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# The Acts of the Apostles, Greek Cities, and Hadrian's Panhellenion

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“This was not done in a corner,” asserts Paul in the Acts of the Apostles about the ideas and origins of his movement (Acts 26:26).<sup>1</sup> In this brief sentence Luke’s geographical imagination spills from Paul’s mouth. Paul has just explained his own travel from Damascus to Jerusalem and throughout Judea and to the Gentiles, echoing Luke’s understanding that “the Way” moves through the entire *oikoumenē*, or inhabited world, eclipsing Jerusalem. And as he utters these words, Paul himself stands on the cusp of his final journey; after this he will be sent from Caesarea (where he had arrived from his Jerusalem imprisonment) to Rome. “This was not done in a corner.” Luke’s economical assertion, placed in Paul’s mouth, leads us to wonder: In the midst of Roman power and claims to possess the *oikoumenē*—claims manifest literarily and in the built environment<sup>2</sup>—how did some early Christian communities imagine the space of the world? What kind of geographical thinking did they engage?

Scholars have long noted that there is something peculiarly geographical about Luke-Acts. Luke refers to Christianity as “the Way” (ἡ ὁδός), and the canonical

Many scholars have helped me in this project. Special thanks to Denise Kimber Buell and Shelly Matthews for sharing their research and insights, and to François Bovon, Christopher Frilingos, Michal Beth Dinkler, and Cavan Concannon among others for reading the manuscript.

<sup>1</sup> All NT translations are from the RSV unless otherwise noted. Sometimes I have modified them slightly. The Greek is from the twenty-sixth edition of Nestle-Aland’s *Novum Testamentum Graece*.

<sup>2</sup> On geography in the Roman period, see Claude Nicolet, *Space, Geography, and Politics in the Early Roman Empire* (Jerome Lectures 19; Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1991); François Hartog, *Memories of Odysseus: Frontier Tales from Ancient Greece* (trans. Janet Lloyd; Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001), esp. chap. 5; and Laura Nasrallah, “Mapping the World: Justin, Tatian, Lucian, and the Second Sophistic,” *HTR* 98 (2005): 283–314.

Acts' story of Christianity is restless and urban.<sup>3</sup> Christianity is propelled from the margins of empire and the center of Judaism, Jerusalem, to the center of the empire, Rome.<sup>4</sup> The characters in Acts constantly make their way between cities, moving throughout the *oikoumenē* and producing a kind of Christian empire parallel to Roman rule.

This article argues that Paul's travels to Greek cities in the latter half of Acts, and the geography of Acts more generally, are best understood in light of contemporary political and cultural discourses about Greek cities under Rome. Moreover, through Paul's deeds and speeches in key sites like Lystra, Thessalonikē, Philippi, and Athens, Acts articulates a theological vision of how Christianity and its notion of one, true God can fit within a "pluralistic" empire and its notions of ethnic difference. To use the terminology of postcolonial criticism, it mimics the logic of empire without shading into mockery; it seeks to find a place for "the Way" within a system of Roman domination.<sup>5</sup> It does so, however, with a Greek twist of the sort that the Roman Empire sanctioned and even fostered and invented. In the midst of the Second Sophistic, that movement that cherished all things classically Greek, the philhellenic emperor Hadrian founded the Panhellenion, a Greek ethnic coalition centered in Athens that fostered diplomacy among city-states. The Panhellenion encouraged various cities' inventions of genealogies and myths that established their cities as solidly Greek in race as well as unified in piety, cult, and political outlook under Athens and Rome. In Acts, Paul's travels, especially to cities in the Greek East, resonate with the logic and functions associated with the creation and promotion of city leagues.<sup>6</sup> The author of Luke-Acts, likely writing in a

<sup>3</sup> Loveday Alexander, "Mapping Early Christianity: Acts and the Shape of Early Church History," *Int* 57 (2003): 163–75; eadem, "In Journeys Often: Voyaging in the Acts of the Apostles and in Greek Romance," in *Luke's Literary Achievement: Collected Essays* (ed. C. M. Tuckett; JSNTSup 116; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1995), 17–49. See also James M. Scott, "Luke's Geographical Horizon," in *The Book of Acts in Its First Century Setting*, vol. 2, *The Book of Acts in Its Graeco-Roman Setting* (ed. David W. J. Gill and Conrad Gempf; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1994), 483–544. Hans Conzelmann brings together the topic of geography with Luke-Acts: *The Theology of St. Luke* (1961; trans. Geoffrey Buswell; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1982).

<sup>4</sup> Conzelmann, *Theology*; see also Alexander, "Mapping Early Christianity," 166. This reading of Acts is true even if Luke and Acts were early transmitted separately (see Andrew F. Gregory, *The Reception of Luke and Acts in the Period before Irenaeus* [WUNT 2/169; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2003], 353), since Acts, too, moves from Jerusalem to Rome. On the eclipsing of Jerusalem, see Richard I. Pervo, "My Happy Home: The Role of Jerusalem in Acts 1–7," in *Forum* n.s. 3.1 (2000): esp. 38.

<sup>5</sup> Homi K. Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (New York: Routledge, 1994), esp. 86–101. On reading Luke-Acts' theology within the sociopolitics of the Roman Empire, see Philip Esler, *Community and Gospel in Luke-Acts: The Social and Political Motivations of Lucan Theology* (SNTSMS 57; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), esp. 1–2.

<sup>6</sup> Other resonances include the Diaspora and the ingathering of God's people in Second Isaiah; see David Pao, *Acts and the Isaianic New Exodus* (WUNT 2/130; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2000).

city of the Greek East such as Antioch or Ephesus, configures a Christianity that fits within the superior aspects of Greek culture and cities under the Roman Empire.

The discourse of Greek cities under Rome in which Hadrian's Panhellenion partakes intertwines with Acts—especially Acts' depiction of Paul—in four principal ways. First, Hadrian and emperors before him traveled the Mediterranean basin, making benefactions and binding cities with Greek identity more closely into the Roman Empire, sometimes by encouraging them to create links of *homonoia* (harmony or concord) with each other. Moreover, embassies moved between key cities in the second century, whether the ambassadors were orators of the Second Sophistic or officers of the Panhellenion. So also the cities to which Paul traveled in the canonical Acts can be seen as a kind of Christian civic league, produced by Paul's gospel and his ambassadorial role.

Second, Acts, as well as figures like Hadrian and the orator Aelius Aristides, deployed commonly available discourses about civic identity, ethnicity, kinship, and correct religion. They did so in order to ask their audiences to consider their place within the geography of the Roman Empire and in order to unify their audiences. This second-century phenomenon relied on a long history of the use of rhetoric of race, myths of origins, concerns about civic leagues, and *homonoia*. This is a form of "ethnic reasoning," Denise Buell's term for the deploying of arguments about fixed and fluid identity in the service of constructing peoplehood.<sup>7</sup> With its idea of being part of "God's race" or offspring (Acts 17:28–29) and with its development of a Christian geographical imagination that embraces the entire *oikoumenē*, Acts engages similar ways of thinking.

Third, Greek cities under Rome in the first and second centuries often served as "memory theaters," to borrow archaeologist Susan Alcock's phrase. Greek cityscapes changed under Rome, but cities were not usually razed or completely transformed. Rather, in the cultural movement of the Second Sophistic, the recent stood next to the ancient, giving the appearance of mutually affirming religious values, ethnic identity, and certain ideas of aesthetics and *paideia*. So also Luke-Acts produces a Christian memory theater by juxtaposing materials ancient (such as the Septuagint) and recent (Christian oral and written traditions), locations exotic (Malta and Lystra) and central (Athens, with all its culture).

Finally, the cities to which Paul travels in Acts produce a Christian parallel to the twenty-eight cities that comprised the Panhellenion. Luke's depiction of Paul's

<sup>7</sup> Acts does not describe Christians as a new or third "race" or people (*genos, ethnos, or laos*), language found elsewhere in the second century, the implications of which Denise Kimber Buell skillfully treats in *Why This New Race? Ethnic Reasoning in Early Christianity* (Gender, Theory, and Religion; New York: Columbia University Press, 2005), esp. 2–4. Nonetheless, these texts highlight "the rhetorical situations in which early Christian texts use ideas about peoplehood to communicate and persuade readers about Christianness" (p. 2). By crafting Christian communities as a league of cities unified by common (divine) origins, kinship, and worship, Acts offers an example of Christian ethnic reasoning.

travels emerges from this discursive setting and similarly constructs in narrative a kind of pan-Christian alliance, tying cities to one of Acts' key founders of Christianity. Just as the Panhellenion links together cities that recall or create archaic Greek origins, so Luke uses the same cities or locations near them to provide a foundation myth for Christianity.

Placing Luke's depictions of Paul's travels within the context of Greek cities struggling to articulate their subject identity and superior *paideia*, on the one hand, and the establishment of city leagues under the Roman Empire, on the other, does not explain all of Luke's theology and ideology. Nor do I here seek to uncover Lukan intent. Rather, exploring Lukan depictions of Paul underscores an extremely influential early Christian "political theology," to borrow Allen Brent's term.<sup>8</sup> I argue that Acts, embedded in a world negotiating Greek-Roman-"barbarian" relations, creates a story of the origins of a Christian city league that might be comprehensible and attractive to Rome, and in its logic offers seeds for a Christian empire that resembles the Roman Empire.<sup>9</sup>

## I. PLACING ACTS: THE SECOND SOPHISTIC IN AN EMPIRE OF CITIES

Acts presents a Christian geography that conforms to the geographical thinking of the Roman Empire, but it does so via the prestige of Greek *paideia* and of second-century Greek city leagues. To understand Luke's approach to space and politics, we must place Luke-Acts in the context of the so-called Second Sophistic, the archaizing movement, often Roman-sponsored, that celebrated Greekness. To put it another way: first- and second-century Rome produced Greek identity.

Philostratus coined the term "Second Sophistic" in the third century as he compiled important figures of prior centuries who had been interested in rhetoric, as had been the ancient Greek sophists. Those involved in this later "movement" were interested in rhetoric as persuasion, and thus also in the concrete power—

<sup>8</sup> Allen Brent, *The Imperial Cult and the Development of Church Order: Concepts and Images of Authority in Paganism and Early Christianity before the Age of Cyprian* (VCSup 45; Leiden/Boston: Brill, 1999), 76. Paul's travels in Acts, when viewed through the lens of Lukan "political theology," need not coordinate with evidence from Paul's own letters (see, e.g., Hans-Martin Schenke, "Four Problems in the Life of Paul Reconsidered," in *The Future of Early Christianity: Essays in Honor of Helmut Koester* [ed. Birger Pearson et al.; Minneapolis: Fortress, 1991], 319–28).

<sup>9</sup> Of course, at the time of the writing of Luke-Acts, Christianity had negligible political and cultural powers compared with the Roman Empire. On Roman universalism, see, e.g., François Bovon, "Israel, the Church and the Gentiles in the Twofold Work of Luke," in idem, *New Testament Traditions and Apocryphal Narratives* (trans. Jane Haapiseva-Hunter; Princeton Theological Monograph Series 36; Allison Park, PA: Pickwick, 1995), 82–87, concluding that "Lukan universalism was neither accommodation to Rome nor a polemic against Rome. But it could become either of these" (p. 87).

patronage, wealth, and status—that Greek *paideia* offered to masters of such rhetoric and knowledge. Both attempts to *be* Greek and to critique Greekness are a response to the fact that Greek identity was a hot item on the Roman market. Like postmodernism, the Second Sophistic was part of a culture war.<sup>10</sup> It was in this environment that Luke strove to represent a new “Way.” Within the same one-hundred-year span, others also engaged these issues: before a Roman audience, Josephus emphasized Jewish similarity to Greek philosophy; Plutarch brought Roman and Greek side by side in his *Parallel Lives*; Lucian mocked the vagaries of Roman purchase of Greek identity and subordination of the “barbarian.”

Many writers in the first and second centuries bolstered their discussions of similar topics with sophisticated vocabulary, good atticizing writing, and allusions to Greek classical writers and ancient myths. They frequently offered eyewitness travel accounts in order to authenticate their insights into *paideia*, empire, civic and ethnic identity, and correct religiosity.<sup>11</sup> Take Pausanias: although writing in the second century, he records his travels as a kind of Blue Guide to a classicizing Hellenic identity that celebrates ancient cult, ritual, tradition, and myth and erases recent Roman foundations. Claudius Ptolemy explained “scientific” geography in his *Geography*, but his *Tetrabiblos* posits that Italy’s geographic placement means that this region produces people of the perfect ethnicity. Strabo wrote ethnography and geography on behalf of the empire, helping its generals to know the ever-expanding *oikoumenē*.<sup>12</sup>

<sup>10</sup> Simon Swain, *Hellenism and Empire: Language, Classicism, and Power in the Greek World, AD 50–250* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), esp. 2. On the Panhellenion and the Second Sophistic, see Ilaria Romeo, “The Panhellenion and Ethnic Identity in Hadrianic Greece,” *CP* 97 (2002): 21–40. Regarding other second-century Christian apologists and the Second Sophistic, see Nasrallah, “Mapping the World,” 283–314; Rebecca Lyman, “2002 NAPS Presidential Address: Hellenism and Heresy,” *JECs* 11 (2003): 209–22, esp. 212–16; Tim Whitmarsh, *Greek Literature and the Roman Empire: The Politics of Imitation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), esp. ch. 2; G. W. Bowersock, *Greek Sophists in the Roman Empire* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1969).

