, the word εὐεργεσία also occurs in 1 Tim 6:2.

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doing good to your subjects" (χαίρων καὶ τερπόμενος ἢ τῷ τοὺς ὑπηκόους εὐεργετεῖν *Legat.* 50-51). But for Luke, Jesus is the exclusive cosmic benefactor of creation, providing benefits on those who are oppressed by the Devil (i.e., the kingdoms of this world). Luke's counter-cosmology is on full display in this passage; it is Jesus, not imperial-authorities, who represents the sole source of soteriological benefaction in this world and the one to come.

C. Paul's Missionary Speeches

After the extension of salvation to the Gentiles in Cornelius's household, Paul takes center stage for the remainder of Acts as he preaches his way into the Gentile world. Given the presence of anti-imperial motifs in Paul's letters, it is surprising that Luke never depicts Paul taking an open swipe at Caesar.[68] Paul's lack of explicit critique of Caesar in Acts has been a source of frustration—what Bridgitte Kahl labels "a stumbling block"—for those who wish to read Paul's letters anti-imperially. In response to this stumbling block, Kahl argues that Luke "concealed and blurred the original subversive message of Paul."[69] By supposedly partaking in a historical revision of the Paul of history, Kahl credits Luke with creating the reading framework that "made the inclusion of Paul's Letters in the canon appear 'safe.'"[70] Kahl is correct in her judgment that the Paul of Acts is not overtly anti-imperial, but her agenda to justify an anti-imperial reading of Paul's letters misunderstands the art of safe criticism in antiquity and misreads Paul as a "safe" character in Acts. Kahl's thesis should be rejected for three reasons.

First, as Rowe recently argued, Paul's "collision" with pagan culture in Acts was "culturally destabilizing" for paganism in the cities of Lystra (Acts 14), Philippi (Acts 16),

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[68] For an overview of studies on Paul and empire, see Judith Diehl, "Empire and Epistles: Anti-Roman Rhetoric in the New Testament Epistles," *Currents in Biblical Research* 10 (2012): 217-63.
[69] Brigitte Kahl, "Pro(to)-Imperial Script and Hidden Transcript," 156.
[70] Idem., 156.

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Athens (Acts 17) and Ephesus (Acts 19).[71] To take one example, the Ephesian silversmiths start a massive riot because they experience an economic loss from people turning away from their silver idols in response to Paul's preaching (Acts 19:23). The episode in Ephesus illustrates how early Christian aniconicism could have an impact on the economy of the religions of the Roman Empire. Second, and more significantly, Kahl overlooks the importance of the traditional gods as a major component of the "web of power" from which the Roman emperors' theo-political image was disseminated from center to periphery. Galinsky points out that it is in Ephesus that we have a good example of Roman imperial cults assimilating with a regional god—for example, the basilica at Ephesus was dedicated to: "Artemis; to Emperor Caesar Augustus, son of god; to Tiberius Caesar, son of Augustus; and to the people of Ephesus" (*IvE* 2.404).[72] Artemis's association with the Roman imperial cults muddles the object of resistance that Paul's preaching opposes, illustrating how the hybrid honors conferred on gods and kings in joint media infused idol polemic with a polyvalent referent.[73] Third, Kahl's suggestion that Luke watered down the subversive message of Paul's Letters implies that Paul's critique of the traditional gods in Acts was an act of safe speech. In section 4.3.2 we amassed significant evidence for the use of the traditional gods by the ruling power to persecute and agitate early Jewish and Christian subjects. Notably, it is also in Ephesus that we have epigraphic evidence of capital punishment for auditors who insulted the cult of Artemis (*CIG* 2954.4; Danker, no. 46). Luke's presentation of

[71] Kavin Rowe, *World Upside Down,* 17-49.
[72] Galinsky, "The Cult of the Roman Emperor: Uniter or Divider?" 5. For further comment on the basilica, see: Simon Price, *Rituals and Power*, 254-57; Paul Trebilco, *The Early Christians in Ephesus From Paul to Ignatius* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2004), 35; Steven Friesen, *Imperial Cults and the Apocalypse of John* (Oxford: Oxford University, 2001), 95.
[73] See Galinsky, "The Cult of the Roman Emperor: Uniter or Divider?" 7. On the inscription, see also Simon Price, *Rituals and Power*, 254-57; Paul Trebilco, *The Early Christians in Ephesus From Paul to Ignatius* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2004), 35; Steven Friesen, *Imperial Cults and the Apocalypse of John* (Oxford: Oxford University, 2001), 95.

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Paul's confrontation with the traditional gods, therefore, should not be taken as innocuous discourse without implications for the image and power of imperial authority.

As the mission to the gentiles officially commences in the second half of Acts, Luke manages his dramatic audience by composing a précis of Paul's missionary preaching through three unfolding didactic paradigms. The first paradigm summarizes Paul's preaching to Diaspora Jews at a synagogue in Pisidian Antioch, with an emphasis on salvation history and especially the Isaianic notion of "light to the gentiles" (Isa 49:6; Acts 13:47). The second paradigm summarizes Paul's preaching to rural pagans immersed in popular piety at Lystra, with an emphasis on critiquing the anthropomorphic narrative of Greco-Roman religion (Acts 14:15-18). The third paradigm summarizes Paul's preaching to the intellectual elite at Athens who are immersed in contemporary debates about the knowledge of God and, hence, the philosophy of religion (Act 17:16-34). Paul’s two missionary sermons to gentile audiences at Lystra and Athens provide indispensable data on the political attitude of early Christian preaching. Both sermons contain forthright criticism of the cult practices and iconic culture of Greco-Roman religion, but neither employs artless blunt speech (παρρησία) to critique emperor worship. Still, their polemic against anthropomorphism and the temple culture of Greco-Roman religion espouse a worldview that is incompatible with the machinery and iconic politics of emperor worship. To what degree, therefore, can one sense an imperial referent in these two sermons? Before turning to a deeper analysis of the Areopagus speech, some observations about Paul's speech at Lystra are worth our consideration.

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D. Paul's Critique of Anthropomorphism and Deification at Lystra

Unlike Athens, there is no material evidence for the Roman imperial cults at Lystra in the first century CE.[74] We do know, however, that Augustus founded Lystra as a Roman colony in 26 BCE (cf. *CIL* 3.6786).[75] The lack of evidence should not detract one from investigating the content of Paul's speech for hidden polemics. After all, it is Luke's dramatic audience—not historical audience—that would anticipate such speech. The scene unfolds through a healing miracle by Paul and Barnabas (vv. 8-10), attempted deification of Paul and Barnabas (vv. 11-13), a speech (vv. 14-18) and the stoning of Paul by Jews (v. 19). Within the paradigm of preaching to rural pagans, Pervo rightly observes that the speech answers the question: "how did early Christian missionaries approach—and persuade—true polytheists?"[76]

To answer this question, Luke opens the scene with a blunt criticism of anthropomorphism. For providing benefaction to a crippled man in the form a miracle, the crowds shout: "the gods have descended to us in human form!" (οἱ θεοὶ ὁμοιωθέντες ἀνθρώποις κατέβησαν πρὸς ἡμᾶς, Acts 14:11). The *parousia* of a benefactor descending as a god finds parallel in Plutarch's account of Demetrius Poliorcetes's deification. On the spot where Demetrius first set foot in Athens, Plutarch writes that an altar was set up with the inscription "Demetrius the Descended [God]" (Δημητρίου Καταιβάτου; Plutarch, *Demetr*. 10.4).[77] In section 2.3.1 of the present study, we evaluated in detail how the anthropomorphic narrative of Greco-Roman religion impacted the elision of gods and kings in the Hellenistic and Roman worlds. In

[74] On the built environment of Lystra, see David W. J. Gill and Bruce W. Winter, "Roman Religion," in *The Book of Acts in Its Graeco-Roman Setting* **(**ed. David Gill and Conrad Gempf, Vol. 2 of *The Book of Acts in its First Century Setting*; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1994), 81-86**.**
[75] See Ben Witherington III, *The Acts of the Apostles: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), 421.
[76] Richard Pervo, *Acts: A Commentary* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2009), 358.
[77] On the altar, see Rolf Strootman, *Courts and Elites in the Hellenistic Empires: The Near East After the Achaeminids, c. 330 to 30 BCE* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University, 2014), 241 n. 32.

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one verse, Luke evokes this tradition—even portraying the crowds conferring cosmogonic identities on Paul and Barnabas ("Barnabas they called Zeus, and Paul they called Hermes," Acts 14:12). Among commentators, it has become commonplace to take Luke's object of resistance at face-value, especially *en lieu* of inscriptional dedications to Zeus and Hermes at Lystra and a myth recorded in Ovid that remembers the elder couple Baucis and Philemon providing hospitality to these two respective deities in the Phrygian countryside (*Meta.* 8.626ff.).[78]

One cannot deny Luke's obvious polemic against the traditional gods at Lystra. For Luke's dramatic audience, however, the scene could also evoke a universal critique of human deification, including emperor worship. Among commentators, Nasrallah stands out on this point: "In their native tongue, in their backwater town, the Lystrans ignorantly manifest confusion between gods and humans that many would say was rampant throughout the empire. The cities that Luke and his first readers travelled housed imperial cult and contained statuary of humans representing themselves as gods, as well as gods in human form whose faces sometimes resembled members of the imperial family."[79] The malleability of anthropomorphic representations of divinity is perhaps best expressed when Homer records Odysseus saying to Athene after she revealed herself to him: "It is hard, goddess, for a mortal who meets you to recognize you, even if he is very knowledgeable: you take on every shape" (*Od.* 13.312-13).[80] The anthropomorphic shape of divinity is also reflected in Horace, who interpreted Augustus as

[78] For an extensive *Forschungsgeschichte* on the episode at Lystra, see Amy Wordelman, "Cultural Divides and Dual Realities: A Greco-Roman Context for Acts 14," in *Contextualizing Acts: Lukan Narrative and Greco-Roman Discourse* (ed. Todd Penner and Caroline Vander Stichele; Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2003), 205-32.
[79] Laura Nasrallah, *Christian Response to Roman Art and Architecture: The Second-Century Church Amid the Spaces of Empire* (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 2010), 111. See also Nasrallah's similar comments in "The Acts of the Apostles, Greek Cities, and Hadrian's Panhellenion," *JBL* 127.3 (2008): 560. Klauck also makes this point. See Klauck, *Magic and Paganism*, 58.
[80] Quoted from Ken Dowden, "Olympian Gods, Olympian Pantheon," in *A Companion to Greek Religion* (ed. Daniel Ogden; Oxford: Blackwell, 2010), 41-55, here 53.

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Mercury in human form (*Ars* I.2).[81] Before the speech proper, Luke provides a paradigmatic setting for his dramatic audience that critiques the elision of divinity with humanity. Ironically, Luke attacks the vulgarities of anthropomorphism by portraying the deification of the protagonist and architect of early Christian mission itself. The circumvention allows Luke to critique anthropomorphism without recourse to evoking a more controversial object of resistance.

The cultic framework for Paul and Barnabas's deification is given vivid description when the priest of Zeus arrives bearing oxen (ταύρους) and garlands (στέμματα) to offer sacrifice with the crowds (σὺν τοῖς ὄχλοις ἤθελεν θύειν, Acts 14:13). The tangible presence of cult offering for two Christian missionaries bearing a message of monotheism causes regret, leading the two travelling companions to rush into the crowds with the following speech:

> (15) καὶ λέγοντες· ἄνδρες, τί ταῦτα ποιεῖτε; καὶ ἡμεῖς ὁμοιοπαθεῖς ἐσμεν ὑμῖν ἄνθρωποι εὐαγγελιζόμενοι ὑμᾶς ἀπὸ τούτων τῶν ματαίων ἐπιστρέφειν ἐπὶ θεὸν ζῶντα, ὃς ἐποίησεν τὸν οὐρανὸν καὶ τὴν γῆν καὶ τὴν θάλασσαν καὶ πάντα τὰ ἐν αὐτοῖς· (16) ὃς ἐν ταῖς παρῳχημέναις γενεαῖς εἴασεν πάντα τὰ ἔθνη πορεύεσθαι ταῖς ὁδοῖς αὐτῶν· (17) καίτοι οὐκ ἀμάρτυρον αὐτὸν ἀφῆκεν ἀγαθουργῶν, οὐρανόθεν ὑμῖν ὑετοὺς διδοὺς καὶ καιροὺς καρποφόρους, ἐμπιπλῶν τροφῆς καὶ εὐφροσύνης τὰς καρδίας ὑμῶν. (18) καὶ ταῦτα λέγοντες μόλις κατέπαυσαν τοὺς ὄχλους τοῦ μὴ θύειν αὐτοῖς.
>
> (15) “Friends, why are you doing this? We are mortals just like you, and we bring you good news, that you should turn from these worthless things to the living God, who made the heaven and the earth and the sea and all that is in them. (16) In past generations he allowed all the nations to follow their own ways; (17) yet he has not left himself without a witness in doing good—giving you rains from heaven and fruitful seasons, and filling you with food and your hearts with joy.” (18) Even with these words, they scarcely restrained the crowds from offering sacrifice to them (Acts 14:15-18).

The speech's strategy for resisting alien religion is three-fold. First, Luke again appeals to the mortality of the Apostles: "We are mortals just like you" (ἡμεῖς ὁμοιοπαθεῖς ἐσμεν ὑμῖν ἄνθρωποι, Acts 14:15). The emphasis on mortality echoes Peter's rebuke of the Centurion Cornelius who offers *proskynesis* to Peter (ὁ Κορνήλιος πεσὼν ἐπὶ τοὺς πόδας προσεκύνησεν, Acts 10:25). Peter

[81] See Kavin Rowe, *World Upside Down,* 21.

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commands Cornelius to stand up (ἀνάστηθι) because "I also am a mortal" (ἐγὼ αὐτὸς ἄνθρωπός εἰμι, Acts 10:26). This emphasis is also felt in the elimination of Herod Agrippa I when the crowds shout that Herod has "the voice of a god and not a man" (θεοῦ φωνὴ καὶ οὐκ ἀνθρώπου, Acts 12:22).

Second, Luke communicates the incompatibility of deification with the true knowledge of God by classifying the Lystrans' materials for sacrifice under the polemical term "worthless things" (μάταιος). The word finds a precedent in the idol polemics of the Hebrew Bible and Second Temple Judaism (e.g. Amos 2:4; Isa 32:6; 44:9; Jer 10:3; 3 Macc 6:11; Wis 13:1; 15:8). The emphasis on turning from idols also finds a strong paraellel in Paul's first letter to the Thessalonians: πῶς ἐπεστρέψατε πρὸς τὸν θεὸν ἀπὸ τῶν εἰδώλων δουλεύειν θεῷ ζῶντι καὶ ἀληθινῷ (1 Thess 1:9). Both passages employ ἐπιστρέφω, but use different polemical terms to classify the futility of idols (whereas Luke uses μάταιος, Paul employs the LXX term εἴδωλον).

Third, and most significantly, Luke confronts the Lystrans' idolatry by appeal to the one God's providential and beneficent care of the creation. We find similar arguments in early Judaism (Wis 13:1-9) and among Stoic philosophers (e.g., Xen., *Mem*. 4.3; Dio Chrys., *Or.* 30.28-44).[82] Although Israel's God allowed the nations to go their own ways, he has not left them without a witness through his benefactions ("doing good" - ἀγαθουργῶ), sending rains, fruitful seasons and filling the Lystrans with food and their hearts with joy (Acts 14:17). The passage critically inverts gentile notions of benefaction; it is Israel's God—not Zeus and other objects of power—that provides rain, abundance and joy for subjects.[83] Notably, Luke employs a similar

[82] So Hans Conzelmann, *Acts of the Apostles: A Commentary on the Acts of the Apostles* (trans. James Limburg et al.; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1987), 111.
[83] Cilliers Breytenbach has argued at length that Zeus was known in the regions of Lystra to govern the vitality of plant life in the natural world. See, "Zeus und der lebendige Gott: Anmerkungen zu Apostelgeschichte 14.11-17," *NTS* 39 (1993): 396-413.

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line of argument in the Areopagus speech when he suggests that God made the world, is not served by human hands and himself "gives to all mortals life and breath and all things" (αὐτὸς διδοὺς πᾶσι ζωὴν καὶ πνοὴν καὶ τὰ πάντα, 17:24-25). The exclusivity of Israel's God as the primary cosmic creator and benefactor over the natural world can be found especially in Philo (e.g., *Opif.* 169, 172; *Alleg. Interp.* 3.78; *Decal.* 41).[84] The *Letter of Jeremiah* also represents this exclusivity: "For they [idols] cannot set up a king over a country or give rain to people (βασιλέα γὰρ χώρας οὐ μὴ ἀναστήσωσιν οὔτε ὑετὸν ἀνθρώποις οὐ μὴ δῶσιν, *Let. Jer.* 6:53).

A cosmic dimension to the beneficence of imperial authority was not uncommon in the Hellenistic and Roman worlds. In tandem with the *peri basileias* literature, when emperors embody piety and law, they become Living Law that brings cosmic stability, order and abundance to their subjects in collaboration with the gods. This abundance and reversal of fortune is present in the Priene Inscription's celebration of Augustus's birthday from 9 BCE (on which, see 3.8.2). The opening lines eulogize Augustus's restoration of cosmic peace and prosperity:

> [Paulus Fabius Maximus to the Asian League, greeting. - - -] It is subject to question whether the birthday of our most divine Caesar spells more of joy or blessing, | this being a date that we could probably without fear of contradiction equate with the beginning of all things, if not in terms of nature, certainly in terms of utility, seeing that he restored stability, when everything was collapsing and falling into disarray, and gave a new look to the entire world that would have been most happy to accept its ruin had not the good and common fortune of all been born: CAESAR (Danker, no. 33; *OGIS* 458 lines 4-10).

The "whiff of eschatology" in this passage, as Stanton puts it, would not be lost on the early Christian.[85] But Stanton overlooks the ways the Priene Inscription mirrors vestiges of the kingship treatises—most notably their emphasis on the cause and effect relationship between a

[84] Notwithstanding the exclusivity, as we saw in our analysis of Philo's cosmology (cf. 4.5.1), Philo could confer the epithet εὐεργέτης on emperors who stood in subordinate, yet shared positions of power over God's creation (*Flacc.* 74, 126; *Legat.* 22, 118, 148, 149).
[85] Graham Stanton, *Jesus and Gospel* (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 2004), 30-32.

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ruler's piety and the vitality of subjects and the cosmic order of things. As we saw in Philo's cosmology (cf. 4.5.1), Philo interprets imperial authorities in a subordinate but shared position of power with Israel's God. This shared power can include acts of benefaction that create peace, abundance and joy.

The cosmic dimension of the emperor's beneficence is especially evident in Philo's eulogy of Augustus, who is praised for bringing cosmic equilibrium to warring nations; clearing the sea of pirate ships and filling it with merchants; and "who reduced disorder to order (ὁ τὴν ἀταξίαν εἰς τάξιν ἀγαγών)…who safeguarded peace, gave each man his due, distributed his favours widely without stint, and never in his whole life kept any blessing or advantage back" (*Legat*. 143-53; trans Smallwood). Philo also eulogizes Gaius, "who had been regarded as saviour and benefactor (ὁ σωτὴρ καὶ εὐεργέτης) who would pour out fresh streams of blessing on Asia and Europe to the lasting happiness (εὐδαιμονίαν) of each man individually and everyone communally…" (Philo, *Legat.* 22; Trans. Smallwood). But when Gaius turned mad, his hubris has the obverse effect on subjects and the cosmic order: "For his illness was merely physical, whereas theirs [i.e. subjects] was universal, affecting their mental health, their peace, their hopes, and their participation in and enjoyment of good things" (Philo, *Legat.* 16; trans. Smallwood). In contrast to the ideal ruler, Gaius represents the paragon of the angry tyrant, which has direct implications for the vitality of subjects' abundance and joy.

The power of the emperor as a cosmic benefactor is further evident in Pliny the Younger's *Panegyricus.* Pliny argues that a providential drought fell upon Egypt to force native Egyptians to look to Trajan, rather than Egyptian deity and the Nile River, for benefaction and abundance. Pliny writes,

> Therefore the country, denied the flood which is its fertility, looked to Caesar for aid instead of to their river; and no sooner had he heard their appeal than their troubles were

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> at an end. So prompt is your power, Caesar, so prepared and ready for all alike your goodness of heart, that if any of your subjects suffers misfortune he has only to tell you to find help and security in you (Pliny, *Pan.* 30).

The suggestion that Trajan is Egypt's true cosmic benefactor rather than the Nile and the gods that sustain its water supply evokes a similar logic to Luke's argument. Luke's emphasis on God providing rains, abundance and joy finds an even more striking parallel in a third century rhetorical handbook by Menander Rhetor, who suggests that those who compose an imperial oration ought to end their speech as follows:

> What prayers ought cities to make to the power above, save always for the emperor? What greater blessings must one ask from the gods that the emperor's safety? *Rains in season, abundance from the sea, unstinting harvests come happily to us because of the emperor's justice*. In return, cities, nations, races and tribes, all of us, garland him, sing of him, write of him. Full of his images are the cities, some of painted tablets, some maybe of more precious material. After this you must utter a prayer beseeching god that the emperor's reign may endure long, and the throne be handed down to his children and descendents.[86]

Menander Rhetor's eulogy and prayer for the emperor's cosmic benefactions—including rains and abundance—shows how Luke's appeal to the one God's beneficence has implications for auditors who look to gods and imperial authorities for abundance and joy. The episode at Lystra is hardly "anti-imperial." However, it espouses a critique of anthropomorphism and subversion of cosmic benefaction that is incompatible with imperial notions of power, representation and deification. Paul and Barnabas are mere representatives of the true benefactor of this world and, in accord with Roman ideals, refuse divine honors (e.g., Augustus, *Res. Ges.* 24).[87]

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[86] Italics mine, *DJS*. Quoted from Simon Price, *Rituals and Power,* 177. See also Clifford Ando, *Imperial Ideology and Provincial Loyalty in the Roman Empire* (Berkeley: University of California, 2000), 235. For Greek text, see Menander Rhetor, Περὶ ἐπιδεικτικων 1-2, *Basilikos logos* (trans. Russell and Wilson).
[87] See M. P. Charlesworth, "The Refusal of Divine Honors: An Augustan Formula," *Papers of the British School at Rome* 15 (1939): 1-10; and Kenneth Scott, "Tiberius' Refusal of the Title 'Augustus,'" *Classical Philology* 27.1 (1932): 43-50. The refusal of divine honors can also be felt when Ps-Callisthenes records Alexander saying: "I beg off from honors equal to the gods. For I am a mortal man and I fear such ceremonies. For they bring danger to the soul" (*Life of Alexander of Macedon* 12:22). Quote from L. T. Johnson, *The Acts of the Apostles* (Sacra Pagina Series Volume 5; Collegeville: The Liturgical Press, 1992), 249. C. Kavin Rowe,

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Luke's appeal to natural revelation at Lystra sets the stage for Paul's speech on the Areopagus in Athens. Dibelius once suggested that the speech denotes "a climax of the book."[88] Dibelius overstates his point, but rightly recognizes that the Areopagus speech represents Luke's attempt to confront those who have been enculurated in the upper-echelons of Greek society. It would be a breath of fresh air if Paul critiqued the Roma-Augustus temple near the Parthenon in Athens, but Luke records Paul focusing his criticism more allusively—toward an altar to an unknown god and the media underlying visual honors. Before turning to the speech proper, what follows is an analysis the hybrid material honors conferred on gods and kings in Athens's sculptural environment. In chapters two and three of this study the dynamic relationship between gods and kings in the Mediterranean basin was established through an analysis of the anthropomorphic narrative of Greco-Roman religion (2.3.1), the system of benefaction (2.3.2), the *peri basileias* literature (2.4) and the epigraphic record (3.2). En lieu of this research, does Athens also reflect the hybrid material culture used to honor gods and imperial authority in other urban centers of the Greco-Roman world?

