

**Roman Citizenship as a Climactic Narrative Element:**  
**Paul's Roman Citizenship in Acts 16 and 22 Compared with Cicero's *Against Verres***

A thesis presented for the degree of  
Master of Arts in Theology at Whitworth University

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May 2018

## Summary of Salient Points

Ancient authors presented the institution of Roman *civitas* in their works judiciously. Cicero in *Against Verres* uses Roman *civitas* as a means to condemn a corrupt Roman governor. Luke in the Acts of the Apostles utilizes Paul's Roman citizenship to critique the Roman and Jewish responses to the gospel message. Both Cicero and Luke place Roman citizenship at culminating points in their narratives to achieve their rhetorical and theological goals.

Luke and Cicero also make arguments for why Roman authorities should uphold Roman justice. For Cicero it is because the value of the Romans as free people is at stake. For Luke it is because the Romans are stewards of God's justice. Both authors use Roman citizenship as the revealing factor which tests Roman authorities' commitment to just rule. Because of the high social regard for Roman citizenship both authors place *civitas* at a climactic point within their narratives. In Acts, Paul's Roman citizenship is the last thing Luke reveals about Paul's moral character. Whereas in *Against Verres*, cases of injustice done towards Roman citizens are the last pieces of evidence Cicero provides to reveal Verres' moral character.

In Acts, Luke contrasts the Roman and Jewish responses to Paul's civic status: identified through Luke's use of chiasmus, or *hysteron proteron*. Roman officials in Philippi and Jerusalem respond positively to Paul's *civitas*. They reassess their conceptions about Paul and treat him with proper respect after his citizen status is revealed. Jewish authorities, however, continue to reject Paul and his message even when confronted with his dignified civic identity. These responses reflect contrasting ways human authorities can respond to God's message of salvation.

## Statement of Integrity

I have composed this thesis and carried out the research which it represents. This thesis has not been accepted in any previous application for a degree. All quotations have been distinguished by quotation marks and the sources of information specifically acknowledged.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Dat K. Christensen". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Dat" being more prominent.

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Daniel K. Christensen

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## Preface

This research project is the culmination of four years of studying Paul as a Roman citizen in Acts. It began as a class paper for an undergraduate Roman Empire course at Eastern Washington University. Originally, I concerned myself with the historicity of Paul's *civitas* and whether or not the historical account in Acts was factually accurate. After studying the scholarly literature on the "Quest for the Historical Jesus," however, I began to reconsider the authorial intentions of Luke when it came to the historical descriptions of his subjects, especially Paul. Upon reading other accounts of Roman citizens in Greco-Roman literature it became apparent that these authors were less concerned with historical accuracy than with properly characterizing their subjects.

This research project builds upon two considerations present in existing scholarship. It starts from the scholarly consensus on Luke's reliable historiographical methods to explain how he characterizes Paul as a Roman citizen. Thus, the research takes a narrative-critical approach to consider how Luke portrays Paul as a Roman citizen within the text. This approach extends from within the cultural encyclopedia of Luke's audience and first century Greco-Roman authors and hopes to explain why Luke edited his writing about Paul's citizenship. This research will help to further scholarship on the literary conventions used in the Book of Acts by providing criteria for how to compare the topic of Roman citizenship between Biblical writings and other ancient authors.

A condensed version of this paper was presented at the Pacific Northwest Region Annual Meeting for the American Academy of Religion (AAR), Society of Biblical Literature (SBL), and American Schools of Oriental Research (ASOR) at Pacific Lutheran University in Parkland, WA on May 12, 2018.

## Acknowledgements

I would like to thank the professors of the Whitworth University Theology Department for their tremendous help and support in this project and in my studies more generally. Jonathan Moo introduced me to the language and world of Koine Greek. Without his kind instruction this project would not have been possible. I am indebted to Jeremy Wynne who helped me navigate the many logistical hurdles of putting a project like this together. Haley Jacob served as the secondary reader for this project and offered comments and critiques on the research. Her insights greatly improved the clarity and content of the final product.

Thank you also to Whitworth University's Office of the Provost and the Pacific Northwest Region AAR/SBL/ASOR chapters who provided generous grants for me to present this paper at the PNW AAR/SBL/ASOR Annual Meeting in May 2018.

Finally, a special thank you to Joshua Leim who graciously supervised this research project. He helped me navigate the complexities of the scholarly debate over the historical accuracy of the New Testament, especially the Gospels and Acts. His breadth of knowledge and ideas guided me throughout my time at Whitworth and through my time working on this research project.

## Abbreviations

ACW	Ancient Christian Writers
ANRW	<i>Aufstieg und Niedergang der römischen Welt</i>
BDAG	Danker, Bauer, Arndt, and Gingrich. <i>Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature</i> . 3rd ed.
BECNT	Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament
ClAnt	<i>Classical Antiquity</i>
CP	<i>Classical Philology</i>
CurBR	<i>Currents in Biblical Research</i>
EvQ	<i>Evangelical Quarterly</i>
FT	<i>Financial Times</i>
GBS	Guides to Biblical Scholarship
HSCP	<i>Harvard Studies in Classical Philology</i>
ICC	International Critical Commentary
Int	<i>Interpretation</i>
JBL	<i>Journal of Biblical Literature</i>
JETS	<i>Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society</i>
JHS	<i>Journal of Hellenic Studies</i>
JRS	<i>Journal of Roman Studies</i>
JSNT	<i>The Journal of New Testament Studies</i>
LCL	Loeb Classical Library
LNTS	Library of New Testament Studies
LSJ	Liddell, Scott, and Jones. <i>A Greek English Lexicon</i> . 9th ed.
NICNT	New International Commentary on the New Testament
NovT	<i>Novum Testamentum</i>
NPNF <sup>1</sup>	<i>Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers</i> , Series 1
NPNF <sup>2</sup>	<i>Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers</i> , Series 2
NSBT	New Studies in Biblical Theology
NTS	<i>New Testament Studies</i>
PG	Patrologia Graece
PNTC	Pillar New Testament Commentary
ResQ	<i>Restoration Quarterly</i>
SNTSMS	Society for New Testament Studies Monograph Series
SP	Sacra Pagina
SwJT	<i>Southwestern Journal of Theology</i>
TNTC	Tyndale New Testament Commentary
TynBul	<i>Tyndale Bulletin</i>
ZNW	<i>Zeitschrift für die neutestamentliche Wissenschaft</i>

## **Introduction**

To be a Roman citizen was a prestigious designation in the first century Mediterranean world. Because of this, ancient authors presented Roman citizens and the institution of Roman *civitas* in their works judiciously.<sup>1</sup> Cicero in *Against Verres* uses Roman *civitas* as a means to condemn a corrupt Roman governor. Luke in the Acts of the Apostles utilizes Paul's Roman citizenship to critique the Roman and Jewish responses to the gospel message. In these instances both Cicero and Luke place Roman citizenship at culminating points in their narratives to achieve their rhetorical and theological goals. Here I will argue that Paul's delay announcing his Roman citizenship in Acts chapters 16 and 22 has a rhetorical and literary counterpart in Cicero's *Against Verres*. In both texts Roman citizenship functions as more than a personal description. Cicero and Luke employ Roman *civitas* as a climactic narrative element that reveals the moral character<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> E.g., Dionysius of Halicarnassus, *Ant. rom.* 10.17; 10.22; Plutarch, *Pomp.* 80.3; Cicero, *Verr.* 2.5.170. Here we will focus on the examples in Cicero's *Against Verres*.

<sup>2</sup> "Moral character" here should be understood within the context of the honor-shame culture of the first century. Things that carried honor, such as Roman *civitas*, gave the person who held them moral character. Brian Rapske, *The Book of Acts in its First Century Setting*, vol. 3, *Paul in Roman Custody* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1994), 56-62. In ancient narratives authors often tried to display the virtue or vice of their subjects through moral characterization (e.g. Plutarch, *Alex.* 1.2; Suetonius, *Cal.* 22.1; Tacitus, *Hist.* 5.9). David P. Moessner, "The Triadic Synergy of Hellenistic Poetics in the Narrative Epistemology of Dionysius of Halicarnassus and the Authorial Intent of the Evangelist Luke (Luke 1:1-4; Acts 1:1-8)," *Neotestamentica* 42, no. 2 (2008): 289, 296; L.V. Pitcher, "Characterization in Ancient Historiography," in *A Companion to Greek and Roman Historiography*, ed. John Marincola, 2 vols. (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2007), 102-117; Sean A. Adams, "The Characterization of Disciples in Acts: Genre, Method, and Quality," in *Characters and Characterization in Luke-Acts*, ed. Frank E. Dicken and Julia A. Synder (London: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2016), 155, 164-165, 168.



of Gaius Verres and the Apostle Paul and thereby causes the characters within these stories and the authors' audiences to reevaluate their assumptions about these two figures.

Both Luke and Cicero postpone the presentation of Roman *civitas* in their narratives. Cicero delays mentioning cases involving Roman citizens until the end of his argument in *Against Verres*. First Cicero examines cases in which the victim was of relatively low social status (*Verr.* 2.2.25-26). He continues with cases where the victim was an established foreigner or ally of Rome (*Verr.* 2.4.60 ff.). Cicero ends his accusations with examples where the targets of Verres' avarice were Roman citizens (*Verr.* 2.5.60 ff.). Because Roman *civitas* was of such value to Cicero's audience this delay maximizes its rhetorical effect. When Cicero mentions someone's Roman citizenship it is a paramount means to disgrace Verres (*Verr.* 2.1.13-14). In narrative-rhetorical terms Verres' treatment of Roman citizens is the climactic narrative element that illuminates his detestable moral character. Luke also delays narrating the disclosure of Paul's *civitas* in Acts chapters 16 and 22. Luke first characterizes Paul as a Jew and then as a Greek outsider. Lastly Luke portrays Paul as a Roman citizen. Because Roman citizenship was perhaps the most prestigious of these three designations Luke withholds narrating it until the end of these scenes, maximizing the rhetorical effect it would have on the audience. The climactic disclosure of Paul's Roman citizenship causes Luke's characters and his audience to reevaluate the social boundaries of Paul's gospel message.

Paul's Roman citizenship in Acts also carries with it two layers of meaning: one from the Greco-Roman perspective and another from Paul's Jewish background. Luke employs this dual meaning to critique Roman and Jewish responses to Paul's "civic"

status.<sup>3</sup> Roman officials in Philippi and Jerusalem respond positively to Paul's *civitas*. They reassess their conceptions about him and treat him with proper respect after his citizenship is revealed. Jewish authorities, however, continue to reject Paul and his message even when confronted with his dignified civic identity. These responses reflect contrasting ways human authorities can respond to God's message of salvation.

Cicero and Luke both make arguments for why Roman authorities should uphold justice. For Cicero it is because the value of the Romans as free people is at stake in the case against Verres (*Verr.* 2.5.170). For Luke it is because the Romans are stewards of God's justice (Acts 25:10-11; cf. Rom 13:3-4). Both Cicero and Luke use Roman citizenship as a revealing factor that tests the Roman authorities' commitment to just rule. Because of the high social regard for Roman citizenship both authors place *civitas* at strategic points within their narratives. In *Against Verres* cases of injustice done towards Roman citizens are the last pieces of evidence Cicero provides to reveal Verres' reprehensible moral character. Cicero then pleads for the Roman court to convict Verres so that the auspices of Roman at home and abroad will no longer be tainted. In Acts Paul's Roman citizenship is the last thing Luke reveals about Paul's virtuous moral character. This revelation challenges the Roman authorities to act as proper stewards of God's justice who have a role to play in carrying God's message of salvation to the entire Mediterranean world.

First, we will examine how genre affects our interpretations of these texts and the ways in which genre influences characterization in ancient narrative. We will consider

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<sup>3</sup> Here "civic" means the dignity of a citizen within the πόλις and commitment to God's covenant with the Israelite people. See the discussion on pages 24 ff. below.

how Luke uses historiography to characterize Paul and carry out his assessment of Roman and Jewish responses to Paul's Roman citizenship. We will also consider how the moralization inherent in ancient biography influences Cicero's judgement of Verres. We will then survey the scholarly literature on the historicity of Paul's *civitas*. We will deliberate how the accuracy of Luke's account about Paul impacts Luke's conceptualization of how authorities should respond to Paul's message. Additionally, we will navigate Luke's two layered meaning of citizenship to see how he brings together its understanding in Greco-Roman and Jewish contexts to reveal Paul's honorable civic identity.

Second, we will examine in detail how Cicero and Luke incorporate Roman citizenship into their narratives. Cicero emphasizes Roman citizenship by placing it last within his examples and in the overall structure of his argument. We will see that Cicero uses the institution of Roman *civitas* to exhort the Roman court to convict Verres and restore Rome's image as an arbitrator of peace and justice. Luke also incorporates Roman citizenship into his narrative near concluding points as a means to drive the story forward and to highlight the different responses given by Jews and gentiles to Paul's mission. This is done in Acts 16 at Philippi and in Acts 22 at Jerusalem.

Finally, we will consider how the different responses to Paul's Roman citizenship influence our understanding of Luke's overall apologetic in Acts. We will debate how Paul's Roman citizenship may be useful in an argument *pro ecclesia* or *pro imperio*. Or how Luke uses it in an apologetic that does not promote an explicit political agenda, but rather gives instruction on how the church and worldly institutions participate in God's salvation history. We will also briefly look at how Paul in his letters interpreted the issue

of civic status. We will consider how Paul pastors the Philippian church to exhibit both worldly and Godly civic virtue, and how he teaches the Roman church to interpret the place of political authority within God's designs.

## **Part I: Understanding Acts and Citizenship**

### **Genre and Historical Understanding**

In order to consider how Luke presents Paul as a Roman citizen we need first to consider Luke's use of ancient rhetorical methods and Acts' literary relationship with the New Testament and other ancient literature. Many studies have delved into Luke's rhetorical capabilities,<sup>1</sup> but since what concerns us here is Roman citizenship in relation to other ancient literature we need to establish parameters by which to evaluate this topic. Naturally it would be best to compare ancient sources with similarities to the style, form, and function of the Book of Acts. However, as is often pointed out, classifying Acts in terms of its genre, form, or function entails a range of interpretive issues.<sup>2</sup> Still, it is worth

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<sup>1</sup> For general studies see George A. Kennedy, *New Testament Interpretation Through Rhetorical Criticism* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1984); George A. Kennedy, *Classical Rhetoric and Its Christian and Secular Tradition from Ancient to Modern Times*, 2nd ed. (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1999); David E. Aune, ed., *Greco-Roman Literature and the New Testament: Selected Forms and Genres* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1988); David E. Aune, *The New Testament in Its Literary Environment* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1987). For a critical assessment of Luke's rhetorical training and capabilities see Osvaldo Padilla, "Hellenistic παιδεία and Luke's Education: A Critique of Recent Approaches," *NTS* 55, no. 4 (2009): 416-437. Also the essays in Bruce W. Winter and Andrew D. Clarke, eds., *The Book of Acts in its First Century Setting*, vol. 1, *Ancient Literary Setting* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1993); David W.J. Gill and Conrad Gempf, eds., *The Books of Acts in its First Century Setting*, vol. 2, *Graeco-Roman Setting* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1994).