<sup>11</sup> On *ekphrasis* (narrative description) and autopsy, see Simon Goldhill, “The Erotic Eye: Visual Stimulation and Cultural Conflict,” in *Being Greek under Rome: Cultural Identity, the Second Sophistic and the Development of Empire* (ed. Simon Goldhill; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 154–94; J. L. Lightfoot, “Pilgrims and Ethnographers: In Search of the Syrian Goddess,” in *Pilgrimage in Graeco-Roman and Early Christian Antiquity: Seeing the Gods* (ed. Jás Elsner and Ian Rutherford; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 333–52. Loveday Alexander explores Luke’s use of the unusual word *autopsis*, which is often used for “medical and geographical” information (*The Preface to Luke’s Gospel: Literary Convention and Social Context in Luke 1.1–4 and Acts 1.1* [SNTSMS 78; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993], 34–39).

<sup>12</sup> See Susan E. Alcock et al., eds., *Pausanias: Travel and Memory in Roman Greece* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), and esp. Ian Rutherford’s chapter (“Tourism and the Sacred: Pausanias and the Traditions of Greek Pilgrimage,” 40–52); Claudius Ptolemy, *Tetrabiblos*, 2.63–65; Strabo, *Geog.* 1.1.16–17. See also Lucian, *Nigrinus* and *A True Story*; Dio of Prusa, *Or.* 7 (“Euboean”) and *Or.* 36 (“Borysthentic”).

Visual manifestations of such discussions of space and ethnicity are evidenced in the Aphrodisias's Sebasteion, with its depictions of subject *ethnē* around the inhabited world, or the Portico of the Nations in Rome itself, or the map of Agrippa nearby, publicly displayed in the Porticus Vispania—a map that depicted both the *oikoumenē* and the regions that Rome had conquered (Pliny, *Nat. hist.* 3.2.17). Nearby stood the *Res Gestae*, which included geography in the form of a list of the areas Augustus had subdued.<sup>13</sup> Luke-Acts is not the only evidence of a text concerned with geography, the spaces of empire, the status of cities and nations under Rome, and the role of Greek language and culture under Rome.

But does Luke-Acts really belong in this crowd, even if it does engage in geographical thinking? Loveday Alexander challenges those who equate Luke with the famous writers of the Second Sophistic. The Greek of Luke-Acts, while smoother than the *koinē* of other NT documents, still does not attain to the prose of Dio of Prusa or Aelius Aristides, key figures in the Second Sophistic.<sup>14</sup> But we do not need such a rhetorically sophisticated Luke-Acts to say that the text is a product of the Second Sophistic. The topics Luke-Acts wrestles with and Christianizes indicate a deep involvement in the main crises and themes of the Second Sophistic.<sup>15</sup> Moreover, Luke-Acts differs from a text such as Mark, in terms of sophistication of writing style and its approach to the Roman Empire.<sup>16</sup> Since before the days of Ferdinand Christian Baur, it has been clear that the author was a unifier, seeking to bring together what Baur, for example, considered to be the Petrine and Pauline sides of Christianity.<sup>17</sup> Luke-Acts crafts a universalizing narrative of Christian iden-

<sup>13</sup> This map is described in two literary sources and perhaps depicted in a third, the Hereford world map (Scott, "Luke's Geographical Horizon," 488). On the Sebasteion, see R. R. R. Smith, "The Imperial Reliefs of the Sebasteion at Aphrodisias," *JRS* 77 (1987): 88–138; and idem, "Simulacra Gentium: The Ethnē from the Sebasteion at Aphrodisias," *JRS* 78 (1988): 50–77; on the Portico ad Nationes, see Servius, *Ad Aen.* 8.271; for mention of images of *ethnē* being carried at Augustus's funeral, see Dio Cassius 56.34.3; see also Tacitus *Ann.* 1.8.4.

<sup>14</sup> Thus, Alexander concludes that rather than Thucydidean-style historiography, the preface is the kind of preface that "scientific" or technical handbooks had (*Preface to Luke's Gospel*, 102; for her critique of Luke's Greek, see ch. 8). See also Henry J. Cadbury, *The Making of Luke-Acts* (2nd ed.; London: SPCK, 1958), 114, 213–38.

<sup>15</sup> Hans Conzelmann, *Acts of the Apostles: A Commentary on the Acts of the Apostles* (trans. James Limburg et al.; Hermeneia; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1987), xxxv; Alexander, "In Journeyings Often," 38–39. See David Balch, "Comparing Literary Patterns in Luke and Lucian," *PSTJ* 40 (1987): 39–42.

<sup>16</sup> Even if Tat-siong Benny Liew sees in Mark both critiques of the "existing colonial (dis)order" and "traces of 'colonial mimicry' that reinscribe colonial domination" ("Tyranny, Boundary, and Might: Colonial Mimicry in Mark's Gospel," reprinted in *The Postcolonial Biblical Reader* [ed. R. S. Sugirtharajah; Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2006], 206–23; quotation from 215).

<sup>17</sup> Ferdinand Christian Baur, *Paul the Apostle of Jesus Christ: His Life and Works, His Epistles and Teachings* (1873; repr., 2 vols. in 1, Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2003). See also Joseph B. Tyson, "From History to Rhetoric and Back: Assessing New Trends in Acts Studies," in idem, *Luke, Judaism, and the Scholars: Critical Approaches to Luke-Acts* (Columbia: University of South

tity that would be attractive or at least comprehensible to philosophical and political minds of the time.

Acts (if not the Gospel of Luke) has long been labeled a "history," as by Henry Cadbury in the early twentieth century and Martin Dibelius in the mid-twentieth century.<sup>18</sup> The stakes of this classification are high. Even if scholars who argue that Luke produced historiography recognize the extent to which history involved the fabrication of speeches, the classification of "history" often brings hopes of an objective, true account.<sup>19</sup> Others, recognizing Luke-Acts' theological and perhaps even political stakes, have returned to the tradition from the 1700s on of labeling Luke-Acts as "apologetic" literature.<sup>20</sup> Thus, Luke-Acts is often understood as an appeal to Roman authorities for tolerance,<sup>21</sup> or even, as Marianne Bonz argues, as an imitation of Roman epic, offering a foundational story for the early Christian church along the lines of Virgil's *Aeneid*.<sup>22</sup>

Even the brief discussion above shows that the genre of Luke-Acts is controversial; scholars' conclusions are informed by their views of Lukan theology in relation to the Roman Empire, on the one hand, and of Judaism, on the other. What is important here is that Luke-Acts, unlike its sources in Mark and Q, emerges from and engages the trends of the Second Sophistic: it is a second-century document<sup>23</sup>

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Carolina Press, 1993), ch. 2, esp. 27; idem, "The Legacy of F. C. Baur and Recent Studies of Acts," *Forum* n.s. 4.1 (2001): 125–44; and Todd Penner, *In Praise of Christian Origins: Stephen and the Hellenists in Lukan Apologetic Historiography* (Emory Studies in Early Christianity; New York: T&T Clark, 2004), 8–14.

<sup>18</sup> Cadbury, *Making of Luke-Acts*, 132–39; Martin Dibelius, *The Book of Acts: Form, Style, and Theology* (ed. K. C. Hanson; Fortress Classics in Biblical Studies; Minneapolis: Fortress, 2004), 1–86, who says, "It is distinguished from the New Testament and many other early Christian writings by its literary character, and from the work of the historians by what we may call a theological purpose" (p. 3). Marianne Palmer Bonz discusses both in *The Past as Legacy: Luke-Acts and Ancient Epic* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2000), 1–5. Most scholars read the preface and Luke-Acts as something like history. See, e.g., David Balch, who disagrees with Alexander: "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; SBLSymS 20; Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2003), 140–42; see also Penner, *In Praise of Christian Origins*, esp. 260–61, for whom Acts adheres to the model of (Jewish apologetic) historiography.

<sup>19</sup> See, e.g., Bonz's assessment of Cadbury in *Past as Legacy*, 2.

<sup>20</sup> Esler's elegant, brief survey of scholarship from 1720 characterizes it in this way (*Community and Gospel*, 205–7).

<sup>21</sup> Gregory Sterling (*Historiography and Self-Definition: Josephos, Luke-Acts, and Apologetic Historiography* [NovTSup 64; Leiden: Brill, 1992], 393). Penner employs the term "apologetic historiography" in *In Praise of Christian Origins*. Esler (*Community and Gospel*, 16) dubs Luke-Acts a literature of "legitimization" rather than "apologetic."

<sup>22</sup> Bonz, *Past as Legacy*. I do not treat the entire debate over the genre of Luke-Acts, such as its relation to the Greek novel. See Richard I. Pervo, *Profit with Delight: The Literary Genre of the Acts of the Apostles* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1987).

<sup>23</sup> Among others, Conzelmann (*Acts*, xxxiii) argues: "Luke's theology . . . is of a much ear-



that strives toward a literary Greek, shows knowledge of Greek historiographical practices, and may even hint at epic aims for Christianity. Acts retrospectively portrays a community that shared its goods in a philosophical way and whose leaders, although *agrammatoi*, or uneducated, offered lengthy and sophisticated speeches. Such speeches drew on the exotic (to Roman eyes) past of the people of Israel yet also spoke to the philosophical themes of the one God and true piety, key topics at the time of the Second Sophistic.

To understand more deeply issues regarding Greek ethnicity and Roman power in this period, it is helpful to turn to a famous, sophisticated, if perpetually ill rhetor.<sup>24</sup> Aelius Aristides' geographical rhetoric shifts gracefully between Greek cities and the Roman Empire.<sup>25</sup> It reflects the influence of policies such as Hadrian's, on the one hand, and provides a useful comparand to Acts, on the other. Aristides is from the Greek East, as Luke probably is. Like Luke he celebrates Greekness but also fits it neatly into Roman imperial geography. Exploring his thought allows us to see an aspect of Roman "geographical thinking" that illumines Luke's geographical imagination.

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lier type than that of Justin." Such assertions are imprecise. On the controversial question of Justin's use of Acts, see Gregory's meticulous work in *Reception of Luke and Acts*, 317–21; he concludes that it is impossible to confirm that Justin knew Acts.

Luke and Acts are not well attested until Irenaeus and the Muratorian Canon (François Bovon, "The Reception and Use of the Gospel of Luke in the Second Century," in *Reading Luke: Interpretation, Reflection, Formation* [ed. Craig Bartholomew et al.; Scripture & Hermeneutics; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2005], 379–400; see also Conzelmann, *Acts*, xxx–xxxii). Gregory is cautious to insist that this does not mean that Luke or Acts was not circulating previously (Gregory, *Reception of Luke and Acts*, 4–5 n. 11). Still, there is no firm evidence for others' knowledge of Acts until ca. 185 c.e. While our current data remain inconclusive, many recent scholars argue that Luke-Acts in its present form emerged in the second century to resist Marcion's appropriation of Luke and Paul. See John Knox, *Marcion and the New Testament: An Essay in the Early History of the Canon* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1942), 114–39; earlier, Baur (*Paul*, 1:5–14) argued that Acts was an *apologia* for Paul and should not be considered "historical truth" (p. 5). J. C. O'Neill in the early 1960s dated Luke-Acts to approximately 115–130 c.e. (*The Theology of Acts in Its Historical Setting* [London: SPCK, 1961], 1–63), as have more recent scholars such as Shelly Matthews (*Perfect Martyr: The Stoning of Stephen and the Making of Gentile Christianity in Acts* [forthcoming; thanks to the author for generously sharing her writing and knowledge]), Christopher Mount (*Pauline Christianity: Luke-Acts and the Legacy of Paul* [NovTSup 104; Leiden: Brill, 2002]), Richard Pervo (*Dating Acts: Between the Evangelists and the Apologists* [Santa Rosa, CA: Polebridge, 2006]), as well as Joseph Tyson and Todd Penner.

<sup>24</sup> On Aelius Aristides' rhetoric of illness, see Judith Perkins, *The Suffering Self: Pain and Narrative Representation in the Early Christian Era* (New York: Routledge, 1995), esp. ch. 7.

<sup>25</sup> Greg Woolf's discussion applies to Greek cities as well: "Culture could thus offer Gauls a chance to enter the empire of friends. What of the empire of cities? That aspect of the empire can be thought of as a complex hierarchy of privileges and statuses, communal as well as individual. . . . The key question then is how far was cultural capital convertible into privileged places in that hierarchy?" (*Becoming Roman: The Origins of Provincial Civilization in Gaul* [New York: Cambridge University Press, 1998], 63–64).

In his famous “Roman Oration,” perhaps given in the city itself in 155 C.E.,<sup>26</sup> Aelius Aristides uses several strategies to present Rome. First, he celebrates Rome’s geographical extent. Rome surpasses all previous empires in size and in knowledge of its own spaces. The empire is not only extensive but also harmonious, perfect, unmarred by incursions from other lands; it is “the chorus of the civilized world.”<sup>27</sup>

When were there so many cities on continents or on the seas, or when have they been so thoroughly adorned? Who then ever made such a journey, numbering the cities by the days of his trip, or sometimes passing through two or three cities on the same day, as it were through avenues? Therefore those former men are not only greatly inferior in the total extent of their empires, but also where they ruled the same lands as you, each people did not enjoy equal and similar conditions under their rule, but to the tribe which then existed there can be counterpoised the city which now exists among them (ἀλλ’ ἔνεστι τῷ τότε ἔθνει πόλιν ἀντιστῆσαι τὴν ἐν αὐτῷ νῦν). And one would say that those had been kings, as it were, of deserts and garrisons, but that you alone are rulers of cities. (Aristides, “Roman Oration” 93)<sup>28</sup>

This brief exclamation makes remarkable claims: under Roman rule there were more and better-organized cities; the roads and seaways were like a grand, new, broad avenue allowing quick travel through cities; the Romans brought *isonomia* (equal rights) to each city, allowed for each *ethnos* to express itself with true civic status, and disregarded the preferential treatment offered by previous empires.