6.3 The Roman Imperial Cults and Athens

Pausanias observes that the "[Athenians are] far more zealous than other people in matters concerning the gods" (1.24.3). This dictum also applies to the Athenians' representation of benefactors and rulers. It was not uncommon for the ruling power to confer benefits on Athens's gods. To take one example, Antiochus IV displayed piety toward the gods by building a massive temple of Olympian Zeus at Athens along with embellishing "magnificent altars and numerous inscriptions" (Livy XLI.20). In Dio Chrysostom's 6th Oration *On Tyranny,* he uses Diogones of

however, rightly observes that Alexander does not consistently refuse divine honors in Ps-Callisthenes's account (e.g., 1.22.7; 2.14). See *World Upside Down*, 185.

[88] Martin Dibelius, *Book of Acts: Form, Style and Theology* (London: SCM Press, 2004), 95.

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Sinope as a mouthpiece to describe the urban spaces of Athens, suggesting that its environs are more impressive than the capital cities of Median Ecbatana and Babylon: "in respect to the beauty of the harbours, and, further, to the statues, paintings, the works in gold, silver, and bronze, in respect to the coinage, the furnishings, the splendour of the houses, he thought that Athens was far superior" (*Or.* 6.4). Although Diogenes acknowledges he has no need for such visual ostentation, the city leaves an impression on the wandering Cynic-Stoic philosopher. In contrast to Diogenes, Paul's observation of Athens's idols is far more critical: indeed, Paul "was deeply distressed to see that the city was full of idols" (θεωροῦντος κατείδωλον οὖσαν τὴν πόλιν, Acts 17:16). The impressive sculptural environment of Athens provided Luke with the ideal locale to reflect, philosophically speaking, on what true divinity is like.

The city of Athens was exposed to ruler cult well-before its Romanization. In section 3.3 above, we discussed the honors Athenians conferred on Antigonus I Monophthalmus (306-301 BCE) and Demetrius Poliorcetes (306-283 BCE). In 307 BCE the city of Athens hailed Demetrius Poliorcetes as σωτήρ and εὐεργέτης for liberating Athens from tyrants and for bestowing benefits of grain and lumber on the populace (Plut., *Demetr.* 8-10; *OGIS* 6, lines 10-34).[89] The honors accorded to Demetrius included annual sacrifices, the weaving of his image into the *peplos* of Athena and a bronze equestrian statue in the marketplace next to personified Democracy with epigraphic honors (*IASIA* 256-62; Danker, no. 30). The extravagant honors conferred on Demetrius are corroborated in the *ithyphallic* hymn sung to Demetrius by the Athenians in 291 BCE, which is recorded by Duris of Samos (*FGrH* 76 F 13). The hymn is the only fully extant hymn sung to a Successor king, providing a striking window into how subjects interpreted powerful rulers in relation to the gods. Here lines 1-22 are quoted:

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[89] On Demetrius, see Kenneth Scott, "The Deification of Demetrius Poliorcetes: Part I," *AJP* 49.2 (1928): 137-66; and Jon D. Mikalson, *Religion in Hellenistic Athens* (Berkeley: University of California, 1998), 75-104.

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1 ὡς οἱ μέγιστοι τῶν θεῶν καὶ φίλατοι
τῇ πόλει πάρεισιν·
ἐνταῦθα γὰρ Δήμητρα καὶ Δημήτριον
ἅμα παρῆγ' ὁ καιρός.
5 χὴ μὲν τὰ σεμνὰ τῆς Κόρης μυστήρια
ἔρχεθ' ἵνα ποήσῃ,
ὁ δ'ἱλαρός, ὥσπερ τὸν θεὸν δεῖ, καὶ καλὸς
καὶ γελῶν πάρεστι.
σεμνόν τι φαίνεθ', οἱ φίλοι πάντες κύκλῳ,
10 ἐν μέσοισι δ' αὐτός,
ὅμοιος ὥσπερ οἱ φίλοι μὲν ἀστέρες,
ἥλιος δ' ἐκεῖνος.
ὦ τοῦ κρατίστου παῖ Ποσειδῶνος θεου,
χαῖρε, κἀφροδίτης.
15 ἄλλοι μὲν ἢ μακρὰν γὰρ ἀπέχουσιν θεοί,
ἢ οὐκ ἔχουσιν ὦτα,
ἢ οὐκ εἰσίν, ἢ οὐ προσέχουσιν ἡμῖν οὐδὲ ἕν,
σὲ δὲ παρόνθ' ὁρῶμεν,
οὐ ξύλινον οὐδὲ λίθινον, ἀλλ' ἀληθινόν.
20 εὐχόμεσθα δή σοι·
πρῶτον μὲν εἰρήνην πόησον, φίλατε·
κύριος γὰρ εἶ σύ.[90]

> How the great and dearest of the gods are present (*πάρεισιν*) in our city! For the circumstances have brought together Demeter and Demetrius; she comes to celebrate the solemn mysteries of the Kore, while he is here full of joy, as befits the god, fair and laughing. His appearance is solemn, his friends all around him and he in their midst, as though they were stars and he the sun. Hail boy of the most powerful god Poseidon and Aphrodite! For other gods are either far away, or they do not have ears, or they do not exist, or do not take any notice of us, but you we can see present here; not made of wood or stone, but real. And so we pray to you: first bring us peace, dearest one; for you have the power (English trans. Chaniotis).[91]

The hymn associates Demetrius with the gods in two ways: first, Demetrius is associated with Demeter, the goddess of corn (probably due to Demeter's celebration at the concurrent Eleusinian

[90] Critical Greek edition from A. Kolde, *Politique et religion chez Isyllos d'Épidaure* (Basel: Schwabe & Co. AG Verlag, 2003).
[91] English translation is from Angelos Chaniotis, "The Ithyphallic Hymn for Demetrius Poliorketes and Hellenistic Religious Mentality," in *More than Men, Less than Gods: Studies on Royal Cult and Imperial Worship* (eds. Iossif P. Panagiotis et al.; Leuven: Peeters, 2007), 160.

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mysteries);[92] and second, Demetrius is given a cosmogonic identity as the son of Poseidon and Aphrodite, a "cosmogonic strategy" of legitimation used by Alexander the Great and numerous Hellenistic and Roman rulers.[93] The hymn proceeds to critique "other gods" (not "*the* other gods"—*pace* Austin, no. 43)[94] with provocative language redolent of the Jewish icon parody. In comparison to Demetrius, other gods are far away, do not have ears, do not exist and do not take notice of humans.[95]

The rhetorical strategy of the *ithyphallic* hymn bears a striking resemblance to the Areopagus speech. Although harmonized to a different underlying tune, both critique the distance of Athens's gods by appeal to the Stoic concept of God's nearness (Seneca, *Ep.* 41.1-2; Dio Chrysostom, *Or.* 12.27-30). For Luke, through the arrival of Israel's messiah, the God of Israel is "not far (οὐ μακράν) from each one of us" (Acts 17:27). Both the *ithyphallic* hymn and the Areopagus speech share at least three overlapping points: (1) both take as their subject a powerful κύριος of divine descent (*ithyphallic* hymn lines 13-14, 20//Luke 1-2; Acts 17:24); both use the feminine singular accusative form of the adverb μακράν to illustrate the nearness of a powerful κύριος in comparison to Athens's idols (*ithyphallic* hymn l. 15//Acts 17:27); and (3) both critique the deafness of statuary and their precious materials (οὐ ξύλινον οὐδὲ λίθινον, *ithyphallic* hymn l. 19//χρυσῷ ἢ ἀργύρῳ ἢ λίθῳ, Acts 17:29). The *ithyphallic* hymn illustrates

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92 See Klauck, *Religious Context,* 257.
93 See Steven Friesen, *Imperial Cults*, 123.
94 See Chaniotis, "Ithyphallic Hymn," 180 for comment.
95 Although Demetrius appears to trump "other gods," it is important to remember that the hymn simultaneously associates Demetrius with the traditional gods through divine descent and traditional epithets. Simon Price notes that, to our knowledge, the "hymn had no discernible effect on civic cults in Athens" (*Rituals and Power,* 38). But Price appears to interpret the hymn as a sweeping critique of "the other gods" rather than "other gods" (See Chaniotis, "Ithyphallic Hymn," 179-180). That Demetrius's statue was offensive to some is evident in Diodorus, who writes that a council convened to remove the statue because "it was absurd to honor equally their besiegers and their benefactors" (Diodorous, 20.93.6). Additionally, the cultic honors bestowed upon Demetrius in Athens became a distant memory after he fell victim to depression in exile under Seleucus (Plut., *Dem.* 50-53).

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how hybrid honors for gods and kings occurred early on in Athens during the Hellenistic period. Moreover, it reminds us that the persuasion strategies of the Areopagus speech are not divorced from Hellenistic religiosity and political discourse, wherein Stoic philosophy could be employed to partake in the critique of religion.

Rome's transformation of Athens's civic space is well attested.[96] Given Athens's siding with Antony, the embedding of Rome in Athens, to borrow a phrase from Evans, held special significance for Augustus's conquest of the East.[97] After Actium, Athens acquiesced to Roman power by building a small round temple to Augustus and Roma in a prominent location on the Acropolis (East of the Parthenon on its main axis, with a diameter of over eight meters and nine columns of the Ionic order).[98] The placement of the *tholos* on the axis of the Parthenon inserted

[96] To be sure, Antony Spawforth argues that evidence for the imperial cult is better for Athens than any other city in old Greece (except for Corinth). See Antony J. S. Spawforth, "The Early Reception of the Imperial Cult in Athens: Problems and Ambiguities," in *The Romanization of Athens* (ed. Michael C. Hoff and Susan I. Rotroff; Oxford: Oxbow, 1997), 183. In addition, Plutarch records that colossal statues of Eumenes II and Attalos II stood in Athens that were re-inscribed with Antony's name, only to be blown over by wind in a political portent signifying the coming triumph of Augustus (*Vit. Ant.* 60.5-6). Similarly, Dio Cassius writes that statues of Antony and Cleopatra in the "guise of gods" stood on the Acropolis, which were toppled into the theatre by lightning before the Battle of Actium (Dio Cass. 50.15.2).

[97] Nancy Evans, "Embedding Rome in Athens," in *Rome and Religion: A Cross-Disciplinary Dialogue on the Imperial Cult* (ed. Jeffrey Brodd and Jonathan L. Reed; Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2011), 83-98. T. Leslie Shear Jr. goes so far as to argue, "The gradual fusion of Greek and Roman cultures in the first two centuries of Roman rule appears at Athens as graphically as anywhere in Greece because of the city's unique position in Greek history and culture" ("Athens: From City-State to Provincial Town," *Hesperia* 50:4 [1981]: 356-377, here 356). Moreover, Athens' siding with Antony put the Greeks on the "wrong side" of Rome's rise to power, which likely intensified Augustus's desire to impute Roman cultural hegemony on Athens. The term "Romanization" has been criticized in recent years because it oversimplifies Greeks' diverse responses to Roman power. Moreover, as Susan E. Alcock writes, "Use of the term has come to be perceived as conjuring up, whether intentionally or not, a unidirectional flow of power and influence from core to periphery, with all transformations emanating from the central authority" ("The Problem of Romanization, the Power of Athens," in *The Romanization of Athens* [ed. Michael C. Hoff and Susan I. Rotroff; Oxford: Oxbow, 1997], 1-8, here 1-2). Despite the semantic difficulties associated with the word, I employ it here to indicate Athens's acculturation and adoption of Roman customs especially related to cult and religion by local elites.

[98] For detailed description, see Helene Whittaker, "Some Reflections on the Temple to the Goddess Roma and Augustus on the Acropolis at Athens," in *Greek Romans and Roman Greeks* (ed. Erik Nis Ostenfeld; Aarhus: Aarhus University, 2002), 25-39, here 25; and Nancy Evans, "Embedding Rome in Athens," 88. See also Paul Zanker, *Power of Images,* 298. On the impact of Augustus on Athens, see: Susan Walker, "Athens Under Augustus," in *The Romanization of Athens* (ed. Michael C. Hoff and Susan I. Rotroff; Oxford: Oxbow, 1997), 67-80.

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Augustus into the center of Athenian politics and religion.[99] Notably, on the architrave of the temple, Augustus was hailed as "Savior" (*IG* II^2, 3173). As is often the case, the statues in the temple of Augustus and Roma are no longer extant, however, Whittaker notes that the architectural design of the structure most closely resembles the Philippeion at Olympia, which we know held chryselephantine statues to honor Philip II of Macedon and his family (Paus., *Descr.* 5.20.9-10).[100]

During the Julio-Claudian period alone, forty-three dedicatory inscriptions on statue bases and altars have been found in Athens honoring the emperor or a member of his family.[101] Twelve inscriptions in the lower city honor Augustus with the following titulary: Αὐτοκράτορος Καίσαρος Θεοῦ υἱοῦ Σεβαστοῦ (*IG* II^2, 12764).[102] A front row seat in the theatre of Dionysus has the inscription "(seat) of the priest and high priest of *Sebastos Kaisar*" (*IG* II^2, 5034), which may indicate the introduction of Roman games to the Athenian theatre.[103] The embedding of Augustus in the cults of the traditional gods is also evident in the Agora, where a two-chambered annex was built onto the Stoa of Zeus Eleutherios that likely housed emperor worship.[104] Moreover, a dedicatory inscription on a statue base honored Augustus as the "New Apollo" ([Σεβαστὸ]ν Καισ[αρα νέον Ἀ]πόλλωνα; *IG* II^2 3262+4725; Schmalz, no. 127). The association of the Roman imperial family with traditional gods in Athens is summarized in the following chart adapted

99 Helene Whittaker, "Some Reflections," 26.
100 Idem., "Some Reflections," 26. On the imperial ideology related to the Philippeion, see: Peter Schultz, "Divine Images and Royal Ideology in the Philippeion at Olympia," in *Aspects of Ancient Greek Cult* (ed. Jesper Tae Jensen et al.; Aarhus: Aarhus University), 125-194.
101 Geoffrey C. R. Schmalz, *Augustan and Julio-Claudian Athens: A New Epigraphy and Prosopography* (Boston: Brill, 2009), nos. 113-156.
102 See Anna Benjamin and Antony E. Raubitschek, "Arae Augusti," *Hesperia* 28 (1959): 65-85.
103 For English translation, see Spawforth, "Early Reception," 183. On the use of gladiator contests and imperial festivals to support the imperial cults, see: Price, *Rituals and Power,* 106-7.
104 Homer Thompson, "The Annex to the Stoa of Zeus in the Athenian Agora," *Hesperia* 35 (1966): 171-87. There is disagreement over the dating of the addition of the annex, which could have been built under Augustus or Tiberius. See Anthony J. Spawforth, "Early Reception," 186.

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from Fernando Lozano, whose meticulously detailed Spanish monograph on Athens and the imperial cults has yet to be utilized in scholarship on the Areopagus speech.[105]

Identification of Emperors and Members of the Imperial Family with Traditional Divinities in Athens			
Identities	Divinity	Cult Location	Testimony (Selected)
Augustus	-New Apollo	-Athens	-SEG 17, 34
	-Zeus *Boulaio*	-Bouleuterion at Eleusis	-SEG 47, 218
Livia	-Augustus Higea	-Acropolis	IG II^2 3240
	-Artemis *Boulaia*	-*Tholos* or Southwest Temple in the Classical Agora	SEG 22, 152
	-*Pronoia*	-Roman Agora	IG II^2 3238
	Vesta-Hestia	-Monopteros in the Acropolis and *Tholos* in the Classical Agora	IG II^2 5097
Gaius Caesar, son of Julia and M. Agrippa	-New Ares	-Temples of Ares	IG II^2 3250
Drusus Caesar, son of Tiberius	-New Ares	Temples of Ares	IG II^2 3257
Drusilla	-New Aphrodite	-?	SEG 34, 180
Claudius	-Apollo *Patroos*	-Temple of Apollo *Patroos*	IG II^2 3274 + SEG 22, 153
Nero	-New Apollo	-Temple of Apollo *Patroos*?	IG II^2 3278 SEG 22, 34, 44, 165, 182, 252

The assimilation of the above members of the imperial family with traditional deities illustrates how Paul's allusive rhetoric against the religiosity of Athens included a political dimension. In addition to the above epigraphic associations, it is crucial to recognize that the location and design of Roman architecture could associate Rome with the gods. For example, some scholars

[105] Table adapted from Fernando Lozano, *La Religión del Poder: El Culto imperial en Atenas en época de Augusto y los emperadores Julio-Claudios* (*British Archaeological Reports* 1087; Oxford: Archaeopress, 2002), 98.

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highlight Rome's relocation of the Temple of Ares to the Agora, which may have been a site of emperor worship based on an honorific inscription to Augustus's adopted son Gaius Caesar as the "New Ares."[106] The relocation of the Temple of Ares was a part of Augustus' transformation of the Agora, including the addition of the impressive recital hall called the Odeion that subversively reflected Roman architecture.[107]

The reigns of Claudius and Nero expanded imperial cult media in Athens with the energetic help of a certain benefactor Tiberius Claudius Novius who may have served as the first civic appointed high priest of the imperial cults in Athens (*IG* II^2, 1990). The Emperor Claudius oversaw the rebuilding of statues that Gaius Caligula had stolen (Cassius Dio 60.6.8).[108] Consequently, he was hailed by the Athenians as "Savior *and* Benefactor" (*IG* II^2, 3269) and was also, for cultic reasons, assimilated with the god Apollo Patroos on a statue base (*IG* II^2, 3274).[109] The reign of Claudius also marked a change in Athenian attitudes toward the acceptance of imperial games into the Athenian calendrical festivals. This acceptance reflects changing attitudes towards the Roman imperial cults, which was helped by Claudius's benefactions, including his construction of a new marble staircase to the top of the Acropolis.[110] Though it is

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[106] David W. J. Gill, "Achaia," in *The Book of Acts in Its Graeco-Roman Setting* (ed. David Gill and Conrad Gempf; vol. 2 of *The Book of Acts in its First Century Setting*, ed. Bruce W. Winter; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1994), 433-453, here 444. Antony Shear notes that an inscription that is often neglected by scholars clarifies that the Temple of Ares was dedicated to "Ares and Sebastos" (*IG* II^2, 2953). See Shear, "Athens: From City-State to Provincial Town," 262; and Zanker, *Power of Images,* 261.
[107] Shear argues that Roman architecture in the Agora intentionally undermined the symbols of Athenian democracy so as to make the glories of the past a "vanished reality" ("Athens," 361).
[108] In the theatre of Dionysus in Athens, an inscription honors Gaius as the new Ares: *ὁ δῆμος Γάϊον Καίσαρα Σεβαστοῦ υἱὸν νέον Ἄρη* (no. 64, in A. H. M. Jones, *Documents Illustrating the Reigns of Augustus and Tiberius* (Oxford: Clarendeon, 1955). For comment, see Mitchell and Ethel Levensohn, "Inscriptions on the South Slope of the Acropolis," *Hesperia,* 16 (1947): 63-74, here 68.
[109] Leslie Shear Jr. argues that Claudius was worshiped in the temple of Apollo on the west side of the Agora. See "Athens," 263. Livia was also assimilated in an honorific statue base with Artemis Bouleia. See J. H. Oliver, "Livia as Artemis Bouleia at Athens," *ClassPhil* 60 (1965): 179.
[110] Athenian resistance to Roman hegemony is especially evident during an uprising in 13 CE. Notably, the doors of the Temple of Janus were opened due to this conflict. The cause of the uprising is difficult to discern; however, it is clear that the clash between Athenian nationalism and imperial cult ideology was at the center of the conflict. See Antony Spawforth, "Early Reception," 192; and Daniel J. Geagan, "The Athenian Elite:

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difficult to tell how the average Athenian responded to the imperial cults' impact on civic space—or whether they even cared—it is clear that, by the time of Claudius and Nero, "the political Romanization of the Athenian elite" had been achieved.[111]

The entrance of Paul into the city of Athens in the mid-first century put him in close contact with emperor worship. The imperial cults' embedding in a forest of idols is not reason to diminish its presence in Athens as Miller recently argued.[112] Though the theology of the Areopagus speech is refracted through the monotheism of an altar to an unknown god, its criticism—within its own narrative framework—is ultimately toward all gentile religiosity.[113] We have more inscriptional evidence for the Roman imperial cults than we do for altars to an unknown god in Athens.[114] Given the integration of politics and religion into the built environment of Athens, how is one to interpret Paul's criticism of the system of euergetic visual honors that gods and kings shared: idols (Acts 17:16), objects of worship (17:23) altars (Acts 17:23), epigraphy (Acts 17:23), temples (Acts 17:24), precious materials of gold, silver and stone for figurative representation (Acts 17:29) and, not least, the *τέχνη* of the artisan's hands (Acts 17:29)?