<sup>2</sup> See the discussions in Andrew F. Gregory and C. Kevin Rowe, eds., *Rethinking the Unity and Reception of Luke and Acts* (Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina Press, 2010); Mikeal C. Parsons and Richard I. Pervo, *Rethinking the Unity of Luke and Acts* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1993). Also Ben Witherington, III, *The Acts of the Apostles: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997), 2-24; Alan

discussing the genre of Acts briefly because, as we will discover, examining Paul's Roman citizenship in Acts is closely linked to how we perceive the generic identification of Acts to function.<sup>3</sup>

### *The Unity of Luke and Acts*

First, we should examine Acts' generic relationship with the Gospel of Luke. There is continued debate over whether Luke and Acts should be classified together under a single genre<sup>4</sup> or separately as two different genres.<sup>5</sup> Studies that put the two works under a single generic heading often use the hyphenated designation "Luke-Acts" to indicate their close compositional and narrational relationship.<sup>6</sup> Charles Talbert's comparison of Luke-Acts with Diogenes Laertius' *Lives of Eminent Philosophers* leads him to categorize the two works as ancient biography.<sup>7</sup> David Aune, on the other hand,

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J. Bale, *Genre and Narrative Coherence in the Acts of the Apostles*, LNTS 514 (London: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2015), 48-49.

<sup>3</sup> For a more complete assessment of the following discussion about the genre of Luke and Acts see Thomas E. Phillips, "The Genre of Acts: Moving Toward a Consensus?" *CurBR* 4, no. 3 (2006): 365-396; Bale, *Genre and Narrative Coherence*, 48-66.

<sup>4</sup> Witherington, *Acts of the Apostles*, 21; Aune, *New Testament In Its Literary Environment*, 77.

<sup>5</sup> David G. Peterson, *The Acts of the Apostles*, PNTC (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2009), 15; Colin J. Hemer, *The Book of Acts in the Setting of Hellenistic History*, ed. Conrad H. Gempf (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1989), 33-43; Richard I. Pervo, *Acts: A Commentary*, Hermeneia (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2009), 18-20.

<sup>6</sup> For discussion of the debate over the use of "Luke and Acts" or "Luke-Acts" see Parsons and Pervo, *Rethinking the Unity of Luke and Acts*, 7-18; Gregory and Rowe, *Rethinking the Unity and Reception of Luke and Acts*, 74-79; Robert C. Tannehill, *The Narrative Unity of Luke-Acts: A Literary Interpretation*, 2 vols. (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1986), 1:1-9; I. Howard Marshall, "Acts and the 'Former Treatise,'" in *The Book of Acts in Its First Century Setting*, vol. 1, *Ancient Literary Setting*, ed. Bruce W. Winter and Andrew D. Clarke (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1993), 172-177. See also Charles H. Talbert, *Literary Patterns, Theological Themes and the Genre of Luke-Acts* (Missoula: Society of Biblical Literature and Scholars Press, 1974), 129-134; Aune, *New Testament In Its Literary Environment*, 77-115.

<sup>7</sup> Talbert, *Literary Patterns*, 129-134.

finds Luke and Acts to fit under the broad category of historiography.<sup>8</sup> Ben Witherington demonstrates that Luke and Acts exhibit many of the markings of Greek historiography: historical synchronisms concerned with proper dating (cf. Lk 1:5; 2:1-2; 3:1-2; Acts 5:33-39; 11:28; 12:1-5; 18:1-2, 12; 24:27), concern with having participated in the history by using the first person (e.g. Acts 16:10),<sup>9</sup> and most importantly, a preference for describing the deeds and actions of the time period (πραγμάτων [Lk 1:1]) over and against evaluating the moral character of the actors involved.<sup>10</sup> However, a disadvantage to viewing Luke and Acts as a single literary unit is that it tends to favor one book over the other when it comes to understanding the work's genre. Parsons and Pervo point out this conundrum in their assessment of Talbert and Aune: "Although both affirmed that genre studies must address the genre of Luke and Acts as a whole, Talbert's analysis favors the Gospel and argues for biography, whereas Aune's study favors Acts and argues for historiography."<sup>11</sup>

I agree with most scholars who tend to put Luke and Acts into separate genres.

There are three reasons for this. First, the early church and interpreters of Luke and Acts

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<sup>8</sup> Aune writes, "Luke does not belong to a type of ancient biography for it belongs with Acts, and Acts cannot be forced into a biographical mold" (*New Testament In Its Literary Environment*, 77).

<sup>9</sup> There is continued debate over the meaning of the use of first person plurals in Acts. See Stanley E. Porter, "The 'We' Passages," excursus in *The Book of Acts in Its First Century Setting*, vol. 2, *Graeco-Roman Setting*, ed. David W.J. Gill and Conrad Gempf (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1994), 545-574. The most common solution is to say that the author of Acts is indicating his involvement in the events. Martin Hengel, *Acts and the History of Earliest Christianity*, trans. John Bowden (Eugene: Wipf & Stock, 2003), 66-67. Interestingly George Kennedy posits the 'we' passages to account for Timothy's perspective, later compiled by Luke (*New Testament Interpretation through Rhetorical Criticism*, 127-129). See also the excursus and notes in Pervo, *Acts*, 392-396.

<sup>10</sup> Witherington, *Acts of the Apostles*, 9-10, 12-24, cf. 106. I. Howard Marshall, *Luke: Historian and Theologian*, 2nd ed. (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1998), 37-41.

<sup>11</sup> Parsons and Pervo, *Rethinking the Unity of Luke and Acts*, 15.

viewed these works as individually contained literary units.<sup>12</sup> Second, no early manuscript exists that tries to place Luke alongside Acts.<sup>13</sup> Third, while the narratives of Luke and Acts share many parallels and complement each other in various ways, especially in their narratives and theology, the two books are obviously different in their organization and style.<sup>14</sup> For the purpose of understanding Paul's Roman citizenship it is best to look at Acts in relative isolation from Luke and to consider how the genre of Acts by itself, whatever it may be, affects our understanding of Paul as a Roman citizen.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> For an overview of the Gospels' reception history see C.E. Hill, *Who Chose the Gospels? Probing the Great Gospel Conspiracy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010); Martin Hengel, *The Four Gospels and the One Gospel of Jesus Christ: An Investigation of the Collection and Origin of the Canonical Gospels*, trans. John Bowden (Harrisburg, PA: Trinity Press International, 2000). Some have suggested that certain ancient sources suggest an understanding of Luke and Acts as a single literary unit (e.g. Justin Martyr, *1 Apol.* 50.12; Irenaeus, *Haer.* 3.1; Muratorian Fragment). See the discussion in C. Kavin Rowe, "History, Hermeneutics and the Unity of Luke-Acts," *JSNT* 28, no. 2 (2005): 132 ff.; Andrew Gregory, "The Reception of Luke and Acts and the Unity of Luke-Acts," *JSNT* 29, no. 4 (2007): 460-463; Michael F. Bird, "The Unity of Luke Acts in Recent Discussion," *JSNT* 29, no. 4 (2007): 435. I agree with Gregory and Rowe that these texts reveal common authorship between Luke and Acts, but not that early interpreters had a hermeneutical approach to read them together (*Rethinking the Unity and Reception of Luke and Acts*, 75; cf. Augustine, *Cons.* 4.8.9).

<sup>13</sup> The evidence from P<sup>53</sup> is speculative. The canon in Codex Claromontanus places Luke as the fourth gospel but does not pair it with Acts. See Gregory and Rowe, *Rethinking the Unity and Reception of Luke and Acts*, 11, 75; Parsons and Pervo, *Rethinking the Unity of Luke and Acts*, 21; Rowe, "History, Hermeneutics, and the Unity of Luke-Acts," 141.

<sup>14</sup> The largest difference between these two texts is their organization. Luke is more topically organized whereas Acts follows a broad chronological order. Peterson, *Acts of the Apostles*, 6-7; Parsons and Pervo, *Rethinking the Unity of Luke and Acts*, 82; Marshall, "Acts the the 'Former Treatise,'" 173-177.

<sup>15</sup> I assume a close literary relationship between Luke and Acts but refrain from using the hyphenated form "Luke-Acts" as my discussion takes Acts to function as an independent literary unit.

### *The Genre of Acts*

Acts stands as an anomaly within the New Testament in that its genre is unique.<sup>16</sup> Most scholars agree that Acts falls under the guise of Greco-Roman historiography.<sup>17</sup> However, commentators often classify Acts as historiography possibly out of a desire to uphold the book's historical accuracy.<sup>18</sup> But, as Hemer points out, Acts has more dissimilarities with ancient historical writers, particularly Josephus, than similarities when it comes to historiographic conventions.<sup>19</sup> Because historiography is such a broad

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<sup>16</sup> This is not to say it is *sui generis* as rightly concluded by Daniel Lynwood Smith and Zachary Lundin Kostopoulos, "Biography, History and the Genre of Luke-Acts," *NTS* 63, no. 3 (July 2017): 409-410.

<sup>17</sup> E.g. William M. Ramsay, *St. Paul the Traveler and Roman Citizen*, ed. Mark Wilson (1925, rev. ed., Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2001); Peterson, *Acts of the Apostles*; F.F. Bruce, *The Acts of the Apostles: The Greek Text with Introduction and Commentary*, 3rd ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990). Witherington, *Acts of the Apostles*, 39; Ernst Haenchen, *The Acts of the Apostles: A Commentary*, trans. Bernard Noble and Gerald Shinn (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1971), 98-99. For discussion of ancient history writing see Michael Grant, *The Ancient Historians* (New York: Scribner, 1970); John Marincola, ed., *A Companion to Greek and Roman Historiography* (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2007).

<sup>18</sup> Peterson, *Acts of the Apostles*, 15; Ben Witherington, III, ed., *History, Literature, and Society in the Book of Acts* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 23, 31-32; Loveday Alexander, *Acts in Its Ancient Literary Context: A Classicist Looks at the Acts of the Apostles* (London: T&T Clark, 2005), 133-136; Phillips, "The Genre of Acts," 385. Ramsay writes, "Acts was written by a great historian, a writer who set himself to record the facts as they occurred, a strong partisan but raised above partiality by his perfect confidence that he had only to describe the facts as they occurred, in order to make the truth of Christianity and the honor of Paul apparent" (*St. Paul the Traveler and Roman Citizen*, 23; cf. Witherington, *Acts of the Apostles*, 32). Bale, on the other hand, finds that history and fiction need not be put into separate categories when it comes to historiographical writing, they can exist in tension. He finds that the system of signification that the reader uses to assess the truth value of a text relies on external references when the intended goal is to write historiography. This means the validity of a historiographical text is not dependent on its genre but upon the reader's ability to assess how the author connects his or her own narrative's relevance with other known referential markers (Bale, *Genre and Narrative Coherence*, 95-119, esp. 100-105).

<sup>19</sup> Hemer, *Book of Acts in the Setting of Hellenistic History*, 96-100; Padilla, "Hellenistic παιδεία and Luke's Education," 434-437.



category, scholars have proposed several limiting options in order to specify the type of historical writing to which Acts belongs. These include, among others: general history,<sup>20</sup> historical monograph,<sup>21</sup> political history,<sup>22</sup> apologetic history,<sup>23</sup> and Deuteronomistic or Jewish history.<sup>24</sup> Scholars have also proposed genre options apart from history, including: Greco-Roman biography,<sup>25</sup> prophetic biography,<sup>26</sup> epic prose narrative,<sup>27</sup> and even the historical novel.<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> Hemer, *Book of Acts in Hellenistic History*; Hengel, *Acts and the History of Earliest Christianity*; Aune, *New Testament In Its Literary Environment*, 84-89, 88; Phillips, "The Genre of Acts," 375-377.

<sup>21</sup> On the difference between "general" and "particular" history see Polybius 1.4.1-10. Also Darryl W. Palmer, "Acts and the Ancient Historical Monograph," in *The Book of Acts in Its First Century Setting*, Vol. 1, *Ancient Literary Setting*, ed. Bruce W. Winter and Andrew D. Clarke (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1993), 4-5; Aune, *New Testament In Its Literary Environment*, 87; Hans Conzelmann, *Acts of the Apostles*, Hermenia (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1987), xl.

<sup>22</sup> David L. Balch, "The Genre of Luke-Acts: Individual Biography, Adventure Novel, or Political History?" *SwJT* 33, no. 1 (Fall 1990): 5-19; Phillips, "The Genre of Acts," 377-379.

<sup>23</sup> Gregory E. Sterling, *Historiography and Self-Definition: Josephos, Luke-Acts, and Apologetic Historiography* (Leiden: Brill, 1992); Phillips, "The Genre of Acts," 380-382.

<sup>24</sup> Palmer, "Acts and the Ancient Historical Monograph," 18-21; Brian S. Rosner, "Acts and Biblical History," in *The Book of Acts in Its First Century Setting*, vol. 1, *Ancient Literary Setting*, ed. Bruce W. Winter and Andrew D. Clarke (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1993), 65-82; Thomas L. Brodie, "Luke-Acts as Imitation and Emulation of the Elijah Elisha Narrative," in *New Views on Luke and Acts*, ed. Earl Richard (Collegeville, MN: Michael Glazier, 1990), 78-85; Thomas L. Brodie, *The Crucial Bridge: The Elijah-Elisha Narrative as an Interpretive Synthesis of Genesis-Kings and a Literary Model for the Gospels* (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 2000); Phillips, "The Genre of Acts," 379-380.

<sup>25</sup> Talbert, *Literary Patterns*, 1974; Phillips, "The Genre of Acts," 366-368; cf. Loveday Alexander, *Acts in Its Ancient Literary Context*, 43-68.

<sup>26</sup> Phillips, "The Genre of Acts," 379-380; Rosner, "Acts and Biblical History," 65-82; Brodie, *Crucial Bridge*, 95-97.

<sup>27</sup> Dennis R. MacDonald, *Does the New Testament Imitate Homer? Four Cases from the Acts of the Apostles* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003); Phillips, "The Genre of Acts," 371-373.

<sup>28</sup> Richard I. Pervo, *Profit with Delight: The Literary Genre of the Acts of the Apostles* (Augsburg: Fortress, 1987); Phillips, "The Genre of Acts," 366-373; Peterson, *Acts of the Apostles*, 8-15. See also the various discussions in Witherington, *History, Literature, and Society*.