According to Aristides, Rome is not only superior with regard to geography and justice; it is also the meta-city to which the entire *oikoumenē* is a suburb.<sup>29</sup> In this role Rome erases traditional ethnic, geographical, and linguistic boundaries:

<sup>26</sup> See P. Aelius Aristides, *The Complete Works* (trans. Charles Behr; 2 vols.; Leiden: Brill, 1981), 2:373–74 n. 1 for an introduction to the *Roman Oration* or, as Behr titles it, “Regarding Rome.”

<sup>27</sup> “The present empire has been extended to boundaries of no mean distance, to such, in fact, that one cannot even measure the area within them.” For Aelius Aristides’ *Roman Oration* I use the study by James H. Oliver, which includes a general discussion, Greek text, English translation, and commentary (*The Ruling Power: A Study of the Roman Empire in the Second Century after Christ through the Roman Oration of Aelius Aristides* [1953; repr., Philadelphia: American Philosophical Society, 1980]); for this quotation, see Aristides, *Rom. Or.* 28; for that cited in the text above, “Roman Oration,” 29–31 (quotation from 31); English translation, Oliver, 898. Richard L. Rohrbaugh’s “The Pre-industrial City in Luke-Acts: Urban Social Relations” unfortunately does not treat archaeological evidence regarding first-century cities (in *The Social World of Luke-Acts: Models for Interpretation* [ed. Jerome H. Neyrey; Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1991]).

<sup>28</sup> English translation is modified from Behr, 2:94.

<sup>29</sup> “What another city is to its own boundaries and territory, this city is to the boundaries and territory of the entire civilized world” (“Roman Oration” 61; English translation Oliver, 901). Compare Commodus’s configuration of Rome as ἀθάνατον εὐτυχῆ κολωνίαν τῆς οἰκουμένης in 192 C.E. Olivier Hekster explains the title this way: “making Rome the ‘immortal, fortunate colony of the whole earth’ also implied that . . . all the inhabitants of the realm could take symbolic ‘possession’ of the civilized world” (*Commodus: An Emperor at the Crossroads* [Dutch Monographs on Ancient History and Archaeology 23; Amsterdam: J. C. Gieben, 2002], 95).

You sought its [citizenship's] expansion as a worthy aim, and you have caused the word Roman to be the label, not of membership in a city, but of some common nationality. . . . for the categories into which you now divide the world are not Hellenes and Barbarians. . . . The division which you substituted is one into Romans and non-Romans. To such a degree have you expanded the name of your city. (Aristides, "Roman Oration" 63)<sup>30</sup>

In a speech directed to Romans, Aristides shifts the ethnic and geographical map from Greek/barbarian to Roman/non-Roman.<sup>31</sup> Rome is a postmetropolis, swallowing up previous identities and expanding its name to all.<sup>32</sup>

Not only does Aristides note Rome's geographical extension or the city's role as an urban center to the entire *oikoumenē*; he also conceives of the Roman Empire as a kind of league of cities, in the ancient Greek mode, with Rome as its leader or *hēgemōn*:<sup>33</sup>

Now all the Greek cities rise up under your leadership, and the monuments which are dedicated in them and all their embellishments and comforts redound to your honor like beautiful suburbs. . . . Taking good care of the Hellenes as of your foster parents, you constantly hold your hand over them, and when they are prostrate, you raise them up. You release free and autonomous those of them who were the noblest and the leaders of yore. . . . (Aristides, "Roman Oration" 94, 96)<sup>34</sup>

<sup>30</sup> English translation Oliver, 902.

<sup>31</sup> Admittedly, such writers often seek to trouble the Greek/barbarian binary, elevating "barbarian" wisdom. See, e.g., Dio of Prusa, *Or.* 36; Lucian, *Demonax* or *The Scythian*; and esp. Aelius Aristides, "Panathenaic Oration." On this topic, see also Arnaldo Momigliano, *Alien Wisdom: The Limits of Hellenization* (Cambridge/New York: Cambridge University Press, 1975); Guy Stroumsa, *Barbarian Philosophy: The Religious Revolution of Early Christianity* (WUNT 112; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1999).

<sup>32</sup> This claim chafes against contemporary writers who employ the Greek/barbarian binary, as even Aristides himself does elsewhere. See Edward Soja, *Postmetropolis: Critical Studies of Cities and Regions* (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2000). Aristides presents the Roman Empire as an innocent *synekism*: in Soja's definition, "the economic and ecological interdependencies and the creative—as well as occasionally destructive—synergisms that arise from the purposeful clustering and collective cohabitation of people in space" (p. 12). Aristides celebrates that all have united to help Smyrna after the earthquake of the late 170s c.e., including Rome, the Greek *ethnos*, and "all the races, which comprise our Asia" (*Oration* 20: "A Palinode for Smyrna," 18; English translation Behr, 2:17). See also Aristides, *Oration* 23: "Concerning Concord."

<sup>33</sup> Oliver, *Ruling Power*, 879–84. This is no surprise, given Aristides' ideology of concord and rhetoric elsewhere; see S. R. F. Price's treatment of *Or.* 23.5–7, a speech key to Price's interpretation of cities and competition for imperial cult temples in Asia Minor (*Rituals and Power: Roman Imperial Cult in Asia Minor* [New York: Cambridge University Press, 1984]).

<sup>34</sup> English translation Oliver, 905. The language of foster parenting is found also in the "Panathenaic Oration" (1), where the "men of Athens" are the "common foster fathers" of all who claim Greek identity.

Earlier in the speech (43–57), Aristides had explicitly linked the Roman Empire to the prestigious if internecine Greek past by arguing that its empire surpasses even Athenian, Spartan, and Theban attempts at hegemony. Aristides makes Rome homologous and superior to Greek city-states, which became quasi-empires, and borrows their long tradition of kinship language. He also cleverly configures the relationship between the Roman Empire and Greek cities as one of adoptive kinship. One might expect such adoption to benefit the “child”—here, Rome—but Aristides focuses on how the child aids its parents, hinting at the decrepitude and exhaustion of a Greek world that is passing away, its genes to be carried on by the Romans.<sup>35</sup>

Rome was thus an empire of cities, for Aristides. Cities, however, were also possible sites of resistance to empire.<sup>36</sup> To state the obvious, the *polis* and discourses of the *polis* were intimately connected with the rhetoric of Greek democracy; they revived traditions and memories of the power and prestige of the city-state, and stories of free debates and free speech (*parrhēsia*) in these cities' *ekklēsiai*, or assemblies. Thus, the *polis* contained the possibility of resistance to empire or at least of changing allegiances depending on the fortunes of a given claimant to the *imperium*. At times the early Roman Empire did restrict the powers of cities perhaps precisely for this reason.<sup>37</sup>

Rome exercised its influence over independent and non-independent cities, all potentially rebellious, in explicit and subtle ways. The Roman Empire held cities spread out like small, diverse jewels, faceted with memories of past great deeds, with famed cultural objects—buildings, sculpture, well-known festivals. The cities' systems of civic engagement, *boulēteria* (council houses) and *ekklēsiai* (places of assembly), were knotted into the grid of the streets. Rome chained and clustered these cities together into empire, in the words of Aristides.<sup>38</sup> The memories of cities'

<sup>35</sup> On the topos of a succession of empires or of aging in ancient historiography, see Arnaldo Momigliano, *Essays in Ancient and Modern Historiography* (Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 1977), 189.

<sup>36</sup> Aristides may hint at this in *Oration 23*: “Concerning Concord,” which discusses the time of Persian rule: “They reduced the king, who equated his empire with that of Zeus, to such fear and humility that he leaped from his throne and went off in flight from land to land” (my emphasis; *Or.* 23.46; English translation Behr, 2:35). This seems to be a pointed comment about Roman emperors who equate themselves with the highest god.

<sup>37</sup> Christopher Jones, *Kinship Diplomacy in the Ancient World* (Revealing Antiquity 12; Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1999), 106–7. My understanding has been enriched by Anna Miller's ongoing research: “The Body of Christ as *Demos*: Democratic Discourse of the *Ekklesia* in 1 Corinthians” (Ph.D. diss., Harvard University, Committee on the Study of Religion).

<sup>38</sup> Aristides uses a variety of metaphors for connections between cities; for the image of bats clustering like beads or links, see “Roman Oration” 68. See also *Oration 17*: “Smyrnan Oration” 10: “Proceeding from west to east, you go from temple to temple and from hill to hill, along a single avenue which is fairer than its name. . . . The city itself . . . takes one's breath away through three

past greatness were mobilized on behalf of both Rome and individual cities. Cities also served as key arenas in which native elites could attract the attention of the empire, and in which empire, especially in the creation and performance of imperial cult, could be manifest.<sup>39</sup> Such cities could be honored with imperial benefactions, such as the right to build a temple for the imperial cult (neokorate or “temple warden” status), or the status of “free and autonomous,” an all-important change in tax status.<sup>40</sup> All this was analogous to an act of god; in the “Roman Oration” (103), Aristides connects Rome’s rule over the preexisting chaos with Zeus’s rule after the “strife, confusion, and disorder” of the Titans.<sup>41</sup>

## II. THE PANHELLENION

The rule of Hadrian, among other emperors, stimulated the processes that Aelius Aristides celebrates two decades later: the power of the Roman Empire made the *oikoumenē* safe and navigable for the celebration and spread of Greekness and its *paideia*. Aristides deliberately blurred the line between the Roman Empire’s piety and its godlike powers; so city leagues, the power of empire, and religion come together in the Panhellenion as they will also in Luke-Acts. Although the precise origins of the Panhellenion are unclear, Hadrian himself in 131/132 seems to have founded this league of cities headed by Athens. This is the same year that he made his third visit to Athens and presided over the dedication of the Olympieion, or Temple of Zeus Olympios there.<sup>42</sup> In the precinct of the Olympieion, Hadrian was

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spectacles most fair, nor can one find a place where he might rest his eyes. Each object attracts him, like the stones in a variegated necklace” (English translation Behr, 2:3).

<sup>39</sup> After Price’s *Rituals of Power* it is impossible to ignore the mutually affirming back-and-forth of the imperial family with urban elites in the Greek East (see, e.g., pp. 247–48). See also C. Jones, *Kinship Diplomacy*; Ursula Kampmann, “*Homonoia* Politics in Asia Minor: The Example of Pergamon,” in *Pergamon: Citadel of the Gods* (ed. Helmut Koester; HTS 46; Harrisburg, PA: Trinity Press International, 1998), 387–93.

<sup>40</sup> On city status under Rome, see Maud W. Gleason, “Greek Cities under Roman Rule,” in *A Companion to the Roman Empire* (ed. David S. Potter; Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2006), 228–49; A. H. M. Jones, *The Greek City from Alexander to Justinian* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1940). C. Jones (*Kinship Diplomacy*, 106) states that while the Augustan monarchy may have resulted from slow processes, its effects were immediate: “Greek observers of the new era noticed that cities could no longer conduct their own foreign policy. ‘Formerly,’ says Strabo early in the principate, ‘they used to deliberate about war, peace, and alliance, but that is not likely now; these things inevitably depend on the Romans.’” On cities and neokorate status, see Price, *Rituals and Power*; and Steven Friesen, *Twice Neokoros: Ephesus, Asia, and the Cult of the Flavian Imperial Family* (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 1993).

<sup>41</sup> Roman rule rendered the empire a garden and left cities aglow with “charming spectacle and . . . festal games” rather than fires of strife (Aristides, “Roman Oration” 99).

<sup>42</sup> A. S. Spawforth and Susan Walker, “The World of the Panhellenion: I, Athens and Eleusis,” *JRS* 75 (1985): 79.

closely associated with Zeus.<sup>43</sup> Nearly one hundred altars have been found in Athens that name Hadrian as “savior and founder.” Throughout the precinct of the Olympieion were found bases that once held statues of Hadrian, dedicated by a vast range of cities.<sup>44</sup> Surviving inscriptions suggest that Athens thrived especially under him and his successor, Antoninus Pius.<sup>45</sup>

The scale of the Panhellenion is surprising. While it was formerly thought that the Panhellenion may have met in the Olympieion's precinct, most scholars now think that it occupied a large building of Hadrianic date.<sup>46</sup> This basilica had interior measurements of ca. 64 × 30 m; perhaps accommodating seven hundred or more, it was two and one-third times larger than the Curia at Rome, which accommodated approximately three hundred senators.<sup>47</sup>

The Panhellenic league consisted of at least twenty-eight cities: eleven in Achaia, ten in Asia, five in Crete and Cyrene, one each in Macedonia (Thessalonikē) and Thrace (see fig. 1).<sup>48</sup> The second century was distinguished by sharp rivalries

<sup>43</sup> On inscriptions to Hadrian Olympios, see Helmut Koester, ed., *Cities of Paul: Images and Interpretations from the Harvard New Testament Archaeology Project* (CD-Rom; Minneapolis: Fortress, 2005), under “Athens: Inscription to Hadrian Olympios.” On the association of Trajan with Zeus Eleutherios, see Antony E. Raubitschek, “Hadrian as the Son of Zeus Eleutherios,” *AJA* 49 (1945): 128–33.