Although these motifs are typical referents of the icon parody, the ritual and material culture that Paul criticizes closely parallels Aristotle's definition of visual honors conferred on gods and kings (*Rhetoric* 1.5.9; for further comment, see section 2.3.2 of this study). Moreover, the hybrid iconography of gods and kings, explored in chapter three and in Athens above, infuses

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Romanization, Resistance, and the Exercise of Power," in *The Romanization of Athens* (ed. Michael C. Hoff and Susan I. Rotroff; Oxford: Oxbow, 1997), 19-32.
[111] Spawforth, "Early Reception," 194.
[112] Colin F. Miller argues that the imperial cult "was hardly center stage in Athens" since it was one cult among many others that had stood for centuries ("Imperial Cult in the Pauline Cities of Asia Minor and Greece," 329). Miller oddly overlooks the resurgence of the Roman imperial cults during the reigns of Claudius and Nero, along with the prime real estate it took up within Athens's urban space.
[113] See C. Kavin Rowe, *World Upside Down,* 27-29.
[114] On the altar to an unknown god, see especially Klauck, *Magic and Paganism*, 81-83.

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Paul's polemic with referential polyvalency. Notably, Luke is the only author in the New Testament to employ the substantive εὐεργέτης (Luke 22:25) and the verb εὐεργετέω (Acts 10:38) to critique gentile power dynamics (on which, see above in 6.2.3.B). This point adds impetus to a reading of the Areopagus speech that fits into Luke's larger narratological agenda to reorient his audience's imaginative faculties away from the magnetism of idols and powerful benefactors toward the resurrected and ascended Christ. Paul's polemic, therefore, is no mere critique of the superstition associated with religion on its own accord. Rather, Paul's polemic is a discourse of resistance that sought to undermine euergetic cult honors for objects of power—both gods, demi-gods and kings—that distracted the auditor from the worship of the one true God. Moreover, the allusive nature of such discourse could evoke multiple points of referent, thereby creating a space for the speaker's safety. Further evaluation of the Roman Jewish icon parody in the Wisdom of Solomon will help to illuminate Paul's allusive cult referents.

6.4 Resisting Idolatry: The Wisdom of Solomon and the Areopagus Speech

The comparative analysis of the Wisdom of Solomon with the Areopagus speech deserves some methodological justification to avoid parallelomania. As Thom observes, "Any texts can be compared, but not all comparisons are equally relevant or meaningful. When we compare texts, it is of crucial importance to know why we are doing so, because the rationale for the comparison is going to determine which aspects of the text or textual elements will be the focus of attention."[115] With Thom's warning in mind, five reasons for comparative analysis are worth consideration. First, both Wisdom and Acts are written by Hellenistic Jews who wrote their way into history by appeal to salvation history *and* Greco-Roman rhetorical conventions. Second,

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[115] Johan C. Thom, "Wisdom in the Wisdom of Solomon and Cleanthes' Hymn to Zeus," in *Septuagint and Reception: Essays Prepared for the Association for the Study of the Septuagint in South Africa* (ed. Johann Cook; Leiden: Brill, 2009), 195-208, here 195.

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both find common cause with Greco-Roman philosophers to polemicize against religious superstition. Third, both re-contextualize the icon parodies of the Hebrew Bible in cities that housed the Roman imperial cults. Fourth, both texts resist the deification of the angry tyrant (Wis 7:1-9; Acts 12:21-23). And fifth, as Gruen has argued, Athens and Egypt forged a special relationship to one another during the Hellenistic period, including the claim by Egyptians that Athenians had settled in their native land (e.g., Plato, *Tim.* 21E).[116] Points one through three provide the strongest justification for a comparative analysis of Ps-Solomon's polemic against idols and the Areopagus speech; it is not from the canonical Old Testament that Luke learns how to blend Greco-Roman philosophy with motifs from the Septuagint. Rather, Luke adopts these rhetorical strategies from Hellenistic Judaism.

6.4.1 The Areopagus Speech and Politics in Recent Research

David Pao makes the strongest case for the influence of Deutero-Isaiah's icon parodies upon the composition of the Areopagus speech. Pao identifies four parallels as follows: (1) God as creator and sustainer (Acts 17:24-25 and Isa 42:5); (2) God does not dwell in temples made with human hands (χειροποίητος; Acts 17:24 and Isa 46:6);[117] (3) the critique of precious materials (Acts 17:29 and Isa 40:18-20); and (4) seeking and feeling for God (Acts 17:27 and Isa 55:6).[118] These parallels, Pao argues, are grounded in the Isaianic conviction that Yahweh is supreme over "the nations, their rulers, their deities, and their idols (and idol makers)."[119] The supremacy of

[116] For further examples, see Erich S. Gruen, *Rethinking the Other in Antiquity* (Princeton: Princeton University, 2011), 265-57.
[117] Pao notes that seven out of the ten occurrences of the word χειροποίητος in the canonical Old Testament occur in Isaiah (Isa 2:18; 10:11; 16:12; 19:1; 21:9; 31:7; 46:6). Pao, however, misses the important use of χειροποίητος in Wis 14:8. See David W. Pao, *Acts and the Isaianic New Exodus* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2002), 195.
[118] Pao, *Acts and the Isaianic New Exodus*, 193-97.
[119] Pao, *Acts and the Isaianic New Exodus,* 181.

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Yahweh—most clearly articulated in Luke's claim that Jesus is "Lord of heaven and earth" (Acts 17:24)—leads Pao to conclude that Luke's anti-idol polemic is a "form of anti-imperialistic propaganda in that the divine power of the reigning political authority is called into question."[120] Pao helpfully illuminates the political dimension of Paul's anti-idol polemic. However, he does not adequately account for the hybrid iconography of gods and kings, the built environment of Athens, nor the new socio-political contexts in which Isaiah's anti-idol polemic was re-contextualized by Hellenistic Jews and, hence, given a new hermeneutical context.[121]

A similar oversight is committed in two more recent studies on the Areopagus speech. The first is by C. Kavin Rowe, who challenges Martin Dibelius's famous thesis that the Areopagus speech "is alien to the New Testament … the main ideas of the speech … are Stoic rather than Christian."[122] Rowe argues that Dibelius misses the logic of the narrative context (17:16-21) and, hence, Luke's transformation of Stoic philosophy into a new hermeneutical framework—that is, a distinctively Christian one between creation (Acts 17:24, 26) and consummation (17:30-31).[123] For Rowe, Luke does not translate the Christian gospel into pagan philosophy; rather, pagan philosophy ceases to propound pagan ideas because Luke transforms its vocabulary into a distinctively Christian vernacular on his own terms.[124] Thus, for Rowe, the speech represents a "collision" with pagan religion, a point that is highlighted in the narrative framework by Paul's perplexity over Athens's forest of idols (17:16), Paul's charge against the Athenians as superstitious (δεισιδαιμονία, 17:22) and, ultimately, the apprehension of Paul

[120] Idem., 182.
[121] Admittedly, Pao does have a short excursus on the influence of Isaiah upon Second Temple Jewish idol parodies (which includes a paragraph on the Wisdom of Solomon). The excursus, however, focuses exclusively on showing how Isaiah influenced these texts rather than on the possibility that Hellenistic Judaism may have impacted Luke's literary aims. See Pao, 213-16.
[122] Martin Dibelius, *Studies in the Acts of the Apostles* (ed. Heinrich Greeven; trans. Mary Ling; New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1956), 63.
[123] Rowe, *World Upside Down,* 27-41. idem. "The Grammar of life: The Areopagus Speech and Pagan Tradition," *NTS* 57 (2010): 31-50.
[124] Rowe, *World Upside Down,* 40.

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(ἐπιλαμβάνομαι, 17:19) and his trial before the Areopagus council (17:22-33). Rowe concludes that the speech is "politically charged in that it does in fact entail a call to embrace a new way of life and abandon pagan worship (cf. μετάνοια v. 30)."[125] Like Pao's study, Rowe's impeccable exegesis helpfully highlights the political dimensions of the Areopagus speech, however, Rowe fails to situate the speech's idol polemic within the contours of Hellenistic Judaism (and, for that matter, the archaeological record of Roman Athens).

Along similar lines as Rowe's study, Joshua Jipp more recently challenged the *Tendenz* among scholars to attribute the Areopagus speech's composition to Hellenistic (Dibelius) *or* Jewish influences (Gärtner).[126] Jipp ably corrects this false-dichotomy, arguing that Luke blends Septuagintal and Hellenistic philosophical traditions to "co-opt" the cultural script of Hellenistic philosophy to exalt/legitimate the Christian movement as a superior and more consistent philosophical form of knowledge.[127] To achieve this subversive apologetic aim, Jipp argues that Luke "hellenizes Jewish traditions of monotheism, anthropology and anti-idol polemic…"[128] Jipp's investigation of Jewish idol polemic, however, focuses on Isaiah, omitting discussion of the Hellenizing of Isaiah's idol polemic in Diaspora Jewish literature.[129] The Wisdom of Solomon's *digressio* on pagan idolatry, for example, blends Biblical traditions, including Isaiah,

[125] Rowe, *World Upside Down,* 41.
[126] Joshua Jipp, "Paul's Areopagus Speech of Acts 17:16–34 as *Both* Critique *and* Propaganda," *JBL* 131:3 (2012): 567-588, here 567-68. For the Hellenistic view, see: Martin Dibelius, *Studies in the Acts of the Apostles*, 57-58. For the Jewish view, see: Bertil Gärtner, *The Areopagus Speech and Natural Revelation* (Uppsala: C. W. K. Gleerup, 1955). Jipp's article shows strong overlap with Rowe's work, but differs with Rowe in its "emphasis on the speech as a subversive attempt to co-opt the best aspects of Greco-Roman philosophy and place these aspects within the Christian movement" (Jipp, "Paul's Areopagus Speech," 569 n. 10).
[127] Joshua Jipp, "Paul's Areopagus Speech," 567-68. See also David Pao, *Acts and the Isaianic New Exodus*, 181-216.
[128] Joshua Jipp, "Paul's Areopagus Speech," 568.
[129] Additionally, in Jipp's discussion on Acts 17:29, he argues that Luke Hellenizes Isa 40:18-20 without acknowledging the parallel passages in Wis 13:10, 14:21 and 15:9; *Let. Aris.* 1:134-136; and Philo, *Decal.* 66. Jipp does briefly acknowledge the Wisdom of Solomon in his discussion on human ignorance (p. 586); however, he relegates all other references to lists of Biblical passages in footnotes (e.g., n. 50, 52 and 69).

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with Hellenistic philosophical traditions to exalt Judaism's knowledge of God.[130] It is not Luke, therefore, who Hellenizes Isaiah; rather, Luke adopts and adapts this Hellenizing tendency from his Diaspora predecessors.[131] Pseudo-Solomon's "veritable dissertation against idols" provides an important precedent for Luke's rhetorical purposes in the Areopagus speech.[132] But even more significantly, in their attempt to place the Areopagus speech in a political setting, Pao, Rowe and Jipp overlook how Ps-Solomon reshapes Isaiah's polemic against idols to critique the visual theology of the Roman imperial cults (Wis 14:16-21).

6.4.2 Ps-Solomon's Polemic Against Gods and Kings

As discussed in section 5.3.1 of our study, a recurring motif in all three sections of the Wisdom of Solomon is a negative portrayal of gentile rulers. These negative portrayals include an apocalyptic scenario evoking rulers' proleptic demise (Wis 5:17-23); a censure of rulers' embellished ontological status through the example of Solomon (Wis 7:1-6);[133] and, ultimately, a polemic against rulers' cultic media (Wis 14:16-21). That Ps-Solomon directs his criticism toward the Roman imperial cults becomes acute in the Book of History's *digressio* on pagan idolatry (13:1 – 15:19). In reaction to the ethnic tensions that Alexandrian Jews experienced after Augustus's annexation of Egypt (see section 5.3.2 of this study), Ps-Solomon blends philosophical and Jewish anti-idol polemic into what John M. G. Barclay calls, "The most

[130] For Ps-Solomon's blending of Jewish and Philosophical traditions, see: John J. Collins, *Jewish Wisdom*, 209-13. For the influence of Greek philosophy on the Wisdom of Solomon, see: James M. Reese, *Hellenistc Influence on the Book of Wisdom and Its Consequences* (Rome: Biblical Institute Press, 1970).
[131] So Hans-Josef Klauck, *Magic and Paganism,* 86, 93; Stephen G. Wilson, *The Gentiles and the Gentile Mission in Luke-Acts* (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 1973), 210; and Wolfgang Nauck, "Die Tradition und Komposition der Areopagrede," *ZTK* 53 (1956): 11-52.
[132] Hadas-Lebel, *Jerusalem Against Rome*, 308.
[133] See Maurice Gilbert, "Your Sovereignty Comes From the Lord," in *La Sagesse de Salomon: Recueil d' etudes* (Rome: Biblical Institute Press, 1973), 127; and U. Wilcken, *Griechische Ostraka aus Aegypten und Nubien* (Berlin: Gieseke & Devrient,1999), 787-89.

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sustained attack on gentile religiosity that we have from the pen of a Diaspora Jew."[134] Various proposals for the structure of the digressio on idolatry have been put forward. Although the exact structure is disputed, most scholars would agree that Ps-Solomon's euhemeristic critique of the origins of idolatry (Wis 14:12-20) comprises the mid-point of a chiastic structure. Lester Grabbe outline the digressio in the following format:

A. Nature Worship (13:1-9)
B. Idolatry (13:10-15:19)
  a. Introduction (13:10)
    b. Carpenter/wood (13:11-14:2)
      c. Apostrophe (14:3-6)
        Transition (14:7-11)
        d. Origins of idolatry (14:12-31)
      c´Apostrophe (15:1-3)
        Transition (15:4-6)
    b´Potter/clay (15:7-13)
  c´Conclusion (15:14-19)[135]

It is noteworthy that Ps-Solomon embeds his criticism of Rome in his euhemeristic critique of the origins of idolatry (Wis 14:12-31) within a larger parody of various forms of Greco-Egyptian idolatry. For Ps-Solomon, emperor worship did not have a preeminent place in Greco-Egyptian religion—rather, it stood alongside the superstition associated with nature worship (13:1-9), Egyptian theriolatry (13:14), Castor and Pollux (14:1), hero cults (14:15), Dionysus (14:23) and the *τέχνη* of the idol artisan (15:9, etc).[136]

For the Greco-Roman auditor of antiquity, cultic images evoked an experience of visual stimulation.[137] The danger of idols for the Jew, then, was their power to stimulate what Halbertal

[134] See John M. G. Barclay, *Jews in the Mediterranean Diaspora*, 181-191.
[135] Lester L. Grabbe, *Wisdom of Solomon* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1997), 23.
[136] On the Greco-Egyptian gods that Ps-Solomon criticizes, see: Marir Françoise Baslez, "The Author of Wisdom and the Cultured Environment of Alexandria," in *The Book of Wisdom in Modern Research: Studies on Tradition, Redaction, and Theology* (ed. Angelo Passaro and Giuseppe Bellia; New York: Walter de Gruyter, 2005), 83-116.
[137] The visual experience associated with cultic images is criticized in Wis 13:7, where Ps-Solomon criticizes those who worship the aesthetic beauty of the creation rather than the creator: "For while they live among his

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and Margalit call "an improper conception of God in the mind of the worshiper."[138] The power of idols' visual stimulation is criticized by Ps-Solomon in his etiological reflection on the origins of idolatry (Wis 14:12-21). Remarkably, Ps-Solomon criticizes the erotic stimulation of cultic images by arguing that "the invention of idols was the beginning of *porneia*" (ἀρχὴ γὰρ πορνείας ἐπίνοια εἰδώλων [Wis 14:12a]).[139] After a euhemeristic attribution of the origins of idolatry to a father who honors an image of a dead child (v. 15), Ps-Solomon redirects his argument toward the Roman imperial cults in Wis 14:16-21:[140]

> (16) Then, when the impious custom had grown strong with time, it was kept as a law, and at the command of princes (τυράννων)[141] carved images were worshipped. (17) When people could not honor them in their presence because they lived far off, they imagined their appearance from afar and made a visible image (ἐμφανῆ εἰκόνα)[142] of the king (βασιλέως) whom they honored, that through diligence they might flatter the absent one as though present (ἵνα ὡς παρόντα τὸν ἀπόντα κολακεύωσιν διὰ τῆς σπουδῆς). (18) But the

works, they keep searching, and they trust in what they *see* (καὶ πείθονται τῇ ὄψει), because the things that are *seen are beautiful*" (ὅτι καλὰ τὰ βλεπόμενα). The emphasis on what is seen (ὄψις) and the beauty of the things that are seen (τὰ βλεπόμενα) evokes the power of cultic visual stimulation. As Jason von Ehrenkrook has recently argued, it was not uncommon for statues to elicit erotic stimulation in the Greco-Roman auditor (*agalmatophilia*). Ehrenkrook draws attention to the relationship between sculpture and erotic desire in Wis 15:4-6, arguing that Ps-Solomon contrasts the virginity of the Jews with those who fall prey to cultic visual eroticism: "For neither has the evil intent of human art misled us, nor the fruitless toil of painters, a figure stained with varied colors, whose appearance arouses yearning in fools, so that they desire the lifeless form of a dead image. Lovers of evil things and fit for such objects of hope are those who either make or desire or worship them" (Wis 15:4-6). See Jason von Ehrenkrook, *Sculpting Idolatry*, 55-58; idem. "Image and Desire in the Wisdom of Solomon," *Zutot* 7 (2011): 41-50. For Ps-Solomon, cultic images create a visual experience (ὄψις; cf., 13:7; 14:17; 15:5) that does not pertain to reality. To resist this false worship, Ps-Solomon Hellenizes Jewish aniconic traditions and, in the words of Simon Price, stresses "the gap between image and reality" (Simon Price, *Rituals and Power,* 200).

[138] Halbertal and Margalit, *Idolatry*, 2.

[139] Jason von Ehrenkrook, *Sculpting Idolatry*, 55-58; idem. "Image and Desire in the Wisdom of Solomon," *Zutot* 7 (2011): 41-50. See also Polly Weddle, *Touching the Gods: Physical Interaction with Cult Statues in the Roman World* (unpub. PhD thesis Durham University, 2010).

[140] On Euhemerus of Messene's theory about the origins of the gods from powerful kings on the island of Panchaea, see section 2.3.1. The use of Euhemerus's theory about cosmogony surfaces in Jewish sources. See *Let. Aris.* 134-37 and 3 Sib 108-58; 429-30; 545-50.

[141] Ps-Solomon highlights the absolute sovereignty of the monarch by using the flexible, yet potentially subversive title τύραννος (6:9, 21; 8:15; 12:14; and 14:17). Though τύραννος is typically translated as monarch, the early Jewish usage of this word shows that Jews could employ it in the truly tyrannical sense. See, for example, 4 Macc 5:1; *Legat.* 350; Wis 6:9, 21; 14:17.

[142] It is noteworthy that ἐμφανής is used for Ptolemy V's title in the Rosetta Stone (e.g., lines 38-39; *OGIS* 90). Also, the emperor Nero bears the title *emphanes theos kaisar*. See Lactantius, *Inst.* 1.15; Minucius Felix, *Oct.* 20.5. See also, Winston, *Wisdom of Solomon,* 278.

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> ambition (φιλοτιμία) of the craftsman impelled even those who did not know the king to a higher pitch of worship. (19) For he, perhaps wishing to please his ruler, skillfully forced the likeness into a more beautiful form, (20) but the multitude, drawn by the charm of his work, now counted as an object of worship (σέβασμα) the one whom a little before had been honored as a human being. (21) And this became a trap for human life, because people, enslaved either by misfortune or tyranny (ὅτι ἢ συμφορᾷ ἢ τυραννίδι δουλεύσαντες ἄνθρωποι), bestowed on objects of stone and wood the incommunicable name (Wis 14:16-21; trans. NETS).

Ps-Solomon's criticism of monarchs who "lived far off" (14:17) and subjects who "flatter the absent one as though present" (14:17) provides an unmistakable reference to the Roman era.[143] Winston takes the phrase "at the command of princes" as a reference to the antics of Caligula (Philo, *Legat.* 133-34).[144] However, Winston fails to recognize that the imperial cult was set up from above and locally organized in Egypt already during the Augustan era (see 5.3.2).[145] Many of the standard jabs against idolatry found in Isaiah and Hellenistic Jewish idol polemics are employed in Wis 14:16-21: namely, the criticism of images, the skill of the artisan, parody of false worshippers and criticism of precious materials. The caricature of flattering (κολακεύω) the emperor in v. 17 recalls Plutarch's parody of those who flatter the emperor (*Moralia* 56EF, 170EF, 543DE). Similarly, Philo caricatures men and women in the "whole empire" (πᾶσα ἡ οἰκουμένη) who were "flattering Gaius" (ἐκολάκευον αὐτὸν, *Legat.* 116). The efficacy of the imperial image for inducing awe and, consequently, honor from the imperial subject is evident in vv 19-20, where the artisan redesigns the imperial image to take on more beautiful form. The aesthetic quality of the imperial image blurs the distinction between human and divine, thus

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[143] On the imperial cults in Egypt, see Fritz Blumenthal, *Der ägyptische Kaiserkult AfP* 5 (1913): 317-345; Gregory Steven Dundas, *Pharaoh, Basileus and Imperator: The Roman Imperial Cult in Egypt* (Los Angeles: University of California, 1994); and Frederike Herklotz, *Prinzeps und Pharao: Der Kult Des Augustus in Ägypten* (Frankfurt: Verlag Antike, 2007).
[144] Winston, *Wisdom of Solomon,* 23.
[145] The phrase "at the command of monarchs" (Wis 14:16) certainly reflects the forced erection of images of Caligula in Alexandrian synagogues (Philo, *Legat.* 133-34). However, inscriptional evidence shows that Augustus and local elites had direct oversight of the imperial cult in Egypt before the reign of Caligula. For discussion, see section 5.3.2 of our study.

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leading the multitudes to deify their ruler who "a little before had been honored as a human being (τιμηθέντα ἄνθρωπον)" (v. 20).