There is also a trend within classical and Biblical scholarship which attempts to move away from using generic identification to understand Acts.<sup>29</sup> For example, Smith and Kostopoulos consider Luke and Acts to be a unified narrative that defies narrow categories of genre.<sup>30</sup> They take a mixture of ancient biographical and historical works and demonstrate that these exhibit a degree of generic permeability between ancient biographic writing and historiography.<sup>31</sup> They reach the conclusion that broad categories such as “history” or “prose narrative” are useful for establishing initial conceptions about a text, but that understanding the rhetorical purpose of a work requires examination of the text itself.<sup>32</sup> In this way genre is less relevant for understanding the rhetorical goals contained in Acts.

As we look at Paul’s Roman citizenship in Acts we should neither completely abandon genre as a tool for understanding Acts’ narrative nor should we limit our understanding of Acts by limiting its generic identity. Genre is a dynamic mediator between the author and the interpreter, which sets expectations for communication but can change as the text progresses.<sup>33</sup> There is obviously a mixture of biographical and historical elements in Luke and Acts.<sup>34</sup> We can place Acts in the nebulous realm of

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<sup>29</sup> Phillips, “The Genre of Acts,” 382-385; Bale, *Genre and Narrative Coherence*, 71.

<sup>30</sup> Smith and Kostopoulos, “Biography, History and the Genre of Luke-Acts,” 391.

<sup>31</sup> Smith and Kostopoulos, “Biography, History and the Genre of Luke-Acts,” 398, 400, 405-406. E.g. the works of Diodorus Siculus, Dionysius of Halicarnassus, Josephus, and Eusebius of Caesarea.

<sup>32</sup> Smith and Kostopoulos, “Biography, History and the Genre of Luke-Acts,” 407-409; Bale, *Genre and Narrative Coherence*, 92-94.

<sup>33</sup> Richard A. Burridge, *What are the Gospels? A Comparison with Graeco-Roman Biography*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2004), 31-52; N. Clayton Croy, *Prima Scriptura: An Introduction to New Testament Interpretation* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2011), 29-30; Bale, *Genre and Narrative Coherence*, 77-79.

<sup>34</sup> Smith and Kostopoulos, “Biography, History and the Genre of Luke-Acts,” 405-406; Peterson, *Acts of the Apostles*, 6-7.

historiography but with an important caveat. The author of Acts is especially concerned with the history of the early followers of Christ and how their actions identify with the history of Israel found in the Old Testament (e.g. Acts 1:16, 21-22; 2:16; 7:1 ff.; 8:35; 9:22; 13:16 ff.; 15:15; 24:14-15; 28:25-28). Acts therefore is not Greco-Roman historiography *per se*, but historiography reinterpreted in terms of the fulfilment of Israel's scriptures found in the person of Christ.<sup>35</sup>

We should also keep in mind the goals of historiographic writing when considering how Luke presents Paul's Roman citizenship in the narrative. Luke's narrational aim is not limited to the accurate portrayal of events and persons. Rather, as David Moessner demonstrates, ancient historiography and narrative contained an inseparable "trialectic hermeneutic" composed of authorial intent, narrative structure, and audience impact.<sup>36</sup> When looking at Paul's Roman citizenship we must necessarily consider how Luke incorporates this characterization into the narrative structurally. We must also consider how the structural arrangement of this portrayal impacts Luke's audience so that they would better comprehend his intention for writing. Thus, by evaluating Paul's *civitas* as a climactic narrative element we can more accurately assess

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<sup>35</sup> Alexander, *Acts in Its Ancient Literary Context*, 163; Jacob Jervell, "The future of the past: Luke's vision of salvation history and its bearing on his writing history," in *History, Literature, and Society in the Book of Acts*, ed. Ben Witherington, III (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 125-126.

<sup>36</sup> David P. Moessner, "Reading Luke's Gospel as Ancient Hellenistic Narrative: Luke's Narrative Plan of Israel's Suffering Messiah as God's Saving 'Plan' for the World," in *Reading Luke: Interpretation, Reflection, Formation*, ed. Craig G. Bartholomew, Joel B. Green and Anthony C. Thiselton, Scripture and Hermeneutics Series, vol. 6 (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2005), 126; Moessner, "The Triadic Synergy of Hellenistic Poetics in the Narrative Epistemology of Dionysius of Halicarnassus and the Authorial Intent of the Evangelist Luke," 289.

Luke's theological-rhetorical strategy than just by considering the factuality of Paul's characterization alone.

### **Was Paul a Roman Citizen? A Survey of the Secondary Literature**

Like with the genre of Acts there is scholarly debate over Paul as a Roman citizen. There are many diverging opinions on whether Paul actually was a Roman citizen. The spectrum of opinion ranges from critically doubtful to optimistically accepting. This spectrum is related to the range of scholarly opinion on the historicity of the Book of Acts more generally. Here we will survey the scholarly literature to see what objections are raised to Paul's possession of Roman citizenship, the historical plausibility of him holding *civitas*, and what avenues have yet to be explored, which might shed additional light on the subject.

#### *Critical Doubt: Paul Was Not a Roman Citizen*

Two of the more critical assessments on the historicity of Paul's *civitas* come from Wolfgang Stegemann and John Lentz.<sup>37</sup> In his article Stegemann argues that Paul was not a Roman citizen. Rather, the author of the Acts of the Apostles constructed Paul's Roman citizenship to serve the apologetic end of uniting Jewish and Roman converts to Christianity.<sup>38</sup> Stegemann looks at the two places in Acts where Paul's

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<sup>37</sup> Wolfgang Stegemann, "War der Apostel Paulus ein römischer Bürger?" ZNW 78 (1987): 200-229; John C. Lentz, Jr., *Luke's Portrait of Paul*, SNTSMS 77 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993).

<sup>38</sup> Stegemann, "War der Apostel Paulus ein römischer Bürger?" 229. Scholars have argued that Paul's citizenship serves a variety of purposes including: (1) the incorporation of gentiles into God's plan of salvation (Tannehill, *Narrative Unity*, 2:284; John T. Squires, *The Plan of God in Luke-Acts*, SNTSMS 76 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 116-120), and (2) the vindication of Christianity in Roman law (Bruce W. Winter, "Gallio's Ruling on the Legal Status of Early Christianity (Acts 18:14-15)," *TynBul* 50, no. 2 (1999): 218-224; Christopher Bryan, *Render to Caesar: Jesus, The Early Church, and the Roman Superpower* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005),

Roman citizenship comes into view (Acts 16:37; 22:22-29) and finds that these two episodes are in contradiction with one another.<sup>39</sup> This is due, says Stegemann, to the way in which the Roman officials responded to Paul's citizenship. In the Philippi episode the fear of the magistrates that they had beaten a Roman citizen is misplaced. Stegemann's argument is that the magistrates should have inquired into Paul's and Silas's status more closely and that Paul and Silas should have disclosed their citizenship from the beginning. Thus the magistrates should only have been afraid *before* they ordered Paul and Silas beaten.<sup>40</sup> Within the arrest scene in Jerusalem the fear of Claudius Lysias that he had chained a Roman citizen is also not justified within the narrative according to Stegemann.<sup>41</sup> Additionally, Stegemann points out several inconsistencies in the Jerusalem episode, which he argues indicate Luke's hand in "dramatizing" the scene. (1) Paul waits until the last moment to reveal his citizenship. (2) Lysias brings Paul before a Jewish court knowing full well that Paul is a Roman citizen. (3) Lysias, as a military commander, admits to being socially inferior to his prisoner in front of his subordinates.<sup>42</sup>

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102-103). For more on the purpose of Acts see Robert Maddox, *The Purpose of Luke-Acts* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1982); Steve Walton, "The State They Were In: Luke's View of the Roman Empire," in *Rome in the Bible and the Early Church*, ed. Peter Oakes (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2002), 1-12; Peterson, *Acts of the Apostles*, 36-39; Witherington, *Acts of the Apostles*, 68-74; Bruce, *Acts of the Apostles*, 22-23.

<sup>39</sup> Stegemann, "War der Apostel Paulus ein römischer Bürger?" 203; Lentz, *Luke's Portrait of Paul*, 130-138.

<sup>40</sup> Stegemann, "War der Apostel Paulus ein römischer Bürger?" 203-204. Cf. Lentz, *Luke's Portrait of Paul*, 132. However, Rapske argues that the magistrates acted legally based on the facts they knew (*Paul in Roman Custody*, 128-134). Cf. J.M. Kelly, *Roman Litigation* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1966), 33. Kelly writes, "Roman law can be applied only to a set of facts; and if the wrong facts are established, the law will be wrongly applied."

<sup>41</sup> Stegemann, "War der Apostel Paulus ein römischer Bürger?" 204-205. Cf. Rapske, *Paul in Roman Custody*, 143-145; Kelly, *Roman Litigation*, 33.

<sup>42</sup> Stegemann, "War der Apostel Paulus ein römischer Bürger?" 205-206.

Stegemann also finds inconsistencies between Paul's report to the Jews in Rome on why he came there (28:17) and in the events themselves as they are portrayed in Acts (25:9).<sup>43</sup> In his summary of the events Paul states that although the Romans did not find him guilty of any crime the Jews objected, which in turn caused Paul to appeal to the Emperor (28:17-19). However, Stegemann refers to the fact that Paul's appeal was not based on the Jews finding him guilty in contrast to the Romans. Rather, Paul's appeal was because of the illegal proposal by Festus to transfer the case to a Jewish provincial court (25:9).<sup>44</sup> Stegemann states that because Festus knew Paul was a Roman citizen he would be unable to transfer the case to a non-Roman court and that given the nature of the accusations against Paul the case could and should have been transferred to the Emperor even if Paul were not a citizen.<sup>45</sup> This would have made Paul's citizenship inconsequential for the overall narrative of Acts and thus for Stegemann suggests Lukan invention.

Finally, Stegemann considers the possibility of Paul acquiring Roman citizenship to be extremely remote. In Rome itself only a select few Jews were conferred citizenship during the first century and fewer still in the provinces.<sup>46</sup> Additionally, Stegemann finds

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<sup>43</sup> Cf. Peterson, *Acts of the Apostles*, 709-712; Witherington, *Acts of the Apostles*, 797-798.

<sup>44</sup> Stegemann, "War der Apostel Paulus ein römischer Bürger?" 208-210. Other commentators have also noted this but are less skeptical of the supposed inconsistency because of the speech's summary nature. Peterson, *Acts of the Apostles*, 711-712; Witherington, *Acts of the Apostles*, 796-798; Tannehill, *Narrative Unity*, 2:344-345.

<sup>45</sup> Stegemann, "War der Apostel Paulus ein römischer Bürger?" 212-213. The charges here would be either treason or, more likely, civil unrest and inciting riot (Dig. 48.4.1.1; Rapske, *Paul in Roman Custody*, 41-46). Cf. Josephus, *J.W.* 3.398. Josephus was put in custody to be sent to Nero based on his participation in the war not his citizenship *per se*.

<sup>46</sup> Stegemann, "War der Apostel Paulus ein römischer Bürger?" 216-221. Philo mentions emancipated Jews living in Rome (*Embassy* 155; cf. Tacitus, *Ann.* 2.85). See also Harry J. Leon, *The Jews of Ancient Rome*, rev. ed. (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1995). In

that Paul's Tarsian citizenship (21:39) would have precluded him from obtaining the Roman *civitas* and that his Jewish identity would also have prevented him from participating in either of those institutions to a full capacity.<sup>47</sup> Stegemann also find Paul's self-representation in his epistles to exclude him from having Roman citizenship: especially regarding his manual labor, imprisonment, and beatings (2 Cor. 11:7-12, 24-25).<sup>48</sup> These inconsistencies within the narrative of Acts as well as the external historical

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Palestine the Herodian family were the most prominent Roman citizens (Josephus, *Ant.* 14.137; *J.W.* 1.194). Josephus also mentions some Jews of equestrian status (*J.W.* 2.308). The Synagogue of the Libertini (Acts 6:9) may also have contained Roman citizens. Peter van Minnen, "Paul the Roman Citizen," *JSNT* 56 (1994): 51.

<sup>47</sup> Stegemann, "War der Apostel Paulus ein römischer Bürger?" 220-221. Cf. Hemer, *The Book of Acts in the Setting of Hellenistic History*, 127. On the legality of dual citizenship see Cicero, *Balb.* 8.19; 12.29-30. Here, a certain Lucius Cornelius had been given Roman citizenship while holding citizenship in an allied state. Cicero concludes that Romans should not take on Greek citizenship but in certain cases Greeks can take on Roman citizenship. See also Rapske, *Paul in Roman Custody*, 83. William Tarn argues Jews could be given "isopolity," but full integration would be considered apostasy (*Hellenistic Civilisation*, ed. William Tarn and G. T. Griffith, 3rd ed. (London: Edward Arnold, 1952), 220-222).

<sup>48</sup> Stegemann, "War der Apostel Paulus ein römischer Bürger?" 221-227. According to three different laws Roman citizens were exempt from the type of punishment Paul endured. (1) *Lex Valeria* (Livy 10.9.3-6); (2) Porcian law (Livy 10.9.4; *Verr.* 2.5.163); (3) Julian laws (Dig. 48.6.7-8). See also A.N. Sherwin-White, *The Roman Citizenship*, 2nd ed. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1973), 150-153; A.N. Sherwin-White, *Roman Society and Roman Law in the New Testament* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1963), 58; Paul du Plessis, *Borkowski's Textbook on Roman Law*, 4th ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 66; Eugene Brewer, "Roman Citizenship and its Bearing on the Book of Acts," *ResQ* 4, no. 4 (1960): 215-218; Peter Garnsey, "The Lex Iulia and Appeal under the Empire" *JRS* 56, no. 1/2 (1966): 167-189; Peter Garnsey, *Social Status and Legal Privilege in the Roman Empire* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1970), 260-271; Rapske, *Paul in Roman Custody*, 47-56. On Paul's attitude towards manual labor see Todd D. Still, "Did Paul Loathe Manual Labor? Revisiting the Work of Ronald F. Hock on the Apostle's Tentmaking and Social Class," *JBL* 125, no. 4 (Winter 2006): 781-795. Stanley E. Porter notes there are certainly differences between the Paul of Acts and the Paul of the letters, but these do not constitute historical contradictions (*Paul in Acts* (1999; repr. Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2001), 187-206).

data from Paul's letters and other sources, says Stegemann, are reason to believe Paul's Roman citizenship is a Lukan invention.

Lentz finds the combined description of Paul in Acts as a Pharisaic Jew, Greek citizen, and Roman citizen historically improbable. He writes: "When studying the description of Paul in Acts, one receives the distinct impression that the whole of the portrayal of Paul is greater than the sum of each of the parts."<sup>49</sup> Lentz finds the portrayal of Paul as a citizen of Tarsus to be more problematic than him being a Roman citizen because being a citizen of a Greek city demanded a higher level of commitment to the local religious cult.<sup>50</sup> Further, Lentz argues that the possession of Greek civic rights among Diaspora Jews did not constitute full citizenship.<sup>51</sup> Jews more often occupied the status of non-citizen aliens and were given civil recognition through membership in a

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<sup>49</sup> Lentz, *Luke's Portrait of Paul*, 26.