<sup>44</sup> Anna Benjamin, “The Altars of Hadrian in Athens and Hadrian's Panhellenic Program,” *Hesperia* 32 (1963): 57–86.

<sup>45</sup> The Panhellenion is known only from a few literary sources: see Cassius Dio 69.16 (epitome). Pausanias (*Descr.* 18.9) refers to a temple of Hera and Zeus Panhellenios but not to a Panhellenion. Our main information for the Panhellenion is epigraphic. Fifty-four inscriptions are known; most are from Greece, but some are from Asia Minor, Italy, and Libya (Spawforth and Walker, “Panhellenion: I,” 79). James H. Oliver (*Marcus Aurelius: Aspects of Civic and Cultural Policy in the East* [Hesperia Supp. 13; Princeton, NJ: American School of Classical Studies at Athens, 1970]) originally collected the inscriptions; Spawforth and Walker in “Panhellenion: I” and a subsequent article (“The World of the Panhellenion: II, Three Dorian Cities,” *JRS* 76 [1986]: 88–105) add a few more. Because with inscriptions what has been found and where are to some extent matters of chance, assertions about the Panhellenion are always provisional.

<sup>46</sup> Located to the east of the Roman agora and Hadrian's library, this building is usually identified as the “temple of all the gods” mentioned by Pausanias. See Spawforth and Walker, “Panhellenion: I,” 92–98, esp. fig. 2. See also *Archaeological Resources for New Testament Studies: A Collection of Slides on Culture and Religion in Antiquity* (ed. Helmut Koester and Holland L. Hendrix; 2 vols.; 2nd rev. ed.; Valley Forge, PA: Trinity Press International, 1994), under “Athens: The Plan of the Panhellenion.” Christopher Jones hypothesizes that the sanctuary may have been at Eleusis, since suburbs of sacred importance were often considered part of the city itself (“The Panhellenion,” *Chiron* 26 [1996]: 36). Alternatively, it may have been located in an as yet partially unexcavated building just northwest of the Stoa of Attalos.

<sup>47</sup> Spawforth and Walker, “Panhellenion: I,” 70. The Panhellenion's officeholders seem mostly to have been wealthy Roman citizens, some of equestrian or senatorial rank (pp. 84–87). Those called Panhellenes—not leaders, but regular participants—seem to have been more of a social mix, and not necessarily Roman citizens, although enrolled among them was Herodes Atticus, the fabulously wealthy Athenian sophist (p. 88).

<sup>48</sup> Mary Boatwright, *Hadrian and the Cities of the Roman Empire* (Princeton: Princeton



between cities, but also by alliances forged by cult, festivals, gifts, culture, and political strategizing. The Panhellenion was like those ancient leagues that still in the second century carried some power, psychic or real, such as the Delphic Amphictyony, which Hadrian also supported, or the *koinōn* of cities of Asia.<sup>49</sup> Hadrian likely established or accepted the Panhellenion for manifold reasons, including the practical desire to reduce the number of embassies seeking his attention by encouraging cities to send joint embassies.<sup>50</sup>

The Panhellenion gathered various cities' representatives to Athens to engage in cultic, cultural, and diplomatic activities; it also may have acted as a court.<sup>51</sup> Panhellenic impulses overtook cities as near Athens as Corinth and as far as Laodicea and Cyrene. Two inscriptions in particular tell us what was required to join the Panhellenion. An inscription regarding the acceptance of Magnesia on the Maeander and a dedicatory inscription from the Phrygian city of Kibyra refer to three elements: their cities' Greek ancestry, their histories of good relations with Rome, and Hadrian's benefactions.<sup>52</sup> The Kibyrian inscription references Zeus Soter, an unusual epithet that is linked to Hadrian elsewhere.<sup>53</sup> Beginning on line 3 of the inscription, Kibyra defines itself as

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University Press, 2000), 147. Seminal in the study of Hadrian in Athens and the Panhellenion is Paul Graindor, *Athènes sous Hadrien* (Cairo: Imprimerie Nationale, Boulac, 1934). We do not know whether Hadrian assigned involvements in the Panhellenion or whether cities appealed to be participants. On the question of who proposed the Panhellenion, see Romeo, "Panhellenion," 21–40; and James Oliver, "Hadrian's Reform of the Appeal Procedure in Greece," *Hesperia* 39 (1970): 332–36. On Cyrene, hellenization, and Hadrian's Panhellenion, see P. M. Fraser, "Hadrian and Cyrene," *JRS* 40 (1950): 77–90; James Oliver, "New Evidence on the Attic Panhellenion," *Hesperia* 20 (1951): 31–33; J. A. O. Larsen, "Cyrene and the Panhellenion," *CP* 47 (1952): 7–16; and esp. Joyce Reynolds, "Hadrian, Antoninus Pius and the Cyrenaican Cities," *JRS* 68 (1978): 111–21.

<sup>49</sup> Hadrian may have developed the Panhellenion because he could not do what he wished with the Delphic Amphictyony (Romeo, "Panhellenion," 24–25). See Oliver, *Marcus Aurelius*, 92–93.

<sup>50</sup> Price's analysis in *Rituals and Power* shows how provincial elites represent themselves to the empire; organizations such as the Panhellenion were to the mutual benefit of both sets of elites. On overwhelming embassies, see Spawforth and Walker, "The Panhellenion: I," 83; and see esp. Fergus Millar, *Emperor in the Roman World (31 B.C. to A.D. 337)* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1992). On cities jockeying for new civic status under the Roman Empire and on *humanitas* (that is, civilization in contrast to past wild barbarity) as a criterion of inclusion, see Woolf, *Becoming Roman*, esp. 64–67.

<sup>51</sup> Spawforth and Walker, "Panhellenion: I," 83–84. The associations with the imperial cult are evident from a statue base set up in Thessalonikē in honor of the emperor Pius; for the Panhellenion's function as a court, see Eusebius, *Hist. eccl.* 4.26.10.

<sup>52</sup> Spawforth and Walker, "Panhellenion: I," 82.

<sup>53</sup> This epithet is found at a round temple mimicking the Pantheon at the Asklepios cult site at Pergamon; Hadrian was the benefactor of this temple. Christian Habicht, *Altertümer von Pergamon: III.3, Die Inschriften des Asklepieions* (Deutsches Archäologisches Institut; Berlin: de Gruyter, 1969), 11–14. An inscription refers to Hadrian with many epithets, including Olympios



Ἡ Κιβυρατῶν πόλις ἄποικος Λ[υδῶν οὔσα καὶ]  
 συγγενὶς Ἀθηναίων καὶ φι[λ . . . . . καὶ]  
 αὐτῆ τοῦ κοινοῦ τῆς Ἑλλάδος [ἐν ταῖς μάλιστα]  
 ἐνδόξοις οὔσα καὶ μεγάλαις [τῆς Ἀσίας πόλε]  
 σιν διὰ τε τὸ γένος Ἑλληνι[κόν] . . .<sup>54</sup>

The city of the Kibyratians, being a colony of Lydians and  
 kin and friend of the Athenians, . . . and  
 the same city (belongs to) the *koinōn* of Greece, being among  
 those cities of Asia quite highly reputed and great  
 on account of their Greek race. . . .

The inscription from Magnesia on the Maeander, a fine piece on marble with regularly carved letters (but a break on its left side), is more elaborate in its genealogical rhetoric:

[ - - - - - φήφισ]μα τὸ γένομενον ὑπὸ τῶν Πανελλήνων  
 [ἐπειδὴ Μάγνητες οἱ] πρὸς τῷ Μαιάνδρῳ ποταμῷ ἄποικοι  
 [μὲν ὄντες Μαγνητῶν] τῶν ἐν Θεσσαλίᾳ, πρῶτοι Ἑλλήνων  
 [δὲ καὶ διαβάντες εἰς] τὴν Ἀσίαν καὶ κατοικήσαντες, συνα  
 [γωνισάμενοι ἐκτενώς] πολλάκις Ἴωσι καὶ Δωριεῦσι καὶ τοῖς ἐ  
 [πὶ τῆς Ἀσίας ταύτου] γένους Αἰολεῦσι, τιμηθέντες καὶ ὑπὸ  
 [τῆς συγκλήτου τῆς Ῥω]μαίων . . .

. . . a measure passed by the members of the Panhellenion.  
 When the Magnesians were settlers by the Maeander River,  
 they were of the Magnesians in Thessaly, the first of the Greeks  
 who also crossed over into Asia and colonized it,  
 often eagerly fighting alongside the Ionians and Dorians and those  
 Aiolians of this race in Asia, honored also  
 by the Senate of the Romans . . .<sup>55</sup>

As Spawforth and Walker write, the idea of “fabricat[ing] Greek pedigrees” is known as early as the Hellenistic period in the eastern Mediterranean.<sup>56</sup> In the second century, as Buell’s work shows, both fixed and fluid explanations of race were

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and Panhellenios (pp. 30–31). On second-century control of cult space at Pergamon, see Alexia Petsalis-Diomidis, “The Body in Space: Visual Dynamics in Graeco-Roman Healing Pilgrimage,” in *Pilgrimage*, ed. Elsner and Rutherford, 183–218.

<sup>54</sup> Oliver, *Marcus Aurelius*, 95–96 and plate 7. I start my translation on line 2 of the inscription, which continues for four to five more lines, discusses relations with Rome, and refers to the “God Hadrian.”

<sup>55</sup> See Oliver, *Marcus Aurelius*, 94–95 and plate 7. I begin my translation on line 3 of the inscription, which continues in four more lines to discuss further Magnesian relations with Rome and the imperial family.

<sup>56</sup> Spawforth and Walker, “Panhellenion: I,” 82; *idem*, “Panhellenion: II,” 95. See also Romeo, “Panhellenion,” 26, on the Hadrianic Panhellenion returning to a fourth-century B.C.E. concept of *genos*. See also C. Jones, *Kinship Diplomacy*, esp. 110–11.

employed. Sometimes race (*genos*), peoplehood (*laos*), and ethnicity/nationality (*ethnos*) were defined in terms of blood and genealogy; at other times, in terms of the acquisition of Greek *paideia*.<sup>57</sup> We find hints of such thinking in Aristides, who in his "Panathenaic Oration" links Athens with the cities opposite in Asia Minor, but also proclaims:

For no one would be proud to have Pella or Aegae as his country; there is no Greek who would not wish to have been born an Athenian rather than a citizen of his own city. Not only do private citizens prefer Athens in this way, but also in the case of cities, those which have been actually founded from here and by you would rather boast that they descend from you than possess power equal to yours; and the others go about seeking somehow to trace themselves back to you. (334)<sup>58</sup>

Though Panhellenic identity was founded on ancient mythic links to Hellenic (particularly Athenian) identity, having strong civic links to Rome was also important. In the Roman period and in the most ancient past, the coast of Achaia drew near to Asia Minor; distant communities were ethnically linked at the earliest, most mythical of stages. It did not matter if connections were fabricated.<sup>59</sup>

These participants were oriented through the Panhellenion not only to the traditions of Athenian *paideia* and toward Hellenic identity, however invented, but also toward Rome. Christopher Jones has argued that scholars have for too long seen the Panhellenion as a diplomatic United Nations, ignoring its cultic focus. He asserts that "the most certainly attested activity of the Panhellenes is the cult of the emperors," since inscriptions which describe the *archōn* or leader give him the title of "archōn of the Panhellenion, priest of the god Hadrian Panhellenios, and *agōnothetēs* [master of the games] of the Great Panhellenia."<sup>60</sup> An inscription in Pergamon depicts Hadrian as "Emperor Caesar Trajan Hadrian Sebastos Olympios Panhellenios, savior and benefactor of all of his own *oikoumenē*,"<sup>61</sup> not only declar-

<sup>57</sup> See Buell, *Why This New Race?* On Greekness, see, e.g., Jonathan Hall, *Hellenicity: Between Ethnicity and Culture* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002); Benjamin Isaac, *The Invention of Racism in Classical Antiquity* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004); on Romanness, see Emma Dench, *Romulus' Asylum: On Roman Identities from the Age of Alexander to the Age of Hadrian* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005). On shifting definitions of race with regard to the Panhellenion, see Romeo, "Panhellenion," esp. 32–37. On the ancient rhetoric of *paideia* as erasing ethnic difference, see Nasrallah, "Mapping the World," 291–93.

<sup>58</sup> English translation Behr, 1:68. For other examples of such "ethnic reasoning" (Buell's term), see *Oration* 24: "To the Rhodians: Concerning Concord" 45; and *Oration* 17: "The Smyrnaean Oration (I)" 5.

<sup>59</sup> As in the case of a Panhellenic city like Aizanoi in Phrygia, or Sardis; see Romeo, "Panhellenion," 29–31.

<sup>60</sup> C. Jones, "Panhellenion," 32.

<sup>61</sup> My translation. See Habicht, *Die Inschriften des Asklepieions*, 30–31, regarding the statue base for Lucius Verus, Hadrian's adopted son (Inv. 1932, 26).

ing Hadrian's political power, but conflating him with Zeus Olympios, the ultimate savior and benefactor.