To resist false worship, Ps-Solomon re-contextualizes Isaiah's polemic against idols for a new imperial context in Roman-Egypt. The lexical and thematic overlap between the Wisdom of Solomon and the Areopagus speech, along with their departure from the Hebrew Bible through their shared philosophical convictions, place these two texts in unique relationship to one another, as the following table illustrates.

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TABLE 1: LEXICAL AND THEMATIC PARALLELS IN WISDOM AND THE AREOPAGUS SPEECH		
Critical Motif	The Book of Acts	Wisdom of Solomon
1. Images	ἀναθεωρῶν τὰ σεβάσματα ὑμῶν (17:23)	τὸ δὲ πλῆθος ἐφελκόμενον διὰ τὸ εὔχαρι τῆς ἐργασίας τὸν πρὸ ὀλίγου τιμηθέντα ἄνθρωπον νῦν σέβασμα ἐλογίσαντο (14:20); See also, 15:17
2. Made by Human Hands	οὐκ ἐν χειροποιήτοις ναοῖς κατοικεῖ (17:24)	τὸ χειροποίητον δέ ἐπικατάρατον... (14:8)
3. Works of Human Hands	οὐδὲ ὑπὸ χειρῶν ἀνθρωπίνων θεραπεύεται (17:25)	ταλαίπωροι δὲ καὶ ἐν νεκροῖς αἱ ἐλπίδες αὐτῶν οἵτινες ἐκάλεσαν θεοὺς ἔργα χειρῶν ἀνθρώπων (13:10). See also 13:19; 15:17
4. Humans Have Breath, Idols Do Not	αὐτὸς διδοὺς πᾶσι ζωὴν καὶ πνοὴν καὶ τὰ πάντα (17:25)	15:15-17; 2:2
5. Seeking the Invisible God—Natural Theology	ζητεῖν τὸν θεόν, εἰ ἄρα γε ψηλαφήσειαν αὐτὸν καὶ εὕροιεν (17:27)	ἀλλ᾽ ὅμως ἐπὶ τούτοις μέμψις ἐστὶν ὀλίγη καὶ γὰρ αὐτοὶ τάχα πλανῶνται θεὸν ζητοῦντες καὶ θέλοντες εὑρεῖν (Wis 13:6); also, οὔτε δάκτυλοι χειρῶν εἰς ψηλάφησιν (15:15)
6. Precious Materials	γένος οὖν ὑπάρχοντες τοῦ θεοῦ οὐκ ὀφείλομεν νομίζειν χρυσῷ ἢ ἀργύρῳ ἢ λίθῳ (17:29)	χρυσὸν καὶ ἄργυρον τέχνης ἐμμελέτημα καὶ ἀπεικάσματα ζῴων ἢ λίθον ἄχρηστον χειρὸς ἔργον ἀρχαίας (13:10). See also 14:21; 15:9.
7. Skill of Idol Artists	χαράγματι τέχνης καὶ ἐνθυμήσεως ἀνθρώπου (17:29)	ὁ μὲν γὰρ τάχα κρατοῦντι βουλόμενος ἀρέσαι ἐξεβιάσατο τῇ τέχνῃ τὴν ὁμοιότητα ἐπὶ τὸ κάλλιον (14:19); And ταλαίπωροι δὲ καὶ ἐν νεκροῖς αἱ ἐλπίδες αὐτῶν οἵτινες ἐκάλεσαν θεοὺς ἔργα χειρῶν ἀνθρώπων χρυσὸν καὶ ἄργυρον τέχνης ἐμμελέτημα καὶ ἀπεικάσματα ζῴων ἢ λίθον ἄχρηστον χειρὸς ἔργον ἀρχαίας (13:10)
8. Human Ignorance	τοὺς μὲν οὖν χρόνους τῆς ἀγνοίας ὑπεριδὼν ὁ θεός (17:30)	ἀλλὰ καὶ ἐν μεγάλῳ ζῶντες ἀγνοίας πολέμῳ (14:22)

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6.4.3 Critical Motif 1: Cultic Objects on σέβασμα

Ps-Solomon's assiduous choice of the word σέβασμα in v. 20 to depict objects of worship, rather than the more typical ἄγαλμα or εἰκών, evokes a neologism from the reign of Augustus coined after the appellation Augustus (=σεβαστός; cf. Suetonius, *Aug.* 7.2).[146] The only two occurrences of σέβασμα in the Septuagint are in Wis 14:20 and 15:17. Both references criticize cultic images and stress the gap between human and divine. Philo refers to the colossal statue of Augustus in Alexandria as τὸ λεγόμενον Σεβαστεῖον (*Legat.* 151), and Josephus records Augustus renaming Samaria "Sebaste" (τὸ ἄστυ Σεβαστὴν ἐκάλεσεν; Jos, *War* 1.403).[147] As Winston and others have pointed out, given the literary context in which the word is employed, an "Augustan" aura is given to the anthropomorphic images. In extra-Biblical traditions, the word σέβασμα only occurs six times, always with a cultic meaning, but never with direct reference to the imperial cults.[148] In a political prophecy about the emperor Hadrian in the Sibylline oracles, the Sibyl prophecies that Hadrian will erect an image of his lover Antinous as a god and "will destroy all objects of

[146] Regarding Augustus's name, Pausanias writes, "On the market-place are temples; there is one of Caesar, the first Roman to covet monarchy and the first emperor under the present constitution, and also one to his son Augustus, who put the empire on a firmer footing, and became a more famous and a more powerful man than his father. His name 'Augustus' means in Greek *sebastos*" (*Descr.* 3.11.4). See also, Augustus, *Res Gestae,* 34.2: "From this cause by senatorial decree I was called Sebastos and my entranceway was publicly crowned with laurels, and the oak wreath which is given for saving fellow citizens was set up above the gateway of my house, and a golden shield, set up in the council chamber by the senate and people of Rome, bore witness through its inscription to my valour and clemency and piety" (trans. Cooley). Augustus' impact on civic space is indicated in an oft-quoted line from Nicolaus of Damascus: "Because mankind addresses him thus (as σεβαστός) in accordance with their estimation of his honour, they revere him with temples and sacrifices over islands and continents, organized in cities and provinces, matching the greatness of his virtue and repaying his benefactions towards them" (English translation from Simon Price, *Rituals and Power,* 1). For Greek translation, see: F. Jacoby, *Die Fragmente der griechischen Historiker* (Leiden: Brill, 1923–1958), 90 F 125. Paul Zanker notes that Augustus contemplated using the title Romulus, but decided against it since it would evoke kingship. Thus, the adjective σεβαστός was chosen as a more innocuous title, yet it implies divinity through its adjectival descriptors of one who is "'stately,' 'dignified' and 'holy'" (*Power of Images,* 98).

[147] Adolf Deissmann draws attention to eight ostraca that speak of taxes paid on the "Sebaste Day," which, for Deissmann, creates the "possibility that the distinctive title 'Lord's Day" may have been connected with conscious feelings of protest against the cult of the Emperor with its "Augustus Day" (Adolf Deissmann, *Light from the Ancient East*, 359ff).

[148] See Dionysius of Halicarnasus, 1.30; Bel 27; Jos., *Ant.* 18.345; Diodorus Siculus, *Library of History*, I.18.22, 6; Strabo, *Geogr.* 3.3.8 and 12.8.6. See also the Ps-Clementine Homilies 10, 21 and 22.

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reverence" (ἅπαντα σεβάσματα λύσει, 8.57). Aside from Acts, the only other occurrence of σέβασμα in the New Testament is in 2 Thess 2:4, where the author associates the "lawless one" with one who "exalts himself above every so-called god or object of worship (σέβασμα), so that he takes his seat in the temple of God, declaring himself to be God." Though the lawless one is composite, the author of 2 Thessalonians juxtaposes σέβασμα with an individual who seeks to usurp the power of God, a sense that is not far removed from Ps-Solomon's criticism of the superhuman status of the Roman emperor (Wis 14:20).

Although the word σέβασμα does not occur in Athens's epigraphic record, of the forty-three dedicatory inscriptions in Athens to the imperial family, twenty-eight employ the appellation Σεβαστός or, when referring to Livia or Julia, Σεβαστή.[149] The following table organizes these inscriptions by dedicatory type and highlights when a Julio-Claudian emperor is associated with a god.[150]

Occurrences of Σεβαστός and Σεβαστή in Athens's Epigraphic Record During the Julio-Claudian Period

Emperor/Empress	Inscription	Dedication Type	Association?
1. Augustus	*SEG* 29 (1979) no. 178	Statue	
2. Augustus	*SEG* 47 (1997) no. 218	Statue	
3. Augustus	*IG* II^2 3227	Altar	
4. Augustus	*IG* II^2 3228 (lines 1-3)	Altar	

[149] Notably, the masculine form σεβασμός is employed in the so-called "great inscription" that Antiochus I ordered for his sacred *Nomos*, which was inscribed in stone on the East and West sides of the *tumulus* monument at Nemrud Dagh in order to be "unassailable to the ravages of time" (ἀπόρθητον χρόνου λύμαις; *OGIS* 383 line 36; English trans. Danker, no. 41). The inscription reads: περὶ δὲ ἱερουργιῶν ἀϊδίων διάταξιν πρέπουσαν | ἐποιησάμην, ὅπως σὺν αἷς ἀρχαῖος | καὶ κοινὸς νόμος ἔταξεν | θυσίας καὶ νέας ἑορτὰς εἴς τε || θεῶν σεβασμὸν καὶ ἡμετέρας τι|μὰς ἅπαντες οἱ κατ᾽ἐμὴν βασιλείαν | ἐπιτελῶσιν. ("and I made appropriate provision for the everlasting sacral duties so that everyone in my kingdom might, in reverence for the Gods and in our honor, celebrate with the sacrifices that have been ordained by ancient and common customs", *OGIS* 383 lines 75-80; Danker, no. 41).

[150] This table is compiled based on Geoffrey C. R. Schmalz, *Augustan and Julio-Claudian Athens*, nos. 113-156.

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5. Augustus	*SEG* 18 (1962) no. 73	Altar	
6. Augustus	*SEG* 18 (1962) no. 74	Altar	
7. Augustus	*SEG* 18 (1962) no. 75	Altar	
8. Augustus	*SEG* 18 (1962) no. 76	Altar	
9. Augustus	*SEG* 18 (1962) no. 77	Altar	
10. Augustus	*SEG* 18 (1962) no. 78	Altar	
11. Augustus	*SEG* 18 (1962) no. 79	Altar	
12. Augustus	*IG* II^{2} 3262 +4725	Statue	Augustus as "New Apollo"
13. Gaius	*IG* II^{2} 3250	Statue	Gaius Caesar as "New Ares"
14. Livia	*IG* II^{2} 3242	Temple	
15. Livia	*SEG* 22 (1967) no. 152	Statue	
16. Livia	*IG* II^{2} 3238	Statue	
17. Livia	*IG* II^{2} 3239	Statue	
18. Julia	*IG* II^{2} 3239	Statue	
19. Julia	*SEG* 47 (1997) no. 220	Monumental	
20. Julia	*SEG* 47 (1997) no. 156	Statue	
21. Julia	*SEG* 47 (1997) no. 156	Building	
22. Tiberius	*IG* II^{2} 4209	Monumental	
23. Tiberius	*IG* II^{2} 3261	Monumental	
24. Caligula	*SEG* 34 (1984) no. 182	Altar	
25. Caligula	*SEG* 34 (1984) no. 180	Statue	With Drusilla as "New Goddess Aphrodite"
26. Caligula	*IG* II^{2} 3266	Statue	
27. Caligula	*SEG* 25 (1971) no. 208	Statue	
28. Nero	*SEG* 32 (1982) no. 252	Altar	Nero as "New Apollo"

The σεβαστός inscriptions create a context that is not devoid of political connotations when Luke depicts Paul in the guise of a Socratic *periegesis* "observing carefully" (ἀναθεωρέω) Athens's objects of worship (τὰ σεβάσματα; Acts 17:23) in the *captatio benevelentiae* of the speech proper:

> Σταθεὶς δὲ [ὁ] Παῦλος ἐν μέσῳ τοῦ Ἀρείου πάγου ἔφη· ἄνδρες Ἀθηναῖοι, κατὰ πάντα ὡς δεισιδαιμονεστέρους ὑμᾶς θεωρῶ. διερχόμενος γὰρ καὶ ἀναθεωρῶν τὰ σεβάσματα ὑμῶν εὗρον καὶ βωμὸν ἐν ᾧ ἐπεγέγραπτο· Ἀγνώστῳ θεῷ. ὃ οὖν ἀγνοοῦντες εὐσεβεῖτε, τοῦτο ἐγὼ καταγγέλλω ὑμῖν (Acts 17:22-23).
>
> Then Paul stood in front of the Areopagus and said, “Athenians, I see how extremely religious you are in every way. For as I went through the city and looked carefully at the

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> objects of your worship, I found among them an altar with the inscription, 'To an unknown god.' What therefore you worship as unknown, this I proclaim to you (Acts 17:22-23).

We know from Paul's recitation of an inscription to "an unknown god" that Paul occupied himself with reading epigraphic dedications on at least one altar ("an altar with the inscription"; βωμὸν ἐν ᾧ ἐπεγέγραπτο, Acts 17:16). We also know that Luke is the only author in the New Testament to use the word σεβαστός—first when Paul appeals to the emperor (i.e."imperial majesty," Acts 25:21, 25), and second when Paul is transferred to a centurion of the "Augustan cohort" (σπείρης Σεβαστῆς, 27:1). In David Gill's oft-cited background article on the Areopagus speech he rightly recognizes that "the word [σέβασμα] may merely reflect the numerous altars and visual images related to cult at Athens, it also resonates with the worship of the imperial family, usually in a Sebasteion."[151] Gill, however, misses the lexical overlap with the Wisdom of Solomon, an oversight that is also committed by several scholars who do cite Wis 14:20 and 15:17 as parallels to Acts 17:23, but do not explore the context in which Ps-Solomon employs the word.[152]

The high degree of lexical and thematic overlap between Wis 13:1 – 15:19 and the Areopagus speech produces the literary relationship one would expect for an intertextual allusion. Yet if Luke did intend for his audience to imagine images of the imperial cults

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[151] David Gill, "Achaia," in *Acts in its First Century Setting*, 447. Frederick Danker, on the other hand, argues that the plural σεβάσματα "with the verb ἀναθεωρέω refers to the total visual impact of a city full of idols" (BDAG, 917). Danker's definition is helpful in that it avoids an atomistic lexicographical gloss, however, Danker does not adequately take into account its association with images of Augustus.

[152] For scholars who cite Wis 14:20, but miss the context, see Ernst Haenchen, *The Acts of the Apostles: A Commentary* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1971), 521; Luke Timothy Johnson, *The Acts of the Apostles* (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 1992), 314; Ben Witherington III, *The Acts of the Apostles: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary,* 520; Darrell Bock, *Acts: Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academics, 2007), 565**.** Jacob Jervell is certainly correct that, "Paulus hat in Athen viele Heiligtümer gefunden, σεβάσματα, „Gegenstände reigiöser Verehrung", was hier nicht näher bestimmt wird, warscheinlich Götterbilder und Götterstatuen" (*Die Apostelgeschichte* [Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1998], 445). Jervell, however, does not cite the Wisdom of Solomon and, in accord with most commentaries, his exegesis focuses on the altar to an unknown god (17:23b).

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embedded in Athens through his use of σέβασμα, he certainly does not dwell on it long. Just as Luke seems to direct his gaze toward imperial cult media—especially after the disciples are accused of acting contrary to the decrees of the emperor in Thessalonica (17:7)—he abruptly changes directions to an altar to an unknown god. But the embedding of the imperial cults in Athens, along with Ps-Solomon's clear use of σέβασμα in correlation with the deified Augustus, precludes one from reading Paul's criticism of gentile religiosity in Athens as a criticism of Greco-Roman religion that is separate from the politics of Luke's day.

6.4.4 Critical Motif 6: The Critique of Precious Materials

As Mary Beard and John Henderson observe, "To be immortalized in precious materials was a powerful stake in the battle for prestige, and by the same token it was controversial and provocative."[153] Israel's construction of the golden calf in Exodus 32 made a lasting impression on Jewish attitudes toward precious materials (Philo, *Mos.*2.160-173, 2.270-274; *Spec.* 1.79, 3.124-127).[154] The Deuteronomist anticipates the struggle: "The images of their gods you shall burn with fire. Do not covet the silver or the gold that is on them and take it for yourself, because you could be ensnared by it; for it is abhorrent to the Lord your God" (Deut 7:25). The luster, value and aesthetic beauty of precious metals provided the material stuff for theologizing about gods and kings in the Greco-Roman world (Dio Chrys., *Or.* 12.44).[155] In Greek culture, literary

[153] Mary Beard and John Henderson, *Classical Art: From Greece to Rome* (Oxford: Oxford University, 2001), 208.
[154] See Nathan MacDonald, "Recasting the Golden Calf: The Imaginative Potential of the Old Testament's Portrayal of Idolatry," in *Idolatry: False Worship in the Bible, Early Judaism and Christianity* (ed. Stephen C. Barton; New York: T&T Clark, 2007), 22-39.
[155] So Kenneth D. Lapatin: "Gold was one of the earliest metals to be worked by man. Although it is too soft for most practical applications, its rarity, colour, luster, and versatility have all contributed to its financial, aesthetic, symbolic and magical value" (*Chryselephantine Statuary in the Ancient Mediterranean World* (Oxford: Oxford University, 2001), 7. On ancient theories of seeing and observing images, see Laura Nasrallah, *Christian Responses to Roman Art and Architecture,* 213-246.

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evidence supports the use of precious materials for iconic purposes by ca. 1200 BCE when Homer talks about gold and silver dogs by Hephaistos (*Od.*VII, 81ff).[156] Philo reflects the hierarchy of materials used to theologize about gods and kings when he repudiates silver and gold because they "are esteemed the most honorable of all materials" (*Spec.* 1.22).[157] Josephus also understands the hierarchy of materials: "The artists who are the most admired use ivory and gold as the material for their constant innovations" (*C. Ap.* 2.252; trans. Barclay). In contrast to this iconic culture, Josephus suggests that: "No materials, however costly, are fit to make an image of Him; no art (ἄτεχνος) has skill (τέχνη) to conceive and represent him" (Jos., *C. Ap.* 2.191). Philostratus, on the other hand, writes: "As for myself I would far rather enter a temple, no matter how small, behold in it a statue of ivory and gold, than behold one of pottery and bad workmanship in a vastly larger one" (*Vit. Apoll.* 5.22). Recent archaeological discoveries have shown Jewish tolerance for images (see section 5.2 of this study). The presence of precious metals even on aniconic objects related to Roman imperial authority, however, could evoke a strong response from Jewish subjects (e.g., Jos., *Ant.*18.55-59; *War* 2.169-74; Philo, *Legat*. 299-305). Although gold and ivory were the premiere materials used to honor the gods in antiquity, in the discussion that follows, stone and wood are included under the rubric "precious materials" because of their utility as an effigy that could stand-alone or be encased with precious metals (notably, all of the extant colossal statues of Roman emperors are acroliths with a wooden core of Cyprus).[158]

[156] Of the extant archaeological evidence, a gold statue of a goddess from Ephesus—possibly identified as Artemis—can be dated to ca. 600 BCE (Vermeule, no. 1). See C. C. Vermeule, *Greek and Roman Sculpture in Gold and Silver* (Boston: Museum of Fine Arts, 1974); and Simon Price, *Rituals and Power,* 170-206.
[157] On Philo's view of wealth as idolatry, see: Karl-Gustav Sandeln, "The Danger of Idolatry According to Philo of Alexandria (1991)," in *Attraction and Danger of Alien Religion: Studies in Early Judaism and Christianity* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2012), 27-59.
[158] See Barbara Burrell, *Neokoroi: Greek Cities and Roman Emperors* (Boston: Brill, 2004), 318.

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A. The Representation of Imperial Authority with Precious Materials

Literary evidence supports the use of precious materials to exploit the elision of gods and kings early on in the Hellenistic period. Pliny goes out of his way to make it known that Augustus was not the first ruler to receive honors with precious metals:

> It is generally believed, but erroneously, that silver was first employed for making statues of the deified Emperor Augustus, at a period when adulation was all the fashion: for I find it stated, that in the triumph celebrated by Pompeius Magnus there was a silver statue exhibited of Pharnaces, the first king of Pontus, as also one of Mithridates Eupator, besides chariots of gold and silver (Pliny, *Nat.* 33.54).

According to Pliny, the tradition of representing deified rulers with precious materials arose well before the Roman Principate. Here the discussion is limited to a few examples. As discussed above, we know Demetrius was honored with a gold statue in Athens (Diod. 20.46.1-4) and a bronze statue in the Marketplace near personified Democracy (*IASIA* 256-62; Danker, no. 30). In Alexandria, Ptolemy Philadelphus (283-246 BCE) oversaw a royal procession with a gold statue of Alexander juxtaposed by Athena and Victory on a chariot drawn by elephants (Callixeinus, *ap. Ath.* v, 202 a).[159] The Canopus Decree instructs the Egyptian priesthood to honor the princess Berenice with a gold *agalma* in "all the temples" (ἐν ἅπασι τοῖς κατὰ τὴν χώραν ἱεροῖς, *OGIS* 56 lines 54-64); the Raphia decree records that "Many people brought [Ptolemy IV] … a gold crown" (Austin no. 276); Ptolemy II Philadelphos commissioned chryselephantine statues of his parents Ptolemy I Soter and Berenice I as "savior gods" (Theocritus, *Id.* 17.121-8)[160]; and the Rosetta Stone praises Ptolemy V Epiphanes (204-180 BCE) for lavishing decorations of "precious gold, silver and stones" on the temple of Apis (Χρυσίο(υ) τε κ[αὶ ἀργυρί]ου καὶ λίθων πολυτελῶν, *OGIS* 90 line 34). Rather strikingly, the order of the precious materials in the Rosetta Stone

[159] For further discussion see: Kenneth Scott, "The Significance of Statues in Precious Metals in Emperor Worship," *TPAPA* 62 (1931): 115.
[160] On this passage, see Keneth D. Lapatin, *Chryselephantine Statuary*, 120.

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reflects verbatim the order of Paul's critique of pagan conceptions of divinity like gold, silver or stone (χρυσῷ ἢ ἀργύρῳ ἢ λίθῳ, Acts 17:29). The critique of such material could arouse a censure of rulers' benefactions toward the gods and/or rulers' use of such material to elide with the numinous.