<sup>50</sup> Lentz, *Luke's Portrait of Paul*, 33, 45. Cf. Jerome Murphy-O'Connor, *Paul: A Critical Life* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996), 39-41. Josine Blok, *Citizenship in Classical Athens* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017), 57-79, 245-248; Josine Blok, "Citizenship, the Citizen Body, and its Assemblies," in *A Companion to Ancient Greek Government*, ed. Hans Beck (Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2013), 164-171. Blok uses classical Athens as an example and examines the language of *Hiera* and *Hosia* which bound the Greek *polis* together with the gods and finds that Greek citizenship required firm commitment and participation in the civic cult.

<sup>51</sup> Lentz, *Luke's Portrait of Paul*, 32.



πολίτευμα.<sup>52</sup> Lentz concedes that it was possible for Paul to have inherited Roman citizenship but he sees that possibility as extremely remote.<sup>53</sup>

However, even if the depiction of Paul in Acts is historically implausible Lentz argues that Luke's audience would not have given much attention to that fact. Rather, Lentz argues, Luke's audience would clearly see that Paul was a person of high social status and reputation.<sup>54</sup> The reason for portraying Paul as a man of high social status, i.e., a Pharisaic Jew, Greek, and Roman citizen, was so Paul would not be seen as having a social disadvantage before high-ranking authorities.<sup>55</sup> In this way, Lentz argues, Luke deliberately presented Paul in a way that benefited the audience, whose *Sitz im Leben* was largely concerned about Christianity's social status. Thus, for Lentz, even though there is reason to doubt the portrayal of Paul as historically accurate there is still value in the way Paul is presented, viz., to understand how Luke formed his narrative and how this formation served the audience.<sup>56</sup>

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<sup>52</sup> To support this Lentz argues that Josephus conflates the idea of full citizenship with civic rights. Lentz writes, "It is apparent that the terms citizen (πολίτης) and citizenship (πολιτεία) are ambiguous and were used either to identify full members of a Greek πολίς or to identify members of one of the πολίτευματα" (*Luke's Portrait of Paul*, 37-43, esp. 41). Josephus would then have conflated these terms (*Ant.* 12.121; 19.281; *J.W.* 7.44; cf. *J.W.* 7.110). For a discussion of Jewish πολίτευματα see Victor Tcherikover, *Hellenistic Civilization and the Jews*, trans. S. Applebaum (New York: Antheneum, 1974), 297 ff.; Gert Lüderitz, "What is the Politeuma?" in *Studies in Early Jewish Epigraphy*, ed. Jan Willem van Henten and Pieter Willem van der Horst (Köln, Netherlands: Brill, 1994), 204-222.

<sup>53</sup> Lentz, *Luke's Portrait of Paul*, 43-51; Stegemann, "War der Apostel Paulus ein römischer Bürger?" 216-221.

<sup>54</sup> Lentz, *Luke's Portrait of Paul*, 58. So also Rapske, *Paul in Roman Custody*, 108-112; Witherington, *Acts of the Apostles*, 432-433.

<sup>55</sup> Lentz, *Luke's Portrait of Paul*, 51.

<sup>56</sup> Lentz, *Luke's Portrait of Paul*, 58.

From the scholarly literature we may summarize the main points against the historicity of Paul's Roman citizenship as follows. (1) It would be extremely unlikely for a Jew to possess Roman citizenship. (2) Even if Paul were to possess Greek or Roman citizenship, devotion to his Jewish faith would preclude him from full participation in these institutions. (3) Paul makes no mention of his citizenship in his letters. (4) Paul's citizenship in Acts seems to be a narrative invention on the part of the author to serve some literary or theological purpose. (5) Paul's Roman citizenship seems out of place in Acts' narrative. Therefore, there is a need to understand why Luke places Paul's Roman citizenship where he does in the narrative. By understanding this we can more accurately discern how Luke characterizes his subjects and how this characterization contributes to his rhetorical-theological strategy.

*Optimistic Acceptance: Paul Was a Roman Citizen*

While there are many scholars who accept Paul's Roman citizenship as historical fact some express more optimism in the accuracy of Acts' account than others. Much of this optimism can be traced back to William Ramsay's work *St. Paul the Traveler and Roman Citizen*. Ramsay places a high value on Paul's *civitas*, writing, "According to the law of his country, [Paul] was first of all a Roman citizen. That characteristic superseded all others before the law and in the general opinion of society; and placed him amid the aristocracy of any provincial town."<sup>57</sup>

There are two major obstacles to overcome when arguing for the validity of Paul's Roman citizenship. First is the seeming incompatibility of the Jewish faith with

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<sup>57</sup> Ramsay, *St. Paul the Traveler and Roman Citizen*, 35.

participation in the Greco-Roman religious cult.<sup>58</sup> Many scholars have questioned this assumption. Jerome Murphy-O'Connor, for example, finds the conflict between the Jewish faith and Roman cult to be of little concern for understanding the historical Paul as there was no mandatory cult participation requirement for Roman citizens; and any such requirements would be mitigated in the provinces.<sup>59</sup> The second obstacle is the lack of evidence for Paul's *civitas* from his letters.<sup>60</sup> However, some have argued that Paul did not attach much importance to his citizenship and so had no reason to mention it in his letters.<sup>61</sup> This may be a reason behind Paul's seeming indifference towards his citizenship as portrayed in Acts.<sup>62</sup> However, if Paul did not give much credence to his Roman

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<sup>58</sup> Stegemann, "War der Apostel Paulus ein römischer Bürger?" 220-221; Hemer, *Book of Acts in Hellenistic History*, 127; Rapske, *Paul in Roman Custody*, 77-78; Tarn, *Hellenistic Civilisation*, 220-222; Lentz, *Luke's Portrait of Paul*, 33, 45; Murphy-O'Connor, *Paul*, 39-41; Blok, *Citizenship in Classical Athens*, 245-248; Blok, "Citizenship, the Citizen Body, and its Assemblies," 164-171.

<sup>59</sup> Murphy-O'Connor, *Paul*, 39-41. Lentz, *Luke's Portrait of Paul*, 33, 45. See also Rapske, *Paul in Roman Custody*, 88-90.

<sup>60</sup> Witherington, *Acts of the Apostles*, 683; Murphy-O'Connor, *Paul*, 39-41; Harry W. Tajra, *The Trial of St. Paul: A Juridical Exegesis of the Second Half of the Acts of the Apostles* (Eugene: Wipf & Stock, 1989), 87.

<sup>61</sup> Witherington, *Acts of the Apostles*, 683; Murphy-O'Connor, *Paul*, 39.

<sup>62</sup> Tajra, *Trial of St. Paul*, 88. For instance John M.G. Barclay finds Paul's stance toward the Roman Empire to be ambivalent in that Rome does not stand as the antithesis to Christ's Kingdom (*Pauline Churches and Diaspora Jews* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2011), 363-387). Contra N.T. Wright who finds Paul's message to directly challenge the notion of Caesar as lord ("Paul's Gospel and Caesar's Empire," in *Paul and Politics: Ekklesia, Israel, Imperium, Interpretation*, ed. Richard A. Horsley (Harrisburg, PA: Trinity Press International, 2000), 160-183). Rapske on the other hand, concludes Paul was not ambivalent toward his citizenship status, but was nonetheless "prepared to suffer or even die without complaint if it is disregarded" (*Paul in Roman Custody*, 143). Robert F. O'Toole goes even further stating, "Luke advocates taking full advantage of Roman polity. His principle would be: Christians should use every available legal means to protect themselves" ("Luke's Position on Politics and Society in Luke-Acts," in *Political Issues in Luke-Acts*, ed. Richard J. Cassidy and Philip J. Scharper (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1983), 8). For a summary of Acts' relationship to politics see Walton, "The State They Were In," 1-12; pages 72 ff. below.

citizenship then we must wonder why Luke uses this aspect of Paul's identity as the narrative catalyst to bring about Paul's journey to Rome.<sup>63</sup> The conclusion, as suggested by some, is that Paul's *civitas* was the driving force behind his transfer to Rome; but Luke minimized its prominence in accordance with Paul's own view.<sup>64</sup>

Sean Adams, for example, finds that Paul's Roman citizenship in Acts is not only historically plausible but also integral to the book's narrative coherence. He argues we cannot view Paul's Roman citizenship as an authorial invention: "[This view] is not sustainable because of the fact that the entire final sequence of Acts, namely Paul's appeal, protection and travel to Rome, hinges entirely on Paul's Roman citizenship. To discount Paul's citizenship would totally discount the entire narrative, as well as the narrator's claims at the outset of his work (Luke 1:1-4; Acts 1:1)."<sup>65</sup> Taking note of a large increase in the number of Roman citizens between 86 and 28 BCE, Adams and others find it plausible that either Paul's father or grandfather could have possessed *civitas*.<sup>66</sup> Some scholars have also pointed to internal connections within Acts that

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<sup>63</sup> Stegemann argues Paul's *civitas* is not a narrative catalyst ("War der Apostel Paulus ein römischer Bürger?" 212-213). Contra Sean A. Adams, "Paul the Roman Citizen: Roman Citizenship in the Ancient World and Its Importance for Understanding Acts 22:22-29," in *Paul: Jew, Greek, and Roman*, ed. Stanley E. Porter (Leiden: Brill, 2008), 315; Tajra, *Trial of St. Paul*, 86.

<sup>64</sup> Adams, "Paul the Roman Citizen," 315; Murphy-O'Connor, *Paul*, 39-43; Peter van Minnen, "Paul the Roman Citizen," 43-47; Tajra, *Trial of St. Paul*, 86.

<sup>65</sup> Adams, "Paul the Roman Citizen," 315. Tajra comes to a similar conclusion, writing, "The key to Paul's legal history lies in his possession of the Roman citizenship" (*Trial of St. Paul*, 86). Also Witherington, *Acts of the Apostles*, 657, 684; van Minnen, "Paul the Roman Citizen," 46-47. Contra Stegemann who suggests Paul's citizenship is inconsequential to the overall narrative ("War der Apostel Paulus ein römischer Bürger?" 212-213).

<sup>66</sup> Adams, "Paul the Roman Citizen," 312. On the increase in Roman citizens during this time see Sherwin-White, *Roman Citizenship*, 225-236. Dio Cassius (60.17.7) notes that during the reign of Claudius, "a man could become a citizen by giving the right person some bits of broken glass."

suggest the validity of Paul's *civitas*. Peter van Minnen, for example, relies on Paul's connection with the persons from the Synagogue of the Libertini at the stoning of Stephen to suggest Paul was a Roman citizen (Acts 7:58-8:1).<sup>67</sup>

While hypotheses on how Paul's family might have obtained Roman citizenship will for now remain anecdotal, some possibilities are more probable than others.<sup>68</sup> Due to Jewish sensitivities to serving in the Roman military it seems unlikely that Paul's ancestors would have obtained Roman citizenship via military service.<sup>69</sup> Likewise, the theory that Paul's ancestors were manumitted slaves seems improbable since most Jewish slaves came from Judea not Tarsus in Cilicia.<sup>70</sup> The most probable means by which Paul's family came into Roman citizenship is a special grant bestowed on Paul's

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<sup>67</sup> van Minnen, "Paul the Roman Citizen," 48-52. van Minnen finds that the Jews who accused Stephen had a personal connection with Paul and it was because of this that they entrusted him with their cloaks as they stoned Stephen (Acts 6:9; 7:58). He further argues that the name of the synagogue to which these people belonged identifies them as the descendants of freedmen of Roman citizens. Because the author of Acts does not make Paul's association with the Libertini synagogue explicit the later depiction of Paul as a Roman citizen is an independent claim and would not be an intentional construction made by the author. This, argues van Minnen, constitutes evidence within Acts that validates Paul's claim to Roman citizenship. Sherwin-White finds this connection doubtful (*Roman Society and Roman Law*, 152; cf. Jerome, *Vir. ill.* 5.1). Acts 6:9 may be describing as many as five separate synagogues, though if the genitive chain is epexegetic it would denote only one. It is ambiguous from where or from whom these "freedmen" gained their emancipation. Bruce, *Acts of the Apostles*, 186-187; Witherington, *Acts of the Apostles*, 253-254; cf. Suetonius, *Claud.* 24.1.

<sup>68</sup> Sherwin-White calls such speculation "a fruitless task" (*Roman Society and Roman Law*, 151). Rapske, *Paul in Roman Custody*, 86.

<sup>69</sup> Adams, "Paul the Roman Citizen," 318. Tajra conjectures Paul's family somehow served in mercenary forces of the Seleucids or Pompey (*Trial of St. Paul*, 83). Cf. Ramsay, *St. Paul the Traveler and Roman Citizen*, 36. Also John Calvin, *Commentary on Acts*, 310-311.

<sup>70</sup> Adams, "Paul the Roman Citizen," 319. This tradition seems to stem from Jerome (*Vir. ill.* 5.1) and a conflated understanding of Acts 6:9. Sherwin-White, *Roman Society and Roman Law*, 152.

hometown of Tarsus.<sup>71</sup> During his campaign in the eastern Mediterranean, Pompey made Tarsus the capital of Cilicia in 67 BCE, and while there is no explicit record of him granting the city *civitas*, Adams finds it likely that he did.<sup>72</sup> Furthermore, a grant of citizenship to the city would not interfere with the rights citizens of Tarsus already possessed, thus making Paul's dual citizenship plausible as well.<sup>73</sup> Thus, for certain scholars, the portrayal of Paul as a Roman citizen can be considered historically viable.<sup>74</sup>

We may summarize the scholarly view that Paul was indeed a Roman citizen as follows. (1) There is evidence that suggests Paul's family may have been granted citizenship while living in Tarsus. (2) Even though unusual, Jews could possess Roman citizenship without compromising their faith. (3) Paul's ambivalence towards his *civitas* in the epistles is consistent with his attitude as portrayed in Acts. (4) Luke's devotion to historical accuracy is reason to trust his depiction of Paul. (5) Paul's citizenship is integral to the overall narrative and judicial proceedings of Acts and so is likely to be

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<sup>71</sup> Witherington, *Acts of the Apostles*, 682; Bruce, *Acts of the Apostles*, 461; Brewer, "Roman Citizenship and its Bearing on the Book of Acts," 207-215. For an example of a special grant of citizenship cf. Strabo, *Geogr.* 5.1.6; Suetonius, *Jul.* 28.3. Also, Cicero, *Balb.* 8.19.

<sup>72</sup> Adams, "Paul the Roman Citizen," 320. Pompey reincorporated former pirates into the cities of Cilicia after he had subdued the region (Plutarch, *Pomp.* 28.4) but no mention is made of him granting citizenship to the cities he or Lucullus conquered from King Tigranes (*Pomp.* 33.4). Tarsus was later granted special concessions as a "free city" for having supported Caesar and later the Triumvirate during the civil war, but it does not appear that an *en bloc* grant of Roman citizenship was a part of these privileges (Dio Cassius 47.26.2; 47.31; Appian, *Bell. Civ.* 5.7; cf. Dio Chrysostom, 2 *Tars.* 25). For a history of Tarsus see Strabo, *Geogr.* 14.5.12-15; C. Edmund Bosworth, "The City of Tarsus and the Arab-Byzantine Frontiers in the Early and Middle 'Abbāsīd Times," *Oriens* 33 (1992): 268-269; Rapske, *Paul in Roman Custody*, 73-75.