Collective definitions of ethnicity and race are often grounded in civic ties, real or imagined, forged through a history of colonization as well as through inventions of myths, claims to kinship, and especially religious practice.<sup>62</sup> Hadrian's Panhellenion encouraged Greek cities to continue producing these political, religious, and mythical stories *in the service of* producing a cultivated, cultured Roman Empire. At the same time, Greeks actively used Roman appeals to Greekness in order to secure their own position within the empire. As we shall see more clearly in part III of this essay, there is a homology between the Panhellenion and Luke-Acts. Luke-Acts produces a Christianity rooted in the civic ties forged through Paul's travels. It is interested not necessarily in establishing links between cities—it offers no exhortations that those in Philippi should help those in Derbe, for instance. Rather, it is interested in the larger geographical imagining of Christian etiological myths for various cities, using contact with Paul to establish Christian origins in a town, at the same time as it tells a geographical tale of Christianity's movement from Jerusalem to Rome via Greece and its *paideia*.

### *Hadrian, Ethnicity, and True Religion*

The emperor Hadrian (117–138 C.E.) was a prodigious traveler who linked the cities of his empire by the monuments he left there and by the monuments left to him, dedicated because of his visits.<sup>63</sup> His reign is characterized by concerns about the cities of his empire, Greek identity, and proper (archaizing) religion,<sup>64</sup> themes he shares with the writer of Acts. For his philhellenism, Hadrian was mockingly called *Graeculus*, “little Greeking” (*HA, Vit. Hadr.* 1.5; *Epit. de Caes.* 14.2). Hadrian purchased and reconfigured Greek identity, marrying *Romanitas* and Greek *paideia* whether in his initiation into the Eleusinian mysteries and his gifts to that cult,<sup>65</sup> in his vast benefactions to Athens, or in his own villa in Tivoli, in

<sup>62</sup> See Buell, *Why This New Race?*

<sup>63</sup> For a good introduction to ancient sources about Hadrian's travels, see William L. MacDonald and John A. Pinto, *Hadrian's Villa and Its Legacy* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995), 13–23. Regarding the impact of imperial journeys on provincial populations, see Millar, *Emperor in the Roman World*, 28–40. Boatwright demonstrates that “during Hadrian's twenty-one-year reign more than 130 cities received, in all, more than 210 marks of his favor” (*Hadrian*, 15).

<sup>64</sup> As Boatwright puts it, “Hadrian was famed for almost perversely archaistic predilections” (*Hadrian*, 13).

<sup>65</sup> Eleusis, linked to Athens by tradition and by the sacred way, was the famous home of the mysteries of Demeter and Persephone, into which Hadrian was inducted perhaps in 124/125 (Boatwright, *Hadrian*, 100); see C. Jones, “Panhellenion,” 29–56. Regarding Eleusis's importance, see Aelius Aristides' *Oration* 22: “The Eleusinian Oration.”

which he collected art and reproduced architecture, especially Greek, from around the empire.<sup>66</sup>

In uniting Greek practice and Roman power, Hadrian sought to define proper religion and piety.<sup>67</sup> Hadrian's interest in religion extended past the cult practices that were the purview of the Panhellenion and past Athens. Religious sites made up "his most frequent single type" of benefaction; one-third of all known Hadriatic architectural and engineering donations were to temples, shrines, or (cult-associated) tombs; at least eleven temples or shrines associated with the imperial cult also received Hadrian's benefactions.<sup>68</sup> Boatwright concludes that Hadrian contributed to a "wide spectrum of religious structures, appealing to many different people."<sup>69</sup> This was at a time when Christian and non-Christian intellectuals debated what exactly constituted right religion. "Pagan monotheism" was on the rise, and some even suggested it might be best to set aside traditional religious practices and the embarrassing notions of gods who engaged in questionable moral activities.<sup>70</sup> Before and after Hadrian's reign, Christians and pagans alike—think only of Justin, Athenagoras, Lucian, or Maximus of Tyre—challenged traditional sacrificial practices and making images of the gods. Lucian, writing a few decades after Hadrian's great benefactions, mocks sacrifices (and the idea that true gods would need bloody, smoky offerings).<sup>71</sup> Luke, as we shall see, distills perfect narrative scenes, like that at Lystra, which engage in a similar critique of a certain kind of *deisidaimonia*, "religion" or "superstition," that impels the inhabitants to want to honor and to sacrifice to Paul and Barnabas. In the midst of this second-century debate over what constituted true religion and religious practice, Hadrian promoted

<sup>66</sup> See MacDonald and Pinto, *Hadrian's Villa*: Tivoli became the best of the empire *in nuce*, with key sculptures and buildings from around the *oikoumenē* reproduced there.

<sup>67</sup> Oliver (*Ruling Power*, 892) argues that Aristides' "Roman Oration" envisions Hadrian's Panhellenion, celebrating the "exhilaration felt by the Greek cities . . . upon the establishment of the Panhellenion and upon the announcement of its program and of the aspirations of that *basileus euergetes* and citizen of Athens, the emperor Hadrian, *restitutor libertatis*." Behr (e.g., *Complete Works*, 1:447 n. 548) critiques Oliver for this association of the "Panathenaic Oration" with Hadrian and the Panhellenion.

<sup>68</sup> Boatwright, *Hadrian*, 127–40; quotation from 28; Benjamin, "Altars of Hadrian," 57.

<sup>69</sup> Boatwright, *Hadrian*, 142.

<sup>70</sup> E.g., Plutarch, *De superstitione*; Varro, *Of Divine and Human Antiquities*, which no longer exists but Augustine discusses in *City of God*; Cicero, *De natura deorum*. Some texts argue that stories of the gods are better understood as allegories for the forces of nature, and that one true God rules over all things, but one should still practice ancestral religions. See Harold W. Attridge's meticulous "The Philosophical Critique of Religion under the Early Empire," *ANRW* 2.1 (1978): 45–78; Robert M. Grant, *Gods and the One God* (LEC 1; Philadelphia: Westminster, 1986), 75–83; and esp. Polymnia Athanassiadi and Michael Frede, "Introduction," in *Pagan Monotheism in Late Antiquity* (ed. Polymnia Athanassiadi and Michael Frede; Oxford: Clarendon, 1999), 7–10; and in the same volume Frede, "Monotheism and Pagan Philosophy in Later Antiquity," 46–57.

<sup>71</sup> See, e.g., Lucian, *Zeus, Performer of Tragedy* 3; *The Double Indictment*, 2; *On Sacrifices, On Funerals, The Passing of Peregrinus, Zeus Accused*.

religion on multiple and contradictory levels, honoring the interest some elites had in restoring ancient glories, even as others were offended by ancient glories and their bloody, embarrassing forms of sacrificial cult.<sup>72</sup>

Except for Rome, Athens was the city where Hadrian spent the most time.<sup>73</sup> His lavish benefactions in Athens, including those surrounding the creation of the Panhellenion, made second-century Athens more “classically” Greek than it had been in the first century. Hadrian thereby created a strong context for his Panhellenion to meet regularly and celebrate ritually once every four years. His benefactions toward cults that he considered proper to Greek and Roman identity also helped to define true religion and proper ethnicity. Indeed, with Hadrian, we can speak about “Greco-Roman” identity.

### *What Has Athens to Do with Rome?*

The Athenians responded to Hadrian’s presence and attentions; he had been a citizen there and had even held its archonship before he assumed the *imperium* of Rome. At the time of his first visit in 124/125, Hadrian was honored by a statue on the Altar of the Eponymous Heroes in the Athenian agora and an addition of a tribe named *Hadrianis*.<sup>74</sup> These interactions between Hadrian and Athenians crystallize a particular moment in Roman–Greek relations. The idea of Romans as barbarians<sup>75</sup> was publicly effaced as Rome bought into Greece’s capital in and traditions of *paideia*. The reality of Athenian and Greek subordination to Rome was veneered with new buildings and benefactions, most of which quote from Greece’s classical period in their architectural form and decoration.

Even before Hadrian, Athens was familiar with building projects sponsored by Roman emperors and Roman citizens, although the scale of Hadrian’s building projects was unprecedented. From the second century B.C.E. to the second century C.E., Romans reconfigured significant spaces in Athens, including parts of the ancient agora. To build in the agora, where Socrates had walked, where Athenian democracy took its course, through which Athena was processed in festival, was to insert oneself into this theater of cultural and political memories. Susan Alcock puts it this way: “The Agora has been taken as a superb architectural equivalent to the antiquarian tendencies of the Second Sophistic.”<sup>76</sup> That is, the impulses of the

<sup>72</sup> Perhaps for this reason we find contradictory comments about Hadrian in *Sib. Or.* 8. Hadrian, in my view, was a kind of Julian-before-the-fact, reviving an archaizing form of religion that many elites found distasteful.

<sup>73</sup> Boatwright, *Hadrian*, 144.

<sup>74</sup> James Oliver, “Athenian Citizenship of Roman Emperors,” *Hesperia* 20 (1951): 346–49; Boatwright, *Hadrian*, 144–45, esp. n. 3.

<sup>75</sup> See, e.g., Vitruvius *De architectura*; see Hartog, *Memories of Odysseus*, 163–97; Dench, *Romulus’ Asylum*, 93–151.

<sup>76</sup> Much of the information here is derived from Alcock’s chapter “Old Greece within the Empire,” in *Archaeologies of the Greek Past*, 36–98 (quotation from 51); see also John Camp, *The*

Second Sophistic are not limited to literary texts; in the Athenian agora, the Romans inscribed themselves materially, quoting from and engaging with its ancient "texts." During this time, the almost empty triangular region marked by the Stoa of Zeus and the Metroon on one side, the Middle Stoa to the south, and the Panathenaic Street on the west became busy with buildings. Probably from the time of Augustus into the second century, a fifth-century B.C.E. "itinerant temple" of Ares—that is, a Greek temple from the classical period—was moved from an unknown location and (re)built in the center of the agora, as we learn from Roman builders' marks. Since Ares was not an especially popular god, "specifically Roman interests" may have spurred the choice of this temple and its relocation<sup>77</sup>—namely, that because Gaius Caesar associated himself with Ares, the Athenians made Ares a focus of the agora.

Various locations in Athens came to serve as "memory theaters": "spaces which conjured up specific and controlled memories of the past through the use of monuments, images, and symbols, spaces which served to remind communities at large of just who they were by drawing on who they had been."<sup>78</sup> These spaces juxtaposed ancient monuments with new benefactions in order to affect those who walked through and engaged these locations. This effect would have something to do with relations between Rome and Greece, with the nature of true religion, with the proper acting out of cult. So also we can think of Acts as a space filled with objects ancient and new, with stories of Greeks, Romans, and barbarian others jostling for place on its pages.

### III. TRAVELING BACK TO ACTS

In the example of the changed cityscape of Athens under Rome we see an abundant recollection of the past and a deliberate sense of architectural citation displayed, as Romans imitated ancient building techniques and details. Similarly, Luke-Acts collects extant sources and creates its own literary memory theater for early Christianity, where past stories are newly used, transformed, and embedded in the narrative.<sup>79</sup> This is true, too, in a way for a text such as Matthew, which uses Q, Mark, and other materials, and with a redactor's strong hand creates its own literary architecture. But Luke is more explicitly a bricoleur of sources, from places

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*Archaeology of Athens* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2001). Price shows that this can be read as "a system of exchange" in the "relationship between subject and ruler," no matter who requested the innovations (*Rituals and Power*, 53–77).

<sup>77</sup> Alcock, *Archaeologies of the Greek Past*, 55.

<sup>78</sup> Susan E. Alcock, "The Reconfiguration of Memory in the Eastern Roman Empire," in *Empires: Perspectives from Archaeology and History* (ed. Susan E. Alcock et al.; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 334–35.

<sup>79</sup> On Acts' use of sources and "rewriting the past," see Penner, *In Praise of Christian Origins*, 247–61; and esp. Cadbury, *Making of Luke-Acts*, e.g., 139, 155–93.

known and unknown, as was the tradition of Hellenistic and Roman historians. The preface that serves both the Gospel and Acts (Luke 1:1–4) and Acts' brief recapitulation (Acts 1:1–2) authorize Luke-Acts precisely by positioning it in relation to past narratives:

1 Inasmuch as many have undertaken to compile a narrative (διήγησιν) of the things which have been accomplished among us, 2 just as they were delivered to us by those who from the beginning were eyewitnesses and ministers of the word, 3 it seemed good to me also, having followed all things closely for some time past, to write an orderly account for you, most excellent Theophilus, 4 that you may know the truth concerning the things of which you have been informed.

Luke's narrative supersedes these, the text implies, because of its power to collect and arrange; his style incorporates and paraphrases works from the past.<sup>80</sup> Moreover, the worth of Luke's sources is guaranteed by their connection to tradition (signaled by the verb *παρέδοσαν*) and by the eyewitness quality (*αὐτόπται*) of the accounts.<sup>81</sup>

We can picture the text of Luke-Acts like the city of Athens. The long text is studded with the architectures of earlier materials—"itinerant temples," fit into the landscape. The language of Luke-Acts in places mimics the Septuagint, giving it an archaizing and authoritative patina.<sup>82</sup> One wanders Acts' stories, sensing but not clearly seeing the seams of the narrative.<sup>83</sup> The "we" narrative, for example, which suddenly appears and disappears,<sup>84</sup> stands up like an architectural wonder in the narrative setting; its style matches the neighborhood, but one can also tell that it is something different along the architectural tour that is Acts.