In contrast to Hellenistic kings, the use of precious material to honor Roman emperors was considered incompatible with Roman cultural ideals.[161] Thus, as Scott observes, "almost every emperor deemed it necessary to promulgate a policy of either accepting or refusing statues in precious metals."[162] While Scott may embellish the ubiquity of this policy, Augustus intentionally embodied vestiges of the past by appeal to a public image of *moderatio* and *pietas.* In the *Res Gestae* Augustus writes of an event in 31 BCE when he refused statues in precious metals:

> After my victory I reinstated into temples of all cities in Asia the dedications which the enemy against whom I had prevailed had plundered and was holding in his possession. Nearly eighty silver pedestrian and equestrian statues of me and statues in chariots had been set up in the city, which I myself removed, and from this money I set up golden dedications in the temple of Apollo both in my name and in the name of those who honored me with these statues (ἐκ τούτου τε τοῦ χρήματος ἀναθέματα χρυσᾶ ἐν τῶι ναῶ[ι] τοῦ Ἀπόλλωνος τῶι τε ἐμῶι ὀνόματι καὶ ἐκείνων, οἵτινές με [τ]ούτοις τοῖς ἀνδριᾶσιν ἐτείμησαν, ἀνέθηκα, *Res. Ges.* 24.1-2; trans. Cooley).[163]

As Stewart suggests, the offerings are unprecedented in the city of Rome and most likely were "set up in or near temples."[164] Augustus interprets the gestures as hubris and redirects the traffic toward the gods. Cassius Dio also reflects the Roman tradition of *moderatio* when he has Maecenas exhort Augustus to reproduce his image in his subjects through benefaction:

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[161] On Rome's purported aniconicism, see Plutarch, *Num.,* 8.7-8; Varro in Augustine, *Civ.* 4.31.
[162] Kenneth Scott, "The Significance of Statues in Precious Metals in Emperor Worship," *TPAPA* 62 (1931): 101-123, here 101.
[163] Cassius Dio also alludes to the melting of the statues, but suggests the overture was used to fund new roads (53.22.3). Suetonius writes that the golden offerings were tripods (*Aug.* 52). See figs. 69, 193 and 209 in Zanker, *Power of Images,* 86**.**
[164] Peter Stewart, *Statues in Roman Society,* 172.

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> And you should never permit gold or silver images of yourself to be made (*καὶ εἰκόνας σου χρυσᾶς μὲν ἤ καὶ ἀργυᾶς μηδέποτε ἐπιτρέψῃς γενέσθαι*), for they are not only costly but also invite destruction and last only a brief time; but rather by your benefactions (*διὰ τῶν ἀγαθῶν ἔργων*) fashion other images in the hearts of your people, images which will never tarnish or perish..." (Cassius Dio, 52.35).[165]

As Dio's logic runs, the ideal Roman Emperor reproduces his image through benefaction, not material artistry: "if you are upright as a man and honourable as a ruler, the whole earth will be your hallowed precinct, all cities your temples, and all men your statues, since within their thoughts you will ever be enshrined and glorified (Cassius Dio, 52.35). Similarly, in Plutarch's essay *To an Uneducated Ruler,* he argues that the ideal ruler who upholds law needs no Phidias, "but by his virtue (δι᾽ἀρετῆς) he forms himself in the likeness of God (εἰς ὁμοιότητα θεῷ) and thus creates a statue (ἀγαλμάτων) most delightful of all to behold and most worthy of divinity" (*Princ. iner.* 780EF).

Despite Augustus's *pietas* toward his patron god Apollo, he was quickly absorbed into the cults of the traditional gods in the winter of 30/29 BCE when he permitted honors of himself in the Greek East (with the expectation that his image be set up alongside Roma).[166] Augustus's move toward accepting divine honors is evident as early as ca. 30 BCE when, according to Appian, a gold statue was set up in the Forum (*Bell. civ.* 5.130).[167] Likewise, after Augustus's death and apotheosis, Dio records that "they placed a golden image of him on a couch in the temple of Mars" (Cassius Dio, *Rom. Hist.,* 56.46).[168] In Roman Egypt, to illustrate the honors given to Augustus in Alexandria, Philo records a detailed description of Augustus's *Sebasteion* overlooking the harbor of the city that was inlaid with precious metals of silver, gold and,

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[165] Tacitus records a similar tradition when he has Tiberius claim that his subjects represent his temples and statuary (*Ann.* 4.37.3 and 38.1ff). See Fishwick, "Dio and Maecenas: The Emperor and the Ruler Cult," *Phoenix* 44 (1990): 267-75.
[166] Zanker, *Power of Images,* 302.
[167] See also Augustus's claim in the *Res Gestae* that golden shields were set up in his honor in the Curia Julia (Cass. Dio 50.5).
[168] In addition, Cassius Dio notes that Augustus's coffin was made of ivory and gold (56.34.1).

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presumably, the porticoes he acknowledges are built of stone (*Legat.* 151). The *Sebasteion* provides a partial extra-textual background for Ps-Solomon's polemic against cult-images in precious materials.

The use of silver and gold to represent one's image was not lost on the so-called mad emperors (i.e., Caligula, Nero and Domitian). Suetonius reports that a golden statue of Caligula was built that was "dressed every day in the sort of clothing which he himself wore" (*Cal.* 21-22). Caligula commanded the erection of a life-size statue of himself in gold (Suet., *Cal.* 22-23; Philo, *Leg.* 203), and Nero was known to lavish gold props during his stage antics (Cass. Dio, *Roman History,* 63.6, 9).[169] Tacitus records that "Golden images of Minerva and Nero were set up in the *Curia* after the murder of Agrippina" (*Ann.* 14.12). Philo observes that Gaius wore gilded costumes when he role-played in the guise of Heracles (*Legat*. 79); moreover, to insult the Jews, Philo writes that Gaius commanded a colossal gold statue of Zeus for Jerusalem (κελυέι κολοσσιαῖον ἀνδριάντα ἐπίχρυσον, *Legat*. 203). In contrast to Caligula's hubristic acceptance of statues in precious metals, Claudius's policy appears intentionally more modest: "At first he accepted only one portrait, and that merely of silver, and two statues, one of bronze and one of stone, which were voted to him" (Cass. Dio, *Roman History,* 60, 5.4-5).

Domitian aggressively proliferated images of himself in precious materials so that "almost the whole world … was filled with his images and statues constructed of both *silver and gold* (Cass. Dio, *Roman History,* 8.1). Suetonius puts things another way: "He [Domitian] suffered no statues to be set up in his honor on the Capitol except of gold and silver, and of a fixed weight" (*Dom.* 13). In a remarkable passage from the younger Pliny's *gratiarum actio* to

[169] Simon Price draws attention to the discovery of a 24 carat gold imperial bust in Thrace, which evokes the blurred visual imagery between human and divine in the cultic honors given to the Roman emperors. See Price, *Rituals and Power,* 187. Likewise, Dio Cassius records that a golden effigy of Caligula's sister was built in the senate house (Dio Cassius, 59.11.2-3).

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Trajan before the senate in 100 CE, Trajan is played off as the ideal emperor in comparison to Domitian's sculptured hubris. If another emperor boasted of Trajan's benefactions, according to Pliny, he would "long since have worn a nimbus around his head; a seat of honor wrought in gold or ivory would have been placed for him among the gods… (*Pan.* 52). But not so with Trajan, who is content to have his statuary stand on guard outside the gods' temples:

> This is why the gods have set you (Trajan) on the pinnacle of human power: they know that you do not covet their own. Of your statues, only one or two are to be seen in the vestibule of the temple of Jupiter Best and Highest, and these are made of bronze; whereas only recently every approach and step, every inch of the precinct was gleaming with *silver and gold*, or rather, was casting pollution, since the figures of the gods were defiled by having statues of an incestuous emperor in their midst. And so your few statues of bronze stand and will stand as long as the temple itself, whereas those innumerable *golden* images, as a sacrifice to public rejoicing, lie broken and destroyed (*Pan.* 52).

In contrast to Domitian's gleaming honors of silver and gold—which resulted in *damnatio*—Trajan allows his image to be embedded in only a few temples and that with bronze. Trajan's *pietas* toward the gods results in praise. But even Trajan, a so-to-speak good emperor, utilizes statuary in relation to the gods. And herein lies our hermeneutical problem: if a Jew or early Christian were to allusively parody precious materials in association with the temple of Jupiter, would they have in mind Jupiter *qua* Jupiter or an emperor (be it Domitian or Trajan)? Notwithstanding the diverse imperial cult media that existed in first-century Athens, there is no extant sculptural or literary evidence of imperial cult images cast in gold or silver (which is not surprising given the value of such material). From the second century, however, in Pausanias's description of Greece, he records that a colossal statue of Hadrian encased with ivory and gold was located before the entrance to the sanctuary of Olympian Zeus in Athens (*Descr.* 1.18.6). The proliferation of Hadrian's image in Athens is also evident in his construction of the massive

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Olympieion, where no less than 136 portraits of Hadrian stood in the *temenos* from every Greek city.[170]

The use of precious materials to represent imperial authority provides a neglected extratext for the universal icon parody in its early Jewish and Christian forms. Without an adjectival descriptor for *what* gold, silver or stone object an author is critiquing, the object becomes polyvalent—indeed, open for interpretation by the audience. We see this phenomenon in Philo's *De Decalogo* and *De Specialibus*, where Philo employs a universal critique of cult objects in precious material without providing his audience with a descriptor of what he is talking about (*Dec.* 4, 7, 66, 71; *Spec.* 1.21-22). Under the stressors associated with Gaius's madness, Philo's allusive polemic against precious materials becomes frank when he openly critiques Gaius's threat to erect a gold colossal in Jerusalem (*Legat.* 203, 337). Further investigation of Ps-Solomon's critique of precious materials in Augustan Egypt will clarify that the icon parody could be employed not only as a "hypothetical" denunciation of emperor worship, but as a veritable strategy for the classification of ruler cults as superstition.

B. Ps-Solomon's Polemic Against Precious Materials

There are three passages that criticize cult images in precious materials in the Wisdom of Solomon (13:10, 14:21, and 15:9). One could add to this list Ps-Solomon's paragon of the ideal ruler, where the wise Solomon refuses to represent Lady Wisdom with precious material (Wis 7:1-10). Wis 13:10 and 15:9 do not have an explicit imperial target, however, Gilbert and others have persuasively shown that the main section of the *digressio* on idolatry (13:10 – 15:13) is structured in a concentric design, where 13:10-19 and 15:1-13 frame Ps-Solomon's etiology of

[170] Alcock, *Graecia Capta,* 181.

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idols (Wis 14:12-21) with traditional Biblical icon parodies.[171] One can take it as axiomatic, then, that images in gold or silver—whether in the shape of a beast, planet or imperial portrait—are implicitly criticized in 13:10 and 15:9. Criticism of gold and silver images in 13:10 and 15:9 is universal in focus, targeting the work of the idol artisan who designs images that obfuscate humanity's proper sight and perception of the creator. The three passages under discussion here are as follows:

Ps-Solomon's Polemic Against Precious Materials	
Wis 13:10	• ταλαίπωροι δὲ καὶ ἐν νεκροῖς αἱ ἐλπίδες αὐτῶν, οἵτινες ἐκάλεσαν θεοὺς ἔργα χειρῶν ἀνθρώπων, χρυσὸν καὶ ἄργυρον τέχνης ἐμμελέτημα καὶ ἀπεικάσματα ζῴων ἢ λίθον ἄχρηστον χειρὸς ἔργον ἀρχαίας. • But wretched, with their hopes set on dead things, are those who designated as gods the work of human hands, gold and silver fashioned with skill, and representations of animals or useless stone, the work of an ancient hand (trans. NETS).
Wis 14:21	• καὶ τοῦτο ἐγένετο τῷ βίῳ εἰς ἔνεδρον, ὅτι ἢ συμφορᾷ ἢ τυραννίδι δουλεύσαντες ἄνθρωποι τὸ ἀκοινώνητον ὄνομα λίθοις καὶ ξύλοις περιέθεσαν. • And this became a trap for human life, because people, enslaved either by misfortune or tyranny, bestowed on objects of stone and wood the incommunicable name (trans. NETS).
Wis 15:9	• ἀλλ᾽ ἔστιν αὐτῷ φροντὶς οὐχ ὅτι μέλλει κάμνειν οὐδ᾽ ὅτι βραχυτελῆ βίον ἔχει, ἀλλ᾽ ἀντερείδεται μὲν χρυσουργοῖς καὶ ἀργυροχόοις χαλκοπλάστας τε μιμεῖται καὶ δόξαν ἡγεῖται ὅτι κίβδηλα πλάσσει. • But his concern is not that his health is likely to fail or that his life is brief, but he sets himself up against goldsmiths and silversmiths and imitates molders of bronze and considers it a glorious thing that he molds counterfeits (trans. NETS).

[171] See Maurice Gilbert, *La Critique de Dieux dans le Livre de la Sagesse (Sg 13-15)*, 245-57; and Moyna McGlynn, *Divine Judgment and Divine Benevolence in the Book of Wisdom* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2001), 134-38. On the influence of Isaiah upon Ps-Solomon's use of Biblical icon parodies, see: Wolfgang, M. W. Roth, "For Life He Appeals to Death (Wis 13:18): A Study of Old Testament Idol Parodies," *CBQ* 37 (1975): 21–47.

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The influence of Isaiah is evident in all three passages that criticize precious materials in the Wisdom of Solomon (cf. Isa 40:18-20; 46:6).[172] It is crucial to recognize that Ps-Solomon Hellenizes Isaiah's polemic by transposing it into a Stoic cosmology of the universe, which understands nature as the medium for human discernment of the nearness and attributes of God. In Wis 13:1, Ps-Solomon depicts the theologically ignorant as foolish (μάταιοι) because "they were unable from the good things that are seen to know the one who exists." The motif of seeking and finding God, also found in Acts 17:27, is spelled out in Wis 13:7: "For while they live among his works, they keep searching (διερευνῶσιν), and they trust in what they see, because the things that are seen are beautiful."[173] Ps-Solomon reproves the power of visual stimulation in so far as it leads one to erroneous knowledge of God, which provides the grounds for Ps-Solomon's exasperation over the foolish: "for if they had the power to know so much that they could investigate the world, how did they fail to find sooner the Lord of these things?" (Wis 13:9). For Ps-Solomon, investigation of nature should result in the proper knowledge of God, oriented around the one God of Israel. This cosmological conviction is also shared by Luke, who imitates Ps-Solomon's technique of Hellenizing Old Testament icon parodies with the protreptic aim of reorienting his audience away from crude deification at Lystra (Acts 14:15-18) and Athens's forest of idols (Acts 17:16), toward the resurrected Christ (Acts 17:31).

Criticism of precious materials moves from implicit to explicit critique of imperial cult media in Wis 14:21. The cluster of words used for "honoring" the distant ruler in vv. 16-21—

[172] Isaiah 40:28, in particular, provides an important backdrop for Ps-Solomon's criticism of the artisan who makes idols cast in precious materials in Wis 13:10 and 15:9: "To whom then will you liken God, or what likeness compare with him? An idol?—A workman casts it, *and a goldsmith overlays it with gold, and casts for it silver chains*. As a gift one chooses mulberry wood—wood that will not rot—then seeks out a skilled artisan to set up an image that will not topple."
[173] The motif of seeking and finding is found in the Old Testament, but without the philosophical tinge. See Deut 4:29 and Isa 55:6.

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ἐτιίμησεν 14, 15c; τιμᾶν 14:17a; τιμωμένου 17c; φιλοτιμία 18b; and τιμηθέντα 20b—heightens Ps-Solomon's criticism of the imperial cults' euergetic system of honors.[174] In an attempt to expose the honors that undergirds the emperor's web of power, Ps-Solomon calls imperial honors a "hidden trap for humankind" among those enslaved to tyranny (τυραννίδι δουλεύσαντες, v. 21).[175] With resonances of Isa 42:8, Ps-Solomon proceeds to attack those who give the name of the one God "that ought not to be shared" to objects of "stone and wood" that represent the Roman emperor (v. 21: τὸ ἀκοινώνητον ὄνομα λίθοις καὶ ξύλοις περιέθεσαν). It is crucial to recognize that, like Luke, Ps-Solomon re-contextualizes Isaiah's icon parody by placing it within the persuasion strategies of Greco-Roman rhetoric and philosophy (both of which were concepts foreign to the thought world of Isaiah).[176] Moreover, in contrast to Isaiah, both Wisdom and Luke employ the icon parody to condemn the philosophical shortcomings of pagan religiosity rather than the Israelite community. But more importantly for my purposes here, both Wisdom and Luke's evocation of the icon parody coincided with Greco-Roman philosophical criticism of religion—an additional *Gesprächspartner* foreign to Isaiah.[177]

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[174] See Gilbert, *La Critique,* 130.
[175] On Pseudo-Solomon's subversive use of τύραννος (6:9, 21; 8:15; 12:14; and 14:17), see 5.3.3 above.
[176] On the deliberative rhetorical purposes of Wisdom, see: Leo Perdue, *Sword and the Stylus*, 322. Idem, "Rhetoric and the Art of Persuasion in the Wisdom of Solomon," in *Text, Images and Christians in the Graeco-Roman World: A Festschrift in Honor of David Lee Balch* (ed. Aliou Cissé Niang and Carolyn Osiek; Eugene: Pickwick, 2012), 183-198.
[177] For a more complete list, see: Johannes Tromp, "Critique of Idolatry," 108-12; Harold W. Attridge, *First-Century Cynicism in the Epistles of Heraclitus* (Missoula: Scholars Press, 1976), 3-13; and David L. Balch, "The Areopagus Speech: An Appeal to the Stoic Historian Posidonius against Later Stoics and the Epicureans," in *Greeks, Romans and Christians: Essays in Honor of Abraham J. Malherbe* (ed. David Balch, Everett Ferguson and Wayne A. Meeks; Minneapolis: Fortress, 1990), 52-79.

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C. Ps-Solomon's Polemic Against Anthropomorphic Images

Like the Jewish icon parody, philosophical criticism of religion included critical reflection on anthropomorphic representation (e.g., Xenophanes, frag. B14-15, Dielz-Kranz; Aristotle, *Meta.* 12.8).[178] A criticism of anthropomorphic images can also be sensed in Wis 13:13 and 15:16:

Ps-Solomon's Polemic Against images in Human Form	
Wis 13:13	• τὸ δὲ ἐξ αὐτῶν ἀπόβλημα εἰς οὐθὲν εὔχρηστον, ξύλον σκολιὸν καὶ ὄζοις συμπεφυκός, λαβὼν ἔγλυψεν ἐν ἐπιμελείᾳ ἀργίας αὐτοῦ, καὶ ἐμπειρίᾳ συνέσεως ἐτύπωσεν αὐτό ἀπείκασεν αὐτὸ εἰκόνι ἀνθρώπου • and, taking a cast–off piece of wood from them, a stick crooked and full of knots, carves it with care in his idle moments and shapes it with skill gained in leisure, it is this he forms into the image of a human being (trans. NETS).
Wis 15:16	• ἄνθρωπος γὰρ ἐποίησεν αὐτούς, καὶ τὸ πνεῦμα δεδανεισμένος ἔπλασεν αὐτούς· οὐδεὶς γὰρ αὐτῷ ὅμοιον ἄνθρωπος ἰσχύει πλάσαι θεόν· • For a human being made them, and one whose spirit is borrowed molded them; for no human has the power to mold a god like himself (trans. NETS).

In Wis 13:13, Ps-Solomon draws on Isa 44:13 to criticize the wood carver who designs images "in the likeness of a human being" (εἰκόνι ἀνθρώπου). Images in the likeness of a human being could pertain to a traditional god or a deified ruler during the Hellenistic period (see 2.3.1 of this study). But such criticism tended to focus on universal criticism of anthropomorphism (e.g., Posidonius in Strabo, *Geogr.* 16.2.35-39; Plut., *Num.,* 8.7-8, Cic., *Nat. d.* 1.77; Sen., in Aug.,

[178] See section 2.3.1 for further discussion. H. Diels and W. Kranz, *Die Fragmente der Vorsokratiker* (Berlin: Weidmann, 1952). For comment and English translation, see Mario Vegetti, "The Greeks and their Gods," in *The Greeks* (ed. Jean-Pierre Vernant; trans. Charles Lambert and Teresa Lavender Fagan; Chicago: University of Chicago, 1995), 254-284, here 278-79.

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Civ. 6.10; Oenomaos of Gadara in Eus., *Praep ev.* 5.36).[179] The ambiguity over *what* anthropomorphic cult practice Ps-Solomon is targeting in Wis 13:13 finds a counterpart in the *Letter of Aristeas*. Like Ps-Solomon, the author draws on euhemerism to resist auditors who represent powerful humans—in this case, "inventors"—with images in precious material and human form:

> (135) For when they have made statues of stone and wood (ἀγάλματα γὰρ ποιήσαντες ἐκ λίθων καὶ ξύλων), they say that they are the images of those who have invented something useful for life and they worship them, though they have clear proof that they possess no feeling. (136) For it would be utterly foolish to suppose that any one became a god in virtue of his inventions. For the inventors simply took certain objects already created and by combining them together, showed that they possessed a fresh utility: they did not themselves create the substance of the thing, *and so it is a vain and foolish thing for people to make gods of men like themselves* (διὸ κενὸν καὶ μάταιον τοὺς ὁμοίους ἀποθεοῦν). (137) For in our times there are many who are much more inventive and much more learned than the men of former days who have been deified, and yet they would never come to worship them. The makers and authors of these myths think that they are the wisest of the Greeks (*Let. Aris.* 135-37).