<sup>73</sup> Adams, "Paul the Roman Citizen," 321; Rapske, *Paul in Roman Custody*, 108; Witherington, *Acts of the Apostles*, 681-682; Tajra, *Trial of St. Paul*, 76; Sherwin-White, *Roman Society and Roman Law*, 182. E.g. Cicero, *Leg.* 2.2.5. Cf. Cicero, *Balb.* 12.29-30.

<sup>74</sup> Adams, "Paul the Roman Citizen," 326.

true. These last two points are especially important for understanding how Luke uses Paul's Roman citizenship as a narrational device. Luke is using historiography to characterize Paul; and Paul's *civitas* is placed within that characterization at a culminating point to aid Luke's rhetorical-theological goal.<sup>75</sup>

### **The Language of Citizenship**

Now that we have explored the possibility of Paul being a Roman citizen we can examine what it meant for him and other ancient persons to be a "citizen." The language of citizenship is especially important for Luke as he uses "citizen" language from both Greco-Roman and Jewish contexts to create dramatic irony and to implicitly critique Jewish and Roman responses to Paul's gospel message of salvation.

#### *Modern and Ancient Vocabulary of Citizenship*

The words "citizen" and "citizenship" as they are used in the twenty-first century are almost always connected to the idea of the modern nation-state. Patrick O'Neil summarizes it this way: "Citizenship is a purely political identity, developed not out of some unique set of circumstances or ascribed by birth but rather developed explicitly by states and accepted or rejected by individuals."<sup>76</sup> We can define citizenship by two elements.<sup>77</sup> First, we can define citizenship by its communicative identity or how

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<sup>75</sup> Moessner, "Reading Luke's Gospel as Ancient Hellenistic Narrative," 126.

<sup>76</sup> Patrick H. O'Neil, *Essentials of Comparative Politics*, 4th ed. (New York: W.W. Norton, 2013), 62.

<sup>77</sup> Blok, *Citizenship in Classical Athens*, 43. Cf. the definitions of citizenship by Charles Tilly, "Citizenship, Identity and Social History," *International Review of Social History* 40 (1995): 8; Michael Walzer, "Citizenship," in *Political innovation and conceptual change*, ed. T. Ball, J. Farr, and R.L. Hanson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 211; Will Kymlicka, *Contemporary Political Philosophy: An Introduction*, 2nd ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 284.

individuals relate themselves to the state and to others.<sup>78</sup> Second, we can define citizenship by its participatory reality, which entails a reciprocal relationship between the individual and the state, wherein the state is obligated to provide rights and services, and individuals give their allegiance to the state by participating in its institutions.<sup>79</sup>

While we should not conflate the modern conceptualization of citizenship with the understanding of citizenship in the ancient world, there is certainly a degree of overlap between the two.<sup>80</sup> In the ancient world the communicative identity and participatory reality of citizenship also existed. We can see this in Aristotle's idealized definition of a citizen:

τίς μὲν οὖν ἐστὶν ὁ πολίτης, ἐκ τούτων φανερόν· ὃ γὰρ ἐξουσία κοινωνεῖν ἀρχῆς βουλευτικῆς ἢ κριτικῆς, πολίτην ἤδη λέγομεν εἶναι ταύτης τῆς πόλεως, πόλιν δὲ τὸ τῶν τοιούτων πλῆθος ἱκανὸν πρὸς αὐτάρκειαν ζωῆς, ὥς ἀπλῶς εἰπεῖν.

What constitutes a citizen is therefore clear from these considerations: we now declare that one who has the right to participate in deliberative or judicial office is a citizen of the state in which he has that right, and a state is a collection of such persons sufficiently numerous, speaking broadly, to secure independence of life (Aristotle, *Pol.* 3.1, 1275b17-22 [LCL]).

The participatory reality, in this case, constitutes a person who has the right to participate in the institutions of the πόλις (ὃ γὰρ ἐξουσία κοινωνεῖν ἀρχῆς βουλευτικῆς ἢ κριτικῆς [3.1, 1275b19-20]). The communicative identity lies among those who make up the πόλις

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<sup>78</sup> O'Neil, *Essentials of Comparative Politics*, 62-63; Henry R. Nau, *Perspectives on International Relations: Power, Institutions, Ideas*, 3rd ed. (Washington, D.C.: CQ Press, 2012), 254-255; Barry Buzan and Richard Little, *International Systems in World History: Remaking the Study of International Relations* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 251-255.

<sup>79</sup> O'Neil, *Essentials of Comparative Politics*, 62-63; Nau, *Perspectives on International Relations*, 254-255; Buzan and Little, *International Systems in World History*, 251-255; Krishna Guha, "Ethnic Communities can be Devout and Good Citizens," *FT* (July 15, 2005): 1; Josine Blok, "Citizenship, the Citizen Body, and its Assemblies," 161-162.

<sup>80</sup> Blok, "Citizenship, the Citizen Body, and its Assemblies," 161; Blok, *Citizenship in Classical Athens*, 41-43.



in independent life (πόλιν δὲ τὸ τῶν τοιούτων πλῆθος ἱκανὸν πρὸς αὐτάρκειαν ζωῆς ὡς ἀπλῶς εἶπεῖν [3.1, 1275b21-22]).

However, Aristotle's definition of citizenship is somewhat limiting as it refers only to males who are members of the governing body.<sup>81</sup> A more encompassing definition of citizenship or civic identity that included people outside of formal political offices would be, as Josine Blok has demonstrated, "to have a share in the things of the gods (*hiera*) and in all human affairs that are pleasing to the gods (*hosia*)."<sup>82</sup> While Blok's studies mainly concern the city of Athens in the classical period her conclusions are applicable to citizenship as it was understood in the Hellenistic-Roman world in the first century.<sup>83</sup> This definition puts emphasis on the participatory reality of citizenship, viz., that those who participate in the community's rites (beyond the political) are given identity within the community. *Hiera* (τὰ ἱερὰ) were things that belonged to the gods as gifts from humans, which created a reciprocal communicative relationship based on χάρις between humans and gods and between humans and humans.<sup>84</sup> *Hosia* (ὄσιος) was the

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<sup>81</sup> Blok, "Citizenship, the Citizen Body, and its Assemblies," 162; Blok, *Citizenship in Classical Athens*, 1-5.

<sup>82</sup> Blok, "Citizenship, the Citizen Body, and its Assemblies," 163; Blok, *Citizenship in Classical Athens*, 75. Cf. Dem. 23.65; 39.35; Thucydides, 2.52.3-4. Blok concludes, "...*hiera kai hosia* was an expression representing the bond between the *polis* and the gods perceived from the human perspective, a long-term reciprocity that was pleasing to the gods and essential to the well-being and continuity of the *polis*. *Hiera kai hosia*... refers to human obligations to the gods in two distinct but related ways, namely the human gifts to the gods (*hiera*) and conduct towards gods and human showing proper respect for the gods (*hosia*)... and played a pivotal role in discourse about citizenship since in this bond the *polis* had entrenched its values, laws and institutions" (*Citizenship in Classical Athens*, 99).

<sup>83</sup> Blok, "Citizenship, the Citizen Body, and its Assemblies," 161; Blok, *Citizenship in Classical Athens*, 41-43.

<sup>84</sup> Blok, *Citizenship in Classical Athens*, 58-63. On the ideas of gift exchange (χάρις) between gods and humans see the discussions in John M.G. Barclay, *Paul & the Gift* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2015), 32-35.

proper conduct required by the gods for humans to follow that honored human relationships between the gods and other humans.<sup>85</sup> The verbs μετεῖναι and μετέχειν commonly connected the ideas of τὰ ἱερὰ καὶ ὅσιος to denote how a person had a share in these institutions via one's identity and conduct.<sup>86</sup>

### *Jewish and Christian Vocabulary of Citizenship*

The vocabulary for citizenship as a bond between πόλις, gods, and humans in the classical Hellenistic world has counterparts in Jewish and Christian thought. In Psalm 85 the psalmist uses the term ὅσιος to identify God's righteous ones who, "have returned the heart to him" (καὶ ἐπὶ τοὺς ὁσίους αὐτοῦ καὶ ἐπὶ τοὺς ἐπιστρέφοντας πρὸς αὐτὸν καρδίαν [Ps 85:9, 84:9 LXX]). In this case ὅσιος means proper conduct toward God's commands. God rewards this proper conduct in return by giving χάρις and other good things (καὶ γὰρ ὁ κύριος δώσει χρηστότητα καὶ ἡ γῆ ἡμῶν δώσει τὸν καρπὸν αὐτῆς [Ps 85:13, 84:13 LXX]).<sup>87</sup> This reciprocal relationship between God and humans in the Jewish mindset is expressed more commonly through terms of God's covenant with his people (e.g. Gen 15:18; Exod 19:5; Deut 4:13; Isa 59:21).<sup>88</sup>

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<sup>85</sup> Blok, *Citizenship in Classical Athens*, 63-70. The gods rewarded ὅσιος conduct with good things (ἀγαθά). This contributed to the cycle of reciprocity that built the relationship between gods and humans.

<sup>86</sup> Blok, *Citizenship in Classical Athens*, 53-57; Dem. 23.65.

<sup>87</sup> Cf. Ps 12:2 [11:2 LXX]; 31:24 [30:24 LXX]; 50:5 [49:5 LXX]; Blok, *Citizenship in Classical Athens*, 70-72. There is also a marked contrast between how the Greco-Roman world and the Jewish-Christian world perceived the term χάρις, "gift." According to Barclay the Jewish ideology of the gift and gift giving "is undergirded not by the ethos of a 'pure', unreciprocated gift, but by an emphasis on the certainty of reciprocation from God" (*Paul & the Gift*, 44). This is contrasted with the Greco-Roman world where reciprocity from the gods was contingent on many, and often ambiguous, conditions of exchange; see Plato, *Euthyphro* 12-15; Blok, *Citizenship in Classical Athens*, 67-70.

<sup>88</sup> Josine Blok, "A 'Covenant' Between Gods and Men: *Heira kai Hosia* and the Greek Polis," in *The City in the Classical and Post-Classical World: Changing Contexts of*

Christians also used language connected to the nomenclature of the πόλις to establish their own self-identity.<sup>89</sup> For example, Christians began forming their own idea of an established community and used the verb μετέχειν when describing participation in the Lord's Supper (1 Cor 10:17, 21; Ign. Eph. 4:2).<sup>90</sup> The *Epistle to Diognetus* also displays the Christian use of citizen language quite clearly:

πατρίδας οἰκοῦσιν ἰδίᾳς ἀλλ' ὡς πάροικοι μετέχουσι πάντων ὡς πολῖται  
καὶ πάνθ' ὑπομένουσιν ὡς ξένοι πᾶσα ξένη πατρίς ἐστὶν αὐτῶν καὶ πᾶσα  
πατρίς ξένη.

They dwell in their own countries, but as sojourners. They share in all things and with others, as citizens. They endure all things as foreigners. Every foreign land is their native country, and every native land is a foreign country (*Diogn.* 5:5 [author's translation]).

Christians also used the language of citizenship and the city to describe how initiates, called catechumens, were brought into the church through baptism and to describe Christian character formation.<sup>91</sup> John Chrysostom, for example, used the technical term πολιτογραφέω to describe this initiation process (*Pasch.*, PG 52.771; *Baptismal Instructions* 1.18).<sup>92</sup>

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*Power and Identity*, ed. Claudia Rapp and H.A. Drake (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 25; Barclay, *Paul & the Gift*, 268-272.

<sup>89</sup> Claudia Rapp, "City and Citizenship as Christian Concepts of Community in Later Antiquity," in *The City in the Classical and Post-Classical World: Changing Contexts of Power and Identity*, ed. Claudia Rapp and H.A. Drake (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 153-165.

<sup>90</sup> Rapp, "City and Citizenship as Christian Concepts," 155-157.

<sup>91</sup> Rapp, "City and Citizenship as Christian Concepts," 157, 160-162; Gerald L. Sittser, "The Catechumenate and the Rise of Christianity," *Journal of Spiritual Formation & Soul Care* 6, no. 2 (2013): 199-201. Gregory of Nyssa describes the Christian mind in terms of a πόλις (*On the Making of Man* 10.4). Cf. John Chrysostom, *On Vainglory* 23, 27.

<sup>92</sup> Πολιτογραφέω was used in instances when a person was enrolled as a citizen (*LSJ*). Cf. John Chrysostom, *Baptismal Instructions* 1.18; 4.6, 29; 7.12; Diogenes Laertius 1.22; 5.84; Diodorus Siculus 11.49; 13.97; Josephus, *Ag. Ap.* 2.251.

Jews and Christians often adopted citizen language to reflect the theological understanding of their relationship with God, as for example, with instances of the verb πολιτεύω. Non-Jews and non-Christians used the verb πολιτεύω to describe participation in the πόλις and how one conducted themselves in politics (e.g. Aristotle, *Pol.* 3.5, 1279a35; Diogenes Laertius 1.53).<sup>93</sup> In Jewish and Christian circles πολιτεύω – though only appearing in the middle voice πολιτεύομαι (e.g. Acts 23:1; Phil 1:27; Josephus, *Life* 1.12)<sup>94</sup> – relates to living in accordance with God’s law (νόμος) as found in the Hebrew scriptures.<sup>95</sup> Christians in particular expanded this sense of πολιτεύομαι and used it to mean living in conformity to Christ.<sup>96</sup> Thus, for Jews and Christians πολιτεύομαι had an ethical sense which relates to the conduct of one’s life as it pertained to one’s religious faith.<sup>97</sup>

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<sup>93</sup> *LSJ*; Blok, *Citizenship in Classical Athens*, 240-245.

<sup>94</sup> *BDAG*.

<sup>95</sup> C.K. Barrett, *Acts*, ICC, 2 vols. (London: T&T Clark, 1994 and 1998), 2:1057-1058. Interestingly, the LXX only uses πολιτεύομαι in the Maccabean books and once in the Greek additions to Esther; 2 Macc 6:1; 11:25; 3 Macc 3:4; 4 Macc 2:8, 23; 4:23; 5:16; Add Esth E. 16:15-16. This may reflect an infusion of Hellenistic ideas about the πόλις into second temple Judaism (cf. 2 Macc 4:7-17). Lee I. Levine, *Jerusalem: Portrait of the City in the Second Temple Period, 538 BCE – 70 CE* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 2002), 69-75, 265-274; Tcherikover, *Hellenistic Civilization and the Jews*, 168, 296 ff. Also Let. Aris. 1:31; Ps.-Hec. 3:1; Gk. Apoc. Ezra 2:9.