Luke is also interested in unity, in juxtaposing his diverse sources and narratives, as well as his own redactional activities, into a coherent memory theater, on the one hand, and into a coherent geography, on the other. As Aristides does, Luke uses universalizing rhetoric to draw diverse members into *concordia* or *homonoiia*, even if these terms are never used. There are specific references to this idea

<sup>80</sup> Cadbury, *Making of Luke-Acts*, 155–209; Bonz, *Past as Legacy*, 87, on Luke's "hint of dissatisfaction with the work of his predecessors."

<sup>81</sup> Cadbury, *Making of Luke-Acts*, 22–23.

<sup>82</sup> There are many studies of "Septuagintalism" in Luke-Acts, e.g., Pervo, *Dating Acts*, 31–35; Cadbury, *Making of Luke-Acts*, 122–26; on Luke's language and its more detailed treatment, see idem, *The Style and Literary Method of Luke* (HTS 6; Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1920), 1–72; J. de Zwaan, "The Use of the Greek Language in Acts," and William Clarke, "The Use of the Septuagint in Acts," in F. J. Foakes-Jackson and Kirsopp Lake, eds., *The Beginnings of Christianity: Acts of the Apostles* (5 vols.; London: Macmillan, 1920–33), 2:30–65, 66–105; for a philological comparison of Luke-Acts with Second Sophistic writers, see de Zwaan, "Use of the Greek Language," 37–38.

<sup>83</sup> See, e.g., Jacques Dupont, *The Sources of the Acts: The Present Position* (trans. K. Pond; London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1964), 166–67; Cadbury, *Making of Luke-Acts*, 49–75.

<sup>84</sup> Stanley Porter, "Excursus: The 'We' Passages," in *Acts in Its Graeco-Roman Setting*, ed. Gill and Gempf, 562.

throughout Acts. We find this harmony in Acts 2:44 and 4:32 as well as in the smoothing over of the conflict between “Hebrews” and “Hellenists” in Acts 16. Acts 10–11 presents the inclusion of Gentiles with a great emphasis on the term *koinos*: on discerning correctly what is “common” and permissible food, thus creating the grounds for a larger community (Acts 10:14, 15, 28; 11:8–9).<sup>85</sup> Acts 15’s story of the council held in Jerusalem gently smoothes over the controversies, instead presenting an easily accomplished unity on issues of Gentile inclusion and apostolic authority.<sup>86</sup>

The Panhellenion linked Greek cities together in part through imagined links to mythic Greek identity. Acts 15:21 offers a similar logic. The passage addresses the question of what legal requirements those “Gentiles who turn to God” are required to keep. It concludes: “For from early generations Moses has had in every city (ἐκ γενεῶν ἀρχαίων κατὰ πόλιν) those who preach him, for he is read every Sabbath in the synagogues.” The minimal requirements for Gentile inclusion—abstaining from the pollution of idols (τῶν ἀλισγημάτων τῶν εἰδώλων), *porneia*, what is strangled, and blood—are bolstered by a claim that Moses was available to cities for generations; Gentiles dwelling in cities must merely restore the ancient connection to become part of the city league of “the Way.”

This section is immediately followed by an official embassy: men from the council repair with Paul and Barnabas to Antioch with a letter: “To the brothers and sisters from the nations, greeting” (Acts 15:23). In the aftermath of the council in Jerusalem, we are assured of the unity of the program. Even as Paul and Barnabas split from each other, even as Paul takes on Timothy as a travel companion, the hearer is reassured that “as they went through the cities, they handed on to them (παρεδίδουσαν) the teachings to guard, which had been adjudicated by the apostles and elders in Jerusalem. And so the assemblies were strengthened in the faith and increased in number each day” (Acts 16:4–5). The tradition—*παρεδίδωμι* signals the handing down of authoritative knowledge and is the same term used to authorize Luke’s own work (Luke 1:2)—and the teachings continue safely from generation to generation and from place to place. Acts depicts the leaders of the Way wending around the Mediterranean basin with no fracture or division.<sup>87</sup>

<sup>85</sup> Acts 21:28 engages in a deliberate irony: Paul, having brought Greeks into the Jerusalem temple, is accused by “the Jews from Asia,” “crying out, ‘Men of Israel, help! This is the man who is teaching people everywhere against the nation and the law and this place; moreover he also brought Greeks into the temple, and he has defiled (χεκοίνωκεν, literally, “made common”) this holy place.’”

<sup>86</sup> Paul himself presented things otherwise, referring, for instance, acrimoniously to “false brothers and sisters” (Gal 2:4) who participated in this council.

<sup>87</sup> Acts early on gathers together the varieties of Jesus-followers into a unified narrative and a unified vision, the sort that easily accommodated those early scholars Irenaeus and Eusebius as they manufactured Christian unity in the late second and early fourth centuries. See Brent, *Imperial Cult*, 138–39.



## Acts 2

In Acts, Jerusalem appears as already the superseded (it competes with Antioch for importance<sup>88</sup>) but still mythical central city of the league. Just as Athens at the center of the Panhellenion was eclipsed by the reality of the true power of Rome, Jerusalem for Luke is eclipsed and insignificant compared to Rome, toward which Paul is headed. Yet Acts begins in Jerusalem. Acts 2:1-13 has been a passage of key importance in scholars' theories of Luke's relations to empire. This passage offers a vision of Pentecost in which tongues descend upon each of the disciples and all present hear them speaking in disparate languages. Embedded within the story of these tongues is a list of regions of the world.

Now there were dwelling in Jerusalem Jews, devout men from every nation under heaven (ἀπὸ παντὸς ἔθνους τῶν ὑπὸ τὸν οὐρανόν). And at this sound the multitude came together, and they were bewildered, because each one heard them speaking in his own language. And they were amazed and wondered, saying, "Are not all these who are speaking Galileans? And how is it that we hear, each of us in our very own language, that into which we were begotten? Parthians and Medes and Elamites and residents of Mesopotamia,<sup>89</sup> Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya belonging to Cyrene, and visitors from Rome, both Jews and proselytes, Cretans and Arabians, we hear them telling in our own tongues the mighty works of God." (Acts 2:5-11)

In the story we find the dream of instant translation, the hope that myriads can come together and understand simultaneously and effortlessly the "mighty works of God."

Acts presents us with this international list of Jews, a Diaspora called back home for Shavuot. But why these particular peoples? What is the importance of this story, coming as it does roughly in the middle of Luke-Acts, a fulcrum from the ministry in Judea, the Galilee, and environs to the edges of the earth? Gary Gilbert has usefully organized scholarly opinions of this episode in Acts 2 into four camps. Some scholars say the passage derives from ancient astrological lists;<sup>90</sup> others that it derives from lists of locations of Jews in the Diaspora; others that it draws from the table of nations and the story of the tower of Babel in Genesis 10-11 (a story with its own message about language and unity); and still others that Luke draws from Jewish prophecies about the eschatological ingathering of Diaspora Jews.<sup>91</sup>

<sup>88</sup> See discussion in Balch, "METABOAH," 164, 185-86.

<sup>89</sup> During Trajan's reign Mesopotamia was made a province; see *The Cambridge Ancient History*, vol. 11, *The High Empire, A.D. 70-92* (ed. Alan Bowman et al.; 2nd ed.; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 125. Thanks to Rangar Cline for this information.

<sup>90</sup> See Stefan Weinstock, "The Geographical Catalogue in Acts II, 9-11," *JRS* 38 (1948): 43-46.

<sup>91</sup> Gary Gilbert, "The List of Nations in Acts 2: Roman Propaganda and the Lukan

The geographical vision in Acts 2 is also temporal: it offers an image of kingdoms of the world that were great at different historical periods. Listing these disparate empires together produces a movement not only through space but also through time, from the Parthians to the Romans. Moreover, it echoes and corrects the disaster of Babel: in Acts 2, languages are miraculously different yet comprehensible. It also reverses the scattering of the Babel episode: the Jews of the Diaspora, the devout of the world, are gathered together. Thus, Acts from its very beginning inscribes some idea of the entire *oikoumenē*, whether that idea is derived primarily from antiquarian geographical-astrological texts or from a text such as the table of nations in Genesis 10—or some mix of the two.

Nearly everyone agrees that Acts' geographical thinking has something to do with the Roman Empire.<sup>92</sup> Many conclude that Acts' geography mimics but subverts the Roman idea of *basileia* or kingdom. Gilbert argues that Luke-Acts "offers . . . the tools to dismantle the ideological foundation upon which Rome has built its empire. Christians might live in the Roman Empire, but they should not accept its claims to universal domination."<sup>93</sup> Alexander concludes: "It is precisely this itinerant role that defines the apostles (and Paul) in Acts, and I would suggest that this provides a vital key to understanding Luke's cartography of early Christianity," which offers a "loose-knit dynamic network rather than either a centralized hierarchy or a congeries of disconnected congregations."<sup>94</sup> David Balch argues that Luke's Asian historiography "acculturates and Romanizes early Christianity," but he also asserts that "the Christian missionaries from the East subverted Western, European, Roman values."<sup>95</sup> Bonz concludes that the catalogue reconfigures Judea

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Response," *JBL* 121 (2002): 497–529, here 500–501. For a comprehensive treatment of interpretations of Acts 2, see Scott, "Luke's Geographical Horizon," 483–544; see also Bonz, *Past as Legacy*, 99–101, on those who read Acts 2 as Luke's reworking of the Sinai epiphany.

<sup>92</sup> See, e.g., Conzelmann, *Acts*, xlvii; idem, *Theology of Saint Luke*, 137–38.

<sup>93</sup> Gilbert, "List of Nations," 529. See also Allen, *Imperial Cult*, 101–23, who understands Luke-Acts not as revolutionary but as "contra-culture"—that is, it borrows from the political propaganda of the Roman Empire in order to correct its terms. See also Penner, "Civilizing Discourse," 102.

<sup>94</sup> Alexander, "Mapping Early Christianity," 171.

<sup>95</sup> Balch, "METABOAH," 187; he goes on: "God speaks Septuagintal Greek (not Attic) and Jesus teaches leaders to serve as slaves (i.e., a radical reorientation of traditional Greco-Roman values). God does not favor one ethnic group. . . . [T]he geographical movement in Luke's story (from Asia to Europe, from east to west) is thus indicative of larger ideological agendas: the Jordan River muddies the imperial Tiber" (pp. 186–87). Acts 2 is much discussed in missiological and Pentecostal circles: e.g., H. Wagenaar, "Babel, Jerusalem, and Kumba: Missiological Reflections on Genesis 11:1–9 and Acts 2:1–13," *International Review of Mission* 92 (2003): 406–32; G. J. Leeper, "The Nature of the Pentecostal Gift with Special Reference to Numbers 11 and Acts 2," *Asian Journal of Pentecostal Studies* 6 (2003): 23–38; Amos Yong, "As the Spirit Gives Utterance: Pentecost, Intra-Christian Ecumenism, and the Wider Oikoumenē," *International Review of Mission* 92 (2003): 299–314.

on the theological world map: the inclusion of various nations denies “Judea’s pride of place. It is henceforth just one among the nations.”<sup>96</sup>

The topic of geography begun in Acts 2 and the question of its ideological positioning continue through Paul’s travels in Acts. Henry Cadbury in the 1950s put it this way: “What mixed names and backgrounds have the people that Paul meets! . . . Such a world needed a universal religion and a missionary who could be ‘all things to all men.’”<sup>97</sup> Paul, then, becomes for Luke and for Cadbury the quintessential servant of the “great commission” to “go into all the world and preach the gospel.” Paul is the universal man, binding together the Roman Empire under a Christian sign.

We see here that scholars tend to understand that Luke-Acts depicts a Christian *basileia* that is unlike Rome’s: a Christian *oikoumenē* is peaceful and unified, characterized by universal acceptance, with no trace of hegemony. Even in earliest Christianity, however, such rhetoric of universalism was carefully and strategically employed, often to argue for Christian inclusivity over and against Jewish particularity.<sup>98</sup> In order to make Christianity more appealing in light of Jewish uprisings against Rome, Acts sacrifices Jews, molding the community of “the Way” into a form of religion that looks less foreign and more pious to a philosophical, Hellenized Rome.<sup>99</sup> Present-day Jews become the angry mob, such as that which stones Stephen, while the epic Jews of the past are made into the forerunners of the Way, as Shelly Matthews argues.<sup>100</sup> While Jerusalem is the city of the origins of the Way (if not of the term “Christian,” a privilege given to Antioch [11:26]), Stephen declares its obsolescence early on: false witnesses before the Sanhedrin argue that Jesus had claimed he would destroy the temple and the law; still Stephen argues thereafter, using Jewish Scripture itself (Isa 66:1), that despite the temple of Solomon, the highest God does not live in houses made with human hands (Acts 7:47–50). For philosophical reasons Luke can erase the significance of the temple in Jerusalem in his narrative of the years before the temple’s destruction; this conveniently allows him to erase Jerusalem as well. At the same time, Luke-Acts drains its sources of clues of Christian conflict with Rome, such as the arrest and execu-

<sup>96</sup> Bonz, *Past as Legacy*, 106, 111; quotation from 106.

<sup>97</sup> Henry J. Cadbury, *The Book of Acts in History* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1955), 28–29; regarding Acts 2 he writes, “In many ways his was already ‘one world’” (p. 14). See also Robert C. Tannehill, “Paul Outside the Christian Ghetto: Stories of Intercultural Conflict and Cooperation in Acts,” in *Text and Logos: The Humanistic Interpretation of the New Testament* (ed. Theodore W. Jennings; Homage Series; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1990), 247.