The passage articulates a strong critique of similarity-based representation: it is vain and foolish to deify (ἀποθεόω) objects of power by representing their form similar to humans. The Third Sibyl also draws on this tradition: "You neither revere nor fear God, but wander to no purpose, worshipping snakes and sacrificing to cats, speechless idols, and *stone statues of people* … You

[179] The Cynic-Stoic philosophy represented in the *Epistles of Heraclitus* have become a common conversation partner among those arguing that Luke's composition of the Areopagus speech is an attempt to make common cause with Greek philosophy. Though the epistles criticize images of the gods in precious materials—especially stone (cf. 4.10-21)—they do not criticize anthropomorphic images explicitly. However, Harold Attridge, in his introduction and translation of the epistles, quotes an inscription on a pottery shard (ostracon) from Egypt that criticizes anthropomorphic images, which aligns with the cynic attitude of the *Epistles of Heraclitus*: "Those who with corruptible matter fashion statues of Isis and Osiris, anthropomorphic and theriomorphic gods (ἀνθρωπομόρφων καὶ ζῳομόρφων), call them deities. The fashioner makes himself a fool. It is not possible to make a moulded likeness of the incorporeal, invisible, uncreated and immaterial nature. For it is possible to apprehend the divine not with hands but with mind. Also the one and only temple of god is the world" (Attridge, *First-Century Cynicism*, 23). One can also detect a critique of anthropomorphic images in Oenomaos of Gadara's caricature of phallic heads of Dionysius in stone, bronze and gold quoted in Eusebius (Eusebius, *Praep ev.* 5.36). On this passage, Attridge rightly observes the universal critique of religion: "Although the critique here is directed to a particular cult and not to religion in general, the motivating force of the polemic seems to lie in a rejection of all religion as silly superstition" (Attridge, *First-Century Cynicism*, 17). It is also worth observing that early Christian polemicists mocked anthropomorphic images. See, for example, Minucius Felix, *Octavius*, 22.5-23.1.

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rejoice in the *evil stones* forgetting the judgment of the immortal savior who created heaven and earth" (3.29-34). The referent of polemic against anthropomorphism is not stated in Wisdom, the *Letter of Ariseas* or the Third Sibyl—all texts which were written in Egypt under the shadow of deified political authority.

Identifying an explicit referent for anthropomorphic images in precious materials was the exception, not the norm, in Hellenistic Jewish anti-idol polemic. Notwithstanding Tromp's oversight of Jewish and Greco-Roman polemic against anthropomorphic images, he is in part correct to suggest, "…verbal agreement between the Jewish and non-Jewish polemics against idolatry occurs only in the case of listing the materials out of which idols can be made."[180] But to what degree did the philosophical critique of precious materials include a censure of imperial images? In what follows, we will focus particular attention on the middle-Platonist Plutarch, whose criticism of images and precious material is placed within a larger attack on the system of euergetism undergirding rulers' power.[181]

D. The Philosophical Critique of Precious Material

The philosophical critique of honors in precious materials finds a striking precedent in the Platonic Socrates. Socrates urged his pupils to avoid public τιμή in precious material because philosophers have "Gold and silver … of the divine quality from the gods always in their souls…" (Plato, *Republic*, 416e-417a). For Plato, the soul already comprises the quality of precious materials, thereby making wealth and numismatic representation a potential for "many impious deeds" (*Republic,* 417a). In Plutarch's comments on this passage, he condemns the "love

[180] Johannes Tromp, "Critique of Idolatry," 112.
[181] On Plutarch's attitude toward Rome, see Simon Swain, *Hellenism and Empire: Language, Classicism, and Power in the Greek World, AD 50-250* (Oxford: Clarendon: 1996), 135-186; and Kenneth Scott, "Plutarch and the Ruler Cult," *TPAPA* 60 (1929): 117-135.

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of honors" (φιλοτιμία) within a robust euergetic framework. Because the soul is made of gold, philosophers have an innate honor—"a gold uncorrupted, undefiled, and unpolluted." Therefore, according to Plutarch, "we have no need of honours painted, modeled, or cast in bronze…" (*Praec. ger. rei publ.* 820B). The pursuit of unbridled power and φιλοτιμία makes one "top-heavy and weighty … like ill-proportioned statues, quickly overturned" (*Praec. Ger. Rei publ*. 820F). For Plutarch, the ideal ruler should represent oneself by the logos of philosophy—not the "art of statuary" and "lifeless images" (*Max. princ.* 776CD).[182] Strikingly, Plutarch's criticism is not against a particular piece of statuary or the imperial cults *per se*. Rather, he attacks the larger system of benefaction that underlies visual euergetism that leads to self-indulgence. In Plutarch's biographical sketch of Demetrius, he notes, "…the most paltry evidence of the people's good will towards kings and rulers is excess of honors" (ὑπερβολὴ τιμῶν, *Dem.* 30.4). Luke and Ps-Solomon would certainly be in agreement. Ps-Solomon, for example, condemns the artisan's love of honors (φιλοτιμία, a *hapax legomenon* in the LXX), which visually impels "those who did not know the king to intensify their worship" (Wis 14:18).

That Plutarch could critique the precious materials of the ruling power's iconography explicitly is evident elsewhere. In *De Superstitione*, Plutarch critiques the superstitious "who give credence to workers in metal, stone, or wax, who make their images of gods in the likeness of human beings, and they have such images fashioned, and dress them up, and worship them" (εἶτα χαλκοτύποις μὲν πείθονται καὶ λιθοξόοις καὶ κεροπλάσταις ἀνθρωπόμορφα τῶν θεῶν τὰ εἴδη ποιοῦσι, καὶ τουαῦτα πλάττουσι καὶ κατασκευάζουσι καὶ προσκυνοῦσι, *Superst.* 167E).[183] Although

[182] Geert Roskam, "A ΠΑΙΔΕΙΑ for the Ruler. Plutarch's Dream of Collaboration Between Philosopher and Ruler," in *Sage and Emperor: Plutarch, Greek Intellectuals, and Roman Power in the Time of Trajan (98-117 A.D*) (eds. Philip A. Stadter and Luc Van der Stockt; Leuven: Leuven University, 2002), 178.
[183] Notably, by the third century it was common practice to make a wax effigy of the dead emperor and burn it on the funeral pyre. So Herodian, *History,* IV.2.1-2. See Simon Price, "From Noble Funerals," 57-105.

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Plutarch's criticism of anthropomorphic images and precious material does not have an explicit referent, Suetonius recalls a golden statue of Caligula being dressed everyday (*Cal.* 21-22). A few passages later Plutarch compares the superstitious with those who "give welcome to despots (τυράννους), and pay court to them, and *erect golden statues* in their honour, but in their hearts they hate them and shake the head" (Plut. *Superst.* 170 E). The passage is remarkably subversive: just as worshipers alleviate their fear of the gods through visual honors and ritual, so also do subjects who mollify the ruling power by erecting chryselephantine sculpture.

Plutarch's criticism of tyrants' iconography in precious material is even more explicit in his treatise *To an Uneducated Ruler.* Here Plutarch parodies unnamed rulers who imitate the gods through colossal statues rather than law and philosophy:

> But most kings and rulers are so foolish as to act like unskillful sculptors, who think their colossal figures look large and imposing if they are modeled with their feet far apart, their muscles tense, and their mouths wide open. For these rulers seem by heaviness of voice, harshness of expression, truculence of manner, and unsociability in their way of living to be imitating the dignity and majesty of the princely station, although in fact they are not at all different from colossal statues which have a heroic and godlike form on the outside, but inside *are full of clay, stone, and lead,* — except that in the case of the statues the weight of those substances keeps them permanently upright without leaning, whereas uneducated generals and rulers are often rocked and capsized by the ignorance within them; for since the foundation upon which they have built up their lofty power is not laid straight, they lean with it and lose their balance (*Princ. iner.* 2).

The passage explicitly associates the critique of precious materials with imperial statues. The flattery (κολακεύω) of artists, poets and subjects are no true mark of the ideal ruler, whose metric for ruling properly is predicated on law and philosophical acumen rather than visual ostentation (*De se ipsum laud.* 543DE; *Alex. Fort.* 330F-331A).[184] In a similar way, Ps-Solomon caricatures

[184] Aside from Plutarch's attack on iconographic euergetism, he can also critique role-playing as an inappropriate form of public honors: "What else was it that fastened the mouthpiece and flute upon Ptolemy? What else set a tragic state for Nero, and invested him with mask and buskins? Was it not praise of his flatterer (ὀυχ ὁ τῶν κολακευόντων ἔπαινος)? And is not almost any king called an Apollo if he can hum a tune, and a Dionysius if he gets drunk, and a Heracles if he can wrestle? And is he not delighted, and thus led into all

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those who "flatter" rulers with images despite their distant absence (ἵνα ὡς παρόντα τὸν ἀπόντα κολακεύωσιν, 14:17), and Philo ridicules those who erected images of Caligula in Alexandrian synagogues as "flattery" (κολακεία, *Legat.* 133-34). Although the philosophical critique of images in precious material tended to be universal in focus (Epict., *Diatr.* 2.8.13-14; Plut., *Is. Os.* 171; Ps-Heraclitus, *Ep.* 4:10-18, 20-21; Lucian, *Philops.* 20; *Jupp. conf.* 8; *Sacr.* 11; and *Pro imag.* 23),[185] Plutarch shows that (1) the philosophical critique of precious materials could censure imperial iconography; and (2) philosophers' polemic against images could encompass φιλοτιμία and the system of benefaction.

E. Summa: What is Divinity Like?

The archaeological record and the Hellenistic-Jewish and philosophical critique of precious materials animate the political referent of Acts 17:29. Luke's dramatic audience is already familiar with the critique of anthropomorphic images before the Areopagus speech proper. In Lystra, locals attempt to apotheosize Paul and Barnabas for their benefaction toward a crippled man by claiming, "The gods have descended in the likeness of human beings (ὁμοιωθέντες ἀνθρώποις)!" (Acts 14:11). Paul corrects the Lystrans' attempt at deification (and assimilation with Zeus and Hermes) arguing that human benefactors' ontological status is "like the nature" (ὁμοιοπαθεῖς) of mere mortals—*not* gods (Acts 14:15). This logic carries over into the Areopagus speech; but here, the learned audience of Athens provides Paul with an opportunity to explicate

kinds of disgrace by the flattery? (Plutarch, *Adul. Amic.* 12.56EF). In a remarkably similar way, Philo ridicules Caligula's imitation of the Dioscuroi and Dionysus through role-playing (*Legat.* 78-79).

[185] On Epictetus's attitude toward political tyrants, see: Chester G. Starr, Jr., "Epictetus and the Tyrant," *Classical Philology* 44.1 (1949): 20-29. For a fuller list of the pagan critique of precious materials, see: Tromp, "Critique of Idolatry," 110-111.

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philosophically upon what divinity—τὸ θεῖον rather than τὸν θεόν—is "like" (ὅμοιον, 17:29).[186] By appeal to the Stoic concept that God pervades humanity (Aratus, *Phaen.* V. 5), Luke argues that it is illogical to think that human art (τέχνη) and imagination (ἐνθύμησις) can manipulate divinity in human form with gold, silver and stone (because humanity already properly embodies the image of and, hence, *metaphysical representation* of God).

The listing of materials reflects the hierarchy of materials used to theologize about divinity in antiquity. Eckhard Schnabel and Craig Keener are certainly correct to recognize an implicit critique of Phidias's gold and ivory Athena (Pliny, *Nat.* 34.19.54; Pausanias, *Descr.* 1.24.5-7).[187] But we can go further: to articulate that divinity is incompatible with gold, silver and stone in the heart of Romanized Athens is to undermine the system of honors that upholds the visibility of gods *and* imperial families (a point that would especially not be lost on Luke's dramatic audience on Greek soil, where the Hellenistic cult of rulers first emerged [e.g., the Ithyphallic Hymn, 6.3 above]).

If Luke intends to target the Roman imperial cults through his criticism of precious materials, his Stoic audience would certainly have been sympathetic. In his seminal study on opposition to the Roman Empire, MacMullen argued that Stoicism "sharpened the impulse and the courage to say what one felt [against the emperors]…"[188] Luke's philosophical convictions, however, are not driven by Stoic philosophy alone. Rather, Luke's theo-political imagination is funded by the story of Israel coming to completion in Yahweh's eschatological act in Jesus'

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[186] C. K. Barrett, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on The Acts of the Apostles* (vol. II; London: T&T, 1998), 848.
[187] Eckhard J. Schnabel, *Acts: Zondervan Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2012), 738; Craig S. Keener, *Acts: An Exegetical Commentary: 15:1-23:35* (vol. 3 of *Acts: An Exegetical Commentary;* Grand Rapids: Baker, 2014), 2667. Phidias's chryselephantine of Olympian Zeus, in particular, captured the imagination of artists for centuries, even imbuing an impression upon Philo (Philo, *Ebr. 89*). Even Josephus recognized that chryselephantine was "most admired" (*C. Ap.* 2. 252).
[188] Ramsay MacMullen, *Enemies of the Roman Order* (Cambridge: Harvard Unviersity, 1966), 53.

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resurrection (Acts 17:30-31). In accord with the Wisdom of Solomon, Luke re-contextualizes the Jewish icon parody to censure images cast in precious materials—*which includes political objects of power*—but only in so far as the imperial cults are understood as an integrated part of the larger polytheistic system of Roman religion.

6.5 Paul the Philosopher? Confronting Superstition and Figured Speech

The oratorical composition and judicial setting of Paul's speech before the Areopagus council evokes the type of scenario that called for figured speech. Quintilian emphasizes this point in his expectation that the interlocutor of figured speech be a judge in court (*Inst. Or.* 9.2.72). Paul's apprehension (ἐπιλαμβάνομαι, v. 17:19) and parallels with the trial of Socrates place the Areopagus speech in an overtly subversive *and* political context, which made blunt speech dangerous and ineffective.[189] The danger of introducing foreign deity into Athens is well-known—most notably from the accusations brought against Socrates himself (Plato, *Euthyphr.* 1C; 2B; *Apol.* 24B; Xenophon, *Mem.* 1.1.1). Like Socrates, Paul is accused of proclaiming foreign divinities (ξένων δαιμονίων δοκεῖ καταγγελεὺς εἶνα, Acts 17:18) and a "new teaching" (ἡ καινὴ αὕτη ἡ ὑπὸ σοῦ λαλουμένη διδαχή, Acts 17:19).[190] Josephus catalogues several individuals who were killed for introducing foreign divinities into Athens (*C. Ap.* 2.262-68), and observes that the Athenians "imposed an inexorable punishment even on those who uttered a single word about the Gods in contravention of their laws" (*C. Ap.* 2.262; trans. Barclay). Socrates represents

[189] Here I follow C. Kavin Rowe's reading that the Areopagus refers to the judicial council rather than the hill of Ares. Paul's arrest and parallels with Socrates evoke a trial scene. See Rowe, *World Upside Down*, 30-31. See also the summary of parallels in Daniel Marguerat, *Paul in Acts and Paul in His Letters* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2013), 70-74; and Joshua Jipp "Paul's Areopagus Speech," 569-74; and Karl Olav Sandness, "Paul and Socrates: The Aim of Paul's Areopagus Speech," *JSNT* 50 (1993): 13-26.

[190] On the Socratic version, see Plato, *Apology* 24bc; *Euthyphro* 1c, 2b; Xenophon, *Mem.*, 1.1-2. Citations from Daniel Marguerat, *Paul in Acts and Paul in His Letters*, 70.

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the most illustrious example of martyrdom at the hands of the Athenian religious elite. Luke plays off this memory to present the protagonist of early Christianity in a similar type-scene.

In addition to the danger of introducing foreign divinity into Athens, Paul's universal critique of temple culture and material representation was not without its dangers. The content of Paul's polemic, along with the overtly philosophical setting in Athens, heightens readers' expectations for subversion. As Ramsay MacMullen memorably wrote, in the Greco-Roman world, "philosophy and subversion went together."[191] Halbertal and Margalit well-articulate the subversive vocation of philosophers by associating them with iconoclasm:

> Philosophy, by its nature, or at its best, is iconoclastic, in the sense of removing ideological masks or breaking idols. In this context the idols are the creatures of the human imagination that take control over people and their lives, and the breaking of idols means the uncovering of the fictional and illusive character of these creatures of the imagination. The war against idolatry has the same role of liberation from error and the attempt to break the bonds of the imagination.[192]

To liberate the imagination of the gentile world from captivity to idols, Luke blends Septuagintal aniconic polemics with Greco-Roman philosophical reflections on divinity to defend the Christ event as the definitive revelatory act in salvation history. Indeed, for Luke, images represent the mere "art and imagination of mortals" (τέχνης καὶ ἐνθυμήσεως ἀνθρώπου, Acts 17:29). In the belly button of the Greek world—and the birthplace of the Hellenistic cult of rulers—Luke presents the exemplar missionary of early Christianity confronting the logic and material culture of euergetic honors. The judicial setting and contentious content of the Areopagus speech meets Quintilian's criteria for figured speech when "it is unsafe to speak openly" (*Inst. Or.* 9.2.66).

Bowersock identifies three types of provincial opposition to the Roman Empire: (1) local sedition; (2) troublemaking initiated by an external power (normally Parthia); and (3) regional

[191] Ramsay MacMullen, *Enemies of the Roman Order*, 53.
[192] Halbertal and Margalit, *Idolatry*, 6.

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support for uprisings among a Roman soldiery mobilized by an aspiring commander.[193] The strategy of resistance in all three forms of provincial opposition is violent sedition, which is a different form of opposition than what we see from Paul in the Areopagus speech, who opposes not Rome itself, but the pantheon of traditional Greek gods with an alternative theo-political vision about divine identity. As classicists have long noted, the type-scene of wandering sages who attack despotic rulers "was so common as to be cliché in the Roman world of the late first century."[194] Philostratus, for example, goes so far as to say that "the conduct of philosophers under despotism is the truest touchstone of their character…" (*Vit. Apoll.* 7). Dio Chrysostom, who himself was exiled by Domitian, records a striking memory of Socrates subversively resisting the tyrannical oligarchy known as the "Thirty Tyrants," who sought to kill Leon of Salamis. Dio compares Socrates's situation with his own plight:

> However, I am not surprised at my present troubles; since even the famous Socrates, whom I have often mentioned, during the tyranny of the Thirty did everything in behalf of the people and took no part in the crimes of that régime, but, when ordered by the Thirty to fetch Leon of Salamis, he refused to obey, and he openly reviled the tyrants, saying they were like wicked herdsmen, who, having received the cows when strong and numerous, make them few and weaker; but nevertheless it was by the government of the people, on whose account he then risked his life, that later on when that government was flourishing, because he had been slandered by certain informers, he was put to death (Dio Chrysostom, *Or.* 43.9).

Socrates's refusal to arrest Leon of Salamis illustrates the political nature of the philosopher's work in society and how they could oppose the ruling power as one of their strategies for transforming the state. With the subversive Socrates in mind, does Luke intend for the attuned reader to sense a philosopher versus tyrant type-scene in Athens when Paul, in the appearance of Socrates *redivivus*, has an initial dialogue with Epicurean and Stoic philosophers, and proceeds

[193] Glen W. Bowersock, "The Mechanics of Subversion, 315.
[194] Ramsay MacMullen, *Enemies of the Roman Order,* 59.

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to preach the Gospel to the Athenian religious elite?[195] Many of the ingredients for such a type-scene are present in the literary setting of Athens of Acts 17, with the exception of the absence of Caesar and imperial authorities, which makes such a type-scene impossible to detect. Still, it is important to remember, as we discussed in section 4.3.3.B, that silence could be construed as a type of opposition in itself. It is notable that when Paul arrives in Rome to defend the Gospel before Caesar, Luke makes no attempt to portray Paul confronting Caesar (Acts 28).[196]

Notwithstanding the absence of imperial authorities at Paul's speech, one could argue that the Roman imperial cults were present for Paul's speech through their media embedded in Athens. As Ps-Solomon argues, imperial images provided a means to "flatter the absent one as though present" (Wis 14:17) The Areopagus speech opens with a *captatio benevolentiae* where Paul aims to flatter his listeners by admiring their exceeding religiosity (δεισιδαίμων [Acts 17:22]). But δεισιδαίμων had a double meaning in antiquity: "exceedingly religious" or "exceedingly superstitious."[197] Paul's use of δεισιδαίμων accords with Demetrius's understanding of figured speech where the rhetor employs words that "say opposing things simultaneously … [leaving] one confused as to whether it is praise or mockery" (*Eloc.* 291). By the end of the first century, such political doublespeak was so common that Pliny had to assure Trajan that his words of panegyrical flattery didn't mean their "semantic opposites" (as they did during the reign

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[195] For the philosopher versus tyrant type-scene and its relevance for Luke's literary portrayal of rulers, see: John Darr, *Herod the Fox: Audience Criticism and Lukan Characterization* (JSNTS 163; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1998), 92-136.
[196] On the ending of Acts, see Richard Cassidy, "Paul's Proclamation of *Lord* Jesus as a Chained Prisoner in Rome: Luke's Ending Is in His Beginning," in *Luke-Acts and Empire* (ed. David Rhoades; Eugene, OR: Pickwick, 2011), 142-53.
[197] The philosophers' charge against cultic worship of the traditional gods as superstitious receives a full-treatment by the middle-Platonist Plutarch. In Plutarch's *De Superstitione* (Περί δεισιδαιμοίας), the sense of Paul's accusation against the Athenians as "exceedingly religious" (δεισιδαίμων; Acts 17:22) receives its proper background. Hans-Josef Klauck defines Plutarch's sense of religious superstition as, "faith generated by fear, a pious neurotic fear in all its forms, religion as a compulsive obsession born of fear and as compulsive ritual" (Klauck, *Religious Context*, 409). See also Klauck, *Magic and Paganism*, 81.