<sup>96</sup> Or the Christian Gospel in the case of Phil 1:27. Bruce, *Acts of the Apostles*, 463. *Pol.*, *Phil.* 5:2; 1 Clem. 3:4; 6:1; 21:1 54:4; Herm. *Sim.* 5 6:6.

<sup>97</sup> There are many other examples of Christians adopting the language of citizenship for their own use. These examples need not be discussed at length in this paper. For a survey of this topic see the various essays in Bruce W. Winter, *Seek the Welfare of the City: Christians as Benefactors and Citizens* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1994); Wayne A. Meeks, *The First Urban Christians: The Social World of the Apostle Paul*. 2nd ed. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003). Two interesting examples include (1) πολίτευμα, as a corporate body or colony (cf. Phil. 3:20; Philo, *Conf* 1.109; Josephus, *Ag. Ap.* 2.257; Plato, *Leg.* 12.945d, 12.949e ff.; Aristotle, *Pol.* 3.4, 1278b12) and (2) πολιτεία as citizenship or way of life (cf. 2 Macc 8:17; Eph 2:12; Josephus, *Ag. Ap.* 2.188; *Mart. Pol.* 17:1; Blok, *Citizenship in Classical Athens*, 149-162).

For Luke, this vocabulary of citizenship will play an important part in characterizing Paul. Luke draws upon the idea of one's "civic" status from both the Greco-Roman and Jewish perspectives when he narrates the disclosure of Paul's Roman citizenship in Acts 16 and 22. In Acts 22 especially, Luke uses "citizen" language to contrast the Roman and Jewish responses to Paul's *civitas*.

## **Part II: Paul the "Un-Roman" Citizen: The Placement of *Civitas***

### *Avenues to Be Explored*

Having surveyed the scholarly literature and some of the language associated with discourse about citizenship, I now suggest some additional avenues for further understanding Paul's citizenship in Acts. Little more can be said on how Paul may have acquired *civitas* and there is little reason to believe he did not possess it.<sup>1</sup> Two of the detractors made against the historicity of Paul's citizenship, however, are worth exploring further. First is the claim that Paul's Roman citizenship seems out of place in Acts' narrative.<sup>2</sup> Some have argued that Paul appealed to his *civitas* at an "un-Roman" time, but others that this delay was to protect his missiological agenda.<sup>3</sup> However, it has yet to be explored whether Roman citizenship typically appears at the end of narrative arguments as a type of hyperbaton or some other climactic rhetorical device.<sup>4</sup> This will

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<sup>1</sup> Witherington, *Acts of the Apostles*, 679; Rapske, *Paul in Roman Custody*, 83-90; Tajra, *Trial of St. Paul*, 86-89.

<sup>2</sup> Stegemann, "War der Apostel Paulus ein römischer Bürger?" 202, 205-206; Lentz, *Luke's Portrait of Paul*, 43-51.

<sup>3</sup> Stegemann, "War der Apostel Paulus ein römischer Bürger?" 202; cf. Rapske, *Paul in Roman Custody*, 129-134, 140-143.

<sup>4</sup> Because the placement of Paul's *civitas* may seem out of place it can be considered a type of semantic displacement (Aelius Theon, *Exercises* 82). Two options may be (1) *hysteron proteron* or placing first what should be last, and (2) *prothysteron* or placing last what should be first. See Samuel E. Bassett, "ὕστερον προτερον ὁμηρικῶς (Cicero, Att.

help to clarify the second detraction that Paul's citizenship in Acts seems to be a narrative invention on the part of the author to serve some literary or theological purpose.<sup>5</sup> Luke's narration of Paul's citizenship may not be an attempt to invent history but to follow conventions of rhetoric regarding *civitas*. Lastly, I will examine Paul's supposed ambivalence toward his *civitas* in Acts.<sup>6</sup> Does its presentation suggest it was unimportant to Paul and the author, or might its placement in the text indicate a different level of significance?

Paul's decision to withhold announcing his Roman citizenship in Acts 16 and 22 seems out of place and "un-Roman" if Paul really did hold *civitas*.<sup>7</sup> However, this placement may reflect Luke's purposeful narrative arrangement rather than a recollection of how Paul actually interacted with Roman authorities. The proclamation of Paul's Roman citizenship comes at climactic points in the narrative and serves as a rhetorical-theological device legitimizing the dissemination of Paul's gospel message to Jews, gentiles, and even Romans. First, we will see how a similar rhetorical move works in Cicero's *Verrine Orations*. Cicero uses Roman citizenship in his narrative contained in *Against Verres* to evoke an emotional response against Verres' deplorable moral

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1, 16, 1)," *HSCP* 31 (1920): 39-62; Samuel Eliot Bassett, *The Poetry of Homer*, 2nd ed., ed. Bruce Heiden (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2003), 120-121; cf. Cicero, *Ep. Att.* 1.16.1.

<sup>5</sup> Stegemann, "War der Apostel Paulus ein römischer Bürger?" 205-206; Lentz, *Luke's Portrait of Paul*, 58.

<sup>6</sup> Tajra, *Trial of St. Paul*, 88; Barclay, *Pauline Churches and Diaspora Jews*, 363-387; Rapske, *Paul in Roman Custody*, 143; cf. Steve Walton, "The State They Were In," 33-35; Robert F. O'Toole, "Luke's Position on Politics and Society in Luke-Acts," 8.

<sup>7</sup> See the discussion in Rapske, *Paul in Roman Custody*, 129-134; Michael J.G. Gray-Fow, "Why Festus, Not Felix? Paul's *Caesarem Appello*," *JETS* 59, no. 3 (2016): 473-485.

character. Thus, Cicero's work is a useful point of comparison for understanding how Roman citizenship functions in a narrative.

However, Cicero's *Verrine Orations* are not the only pieces of ancient literature that use Roman citizenship at culminating points in their narratives. Here I will briefly mention two other examples. Dionysius of Halicarnassus and Livy both recall the story of the famous Roman dictator, Lucius Quintus Cincinnatus (Dionysius of Halicarnassus, *Ant. rom.* 10.17-25; Livy 3.25-29). These authors both make brief asides exhorting their readers to emulate the actions and moral character of Cincinnatus (Dionysius of Halicarnassus, *Ant. rom.* 10.25; Livy 3.26.7). These asides are then paired with the conflict concerning citizen rights during the consulships of Gaius Nautius and Lucius Minucius (Dionysius of Halicarnassus, *Ant. rom.* 10.22; Livy 3.29.7-9). In this way Dionysius of Halicarnassus and Livy both use the story of Cincinnatus in a climactic manner to highlight how Roman citizens should act in times of crisis. They compare the noble deeds of Cincinnatus, who although having tremendous political power nevertheless laid down his dictatorship for the benefit of all Romans, with the degeneration of citizen rights during the consulships Nautius and Minucius.

A second example of a Greco-Roman author using Roman citizenship in a climactic fashion comes from Plutarch's life of Pompey (Plutarch, *Pomp.* 80). After Septimius, Salvius, and Achillas had assassinated Pompey (*Pomp.* 79.3) these men left his decapitated body out in the open for all to see (*Pomp.* 80.1). Philip, Pompey's freedman, stayed with the body and began to build a funeral pyre for it (*Pomp.* 80.2). However, while Philip was doing this an unnamed Roman citizen came to him and the following exchange ensued:

Τίς ὢν, ὃ ἄνθρωπε, ἔφη, θάπτειν διανοῇ Μάγνον Πομπήϊον; ἐκείνου δὲ φήσαντος ὡς ἀπελεύθερος, Ἄλλ' οὐ μόνω σοί, ἔφη, τοῦτο τὸ καλὸν ὑπάρξει· κάμει δὲ ὥσπερ εὐρήματος εὐσεβοῦς δέξαι κοινωνόν, ὡς μὴ κατὰ πάντα μέμφωμαι τὴν ἀποξένωσιν, ἀντὶ πολλῶν ἀνιαρῶν τοῦτο γοῦν εὐράμενος, ἄσπασθαι καὶ περιστεῖλαι ταῖς ἐμαῖς χερσὶ τὸν μέγιστον αὐτοκράτορα Ῥωμαίων.

“Who art thou, my man, that thinkest to give burial rites to Pompey the Great?” And when Philip said that he was his freedman, the man said: “But thou shalt not have this honour all to thyself; let me too share in a pious privilege thus offered, that I may not altogether regret my sojourn in a foreign land, if in requital for many hardships I find this happiness at least, to touch with my hands and array for burial the greatest of Roman imperators” (*Pomp.* 80.3 [LCL]).

Here Plutarch has chosen to use a Roman citizen as a character who can bring Pompey’s life to a close. Plutarch leaves the Roman man unnamed but does mention that he is old man who had served in Pompey’s campaigns during his youth (ἀνὴρ Ῥωμαῖος ἤδη γέρων, τὰς δὲ πρώτας στρατείας ἔτι νέος Πομπηΐω συνεστρατευμένος [*Pomp.* 80.3]).

This Roman citizen therefore serves as a kind of metonym for Pompey and for his life. Plutarch closes his narration of Pompey’s life with this story involving the Roman citizen to show that Pompey altogether was a great Roman, deserving of the respect and admiration reserved from Roman citizens from the beginning of his life to its end.

We can see from these two examples that Roman citizenship appears in a variety of ancient literature at climactic points. Here we will focus on how Cicero uses Roman citizenship in *Against Verres*. The main reason to limit our comparison to just Cicero’s *Verrine Orations* is that scholars heavily cite this work as corroborating evidence concerning Paul’s *civitas* in Acts and so such a comparison will benefit existing scholarship. However, there are several additional reasons. (1) The text identifies a



number of individuals as Roman citizens either explicitly or implicitly.<sup>8</sup> (2) The text is self-contained. This means Cicero's argument is relatively compact, contains start and end points, and constitutes a short literary unit that fits within and builds up its larger literary context.<sup>9</sup> (3) Cicero makes numerous comparisons of Roman citizens with other people groups. (4) We can deduce from the comparisons a character judgment about the Roman citizen(s) and those who interact with them, both explicitly or implicitly.<sup>10</sup> Thus, by comparing Acts with Cicero's *Against Verres* we will see how Roman citizenship as a topic of narrative discourse functions rhetorically as a climactic narrative element.

### **Roman Citizenship in Cicero's *Against Verres***

Cicero's *Against Verres* gives us a detailed account of a corruption scandal during the late Republican period. Gaius Verres had served as a public official in several provinces during his career from 83 to 70 BCE, but most notably as governor of Sicily from 73-71 BCE. After his return to Rome in 70 BCE, the people of Sicily began to levy

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<sup>8</sup> In Acts the author makes it clear that Paul is a Roman citizen (Acts 16:37; 22:25-29). Some ancient sources identify their subjects as Roman citizens (e.g. Cicero, *Verr.* 1.56) but others are not always as forthcoming (e.g. Livy 3.26). We can assume, in most cases, that high ranking Roman officials, i.e., proconsuls, governors, praetors, etc., are Roman citizens even if the text does not say so explicitly. It is possible, though unlikely, that some high ranking Roman officials did not possess formal citizenship during their tenure. See the discussion in Sherwin-White, *The Roman Citizenship*, 408-411.

<sup>9</sup> For example, Suetonius's digression about Augustus's refusal to confer Roman citizenship on slaves can be considered a self-contained unit of text (*Aug.* 40.3-4) whereas his depiction of Augustus, the principle Roman citizen, as a whole may be too unwieldy for a meaningful comparison with Paul's citizenship in Acts.

<sup>10</sup> For example, in Acts 16 Paul is implicitly compared with the citizens of Philippi and the readers are left to judge for themselves what to make of the comparison (Acts 16:21, 37). By contrast, Livy and Dionysius of Halicarnassus make their comparisons between Cincinnatus and their readers abundantly clear (Livy 3.26; Dionysius of Halicarnassus, *Ant. rom.* 10.25.3-4). See also L.V. Pitcher, "Characterization in Ancient Historiography," 102-117.

charges of corruption against him, and they chose the young but ambitious Cicero to serve as prosecutor in the case.<sup>11</sup>

The *Verrine Orations* are divided into three parts: the *Divinatio in Caecilium*, the *Actio Prima*, and the *Actio Secunda*. The *Divinatio in Caecilium* contains Cicero's argument for why he, instead of the former quaestor of Sicily, Q. Caecilius, should serve as prosecutor against Verres in the proceedings (*Div. Caec.* 1.1-2.5; 3.10-4.11).<sup>12</sup> This section provides what some have noted to be a rhetorical handbook, an *orationis ratio*, serving as a guide to Cicero's argument and narrative throughout the remainder of the *Verrines*.<sup>13</sup>

The *Actio Prima* lays out Cicero's method for prosecuting Verres and his rationale for why such prosecution should take place. Unlike standard judicial procedure at this time, Cicero elects to shorten his opening speech so that he can proceed quickly to

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<sup>11</sup> For discussion on the historical and political background of the *Verrines* see Ann Vasaly, "Cicero, Domestic Politics, and the First Action of the *Verrines*," *Classical Antiquity* 28, no. 1 (April 2009), 101-137; Ann Vasaly, "Cicero's Early Speeches," in *Brill's Companion to Cicero: Oratory and Rhetoric*, ed. James M. May (Leiden: Brill, 2002): 87-103.

<sup>12</sup> Vasaly states the *Divinatio in Caecilium* is "the only example of an oration delivered at a preliminary hearing before a court empowered to decide who would be allowed to prosecute a given defendant" ("Cicero's Early Speeches," 87). This oration is thus an anomaly within Roman law. Under normal circumstances a preliminary hearing would determine the *formula* for litigation containing (1) the appointment of a judge (*nominatio*), (2) the plaintiff's statement/claim (*intentio*), (3) the sought-after verdict (*condemnatio*), (4) statement of facts (*demonstratio*), (5) a defense (*exceptio*), and (6) any limiting factors (*praescriptio*). See du Plessis, *Textbook on Roman Law*, 74-75.