<sup>98</sup> Buell, *Why This New Race*, esp. 44–47, 59–62, 78–93, 138–65.

<sup>99</sup> For a similar, perhaps contemporaneous, strategy, see Justin’s *Dialogue with Trypho*.

<sup>100</sup> Shelly Matthews, “The Need for the Stoning of Stephen,” in *Violence in the New Testament* (ed. Shelly Matthews and E. Leigh Gibson; New York: T&T Clark, 2005), 124–39; Lawrence Wills, “The Depiction of the Jews in Acts,” *JBL* 110 (1991): 631–54; Richard Pervo, “Meet Right—and Our Bounden Duty,” *Forum* n.s. 4.1 (2001): 57–60. Bonz underscores the competition between Lukan communities and communities of the Jewish Diaspora (*Past as Legacy*, 94, 128).

tion of John the Baptist, and leaves Paul at the end enjoying what sounds like a comfortable and safe house arrest (long puzzling to scholars) under Roman care.

### *Paul in Lystra and Athens: Confusing Humans and Gods*

The issue of space and geography continues to be addressed throughout Acts. The term *ekklēsia*, found as a self-designation for community even in Paul's earliest letter, is the same one used for political assemblies in Greek cities and recalls all the rich debates and struggles of such assemblies. Yet Luke-Acts retains the plural *ekklēsiai* in only one place; otherwise, the "assemblies" are reduced to a singular.<sup>101</sup> In crafting this unity Acts reminds us of the league of cities under Rome that Aristides celebrates. Aristides, frequently using the term *koinos*, had described Rome as a lead city to an empire that looked more like a civic league than a conquering force;<sup>102</sup> he celebrated the ease of moving throughout empire, city to city, "as on an avenue." Rome's influence was "literally woven through the city like a thread" by the *cardo* or *decumanus*, and this tie to the center was again marked by milestones which "reminded the traveler of the center of the empire."<sup>103</sup> Travelers were guided by the routes into the nodes of cities and knotted into the system of the Roman Empire. Luke-Acts represents Paul as such a traveler.

The cities to which Paul travels repeatedly are in the same regions where many of the cities of the Panhellenion were, not to mention cities with statues and altars of Hadrian (see again fig. 1).<sup>104</sup> Having emerged from their days in the east, Paul and his companions head to the heartland of ancient Greece and its colonies in Asia Minor, powerful cities of the second century c.e. and of the mythic Greek past. They return again and again, as if on political embassies, to these cities.<sup>105</sup> Even before the council in Jerusalem, Saul and Barnabas had been commissioned in Antioch to travel, and covered the territory of Seleucia, Cyprus (Salamis and Paphos), Perga (in Pamphylia), Pisidian Antioch, Iconium, Lystra, Derbe, Lystra again, Iconium, Pisidian Antioch, Pamphylia again, Attalia, and Antioch. A pattern is developed throughout Acts: Acts 13 describes this back and forth of travel, and after the council of Acts 15 the story is repeated, as if to affirm the linking of these and other cities under the care of Paul and his companions.

<sup>101</sup> Acts 16:5 is the only plural amid twenty-three uses of the term *ekklēsia*.

<sup>102</sup> See the discussion in Oliver, *Ruling Power*, 889.

<sup>103</sup> Paul Zanker, "The City as Symbol: Rome and the Creation of an Urban Image," in *Romanization and the City: Creation, Transformations, and Failures: Proceedings of a Conference Held at the American Academy in Rome to Celebrate the 50th Anniversary of the Excavations at Cosa, 14–16 May, 1998* (ed. Elizabeth Fentress; Journal of Roman Archaeology Supplementary series 38; Portsmouth, RI: Journal of Roman Archaeology, 2000), 27; the quotation is from 29.

<sup>104</sup> The figure is based on Spawforth and Walker, "Panhellenion: I," 80 (fig. 1). For locations of Hadrian's altars and statues, see Benjamin, "Altars of Hadrian," 57–86.

<sup>105</sup> Bovon reads this as pastoral "fortifying" ("Israel, the Church and the Gentiles," 92–95).

Many of Luke's scenes of Paul's travels serve as narrative distillations of issues of ethnicity, proper practice of religion, *paideia*, and relations with Rome—that is, some of the precise issues raised in the Second Sophistic. In the midst of Paul's travels, several locations stand out because they are the settings of longer narratives about Paul's interactions with “natives.” These stories are narrative forms of theorizing religion and politics. Luke takes part in a debate over what is proper religion and what practices are efficacious, at a time when Hadrian and others also discuss religion explicitly, with words, and implicitly, with benefactions for festivals and cultic practice.

The account of Paul and Barnabas at Lystra spoofs tendencies to misapprehend humans as gods: “And when the crowds saw what Paul had done, they lifted up their voices, saying in Lykaonian, ‘The gods have come down to us in human form!’ (οἱ θεοὶ ὁμοιωθέντες ἀνθρώποις κατέβησαν πρὸς ἡμᾶς).” In their native tongue, in their backwater town, the joke is that the Lystrans ignorantly manifest a confusion between gods and humans that many would say was rampant throughout the empire. The cities that Luke and his first readers traveled were crowded with the imperial cult, with statuary of humans representing themselves as gods, gods in human form whose faces sometimes resembled members of the imperial family, and with executions where criminals were made to represent the gods.<sup>106</sup>

So-called apologists like Justin and Athenagoras take up the theme raised here in more philosophical tones, arguing about the nature of the creator versus the created or mocking (alongside their pagan contemporaries) the myths of gods busying themselves among humans in more or less admirable and sexually avaricious ways. Luke instead makes a similar, briefer argument about true piety and correct religion in sparkling narrative form. The scene commences with Paul's healing miracle (14:8–18) and includes a priest of Zeus who wants to make sacrifice for the incarnate Zeus and Hermes.<sup>107</sup> As the priest of Zeus offers animals for sacrifice and garlands for celebration, marching out of the city toward the temple of Zeus, Paul and Barnabas weep at this pious misunderstanding. “We ourselves are humans, similar and subject to the same laws as you!’ . . . and saying these things they barely stopped the mobs from sacrificing to them” (Acts 14:15, 18). Here we find another joke: the ignorant mobs for once are not violent but over-adulatory, like the crowds

<sup>106</sup> For two examples of ancient debates over theomorphy and statuary of the gods, see Cicero, *De natura deorum* and Clement of Alexandria, *Protreptikos* (esp. book 4). See also Christopher Hallett, *The Roman Nude: Heroic Portrait Statuary 200 BC–AD 300* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), 223–70; Yaron Eliav, “Roman Statues, Rabbis, and Graeco-Roman Culture,” in *Jewish Literatures and Cultures: Context and Intertext* (ed. Yaron Eliav and A. Norich; BJS 349; Providence, RI: Brown Judaic Studies, 2008), 99–115. On the execution of criminals as if they were gods in mythological stories, see Kathleen Coleman, “Fatal Charades: Roman Executions Staged as Mythological Enactments,” *JRS* 80 (1990): 44–73.

<sup>107</sup> Dean Philip Béchar, *Paul Outside the Walls: A Study of Luke's Socio-Geographical Universalism in Acts 14:8–20* (AnBib 143; Rome: Pontificio Istituto Biblico, 2000), 376.

Lucian depicts happily gathered for Peregrinus's praise and immolation, as he becomes a god.<sup>108</sup>

Dean Béchard argues that Paul's speech to the people of Lystra matches his speech to the Athenians. The story of Lystra marks Paul's interaction with rustics, not urban sophisticates.<sup>109</sup> Paul's speech to the Athenians, as Dibelius and others have argued, marks his interaction with Greek culture.<sup>110</sup> Acts 14 and 17 contrast rural and native, barbarian and the most Greek of all. But in both, the line between human and divine and the nature of true religion are misapprehended and critiqued.

Luke's depiction of Paul in Athens is the "climax of the book."<sup>111</sup> Athens symbolizes philosophical significance even under Rome, and Paul's speech from the Areopagus takes place not just on a high place in the city topographically, but a high place of cultural values. Standing on the Areopagus, the ancient site of the Athenian *ekklēsia*, or assembly, of ancient judgment and knowledge, Paul thoroughly critiques Greek *deisidaimonia*: "I see that you are in every way very *deisidaimonesterous*" (κατὰ πάντα ὡς δεισιδαιμονεστέρους ὑμᾶς). The RSV translates "very religious," but "very superstitious"—fearing the gods in a way that completely misapprehends the divine—is also legitimate. Plutarch discusses *deisidaimonia* as a dangerous inclination to conduct cultic rites out of fear of the gods.<sup>112</sup>

In Athens, Luke-Acts foregrounds issues of religion and its truly philosophical practice. Here Paul acts as a philosopher to address other philosophers. Even before the time of Hadrian's great benefactions, and certainly thereafter, we can imagine an Athens crowded with statuary, temples, altars, and buildings—even more crowded than the agora alone, where Acts 17:3 places Paul.<sup>113</sup> Paul's horror at Lystran religiosity was linked to the people's confusion between human and

<sup>108</sup> Lucian, *Passing of Peregrinus*; on mobs and Acts, see Wills, "Depiction of the Jews"; and Matthews, "Need for the Stoning." Although they are not "wolflike" as the etymology of their name suggests, they too will turn violent at the instigation of the Jews who come from Antioch and Iconium and persuade the people to stone Paul. See Amy Wordelman, "Cultural Divides and Dual Realities: A Greco-Roman Context for Acts 14," in *Contextualizing Acts*, ed. Penner and Vander Stichele, 205–32, esp. 228–29. There is a play on the word *lykos* ("wolf") in this passage; elsewhere too Luke alludes to Jews being like wolves (Luke 10:3; Acts 20:29) (p. 228).

<sup>109</sup> So also Alexander, "In Journeyings Often," 35.

<sup>110</sup> Dibelius, *Book of Acts*, 95–133; Bechard, *Paul Outside the Walls*, 255–53. Lucian too uses the Areopagus as a setting of judgment (*The Double Indictment*).

<sup>111</sup> Dibelius, *Book of Acts*, 95.

<sup>112</sup> E.g., Plutarch, *De superstitione*; see also Dale Martin, *Inventing Superstition: From the Hippocratics to the Christians* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2004).

<sup>113</sup> Acts 17:17 depicts Paul as "in the synagogue with the Jews and the devout persons and in the market place (*agora*) every day." Since Acts draws broad painterly strokes, and since Epicureans and Stoics haunt this particular *agora* (see v. 18), which seems to be near the Areopagus, I think Acts 17:17 conjures the philosophically engaged ancient agora. On Paul in Athens, see Halvor Moxnes, "He Saw That the City Was Full of Idols' (Acts 17:16): Visualizing the World of the First Christians," in *Mighty Minorities? Minorities in Early Christianity: Positions and Strategies* (ed. Halvor Moxnes et al.; Oslo: Scandinavian University Press, 1995), 107–31.

divine: “The gods have come down to us in the likeness of humans (ὁμοιωθέντες ἀνθρώποις)!” cried the people when they saw Paul’s miracle. *Homoiōthentes* (the passive of the verb ὁμοιάω is defined as “to be made like, to become like”) recalls terms that are often used for statuary and image making that imitate real life, on the one hand, and the language of human creation in Genesis 1, on the other, where God decides to make humans in God’s “image and likeness.”<sup>114</sup>

So also in Athens, Paul is described as provoked in his spirit when he sees “the city full of idols (κατείδωλον)” (17:16). In the cultural context of the ancient Mediterranean, where gods look like humans and humans like gods in the statuary of cities and temples, Acts presents a Paul who is offended because neither Lystra nor Athens draws proper lines between god and humans. Paul’s speech insists that God does not “dwell in shrines made by human hands, nor is God served by human hands, as though in need of something” (Acts 17:24b–25a). The frantic restoration and building efforts of someone like Hadrian are misdirected: they miss the true nature of the divine.

Acts uses Athens as a stage setting<sup>115</sup> for Paul’s philosophical critique of Greek religion. Conzelmann’s commentary notes that Paul’s speech is not unusual in light of past and present Greek philosophical thought.<sup>116</sup> Acts sets this speech on the Areopagus, that ancient site of judgment and community deliberation. Pushed there by the crowd that surrounds him, Paul states:

26 [God] made<sup>117</sup> from one every nation of humans to dwell upon all the face of the earth, having delimited the prescribed times and the fixed boundaries of their dwelling place, 27 to seek God, if indeed they should touch him and find him. And yet [God] is not far from each one of us, 28 for “In God we live and move and have our being”; as even some of your poets have said, “For we are indeed his offspring (γένος).” 29 Being then God’s offspring, we ought not to think that the divine is like gold, or silver, or stone, a representation by art and human conception.<sup>118</sup>

<sup>114</sup> LSJ s.v. ὁμοιάω. For other terms for statuary, see Peter Stewart, *Statues in Roman Society* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003), 19–45. See Gen 1:26–27, and, e.g., J. Maxwell Miller, “In the ‘Image’ and ‘Likeness’ of God,” *JBL* 91 (1972): 289–304.

<sup>115</sup> On Athens and the Areopagus as a stage background, see Conzelmann, *Acts*, 146–48.