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of Domitian [*Pan.* 3.4]).[198] Similarly, Philo assures his audience that the Jews are not friends to Caesar" (φιλοκαίσαρές) in deceitful flattery, but "really are his friends" (trans. Smallwood, *Legat.* 280). Paul's "clutching at goodwill," then, evokes a double meaning; but the attuned reader already knows Paul's attitude toward Athenian religiosity before the speech proper. Indeed, Paul is "deeply distressed" (NRSV) over a city "full of idols" (17:16), which reminds the reader that the altar to an unknown god is one manifestation of Athens's exceeding religiosity (i.e., their superstition) amid the city's *sebasmata* of gold, silver and stone (i.e., images of gods and/or rulers).[199]

Quintilian suggests that the most trivial form of figured speech "turns on a single word" (*Inst. Or.* 9.2.99). Quintilian substantiates this point through an example of figured speech from Cicero, who writes that the promiscuous Clodia (c. 95 BCE) was the "friend (*amica*) of all men rather than the enemy of any" (Cicero, *Cael.* 13.32). Somewhat humorously, the word *amica* could mean "friend" or "mistress." Quintilian observes that the first requirement of this type of *emphasis* is that "the Figures should not be obvious" (*ne sint manifestae*), which is achieved by "not using words of doubtful or double meaning" (*verbis dubiis et quasi duplicibus*) or "an ambiguous word arrangement" (*compositis ambiguis*, *Inst. Or.* 9.2.69).[200] In accord with Quintilian's caution, Luke beholds Athens's idols using the polyvalent word *sebasmata*, but proceeds to embed it in an open criticism of an altar to an unknown god (Acts 17:23).[201] The altar

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[198] I take this reference to Pliny and the phrase "semantic opposite" from Shadi Bartsch, "The Art of Sincerity: Pliny's Panegyricus," in *Oxford Readings in Classical Studies: Latin Panegyric* (ed. Roger Rees; Oxford: Oxford University, 2012), 148-193, here 156-57. See also idem. *Actors in the Audience: Theatricality and Doublespeak from Nero to Hadrian* (Cambridge: Harvard University, 1994).
[199] As Klauck points out, an altar to an unknown god ensured that heroes, gods and the deities of other nations were not overlooked, lest they take revenge on the populace. Thus, such altars created "political links" with other nations. See Hans-Josef Klauck, *Magic and Paganism*, 83.
[200] See Ahl, "Art of Safe Criticism," 196-97.
[201] As is well known, the inscription was likely in the plural to "unknown gods." See Eduard Norden, *Agnostos theos: Untersuchungen zur Formen-Geschichte religiöser Rede* (Leipzig: Teubner, 1913). Klauck observes that even Jerome recognized this point. See *Magic and Paganism,* 83.

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to an unknown god provides a point of contact with Luke's historical audience to reflect on divine identity in the form of monotheism before Luke polemicizes against temple culture (v. 24, 29). As Frederick Ahl warns, when a Greco-Roman author employs allusive phrases and words "our error … is to assume such criticism really is unintentional, that the writer has lost control of his meaning."[202] It is suggested here that Luke has not lost control of his meaning—images of gods and kings (*sebasmata*), along with the manipulation of their images with gold, silver and stone (17:29), distorts the true knowledge of God revealed in the death and resurrection of the Jewish messiah. For Luke's dramatic audience, the allusive idiolect of the LXX—especially the Wisdom of Solomon—provides further polemical echoes of subversive confrontation with the iconic politics of gods and kings. Luke employs figured speech and allusive intertexts from Hellenistic Judaism to both reorient Roman Athens's imaginative faculties away from iconic spaces of empire toward the resurrected Christ; this Messiah, as Peter *and* Paul argue, is "Lord of heaven and earth" (*οὗτος οὐρανοῦ καὶ γῆς ὑπάρχων κύριος*, Acts 17:24, cf. also 10:36), and the agent through which God has appointed a day to judge the empire (*οἰκουμένη*, Acts 17:31).

6.6 Summary and Conclusion

Hans Conzelmann memorably wrote that Athens was the "museum of classical culture for the Hellenistic world."[203] Within this urban museum stood the *sebasmata* of gods and kings. The iconological impact of this media on the eye was mediated by a plastic language of signs shaped and molded by the hands of the artisan. Depending on how the artisan shaped the object—or what material the object was made of—the syntax of signs could communicate different

[202] Ahl, "Art of Safe Criticism," 195.
[203] Hans Conzelman, "The Address of Paul on the Areopagus," in *Studies in Luke - Acts* (ed. Leander E. Keck and J. Louis Martin; Nashville: Abingdon, 1966), 218.

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meanings of social, religious and political reality.[204] The same can be said of the rhetorical art of the Areopagus speech. Depending on where you are standing in Athens's forest of idols, Paul's idol polemic is carefully sculpted to evoke polyvalent angles of criticism upon the visual theology of a city full of idols. As Elsner writes, in the Roman world, "Art was power."[205] In continuity with Luke's criticism of benefactors who Lord their power over subjects (οἱ βασιλεῖς τῶν ἐθνῶν, Luke 22:25), the Areopagus speech censures the false-divinity of gods and kings from a different direction: that is, the (mis)representation of their power concretized in art.

To achieve this rhetorical end, Luke re-contextualizes the strategies of resistance developed by his Hellenistic Jewish predecessors, such as the Wisdom of Solomon and Philo, who blended Old Testament idol polemics with Greco-Roman philosophical reflections on God. In a world where gods posed as kings, and kings posed as gods, Luke censures the hybrid material culture that communicated divinity, power and benefaction to the watching world. Luke, therefore, maintains the aniconic-monotheism of his Jewish heritage, but reorients the controlling narrative of Judaism around the ascended Christ. This theo-political conviction is by no means inherently anti-imperial in the sense of a call for sedition; it is, rather, a call for gentiles to repent of trinket gods and silly superstition. Put another way, the Areopagus speech is not a call to *stasis*, but repentance from false worship in all of its various manifestations (Acts 17:31); the Roman imperial cults are simply one component of human cognitive error that detracts the auditor from worshiping rightly. Luke's presentation of Paul in Athens presents an alter-cultural

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[204] On iconological theories of interpretation, see: Tonio Hölscher, *The Language of Images in Roman Art* (trans. A. Snodgrass and A. Künzel-Snodgrass; Cambridge: Cambridge University, 2004); Eugenio La Rocca, "Art and Representation," in *The Oxford Handbook of Roman Studies* (Oxford: Oxford University, 2010), 315; and Annette Weissenrieder and Friederike Wendt, "Images as Communication: The Methods of Iconography," in *Picturing the New Testament: Studies in Ancient Visual Images* (ed. Annette Weissendrieder et al.; Tübingen: Mohr-Siebeck), 3-49.
[205] Jas Elsner, *Imperial Rome and Christian Triump* (Oxford: Oxford University, 1998), 53.

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vision of monarchy, monotheism and representation that is at odds with the religions of the Roman Empire—including emperor worship.

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CHAPTER 7.

CONCLUSION: THE AREOPAGUS SPEECH AND POLITICAL IDOLATRY

> Within a decade of the crucifixion of Jesus, the village culture of Palestine had been left behind, and the Greco-Roman city became the dominant environment of the Christian movement.
>
> —Wayne A. Meeks[1]

7.1 Introduction

The Acts of the Apostles provides our only narrative presentation of early Christianity's expansion into the urban spaces of the Roman Empire. As such, it provides indispensable data for interpreting the confluence between early Christian proclamation of the aniconic-cruciform-God and Greco-Roman religion's temple culture. This confluence—or what some term "collision"—comes to a head in the Areopagus speech.[2] At Athens Luke portrays the protagonist of early Christian mission confronting the iconic spectacle of a city full of idols. It is at this juncture in the narrative that Luke is faced with a rhetorical problem: namely, how to communicate to an elite gentile audience that a crucified Jewish Messiah is the rightful God, ruler and benefactor of the inhabited world. To communicate this alter-cultural message, Luke draws on the Hebrew Bible's idol polemics (including their re-contextualization in the literary culture of Hellenistic Judaism). Additionally, Luke draws on Stoic philosophers' movement toward monotheism to find common ground about the oneness of God and the superstition of

[1] Wayne A. Meeks, *The First Urban Christians: The Social World of the Apostle Paul* (New Haven: Yale University, 2003), 11.
[2] C. Kavin Rowe, *World Upside Down*, 17-49.

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cult images.[3] In so doing, Luke, in alignment with his Hellenistic-Jewish heritage, communicates to his dramatic audience that the worship of Israel's God incarnated in the Christ is more philosophically consistent than what is on offer in Athens's built environment. In accord with Jewish and Stoic icon parodies, Luke's idol polemic is universal in scope—toward idols (Acts 17:16), objects of worship (17:23), altars (Acts 17:23), epigraphy (Acts 17:23), temples made with human hands (Acts 17:24), the *τέχνη* of the artisan (Acts 17:29) and allusive precious materials for image making (17:29). This study argued that Paul's critique of this material culture is not politically innocuous, nor a critique of the traditional gods *sensu stricto*. In an urban metropolis like Athens where gods were imaged as humans and powerful human benefactors were imaged as gods, Luke's universal polemic against idols articulates a worldview that is incompatible with the representation and purported benefaction of gods *and* deified imperial authority.

7.2 Synthesis: Idols, Cosmology and Resistance Literature

At the outset of this study we asked the following question: does Luke's denunciation of idols in Athens include a hidden polemic against the emperor cult? To answer this question, this study sought to interpret the Areopagus speech through an imperial-critical lens *without employing modern synthetic rhetorical devices* such as hidden transcripts, coded speech and anti-Roman cryptograms.[4] This research aim led us into the fray of Jewish resistance literature and Greco-Roman rhetorical strategies of "allusive verbal innuendo" (Demet., *Eloc.* 287). Additionally, it led us to investigate the material culture that comprises the icon parody's allusive objects of resistance. The three extra-texts investigated in this study can be organized according to the

[3] Joshua Jipp, "Paul's Areopagus Speech," 567-88.
[4] See James C. Scott, *Domination and the Arts of Resistance*. For New Testament scholars who appeal to synthetic rhetorical devices, see n. 102 in chapter 4 of this study.

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following structural taxonomy:

1. *Objects of Resistance*: Chapters two and three investigated the conceptual framework and material infrastructure for honoring gods and kings in Greco-Roman antiquity. The purpose of this research was to animate—historically speaking—the religious and political dimensions of the icon parody's allusive referents against statuary, images, temples, precious materials and artisans.

2. *Strategies of Resistance:* Chapters four and five investigated early Jewish strategies of resistance toward machinations of empire that infringed on Jewish concepts of monarchy, monotheism and representation (i.e., the first and second commandments). In addition to Ps-Solomon's tri-partite criticism of empire, Philo of Alexandria's negotiation and resistance toward deified political authority and their visual accoutrements comprised a major emphasis of this research. The cultural reciprocity of Hellenism was also investigated for ways that Jews adopted strategies of safe speech before the angry tyrant from Greco-Roman orators.

3. *Ps-Solomon and Comparative Analysis:* Chapter six of the study brought the research of chapters two through five to bear on the text of Acts. After an analysis of Luke's attitude toward the Roman Empire, the chapter sought to read Paul's speech on the Areopagus *en lieu* of the hybrid iconography of gods and kings in Athens for Luke's historical audience (and the Mediterranean basin for Luke's dramatic audience). The chapter concluded with a comparative analysis of Paul's polemic against idols with the Wisdom of Solomon and the Greco-Roman rhetorical convention called figured speech.

The hermeneutical danger when handling politically elusive material such as the Areopagus speech is that interpreters can manipulate the text to meet their own politics. As Michael Thate recently asked, in the study of Paul and politics, "The distinction is this: are current discourses of Paul and politics within biblical studies operating out of a movement of reading for the *political potential* within the historical material? Or is it reading for the political that is present *within the historical*?"[5] One cannot bypass their own presuppositions and prejudices when reading Acts and Paul for political import.[6] However, one can, in so far as it is possible, appeal to the historical precedents, intertextual patterns and objects of resistance to substantiate a reading of the political that is present *within the historical*. Whether or not this study has achieved this goal sufficiently

[5] Michael Thate, "Politics and Paul: Reviewing N. T. Wright's Political Apostle," in *The Marginalia Review of Books* (January 6, 2015), http://marginalia.lareviewofbooks.org/politics-paul-reviewing-n-t-wrights-political-apostle-michael-thate/.
[6] As Morna Hooker warns, "The answers which the New Testament scholar gives are not the result of applying objective tests and using precision tools; they are very largely the result of his [or her] own presuppositions and prejudices." I reproduce this quote from Scot McKnight and Joseph Modica, "Conclusion," in *Jesus is Lord,* 211. For original, see: Morna Hooker, "On Using the Wrong Tool," *Theology* 75 (1972): 570-81, here 581.

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is open to debate—however, one cannot deny, at the very least, that Paul's discourse against idols critiques the machinery of Greco-Roman religion that made visible the power, benefaction and divinity of gods and imperial authority. An overview of the above extra-texts will help substantiate our thesis and highlight the contributions of this study.

7.2.1 Objects of Resistance: Hybrid Iconography and the Icon Parody

In contrast to studies that focus exclusively on the literary forms of the icon parody, this study sought to investigate the icon parody's actual material referents. In response to some of the warnings of Karl Galinsky at the "Cross-Disciplinary Dialogue on the Imperial Cult," this study sought to investigate the Roman imperial cults according to their diversity, local variation and especially their integration into the media of the gods.[7] The latter point, this study contends, is not sufficiently accounted for in studies on Jewish idol polemics and imperial-critical hermeneutics. To interpret the relationship between gods and kings, and thereby the icon parody's objects of resistance, chapters two and three investigated (1) the anthropomorphic narrative of Greco-Roman religion; (2) the system of benefaction; (3) the *peri basileias* literature; and (4) the epigraphic record. What follows is a brief summary of this investigation.

The anthropomorphic representation of human benefactors at the dawn of the Hellenistic period was provocative. In classical Greece, the human shape had been exclusively reserved for the gods—a pattern of design that communicated divinity and benefaction. The emergence of powerful Hellenistic warrior kings, however, challenged this exclusivity, introducing into society an external form of political authority that operated in a manner redolent of the gods: providing material benefits, cosmic order and religious revival. The response of subjects, especially in the

[7] Karl Galinsky, "The Cult of the Roman Emperor: Uniter or Divider?," in *Rome and Religion: A Cross-Disciplinary Dialogue on the Imperial Cult* (ed. Jeffrey Brodd and Jonathan L. Reed; Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2011), 1-22.

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Greek East, was to interpret the external power of the distant king through pre-existing local and regional traditions of cult and religion, including anthropomorphic representation in precious material.[8] This study suggested that amid the elision of gods and kings in art and statuary, Hellenistic Judaism's re-contextualization of Isaiah's critique of anthropomorphic polytheism and precious materials evoked a polyvalent referent against gods and deified benefactors.[9]

In addition to the anthropomorphic narrative of Greco-Roman religion, we investigated the system of benefaction as an impetus and conceptual framework for subjects to honor Hellenistic kings with ἰσόθεοι τιμαί. Aristotle anticipated this logic in his definition of euergetism, where he suggests that sacrifice (i.e., temples), monuments in verse and in prose (i.e., epigraphic honors), first seats (in theatres), tombs and statues should be conferred especially on benefactors who provide benefits (μάλιστα οἱ εὐεργετηκότες, *Rhet.* 1.5.9). For Aristotle, these benefits can arrive through benefactors in the form of "rescue" (εὐεργεσία δὲ ἢ εἰς σωτηρίαν, *Rhet.* 1.5.9). Rather strikingly, the Areopagus speech's referents reflect Aristotle's list of material honors, reminding the interpreter that Jewish idol polemic was a response to gentile modes of euergetism that lead to cognitive error. By classifying the material honors of gentile euergetism inanimate and futile, anti-idol polemic functioned to re-locate power away from temple culture toward the one God. The logic of euergetism was vital to the cosmology of empire oriented around temple, image and sacrifice; therefore, by classifying visual theology inanimate and superstitious, the icon parody critically inverts and falsifies imperial notions of power and benefaction.

What is remarkable about the material honors conferred on Hellenistic and Roman rulers

[8] See Simon R. F. Price, *Rituals and Power*, 224-25.
[9] E.g., *Let. Aris.* 134-36; Wis 13:13; 14:15; 15:16; Bar 6:11; *Sib. Or.* 3.29-34, 721-23; Philo, *Prov.* 2.15; *Spec.* 1:10; Jos., *C. Ap.* 2.167.

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is that they (a) imitated the architectural patters of the traditional gods; and/or (b) were set in joint media with the gods. This hybrid media creates a highly allusive referent in early Judaism's universal polemic against idols. The conceptual framework for hybrid iconography is reflected in the *peri basileias* literature, where the ideal ruler is understood as one who is elected by the gods, a benefactor like the gods and a collaborator with the gods toward a just and ordered society (reflected in νόμος ἔμψυχος and religious piety). On the one hand, the Successors and Roman emperors imitated the pattern of dress and iconographic insignia of the gods; on the other hand, when imperial power persecuted Jews and early Christians—which was rare—the gods—not ruler cults!—were employed as a strategy of domination.[10] In certain cases, therefore, Early Judaism's critique of the traditional gods should not be abstracted from imperial discoures of power and hegemony. Although the hybrid representation of gods and kings has been well articulated by classicists, it remains overlooked among New Testament scholars (which reflects the compartmentalization of the fields and the need to integrate).

To show that hybrid representation of gods and kings was not an isolated phenomenon, we investigated eight inscriptions from the Antigonid, Ptolemaic, Seleucid, Attalid and Commagenian dynasties. We also investigated Roman Athens for hybrid representations; where, in addition to imperial cult media, several Julio-Claudian emperors and/or their wives were given cosmogonic associations with a traditional deity in dedicatory inscriptions on statue bases (a point of research that has been neglected in studies on the Areopagus speech). From this research, this study contends that the icon parody's allusive cult referents evoke a polyvalent object of resistance (against a god, a king or both at the same time).

[10] So Simon Price, "The difficulties which the Christians posed for their contemporaries lay firstly with their threat to traditional cults in general and only secondarily with an allegedly subversive attitude toward the emperor" (Simon R. F. Price, *Rituals and Power*, 124-25).

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7.2.2 Strategies of Resistance: Early Judaism, Safe Speech and the Critique of the Angry Tyrant

The cultural survival of Second Temple Judaism hinged on its ability to manage external political authority and foster allegiance to the Law of Moses. Early Judaism's negotiation of imperial authority, however, was diverse. Between the poles of assimilation and violent resistance stood various literary strategies for resisting imperial domination and political idolatry. These strategies of resistance included apocalyptic resistance, portrayals of the angry tyrant and anti-idol polemic. Jewish resistance literature provided the first urban Christians with important *topoi* for critiquing the iconic spectacle and imperial hegemony of gods and kings. But because the concept of "resistance" (or "anti-imperial" for that matter) is admittedly broad, it is crucial that one flesh out *what* object and stressor of empire stimulated the act of resistance, along with its mode of delivery.

This study focused almost exclusively on imperial stressors associated with the deification and representation of imperial authorities: machinations of empire that infringed on Jewish worship practice. More pointedly, this study investigated how Jewish views of monarchy, monotheism and representation rooted in and shaped by the first and second commandments could conflict with the ruling power. Whereas early Judaism's exclusive monotheism could envision gods and kings in a subordinate position of shared power with the one God; the second commandment, on the other hand, was less flexible, classifying cult images in the LXX under the polemically freighted term *eidolon*. The transfer of power between Yahweh and subordinate authority finds a strong precedent in the Davidic Monarchy and the Deuteronomic Law of the King. But without the ability to manage external political authority by the standards of Jewish Law, early Judaism had to look to the Septuagint and poach from Hellenistic sources to resist the deification and representation of imperial authority. These sources can be summarized in the

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following three intertexts:

1. *Figured Speech*: Figured speech remains a neglected methodological approach for imperial-critical readings of the New Testament.[11] Already by the time of Aristotle, blunt speech (παρρησία) was considered unacceptable and ineffective for critiquing the ruling power (Aristotle, *Rhet.* 1382B). The preferred rhetorical device was figured speech, where oblique phrases, double innuendo and allegory are employed to articulate subversive motifs. What is remarkable about this material is that Greco-Roman orators were trained to hear and actively read for double innuendo. This study argued that the concept was not lost on Philo, who recognizes that "untimely blunt speech" (ἀκαίρου παρρησίας) before an angry tyrant is a death wish (*Somn.* 2.85). The investigation of the Areopagus speech for figured speech is particularly apt since, according to Quintilian, it was especially useful for speeches in a judicial setting (a rhetorical setting that aligns with Luke's portrayal of Paul [Quint., *Inst. Or.* 9.2.72]). According to Quintilian's criteria, Paul's speech on the Areopagus represents the exact kind of scenario that called for figuring one's speech—a point that would not be lost on a classical audience.

2. *The Peri Basileias Literature:* Without the Deuteronomic Law of the King to enact strictures on gentile political authority, Jews borrowed motifs from the Hellenistic treatises on kingship to portray the ideal ruler as one who animates Law, provides benefaction and, more subversively, imitates the character of Israel's God in a subordinate relationship of power. Philo's portrayal of Augustus in the *Legatio ad Gaium* and Ps-Solomon's portrayal of Solomon as the ideal ruler reflects these emphases: both rulers refuse divine honors and acknowledge their subordination to the one God of Israel. Further investigation of Luke's portrayal of Christ as King and the *peri basileias* literature would be a fruitful field for further research.

3. *The Critique of Idols in the Septuagint and Philo:* A major emphasis of this study was early Judaism's re-contextualization of the Hebrew Bible's idol polemic amid ruler cults. Although the bulk of Jewish idol polemic was universal in scope, it could also be employed in contexts with an explicit imperial referent (e.g., Dan 1-7; *Bel*. 6; *Sib. Or*. 3.545-555; *Let. Jer.* 6.52, 56, 65; 3 Macc 4:16; Wis 14:16-21). The intertextual idiolect of the Septuagint evoked a constellation of subversive ideas for those in the enclosed Jewish circle. But perhaps more pertinently, the allusive referents and re-contextualization of the icon parody in an apologetic and philosophical context aligned Jews' critique of images with the upper echelons of Greek society. Indeed, by aligning polemic with the philosophical critique of images and movement toward monotheism, Hellenistic Jews sought to disguise their "allusive verbal innuendo" in an intellectually credible and distinctively Greco-Roman milieu.

To evaluate the above intertexts for resistance motifs is to walk a narrow hermeneutical ridge. Although we have evidence of deified political authority causing stress on Jewish communities, this was the exception rather than the norm. The danger, then, is that scholars can take material from the reigns of Gaius Caligula and embellish it to reflect the totality of Jewish experience in the first century CE. The pre-dominant attitude toward the ruling power was accommodation and

[11] The once exception is the recent study by Jason A. Whitlark, *Resisting Empire: Rethinking the Purpose of the Letter to "the Hebrews"* (London: Bloombury T&T Clark, 2014), 21-48.