<sup>13</sup> Vasaly suggests as much ("Cicero's Early Speeches," 87-88). The opening speech was called the *quaestio de repetundis*. Cicero "instructs" Caecilius in the art of prosecution and lays out several guidelines, saying, "Let me instruct you, this being your first opportunity of gaining such instruction, as to the many qualifications a prosecutor must possess" (*Div. Caec.* 9.27 ff.). See also Kennedy, *Classical Rhetoric and Its Christian and Secular Tradition from Ancient to Modern Times*, 98-113; James A. Herrick, *The History and Theory of Rhetoric: An Introduction*, 4th ed. (Boston: Pearson, 2009), 100-103.

his arguments and produce his witnesses and documents before Verres has a chance to react (*Verr.* 1.33-34).<sup>14</sup> By moving quickly into the prosecution of Verres, Cicero directs the attention of the audience and the reader to a climactic point in his argument. To begin, Cicero points to the culpability of the court should Verres escape conviction. He argues the Roman courts themselves are on trial along with Verres. Cicero questions the efficacy of the courts, whether they procure pure and unbiased justice or if they are manipulated by those with money (*Verr.* 1.1). He argues that the conviction of such a vile man like Verres, who was himself offering bribes for his acquittal (*Verr.* 1.15-17), would restore the reputation of the courts and bring back the auspices of the Roman people and their allies (*Verr.* 1.2). Cicero points to Verres as a source of the corrupted justice which is now infecting the courts. While Verres was governor of Sicily, Cicero states, “Its people were protected neither by their own laws, nor by the decrees of the Roman Senate, nor by the rights that belong to all nations alike” (*Verr.* 1.13). Cicero then produces a list of offenses that indicate Verres’ maltreatment of justice, and which will become recurrent throughout his argument. These include: the violation of inheritance rights, extortion of farmers, mistreatment of allies, adultery, sexual assault, sacrilegious robbery, treason, military negligence, and finally, the violation of Roman citizen’s rights (*Verr.* 1.13-15; cf. 2.1.63-85; 2.1.104; 2.2.19-24; 2.3.11; 2.4.60-72; 2.5.158).

In this list of nefarious deeds Cicero draws special attention to the treatment of Roman allies and Roman citizens. First, he uses simile to create a contrast between the

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<sup>14</sup> Vasaly, “Cicero’s Early Speeches,” 88-89. du Plessis notes that in preliminary hearings the plaintiff needed to produce any documents he intended to use in the subsequent trial but was not to utilize them until after the official trial had commenced (*Textbook on Roman Law*, 73).

type of treatment Roman allies and Roman citizens deserved and what Verres actually wrought upon them. For example, Cicero puts forward the phrase “cives Romani servilem in modum cruciate et necati” (Roman citizens were tortured and crucified like slaves [Verr. 1.13]) to provide a contrast between Roman citizens, who could except magnanimity in their treatment during legal proceedings, and slaves, who could except no such recourse.<sup>15</sup> This statement also serves to foreshadow the appalling acts of torture that Roman citizens were forced to undergo at the hands of Verres.<sup>16</sup> Likewise, a simile draws attention to the mistreatment of Roman allies: “socii fidelissimi in hostium numero existimati” (Our foreign allies were numbered as our enemies [Verr. 1.13]). These are the only two similes in Cicero’s list at this point in the text. He presents the other deeds through simple narration and relies on an emotive response for their overall effectiveness in the appeal to the audience.<sup>17</sup> In this way Cicero highlights the treatment of Roman allies and citizens and indicates that the respect of these two institutions is especially important to the audience, thus deserving special treatment in his overall argument.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> Several laws protected Roman citizens from undue punishment. The *Lex Valeria* gave citizens the right of appeal (*appellatio*) (Livy 10.9.3-6). The Porcian law protected citizens from beatings or execution (Livy 10.9.4; Verr. 2.5.163). The Julian laws gave similar protections (Dig. 48.6.7-8). Of course, there are instances where these laws are ignored (e.g. Verr. 2.5.163; Suetonius, *Galb.* 9.1). The extent and nature of these laws remains debatable. Sherwin-White, *Roman Citizenship*, 150-153. For further discussion see Rapske, *Paul in Roman Custody*, 47-56; Sherwin-White, *Roman Society and Roman Law in the New Testament*, 58; du Plessis, *Textbook on Roman Law*, 66; Brewer, “Roman Citizenship and its Bearing on the Book of Acts,” 215-218; Garnsey, “The Lex Iulia and Appeal under the Empire,” 167-189; Garnsey, *Social Status and Legal Privilege in the Roman Empire*, 260-271.

<sup>16</sup> The cognates *cruciātus*, *crucifigō*, and *cruciō* are indicative of this. (e.g. Verr. 1.13; 2.5.163).

<sup>17</sup> Vasaly, “Cicero’s Early Speeches,” 96-97.

<sup>18</sup> Of course, at this point in the text Cicero is merely summarizing the accusations against Verres, so each point in the list here is of equal weight. Only when looking at the

Cicero throws the full weight of his rhetorical abilities and investigative skills into his prosecution of Verres.<sup>19</sup> He declares that prosecuting corruption, though difficult, is tantamount to preserving the image of Rome abroad.<sup>20</sup> He lays out the scope of the trial and his accusations in a summary fashion at the end of the *Actio Prima*:

Dicimus C. Verrem, cum multa libidine, multa crudeliter in cives Romanos atque in socios, multa in deos hominesque nefarie fecerit, tum praeterea quadringentiens sestertium ex Sicilia contra leges abstulisse. Hoc testibus, hoc tabulis privatis publicisque auctoritatibus ita vobis planum faciemus ut hoc statuatis, etiamsi spatium ad dicendum nostro commodo vacuosque dies habuissemus, tamen oratione longa nihil opus fuisse.

We submit that Gaius Verres has been guilty of many acts of lust and cruelty towards Roman citizens and Roman allies, of many outrageous offences against God and man; and that he has, moreover, illegally robbed Sicily of four hundred thousand pounds. This fact we will use witnesses [sic], and private records, and official written statements, to make so plain to you that you will conclude that, even had we had days to spare and time to speak at leisure, there would still have been no need to speak at any great length (*Verr.* 1.56 [LCL]).

Again, Verres' actions against Roman citizens and Roman allies are of key importance for Cicero. Of all the malicious deeds attributed to Verres previously (*Verr.* 1.13-14) only those with regard to Roman citizens and Roman allies repeat in the summary here. The other accusation at this point in the text, viz., that Verres robbed a large sum of money from Sicily, does not draw as significant attention as does the repetition of wrongs done against Roman citizens and allies.

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account as a whole do we see that Cicero's most poignant form of criticism against Verres is his treatment of Roman citizens.

<sup>19</sup> Preparing rhetoric was usually a five-step process involving invention, arrangement, style, memorization, and delivery (Aristotle, *Rhetoric* 3; Cicero, *Inv.* 1.6.9). Kennedy, *New Testament Interpretation Through Rhetorical Criticism*, 14-33; Herrick, *Rhetoric*, 103.

<sup>20</sup> Especially since the consul elect, Quintus Hortensius Hortalus, r. 69 BCE, colluded with Verres to secure his acquittal (*Verr.* 1.18-20; 1.37-39).

The reader therefore expects special consideration for how Verres treated Roman citizens and Roman allies in the rest of Cicero's argument, namely that such instances of mistreatment on the part of Verres should serve as Cicero's sharpest tools for leveling charges against him.

The final section of *Against Verres*, the *Actio Secunda*, contains numerous examples of the mistreatment of Roman citizens and Roman allies at the hands of Verres (e.g. 2.2.33; 2.3.59; 2.4.48; especially 2.5). Thus, Cicero fulfills the expectation he established in the *Actio Prima* of using Roman citizens to defame Verres. This section's usefulness for understanding Paul's plight as a Roman citizen at the hands of Roman officials in Acts is evident.<sup>21</sup> However, before assessing instances of Verres' mistreatment of Roman citizens in this section we should note Cicero's purposeful narrative construction.<sup>22</sup> Verres fled Rome and went into exile in Massilia (modern day Marseille) before Cicero delivered the *Actio Secunda*. This may be a cause for commentators to categorize the work as rhetoric rather than historiography or biography.<sup>23</sup> Yet the *Verrines* describe events that Cicero actually investigated and

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<sup>21</sup> As demonstrated by the many authors who cite the *Verrines* in their discussions; Tajra, *Trial of St. Paul*, 24-29, 148-149; Witherington, *Acts of the Apostles*, 678, 725; Sherwin-White, *Roman Society and Roman Law in the NT*, 172; Rapske, *Paul in Roman Custody*.

<sup>22</sup> Vasaly, "Cicero's Early Speeches," 92-93; Beth Innocenti, "Towards a Theory of Vivid Description as Practiced in Cicero's *Verrine* Oration," *Rhetorica* 12, no. 4 (Autumn 1994): 369-381.

<sup>23</sup> Vasaly suggests the work "constitutes a new genre, hovering somewhere between epideictic and forensic oratory" and served as an ad campaign for Cicero's career as an aedile ("Cicero's Early Speeches," 90-91, 98-103). Greenwood argues the *Actio Secunda* was composed for delivery and is hesitant to put a literary classification on the work, writing: "We should have lost more than we should have gained by its conversion into a historical monograph" (Introduction to *The Verrines*, LCL, xix). George A. Kennedy, *A New History of Classical Rhetoric* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1994), 96, 131-132.

contains many of the marks of narrative literature. This makes them of historical value regardless of their presentation as a hypothetical dictation of a court argument and proceeding.<sup>24</sup> In particular, there is overlap with how Cicero structures his prosecution of Verres and Greco-Roman biography.<sup>25</sup> At one junction, Cicero makes a paraleptic statement regarding how he must pass over the, “vile and immoral ‘first act’ of Verres’ career” (*Verr.* 2.1.32). Cicero also cites a need for modesty, saying that some of the things Verres has done are not decent for presentation in a court of law, but he nevertheless recalls Verres’ acts of debauchery and infamy through paraleipsis (*Verr.* 2.1.32-33). This indicates that Cicero is aware that a full accounting of Verres’ life (*vita*) would include his birth, childhood, and development before entering the public sphere, and is tacit proof of Cicero’s knowledge of biographical writing.<sup>26</sup> Cicero’s reasons for providing a truncated retelling of Verres’ public career are: (1) to convict Verres before he is able to stall the proceedings due to the upcoming election (cf. *Verr.* 1.32-34) and (2) because he believes Verres’ public actions alone are more than enough to provide a conviction (*Verr.* 2.1.33).

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<sup>24</sup> Greenwood, Introduction to *The Verrines*, LCL, xvii-xix; Vasaly, “Cicero’s Early Speeches,” 89-91; Kennedy, *A New History of Classical Rhetoric*, 131; George A. Kennedy, *The Art of Rhetoric in the Roman World: 300 B.C.-A.D. 300* (Eugene: Wipf & Stock, 1972), 156-165.

<sup>25</sup> The overlap is that Cicero expounds upon the life of a single individual, Verres, for the purpose of exposing his moral character. See the discussion stemming from Plutarch, *Alexander* 1.1-3. Burrige, *What are the Gospels?*, 59-62; David E. Aune, *The Westminster Dictionary of New Testament and Early Christian Literature and Rhetoric* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2003), 78-81. Even though Acts may be classified as historiography a comparison with a text resembling biography is still useful because both types of literature are concerned with characterizing their subjects through episodes that reveal moral character; Aune, *Greco-Roman Literature and the New Testament*, 125; Pitcher, “Characterization in Ancient Historiography,” 1:102-117.

<sup>26</sup> Burrige, *What are the Gospels?*, 108-113; Aune, *Dictionary of NT and Early Christian Literature and Rhetoric*, 78-81.

Further overlap between *Against Verres* and biography lies in the work's chronological and topical organization.<sup>27</sup> Following the peripatetic type of biography<sup>28</sup> Cicero states that he will explicate Verres' career based on his years in public office (*Verr.* 2.1.34) first as quaestor, then adjunct in Asia, next as city praetor, and finally as praetor of Sicily (*Verr.* 2.1.34-40; 2.1.41-102; 2.1.103-158; 2.2). Cicero's aside at 2.1.32-34 also illuminates the work's categorical organization.<sup>29</sup> This aside, similar to one made by Suetonius in his *Deified Augustus* (9.1), is an indication of Cicero utilizing the writing methods of biography for his legal treatise.<sup>30</sup> Cicero laboriously divides his work into five sections, a move that caused one ancient rhetorician to lament, "Would anyone sit out the

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<sup>27</sup> Hence a mixture of peripatetic and Alexandrian biography. Quintilian, *Inst.* 3.7.15; Burridge, *What are the Gospels?*, 115; Everett Ferguson, *Backgrounds of Early Christianity*, 3rd ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003), 121-122; Aune, *Greco-Roman Literature and the NT*, 107-108; Aune, *Dictionary of the NT and Early Christian Literature and Rhetoric*, 78-81. Also Arnaldo Momigliano, *The Development of Greek Biography*, rev. ed. (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1993).

<sup>28</sup> I.e., a chronological framework. Quintilian, *Inst.* 3.7.15; Aune, *Greco-Roman Literature and the NT*, 108; Ferguson, *Backgrounds of Early Christianity*, 121.

<sup>29</sup> I.e., an Alexandrian model of biography. Quintilian, *Inst.* 3.7.15; Aune, *Greco-Roman Literature and the NT*, 108; Ferguson, *Backgrounds of Early Christianity*, 121.

<sup>30</sup> The similarities are subtle but relevant. Cicero means to pass over the early part of Verres' career for the sake of brevity: "Itaque primum illum actum istius vitae... praetermittam [And so, I will omit the first act of his life]" (*Verr.* 2.1.32). Suetonius draws attention to his summary of Augustus' life so the reader may understand the rest of the account: "Proposita vitae eius velut summa partes singillatim neque per tempora sed per species exsequar [Having given a summary of his life, I will now take up its parts, not chronologically, but by categories]" (*Aug.* 9.1). In this manner, both authors indicate how they intend to organize their representations of the life (*vita*) of their subjects. Innocenti, "Towards a Theory of Vivid Description," 369.



five orations against Verres?” (Tacitus, *Dial.* 20).<sup>31</sup> By proceeding in this categorical manner Cicero imitates the organization of biographical writing.<sup>32</sup>

Above all, Cicero’s concern to reveal the moral character of Verres and to do so by both educating and entertaining his audience makes the work read much like a biography.<sup>33</sup> Many instances throughout the work indicate that Cicero is critical of Verres’ moral character. The examples Cicero provides of Verres maligning the rights of Roman citizens serve to emphasize this point. His concluding statements are representative. Cicero holds Verres’ moral scruples in such low esteem that he says, “I may rest assured that Verres will be pronounced the one Roman citizen for whom [the] cross would be a fitting punishment” (*Verr.* 2.5.171).<sup>34</sup> By analyzing the moral character of Verres, Cicero’s work is in line with biography, which seeks to reveal its subject’s character through his actions (cf. Plutarch, *Alex.* 1.2).<sup>35</sup>

#### *Roman Citizenship as a Revelation of Moral Character*

As mentioned, Cicero indicates he is particularly interested in how Verres treats Roman citizens and their allies (*Verr.* 1.56). While scholars often use *Against Verres* as a

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<sup>31</sup> Book 2.1 contains Verres behavior as praetor, adjunct, and city praetor. Book 2.2 focuses solely on his actions as praetor of Sicily. Book 2.3 concerns agricultural corruption. Book 2.4 narrates Verres’ many robberies of public and private places. Finally, book 2.5 deals with Verres’ mistreatment of Roman citizens.

<sup>32</sup> Quintilian, *Inst.* 3.7.15; Aune, *Greco-Roman Literature and the NT*, 108.