<sup>116</sup> Plutarch cites the Stoic Zeno’s argument that one should not build temples of the gods; Seneca and Pseudo-Heraclitus also argued that the divine is to be consecrated within each human (according to the first) or in all the world (according to the second). Plutarch *Mor.* 1034b: “It is a doctrine of Zeno’s ‘not to build temples of the gods’”; all the above are cited in Conzelmann, *Acts*, 141. See also, e.g., Lucian, *Sacr.* 11. Philo and Josephus too contain injunctions against images, although these are frequently launched in a particular rhetorical context, especially the memory of Gaius’s (Caligula’s) attempt to hang banners and mount a statue of Zeus in the Jerusalem temple.

<sup>117</sup> I follow Conzelmann’s argument that ἐποίησεν governs both κατοικεῖν and ζῆτεῖν (*Acts*, 142). Ernst Haenchen emphasizes that ἐποίησεν echoes the ποιήσας of v. 24 and thus is a “recapitulation of the creation account” (*The Acts of the Apostles: A Commentary* [trans. Bernard Noble and Gerald Shinn; trans. rev. and ed. R. McL. Wilson; Philadelphia: Westminster, 1971], 523).

<sup>118</sup> The term χάραγμα has connotations of an impression, inscription, or stamp.

26 ἐποίησέν τε ἕξ ἑνὸς πᾶν ἔθνος ἀνθρώπων κατοικεῖν ἐπὶ παντός προσώπου τῆς γῆς, ὀρίσας προστεταγμένους καιροὺς καὶ τὰς ὁροθεσίας τῆς κατοικίας αὐτῶν 27 ζητεῖν τὸν θεόν, εἰ ἄρα γε ψηλαφήσειαν αὐτὸν καὶ εὖροιεν, καὶ γε οὐ μακρὰν ἀπὸ ἑνὸς ἐκάστου ἡμῶν ὑπάρχοντα. 28 ἐν αὐτῷ γὰρ ζῶμεν καὶ κινούμεθα καὶ ἐσμέν, ὡς καὶ τινες τῶν καθ' ὑμᾶς ποιητῶν εἰρήκασιν· τοῦ γὰρ καὶ γένος ἐσμέν. 29 γένος οὖν ὑπάρχοντες τοῦ θεοῦ οὐκ ὀφείλομεν νομίζειν χρυσῷ ἢ ἀργύρῳ ἢ λίθῳ, χαράγματι τέχνης καὶ ἐνθυμήσεως ἀνθρώπου, τὸ θεῖον εἶναι ὅμοιον.

The passage is a tour de force, combining allusions to Greek poets with the story of creation in Genesis 1–2, and weaving together abstract geographical and temporal thinking with the reality of the built environment of statues of gold, silver, and stone. In v. 28, the phrase “in God we live and move and have our being” borrows from Cleanthes’ third-century B.C.E. *Hymn to Zeus* (lines 3b–5): “For it is right for all mortals to address you: / for we have our origin in you, bearing a likeness to God, / we, alone of all that live and move as mortal creatures on earth.”<sup>119</sup> In the phrase “for we are also his offspring,” scholars have long seen the influence of Aratus’s *Phaenomena*.<sup>120</sup>

In this speech, Luke’s Paul also combines the topic of creation—how God “made from one every nation of humans”—with the question of “what the divine is like” (τὸ θεῖον εἶναι ὅμοιον), or not: the divine is not like the images produced by humans. In doing so the speech articulates one primary and one secondary theological point: first, it tries to establish proper human relations with the divine, and, second(arily), proper human relations with each other. I use the term “relations” deliberately, since Acts employs the terminology of *genos*, which can also be translated “race” and which, as we have seen, is a key term in establishing kinship.<sup>121</sup> Humans and the divine are indeed alike: the Septuagint version of Gen 1:26 states, “God said, ‘Let us make a human according to our image (εἰκόνα) and likeness (ὁμοίωσιν).’” But the Areopagus speech hints that the nature of that similarity does not extend to creating gods in the image of humans. In the Lystran episode, we saw the theme that humans are not to be confused with gods; Paul and Barnabas are not Hermes and Zeus. In the speech in Athens, we see the inverse arguments: god is not like humans; humans cannot make images of the divine or build homes/shrines for it.<sup>122</sup>

<sup>119</sup> Johan C. Thom, *Cleanthes’ Hymn to Zeus: Text, Translation, and Commentary* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2005), 52.

<sup>120</sup> Line 5: τοῦ γὰρ καὶ γένος εἰμέν. For the Greek see Aratos, *Phénomènes* (2 vols.; text, trans., comm. Jean Martin; Paris: Les belles lettres, 1998), 1:1. Aratus was also cited by the Hellenistic Jewish writer Aristobulus before Luke-Acts (Eusebius, *Praep. evang.* 13.12); Clement, *Strom.* 14.101 also cites Aratus. See Cadbury, *Making of Luke-Acts*, 122 n. 10.

<sup>121</sup> See Buell, *Why This New Race?* The language of *genos* reminds us of the same terminology in the Kibyran Panhellenion inscription (τὸ γένος Ἑλληνι[κόν]).

<sup>122</sup> The passage repeats a logic already legitimized twice by Peter in Acts 10–11: “Truly I



What is the “one” from which this impartial God “made the world,” in the terms of Acts 17? Conzelmann suggests Adam; we can go further and suggest that from Adam until Babel, all peoples were one, united at least by language (ἕξ ἑνὸς πᾶν ἔθνος ἀνθρώπων).<sup>123</sup> From this one proliferate many nations. Terminology of boundary making (*horizō*, *horothesia*, *prostassō*) fills the passage. *Kairoi* (“fixed times”) and *horothesiai* (“prescribed boundaries”) refer “to the epochs in the histories of the nations and to their national boundaries” and mean “periods and boundaries.”<sup>124</sup> Each human *ethnos*, derived from an original “one,” moves outward to its proper place in time and space.

Thus, in Acts 17 we see a God who is Panhellenios and more. Although the Roman Empire allowed (to some extent) the worship of multiple gods—the shrines and representations to which Paul refers—Luke through Paul communicates a vision of the world where one God commands all, everywhere (17:30b; τὰ νῦν παραγγέλλει τοῖς ἀνθρώποις πάντας πανταχοῦ μετανοεῖν). Thus, the God Paul describes in Athens as the one true God repeats and expands the God of Acts 2. In Acts 2, Jews of “every nation” are able to hear in their own language; in Acts 17, Luke’s imperial God, communicating through Paul’s always threatened but invulnerable body, commands all people, of all nations, to repent and submit, even as he insists that all are ultimately one in origin, mythically and primordially linked.

In Athens, the heart of Hadrian’s projects, Paul offers a religious option that draws on the rhetoric, traditions, and literature of ancient Greece. He recalls the glories of ancient Greece but also announces God’s command and impending judgment on the *oikoumenē*. Clearly, Roman imperial command, judgment, and reign over the world, as well as Roman imperial claims to be and to represent the divine, are paltry in the face of Paul’s God.

### *Paul in Thessalonikē and Philippi: Roman Sedition?*

But does this mean that Acts presents a vision of a kingdom of God that stands over and against the Roman Empire? No. In its depiction of Paul in Thessalonikē and Philippi, Acts both preserves and denies traces of an idea that Christianity is politically seditious—an idea promulgated by Romans and even Christians at the time. Acts instead appeals to the logic of Greek cities under Rome, on the one hand, and to the logic of philosophical conversations about the nature of true worshiping, on the other, in order to construct a Christianity that hybridizes neatly with Rome.

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understand that God is not partial, but in every nation (ἔθνος) one who fears God and practices justice is acceptable to God” (Acts 10:34–35). It also echoes Acts 2, where the list of nations seemed to function simultaneously as a chronological and geographical succession of empires and spread of nations. Here, too, God made from one every nation for one purpose: to dwell on the earth even as they seek God.

<sup>123</sup> Buell, *Why This New Race?* 78–84, 138–65.

<sup>124</sup> Conzelmann, *Acts*, 142–44, discussing the views of others, including Dibelius, for whom *kairoi* refer to seasons and a “philosophy of nature” (*Book of Acts*, 97–101).

Paul has already traveled through the eastern rim of the Mediterranean, shifting from Antioch to Cyprus to Jerusalem and back. Paul then travels extensively in various parts of Asia Minor; being prevented by the "Spirit of Jesus" (Acts 16:7) from travel in the province of Asia proper, he is called to Macedonia in a dream. There, in the heartland of Alexander the Great's empire, where Rome exerted its influence through means such as the Panhellenion, Paul and his cohort are labeled "the ones who have stirred up the inhabited world" (17:7; οἱ τὴν οἰκουμένην ἀναστατώσαντες). Specifically, they stir up the *oikoumenē* by "acting against the decrees of Caesar, saying that there is another king, Jesus." In other words, Paul and company are accused (even in absentia, as is the case in Thessalonikē), of political sedition.

What comes of these accusations of treason? Nothing, in the end, because Acts carefully constructs a Way that is not seditious toward Rome.<sup>125</sup> In Philippi, Paul and Silas encounter a girl with a Pythian spirit, who declares that the two are servants of the Most High God. Thus, even a "pagan" slave, economically and pneumatically exploited by human and divine, proclaims the truth of monotheism and proclaims Paul and Silas as that one God's representatives (Acts 16:16–40). When Paul and Silas are thrown into prison for exorcising the girl (and thus, according to her owners, destroying their tool for money-making), Paul refuses an offer of quiet release: with their Roman citizenship, he insists, they should not be so humiliated, and thus Rome comes to the rescue of these cultured travelers. In the episode just before this, it is in fact Paul's strident claim to Roman citizenship that gets Silas and him shown Philippi's city gate (Acts 16:35–40). Acts thus retains traces of ongoing interpretations of Paul as a political seditionary who stands against Rome while overwriting these traditions. Paul is a master of escape and acquiescence, whose nearly invulnerable body uses imperial roadways and seaways in no way especially offensive to the empire. Paul slips off safely, under threat of Jewish violence, not Roman judicial proceedings.

#### IV. CONCLUSIONS: EMPIRE AND ACTS' THEOLOGICAL VISION

As the Romans embellished ancient buildings in the Athenian agora and inserted their own, so also Luke-Acts produces a "memory theater," invoking the language of the Septuagint, monumental traditions regarding the earliest Jesus movement, and retelling again and again the epic of the people of Israel, reconfiguring its literary spaces for a new (Christian) Israel.<sup>126</sup> Luke's narrative sources and his map of the *oikoumenē* are significant shards of the past. Acts is a product of the Second Sophistic: it crafts a story of a city league formed by the ambassadorial presence of Paul; it looks back to the first generation of the Jesus movement and to the ancient traditions of Israel.

<sup>125</sup> Esler, *Community and Gospel*, 202–5.

<sup>126</sup> See Bonz, *Past as Legacy*, 26.

Many of Acts' speeches can be read as redundant mini-epics, short recountings of the mythos of the people of Israel. As Philip Esler has argued, Luke-Acts draws on this ancestral religion in order to "assuage doubts which Roman members of Luke's community might have entertained as to the political implications of Christianity":<sup>127</sup> a religion that has such deep ancient ties, as did so many other religions under the Roman Empire, must be a proud and legitimate community. Christianity is constructed as the new Israel, as the rightful inheritor of these stories of salvation and of God's activity in the world. In placing these genealogies in the mouths of figures like Peter and Paul, Luke does something analogous to the cities of the Panhellenion, which were encouraged to invent complex genealogies to establish their metropoleis as solidly Greek in race.<sup>128</sup>

Moreover, Luke-Acts maps Paul's movement through the Roman *oikoumenē* and produces a Christian one in turn. Paul's travels in particular build up a list of cities—an ancient Christian coalition. The Panhellenion, a Roman-sponsored Greek ethnic coalition, fostered diplomacy among Greek city-states. It also called for pious practice that bound diverse cities to the Roman Empire and the imperial family. Similarly, Acts tells the story of a Christianity that is comprehensible to and even in ways imitative of the Roman Empire; it produces a Paul whose travels trace regions and ideas trod by Hadrian himself, and Paul's travels produce a kind of Pan-Christian league echoed in the Panhellenion.

Reading Acts in this way provides a fresh vantage point from which to address sites of interpretive contention, particularly concerning Acts' "apologetic" stance and Roman ideology. Scholarly attention to geography in Luke-Acts has been tied to concerns about the character and scope of earliest Christianity. Prevailing explanations for Luke's geographical vision have moved toward the magnetic poles of these questions: Did Luke's geographical vision imitate Roman geography to support or to undermine it? Or was Luke's geographical vision a quotation of Jewish eschatological traditions, and if so, did it move toward the inclusion of all peoples into the people of God? Acts presents a vision of a new Christian identity. This Christian identity is moored in prestigious ancient Israelite traditions, but moves easily nonetheless through the Greek cities that begged connection with and protection from the Roman Empire. Luke hybridizes Christianity to the Greekness that was so prestigious and marketable in the Roman Empire and seeks to make of "one race" many peoples, using available discourses, including those available to Aelius Aristides and Hadrian. What is at stake in these questions about Acts and the Roman Empire is clear: When did Christianity ever become an inclusive, embracing, universal religion, expanding to the boundaries of the *oikoumenē*? Or did it? And we can push these questions further: Universal in whose terms? At what cost?

<sup>127</sup> Esler, *Community and Gospel*, 216; see also ch. 5, in which he argues that Luke presents Christians, not Jews, as the inheritors of Moses.

<sup>128</sup> On similar ethnic reasoning, see Buell, *Why This New Race?* 4, 85–90.