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peaceful co-existence during the Hellenistic and Roman periods. For some, the Deuteronomic theology of retribution provided a hermeneutic for rationalizing imperial domination; for others, calculated accommodations and concessions afforded Jews the civic rights and benefactions they needed to survive. Jewish postures of conciliation are reflected in synagogue inscriptions (cf. 5.3.1), daily sacrifices in behalf of the emperor (1 Macc 7:33; *Arist.* 45; Jos. *War* 2.197; *Apion.* 2.76-77; 409-10, 412-17; Philo *Legat.* 157, 291, 317; *Flacc.* 48-49) and, most strikingly, honorific furniture in Alexandrian synagogues (*Legat.* 132). When domination did ensue in the form of trauma, apocalyptic—*not idol polemic*—was the preferred strategy of resistance.[12] Still, even amid accommodations and cosmic equilibrium with the ruling power, Jews subversively portrayed, represented and resisted the idolatrous machinations of the ruling power to resist assimilation and uphold ancestral tradition and cultural boundaries.

7.2.3 Ps-Solomon and Comparative Analysis

Chapter six of this study investigated the Areopagus speech for political import in light of our investigation of the icon parody's objects of resistance (chapters 2-3 of this study), and Jewish strategies for resisting the exalted tyrant (chapters 4-5). This investigation drew especially on the Wisdom of Solomon, which represents a neglected text in imperial-critical readings of early Judaism and the New Testament. Ps-Solomon contains a tri-partite strategy of resistance toward the ethnic tensions and idolatry of Augustan Egypt, including an apocalyptic scenario depicting the destruction of unjust rulers (Wis 5:17-23), a literary paragon of the ideal ruler (Wis 7:1-11) and, most importantly for our purposes, polemic against the cult media of gods and kings (Wis 14:16-21). Ps-Solomon's explicit critique of the emperor cult is embedded in a larger critique of the traditional gods (Wis 13:1 – 15:16), which cautions the interpreter from embellishing ruler

[12] See Anathea Portier-Young, *Apocalypse Against Empire,* 383.

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cults as the primary stumbling block in early Judaism. On the other hand, Ps-Solomon's explicit use of the icon parody to resist the iconic spectacle of the distant king shows how porous the boundaries were between religion and politics in the Roman world.

What remains for us to consider is to what degree the Areopagus speech aligns with Yairah Amit's criteria for a hidden polemic (discussed in section 1.4). Because Amit's criteria are a modern construct, it is worth remembering that the Areopagus speech meets the criteria for verbal allusive innuendo in Quintilian (*Inst. Or.* 9.2.66), Demetrius (*Eloc.* 294) and Philo (*Somn.* 2.81-92). Demetrius, to be sure, advises the rhetor who wishes to show the angry tyrant's true nature as follows: "Flattery is shameful, open criticism is dangerous, and the best course lies in the middle, namely innuendo" (τοῦτ᾽ἔστι τὸ ἐσχηματισμένον, *Eloc.* 294). While the modern critic may criticize the subjectivity employed in identifying double innuendo, it bears remembering that figured speech was the expected mode for delivering hidden polemic safely and artfully. Thus, modern interpreters will do well to synchronize their expectations for subversive speech according to the pattern and rhetorical conventions of the Greco-Roman world. What follows reflects on Amit's four criteria for hidden polemic.

A. Amit's Criterion 1 for a Hidden Polemic

Amit's Criterion 1: "Refraining from explicit mention of the subject, which the author is interested to condemn or to advocate."[13] Luke's portrayal of the early Christian mission nowhere explicitly confronts the Roman imperial cults. Luke's refrain from such a confronation could reflect his intention to reduce the emperor cult to irrelevance as Barclay and Thate have recently

[13] Yairah Amit, *Hidden Polemics in Biblical Narrative*, 97.

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suggested.[14] In the case of Luke-Acts, however, Barclay and Thate's thesis does not hold up since the Roman Empire was not insignificant to Luke's portrayal of the early Christian mission (for further comment, see below). Luke's failure to confront the Roman imperial cults could also reflect the reality that emperor worship, simply put, was one form of superstition among many others. This thesis has merit, but it quickly erodes when one takes into account that Luke is (1) the only author in the New Testament to mention a Roman Emperor by name; (2) the only author to directly critique gentile rulers' epithet Euergetes (Luke 22:25); and (3) Luke critiques self-deification through the death of Herod (Acts 12:21-23). The latter two examples, in particular, reveal Luke's knowledge of ruler cult—yet Luke refrains from explicitly mentioning its various manifestations as he narrates the expansion of early Christianity into the Roman Empire. What is more likely is that Luke refrains from critiquing the Roman imperial cults directly because doing so openly was considered dangerous and lacking rhetorical art.

B. Amit's Criterion 2 for a Hidden Polemic

Amit's Criterion 2: "The evidence of other biblical materials regarding the existence of a polemic on the same subject."[15] Of Amit's four criteria, the presence of hidden polemic in the Areopagus speech is most strongly argued for through the evidence of other Biblical material on the same subject. Aside from our analysis of allusive polemic against hybrid iconography in Philo, Josephus and other early Jewish and Greco-Roman philosophical sources, the Wisdom of

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[14] See John M. G. Barclay, "Why the Roman Empire Was Insignificant to Paul," 363-88, here, 374-76. Michael Thate, on the other hand, writes: "Paul was not sitting upon the ground telling sad tales of the death of kings. He was telling the world of a king who died, rose, and not only re-mapped the cosmos but brought a new creation (Gal 6:14-15; cf. 1 Cor 1:18–2:16). Paul's Christological cartography of this new cosmos, of this new creation, does not merely flip the script on empire in terms of shifting center and periphery. Rather, Paul's inoperative political theology develops in such a way that empire is neglected altogether as it is reduced to irrelevance" (Michael J. Thate, "Paul and the Anxieties of (Imperial?) Succession," 241.

[15] Yairah Amit, *Hidden Polemics in Biblical Narrative*, 97.

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Solomon reflects eight thematic and intertextual parallels with the Areopagus speech. Most remarkably, Ps-Solomon's polemic against imperial images on sebasma (Acts 17:23//Wis 14:20; 15:17) and imperial images in precious material (Wis 13:10; 14:21; 15:9) finds strong counterpart in Acts 17:23 and 17:29. Equally significant, like Ps-Solomon, Luke re-contextualizes the icon parody in an apologetic and philosophical context (a rhetorical strategy he does not learn from the Hebrew Bible but rather from Hellenistic Judaism). In addition to our investigation of the icon parody's referents, Ps-Solomon's re-contextualization of the icon parody to critique the Roman imperial cults provides strong Biblical support for a hidden polemic in the Areopagus speech.

C. Amit's Criterion 3 for a Hidden Polemic

Amit's Criterion 3: "The presence of a number of signs by whose means the author directs the reader toward the polemic so that, despite the absence of explicit mention of the polemical subject, the reader finds sufficient landmarks to uncover it."[16] To properly place Amit's third criterion amid contemporary debates about Paul and Politics, it is necessary to critically engage John M. G. Barclay's widely publicized rebuttal of Wright's imperial-critical reading of Paul's Letters, titled, "Why the Roman Empire Was Insignificant to Paul."[17] Barclay draws attention to the allusive language Paul uses when discussing idols (e.g. 1 Thess 1:9; Gal 4:8; 1 Cor 8:4-5; 12:2).[18] Although Barclay concedes that Paul could have in mind objects of the Roman imperial cults, he argues: "Paul is never concerned to spell out their Roman profile… [and] Paul never

[16] Yairah Amit, *Hidden Polemics in Biblical Narrative*, 97.
[17] John M. G. Barclay, "Why the Roman Empire Was Insignificant to Paul," 363-88. See also Barclay's perceptive essay on emperor worship and Roman religion in the same compendium: "Paul, Roman Religion and the Emperor: Mapping the Point of Conflict," 354.
[18] John M. G. Barclay, "Why the Roman Empire Was Insignificant to Paul," 374-75.

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describes the world he inhabits in terms that allude to its Roman character."[19] Barclay concludes that Paul's epistemology in the letters does not employ Roman terms precisely because Paul seeks to render "the Roman empire theologically insignificant."[20] Barclay's evaluation is unsatisfying at two points. First, Barclay, although rightly critical of scholars who appeal to "hidden transcripts," overlooks the significance of figured speech in Paul's world, along with the hybrid iconography of gods and kings and allusive criticism of idols in the LXX. Second, and more pertinently, Barclay fails to take Luke seriously as a first-century interpreter of the historical Paul.

In contrast to Paul's Letters, Luke narrates Paul's missionary activity in a distinctively Roman plot. As Balch memorably writes, "The geographical movement in Luke's story (from Asia to Europe, from east to west) is thus indicative of larger ideological agendas: the Jordan muddies the imperial Tiber."[21] The narrative arc of Luke-Acts "muddies the imperial Tiber" in distinctively Roman hues under divine impetus: Jesus commissions the disciples to universal mission to "the ends of the earth" (*ἕως ἐσχάτου τῆς γῆς* [Acts 1:8]); Paul must "see" Rome (*δεῖ με καὶ Ῥώμην ἰδεῖν* [Acts 19:21]); and Paul must "bear witness" in Rome (*οὕτω σε δεῖ καὶ εἰς Ῥώμην μαρτυρῆσαι* [Acts 23:11]).[22] The Roman provenance of Acts is further illuminated when one takes into account that five of the seven occurrences of the substantive "Rome" (*Ῥώμη*) in the New Testament are in Acts (18:2; 19:21; 23:11; 28:14; 28:16); eleven of the twelve occurrences

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[19] Idem., 374-75.
[20] Idem., 387.
[21] David L. Balch, "ΜΕΤΑΒΟΛΗ ΠΟΛΙΤΕΙΩΝ—Jesus as Founder of the Church in Luke-Acts: Form and Function," in *Contextualizing Acts: Lukan Narrative and Greco-Roman Discourse* (ed. Todd Penner and Caroline Vander Stichele; Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2003), 186.
[22] On the phrase "ends of the earth" as a reference to Ethiopia, see: Homer, *Od.* 1.23. Conversely, the author of 1 Maccabees uses a similar phrase as a descriptor for Alexander the Great's hegemonic conquests to the ends of the earth: *καὶ διῆλθεν ἕως ἄκρων τῆς γῆς καὶ ἔλαβεν σκῦλα πλήθους ἐθνῶν* (1 Macc 1:3). For an overview of the literary parallels, see: E. Earle Ellis, "The End of the Earth (Acts 1:8)," *Bulletin for Biblical Research* 1 (1991): 123-32. Ellis takes Luke's use of the phrase as a reference to Spain, yet it could equally apply to Rome given that Rome comprises the final destination of Paul and, hence, the Gospel in Acts.

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of the adjective "Roman" (Ῥωμαῖος) (2:10; 16:21; 16:37, 38; 22:25, 26, 27, 29; 23:27; 25:16; 28:17); eighteen of the twenty-nine occurrences of the appellation Καῖσαρ; the title σεβαστός only occurs in Luke's second volume (Acts 25:21; 25:25; 27:1); and, perhaps most remarkably, Luke is the only author in the New Testament to acknowledge a Roman emperor by name (Augustus [Luke 2:1], Tiberius [Luke 3:1] and Claudius [Acts 11:28; 18:2]).[23] Amid Luke's imperial geography, he even suggests that Paul was a chosen instrument to bring the Gospel "before Gentiles and kings and before the people of Israel" (Acts 9:15). From this data, one can only conclude that *the Roman Empire was not insignificant to Luke.*

The Roman provenance of Luke-Acts provides the signs for Luke's audience to discern a hidden polemic of the Roman imperial cults. Luke's critique of gentile kings who lord their power of subjects as εὐεργέτης (Luke 22:25) and critique of Herod's self-deification (Acts 12:21-23), in particular, add further signposts to point Luke's audience toward a hidden polemic along "the way." The critique of dead rulers or different rulers as an act of innuendo finds precedent in Plutarch and Demetrius. As Nock observed "it is to be noted that Plutarch makes outspoken criticisms of the self deification of Hellenistic kings without any feeling that what he says might be taken as reflecting on Roman practice."[24] Demetrius, on the other hand, substantiates this use of innuendo when he writes: "since powerful men and women dislike hearing their own faults mentioned, we will not speak openly, if we are advising them against a fault, but we will either blame others who have acted in a similar way, for example, in addressing the tyrant Dionysius, we will attack the tyrant Phalaris and the cruelty of Phalaris…" (*Eloc.* 292). The referent of Luke

[23] See Luke 2:1; 3:1; 20:22; 20:24; 20:25; 23:2; Acts 17:7; 25:8; 25:10; 25:11; 25:12; 25:21; 26:32; 27:24; 28:19. Other occurrences of Ῥώμη in the New Testament are Rom 1:7, 15; 2 Tim 1:17. The only other occurrence of Ῥωμαῖος is in John 11:48.

[24] For examples from Plutarch, see section 6.4.4.D of our study. Quoted in Glen W. Bowersock, "The Mechanics of Subversion," 189. Notably, Bowersock is critical of Nock's point, but fails to account for figured speech.

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22:25 and Acts 12:21-23 should not be interpreted in one dimension—rather, Luke's attack on gentile euergetism and imperial deification critiques emperor worship through circumvention. One could add to these signs the synchronism of Christ's birth with decree of Augustus (Luke 2:1), the ascension of Jesus (Acts 1:9-11), Peter's proclamation that "this one is Lord of all" in Cornelius's household (Acts 10:36) and Paul's critique of anthropomorphism at Lystra (Acts 14). These signs—and others could be mentioned—create a narrative plot that heightens the potential for a hidden polemic without recourse to naming this referent explicitly. Luke's presentation of early Christianity's mission in the Roman Empire is significant, providing numerous sign posts for Luke's audience to anticipate hidden polemic in the form of figured critique of the Roman imperial cults.

D. Amit's Criterion 4 for a Hidden Polemic

Amit's Criterion 4: "Reference to the hidden subject of the polemic in the exegetical tradition concerning the text in question."[25] It has been said that, since the exegetical giants such as C. K. Barrett, Henry Cadbury and Hans Conzelmann, among others, didn't see anti-imperial motifs in Acts—then why should we see it now? This question is insightful and should cause us to pause. Some have attributed the scholarly awakening to the Roman Empire among New Testament scholars to contemporary political events (e.g. America's invasion of Iraq).[26] There may be some truth to this, but it is worth remembering that Adolf Deissmann did see the polemical parallels between early Christianity and Rome as early as 1908 (albeit with appropriate caution).[27] Additionally, it wasn't until the work of Simon Price that the Roman imperial cults were taken seriously as genuine religion rather than what previous generations of scholars deemed

[25] Yairah Amit, *Hidden Polemics in Biblical Narrative*, 97.
[26] So Scot McKnight and Joseph Modica, eds., "Introduction," in *Jesus is Lord*, 15-22.
[27] Adolf Deissmann, *Light from the Ancient East*.

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superficial political flattery.[28] The impact of Price's work cannot be underestimated, opening up new avenues for thinking about idolatry and the cults that Paul and early Jewish sources sought to criticize when they employed idol polemic. Thus, it is probably more accurate to say that the so-called "paradigm shift" in New Testament studies toward imperial-critical readings is primarily a product of developments in our understanding of the religions of the Roman Empire.[29] Due to the newness of this shift, the investigation of the Areopagus speech for hidden polemic against deified political authority is a question previous generations of scholars were not as interested in asking; for them, emperor worship was a kind of pseudo-religion, a vulgar form of flattery imposed from above (rather than below).

As discussed in section 6.4.1 of this study, contemporary scholars such as C. Kavin Rowe, Joshua Jipp and David Pao propound subversive readings of the Areopagus speech in the wake of recent developments in the study of Roman religion.[30] Pao identifies a critique of the emperor cult most explicitly, suggesting that Luke's anti-idol polemic in the Areopagus speech is a form of "anti-imperialistic propaganda in that the divine power of the reigning political authority is called into question."[31] This study agrees with Pao's emphasis, but substantiates such a reading through different means. Luke does not learn to Hellenize his idol polemic in an apologetic context from the Isaianic new exodus program (pace Pao); rather, Luke learns to re-contextualize the icon parody in a philosophical context from Hellenistic Judaism (e.g., in Ps-

[28] Simon R. F. Price, *Rituals and Power*, 224-25. For an overview of this transition, see James B. Rives, "Graeco-Roman Religion in the Roman Empire: Old Assumptions and New Approaches," *Currents in Biblical Research* 8.2 (2010): 240-299, here 252-56. Kenneth Scott relegates emperor worship to a form of religion for the lower classes: "True religious belief in the divinity of the king or emperor is to be sought among the more ignorant or lower classes" ("Humor at the Expense of the Imperial Cult," *CPh* 27 [1932]: 317-328, here 328).
[29] The impact of these developments on New Testament studies are reflected in the essays by Simon Price ("Rituals and Power," 45-71) and Paul Zanker ("The Power of Images," 72-86) in the seminal study on Paul and Politics, titled, *Paul and Empire: Religion and Power in Roman Society* (ed. Richard Horsley; Harrisburg: Trinity, 1997), 57.
[30] See Rowe, *World Upside Down,* 27-41. idem. "The Grammar of Life," *NTS* 57 (2010): 31-50; Joshua Jipp, "Paul's Areopagus Speech," 567-68; and David W. Pao, *Isaianic New Exodus*, 195.
[31] David W. Pao, *Isaianic New Exodus*, 182.

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Solomon). At the end of the day, appeal to the exegetical tradition is a relatively weak argument for the lack of hidden polemic in the Areopagus speech. What is of greater weight is that Luke provides signs for his audience to sense a hidden polemic (criterion 3), and appeals to other Biblical materials that contain a polemic on the same subject (criterion 2).

7.3 On Describing The Areopagus Speech's Political Attitude

Describing the political attitude of the Areopagus speech betrays a simplistic "Jesus is Lord, Caesar is not" polemical dichotomy. Beginning with Alexander's *diadochoi*, the traditional gods provided the infrastructure for disseminating Hellenistic and Roman rulers' image and power over subjects. Even when pagans in the Roman provinces opposed Rome in the first century, as Bowersock has shown, opposition "was normally expressed through the traditional cults."[32] The centrality of the traditional gods for both opposition *and* distribution of the Roman imperial cults brings the politics and religion of Athens's forest of idols into focus. What, then, is an appropriate descriptor for the political attitude of the Areopagus speech?

Ironically, the phrase "anti-imperial" mitigates, rather than heightens, Luke's subversive polemic against Athenian idolatry since it reduces the speech's referent to Caesar/empire alone. The descriptor anti-imperial also fails to take seriously the importance of the traditional gods for the visibility of imperial power (and loyalty tests). This study suggests three descriptive options that reflect the referential polyvalence of the Areopagus speech, and account for the functional polytheism of Greco-Roman religion. The first is Karl Galinsky's recent neologism "*supra*-imperial."[33] The Areopagus speech is a supra-imperial critique of any deity or imperial authority

[32] Glen W. Bowersock, "Mechanics of Subversion", 315. So also Simon Price, "local cultic traditions could become the rallying ground for opposition to Roman rule" ("Response," in *Paul and the Roman Imperial Order* [ed. Richard Horsley; Harrisburg: Trinity, 2004], 180).
[33] Karl Galinsky, "Cult of the Roman Emperor," 222.

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that distracts the auditor from acknowledging the "superior" and "surpassing" Lordship of the resurrected and ascended Christ. Galinsky's descriptor also accounts for Luke's apologetic purposes, wherein he draws on the philosophers to elevate the Jewish religion *above* the religions of the Roman Empire.

The second descriptor is Anathea Portier-Young's phrase "counter-cosmology."[34] The Areopagus speech is a confrontation between two opposing cosmological convictions: one that is ruled by the ascended, crucified Jewish Messiah who went about "providing benefits (εὐεργετῶν) and healing all who were oppressed by the devil" (Acts 10:38); and one that is ruled by Satan, gods *and* imperial authorities. As Friesen suggests, cosmic order functioned as "the primary religious concern of imperial cults…"[35] Jewish polemic against idols confronts gentile notions of cosmic power: re-mapping power away from temple cultures that produce cognitive error through sight and erroneous perceptions of divinity and benefection. The descriptor counter cosmology also takes into account non-cultic forms of Jewish and early Christian resistance to empire. For example, early Christianity's view of cosmic order conflicted with the cosmology of empire on issues of social status and economic redistribution (e.g., Acts 2:42-47; 4:32-38); this conflict could be aptly termed a counter-cosmology. Investigation of Luke's critique of imperial power in non-cultic forms deserves further consideration in future studies.

The third descriptor is "alter-cultural," which understands the conflict between early Christianity and the ruling power at the level of distinctive cultural values centered on tradition, rituals, texts and ideologies.[36] This descriptor is helpful in that it encompasses the complexity of

[34] Anathea Portier-Young, *Apocalypse Against Empire*, 383.
[35] See Steven Friesen, *Imperial Cults*, 124. One should also consider Karl Galinsky's definition: "Fundamentally, religion is a response and alternative to chaos; it is an attempt to provide structure, order and meaning, the very efforts that lay at the heart of the Augustan reconstitution of the *res public*" (*Augustan Culture* [Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996], 288).
[36] Again, I am grateful to Michael Gorman for sharing this descriptor with me in a conversation.

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ideology and discourses of power that do not operate in explicitly cultic contexts. The political attitude of the Areopagus speech can be described, then, as a counter-cosmology, wherein the *Weltanschauung* of early Christianity confronts Greco-Roman conceptions of euergetism, monotheism and representation with an alter-cultural vision of politics and religion. Yet within the cosmology that Luke inhabits, Luke envisions not the *Götterdämmerung* of the Roman Empire: rather, drawing on the literary culture of early Judaism, he explicates philosophically upon the incompatibility of euergetic visual culture with the new culture birthed in Christ and his rule over the nations.

In the end, the operative descriptor for the identity of idols criticized in the Areopagus speech is "allusive." But the universality and allusiveness of Luke's polemic against idols accords with Hellenistic icon parodies, and is what one would expect from a Hellenistic author attempting to criticize the ruling power "artfully." Lest we be tricked by Luke's rhetorical art, criticism of *sebasmata*, temple culture and precious materials is hardly a politically innocuous speech act; it is the active reader, then, who is invited into the narrative to identify Athens's idols "formed by the art and imagination of mortals" (Acts 17:29).[37]

[37] On the active reader in antiquity, see: David Konstan, "The Active Reader in Classical Antiquity," *Argos* 30 (2006): 5-16.

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