<sup>33</sup> Quintilian, *Inst.* 4.2.119-120; Polybius, 1.4.11; Vasaly, “Cicero’s Early Speeches,” 92-93; Aune, *Greco-Roman Literature and the NT*, 107; Ferguson, *Backgrounds of Early Christianity*, 121-122; Innocenti, “Towards a Theory of Vivid Description,” 369 ff.

<sup>34</sup> Romans typically reserved crucifixion for the most detestable and low status criminals. *Verr.* 2.1.14; 2.5.149; Martin Hengel, *Crucifixion: In the Ancient World and the Folly of the Message of the Cross*, trans. John Bowden (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1977), 39-45; Rapske, *Paul in Roman Custody*, 13-14; Tajra, *Trial of St. Paul*, 11.

<sup>35</sup> Burridge, *What are the Gospels?*, 120-121; Ferguson, *Backgrounds of Early Christianity*, 121; Aune, *Greco-Roman Literature and the NT*, 107.

source of corroborating evidence for the treatment of Paul as a Roman citizen in Acts<sup>36</sup> little effort has been made to recognize the narrative aspect Roman citizenship plays in Cicero's argument and how it relates to Luke's presentation of Paul's *civitas*.<sup>37</sup> Generally speaking, whenever Cicero mentions someone's Roman citizenship in his argument he uses it as a paramount means to disgrace Verres and shame his moral character (e.g. *Verr.* 2.1.13-14). Before mentioning the Roman citizenship of someone involved in these various machinations Cicero builds his case on other evidence. He cites Verres' displayed lust, greed, or gluttony, mentions his stupidity or incompetence, and even points to Verres' abominable behavior toward foreigners and then allies of Rome. But he leaves Verres' treatment of Roman citizens for last. Roman citizenship for Cicero is the final litmus test for Verres' morality. In narrative-rhetorical terms, Roman citizenship is the climax that illuminates Verres' moral character.<sup>38</sup> In what follows, I offer three examples

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<sup>36</sup> Tajra, *Trial of St. Paul*, 24-29, 148-149; Witherington, *Acts of the Apostles*, 678, 725; Sherwin-White, *Roman Society and Roman Law in the NT*, 172; Rapske, *Paul in Roman Custody*.

<sup>37</sup> Some have examined the narrative elements within the *Verrines* but do not connect this with Roman citizenship. Ann Vasaly, *Representations: Images of the World in Ciceronian Oratory* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1983), 88-130; Vasaly, "Cicero, Domestic Politics, and the First Action of the *Verrines*," 113; Vasaly, "Cicero's Early Speeches," 92-94; Innocenti, "Towards a Theory of Vivid Description," 369ff. Even though he is writing historical fiction, Robert Harris clearly demonstrates the narrative element present within the *Verrine Orations*. Robert Harris, *Imperium: A Novel of Ancient Rome* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2006).

<sup>38</sup> Kennedy, *NT Interpretation through Rhetorical Criticism*, 27-28. Quintilian speaks about gradation (*gradatio*), what the Greeks call climax (κλίμαξ) (*Inst.* 9.3.54-57). This form might be what is called anadiplosis, where the object of the first phrase is repeated as the subject of the next in a verb-less construction (cf. Rom 5:3-4). *Against Verres* exhibits both this rhetorical feature of climax (e.g. *Verr.* 1.51), and the narrative feature of climax associated with plot development (*Verr.* 2.5). See the discussion in Kennedy, *The Art of Rhetoric in the Roman World*, 245. Robert Harris, although writing a historical fiction, describes this climactic flourish quite vividly. He even has Cicero say, "A show must always end with a climax" (Harris, *Imperium*, 138).

to illustrate how Cicero constructs his characterization of Verres based on his treatment of non-citizens and then concludes with a climactic accusation involving Roman citizenship.

In 2.3.53-66, Cicero expounds upon Verres' embezzlement and extortion of public Sicilian money through agricultural taxes. Cicero names a number of individuals defrauded by both Verres and his subordinates, going into some detail about these persons' dignity and status as Sicilians. Having established that Verres defrauded, beat, imprisoned, and executed various leading Sicilians, Cicero adds a final accusation to the repertoire of Verres' misdeeds. He states:

Esto; falsam de illis habuit opinionem, malam de vobis; verum tamen, cum de Siculis male mereretur, cives Romanos coluit, iis induisit, eorum voluntati et gratiae deditus fuit. Iste cives Romanos? At nullis inimicior aut infestior fuit.

Well, well; he had a false conception of them [Sicilians], and an unflattering conception of you [the court]; but at least, ill as he served the Sicilians, of course he courted the Roman citizens there, was indulgent to *them*, did his best to satisfy and conciliate *them*. Did he indeed? Why, he hated them and persecuted them beyond all other men (*Verr.* 2.3.59 [LCL, italics original]).

By asking these rhetorical questions and answering them negatively, Cicero characterizes Verres as deplorably as possible. There is an expectation among Cicero and the court that Roman citizens would be treated with magnanimity; even Verres' disdain toward foreigners might be forgiven if he treated Roman citizens well. The expectation is broken, and the audience casts a moral judgement on his character; he is a nefarious menace to the ideals of Rome, someone not to be emulated. Cicero adds additional evidence to support his climactic claim. He speaks of how Gaius Matrinius, a Roman knight, was held prisoner at Leotini without food or shelter for two days (*Verr.* 2.3.60). He then adds the case of Quintus Lollius, another Roman knight, who was 90 years old,

and how he was dragged before one of Verres' henchmen, Apronius, during a party and forced to stand there in a state of humiliation until he paid a fine (*Verr.* 2.3.61-63). In saving the mistreatment of Roman citizens for the end of this pericope<sup>39</sup> Cicero is using Roman citizens and the institution of Roman *civitas* as climactic elements in his case against Verres' moral character.

Another example serves this point. In 2.4.26-60 Cicero recalls how Verres robbed temples and wealthy persons throughout his career. He begins this section with a statement to the people of Messana, who aided Verres in his many illegal actions (*Verr.* 2.4.22-24), that their culpability in crucifying a Roman citizen should preclude them from standing as witnesses in a Roman court (*Verr.* 2.4.26), thereby drawing attention to the plight of Roman citizens. Near the middle of this section he mentions Gnaeus Pompeius of Tyndaris, a man who had recently moved to Sicily and gave a dinner party for Verres. Again, Cicero draws attention to the institution of Roman citizenship by stating, "He [Pompeius] did what the Sicilians dared not do, but what, being a Roman citizen, he thought he would run comparatively little risk of doing" (*Verr.* 2.4.48). The reader is then shocked to learn Verres stole the embossments off the sacred vessels belonging to Pompeius. Cicero ends this pericope with the example of Lucius Titius, a Roman citizen and head of a family who had his signet ring ripped off his finger at the behest of Verres (*Verr.* 2.4.58). The placement of these first and last examples in the narrative function as an *inclusio* couching this section in terms of Roman citizen rights and privilege, while the

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<sup>39</sup> This and similar instances within the *Verrines* may be labeled as pericopae because they are largely self-contained units of texts; Aune, *Dictionary of NT Literature and Rhetoric*, 346. Cicero makes it clear to the reader that he intends this section to be organized around the motif of individual robberies, he then moves to extorted communities afterward (cf. *Verr.* 2.3.53; 2.3.66).

middle example provides a dramatic climax through the audacity with which Verres robbed a Roman citizen.<sup>40</sup>

The final book of the *Verrine Orations* itself serves as the climactic conclusion to Verres' deplorable behavior (cf. *Verr.* 2.3.59). The book centers around three themes: Verres' actions concerning his supposed military acumen (*Verr.* 2.5.1-41), his exempting the city of Messana from certain military obligations in exchange for bribes (*Verr.* 2.5.42-62), and his involvement in executing Roman citizens to cover up his having harbored notorious pirates who had terrorized Syracuse (*Verr.* 2.5.63 ff.). At each juncture Cicero uses Roman citizenship or obligation to Roman identity to implicate Verres. Should Verres claim that he was a capable military leader because he incarcerated revolting slaves, Cicero can point out that Verres actually freed them, "intending, no doubt, that the gallows [Verres] set up for slaves who had been convicted should be kept for Roman citizens who had not" (*Verr.* 2.5.12). Should Verres claim he adequately supplied the fleet, Cicero can state, "in this one matter all his evil qualities are displayed at their worst" (*Verr.* 2.5.42). Should Verres claim to have brought justice upon pirates, Cicero

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<sup>40</sup> Cicero also uses the example of Verres stealing a lampstand for the Temple of Jupiter belonging to a certain Syrian prince (*Verr.* 2.4.60-68). This story serves as a second climactic point demonstrating Verres detestable moral character within Book 2.4. The structure of Book 2.4 can be described as follows:

- A** No object public or private was safe from Verres' avarice (2.4.2)
- B** Verres is culpable in the dismantling of Roman honor (2.4.11-12)
- B'** Messana is also liable for dishonoring the freedom of Roman citizens (2.4.26)
- A'** Nothing that Verres fancied was safe even if it was sacred property (2.4.36-46)
- C** Gnaeus Pompeius is robbed of the embossment on his sacred vessels (2.4.48)
- C'** The signet ring of Lucius Titius is taken from him (2.4.58)
- A''** The image of Rome abroad is not safe because of Verres' greed (2.4.60; cf. 2.4.68)
- D** Verres robs the lampstands of the Temple of Jupiter from a Syrian prince (2.4.60-72)
- D'** Verres' robbery of the Statue of Diana, an affront to Scipio Africanus (2.4.74-75)

can claim, “Verres behaved less like a captor of pirates than like a pirate receiving his booty” (*Verr.* 2.5.64), and moreover, “had the hardihood to execute men who were stated to be Roman citizens and recognized widely as being so” (*Verr.* 2.5.136). In this manner, Cicero uses Roman citizenship and the rights and duties associated with it to denigrate Verres’ character and to demonstrate the extent of his crimes against Roman identity at home and abroad.

In building his argument, Cicero concludes with a final notorious example of Verres’ desecration of the rights of Roman citizenship, thereby sealing his fate in the eyes of the Roman court.<sup>41</sup> The story of Publius Gavius (*Verr.* 2.5.158-170) comes with a heightened sense of emotion, urgency, and antipathy towards Verres. Verres had thrown Gavius into the infamous Syracusan quarry prison in place of one of the pirates he was harboring.<sup>42</sup> Gavius managed to escape prison and made his way to Messana where he was recaptured by the residents of that city (they were Verres’ loyal accomplices) and was tried before Verres publicly. Gavius appealed to his Roman citizenship but Verres condemned the man as a spy.<sup>43</sup> Cicero then describes the scene in grisly detail:

Caedebatur virgis in medio foro Messanae civis Romanus, iudices, cum interea nullus gemitus, nulla vox alia illius miseri inter dolorem crepitumque plagarum audiebatur nisi haec, “Civis Romanus sum.” Hac se commemoratione civitatis omnia verbera depulsurum cruciatumque a corpore deiecturum arbitrabatur; is non modo hoc non perfecit, ut virgarum vim deprecaretur, sed, cum imploraret saepius usurparetque

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<sup>41</sup> Vasaly, “Cicero’s Early Speeches,” 95.

<sup>42</sup> *Verr.* 2.5.68; Livy 32.26.17; Varro, *Ling.* 5.151; Rapske, *Paul in Roman Custody*, 24-25.

<sup>43</sup> Appeal rights extending from the *Lex Valeria* (Livy 10.9.3-6) the Porcian law (Livy 10.9.4; *Verr.* 2.5.163), and the Julian laws (Dig. 48.6.7-8). See also *Verr.* 2.5.163; Sherwin-White, *Roman Citizenship*, 150-153; Sherwin-White, *Roman Society and Roman Law in the NT*, 58; Rapske, *Paul in Roman Custody*, 47-56; du Plessis, *Textbook on Roman Law*, 66; Brewer, “Roman Citizenship and Acts,” 215-218; Garnsey, “The Lex Iulia and Appeal under the Empire,” 136-189.

nomen civitatis, crux, crux, inquam, infelici et aerumnoso, qui numquam istam pestem viderat, comparabatur.

There in the open marketplace of Messana a Roman citizen, gentlemen, was beaten with rods; and all the while, amid the crack of the falling blows, no words came from his lips in his agony except “I am a Roman citizen.” By thus proclaiming his citizenship he had been hoping to avert all those blows and shield his body from torture; yet not only did he fail to secure escape from those cruel rods, but when he persisted in his entreaties and his appeals to his citizen rights, a cross was made ready - yes, a cross, for that hapless and broken sufferer, who had never seen such an accursed thing till then (*Verr.* 2.5.162 [LCL]).

For Cicero, this instance marks the ultimate betrayal of Roman citizenship rights on the part of Verres. He exclaims soon after, “It was not Gavius, not one obscure man, whom you nailed upon that cross of agony: it was the universal principle that Romans are free men” (*Verr.* 2.5.170). By beginning with one small example in Publius Gavius, Cicero expands his argument to the entire Roman world. Thus Cicero shows that even the smallest example reveals the severe magnitude of Verres’ actions.<sup>44</sup> Vasaly writes that this dramatic narrative “builds to an attempt to rouse the emotions of the audience through a highly charged assertion to the wide implications of the events retold.”<sup>45</sup> This final crescendo, as it were, creates a climactic episode based upon Roman citizenship which is definitive evidence of Verres’ appalling moral character.

The three previous examples serve to illustrate Cicero’s utilization of Roman citizenship as a rhetorical element in his argument. We can see that Roman citizenship appears at climactic points within the narrative. Roman citizenship is the final recourse Cicero uses to implicate Verres of his crimes.

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<sup>44</sup> In that what has happened to one man brings equal offense to the whole inhabited world; *Verr.* 2.5.169; 2.5.171; cf. Plutarch, *Alex.* 1.2

<sup>45</sup> Vasaly, “Cicero’s Early Speeches,” 96.

Therefore, Roman citizenship serves a key narrative purpose within the text; namely, as an accurate measure of what reveals moral character.

### **Roman Citizenship in Acts 16**

Having explored the rhetorical function of Roman citizenship in *Against Verres*, I now explore the rhetorical function of Roman citizenship in the narrative of Acts. I consider Roman citizenship's role in the Philippi episode (Acts 16) and then in Paul's trial in Jerusalem (Acts 22).

Acts chapter 16 contains the first explicit reference to Paul's Roman citizenship (16:37). As Tajra has suggested, the events in Philippi are the beginning of Paul's larger judicial defense in Acts.<sup>46</sup> Paul's encounter with the crowd (ὄχλος [16:22]), the Philippian magistrates (στρατηγοὶ [16:20, 22, 35-40]), and his time in prison (16:24-34) all foreshadow the events of Paul's trial in Jerusalem (21:17-23:35) and Caesarea (24-27).<sup>47</sup> This episode illustrates how Luke uses Roman citizenship as a climactic feature, and in the context of Paul's missionary activity also serves to buttress his prerogative of preaching the gospel to the gentiles.

Luke puts special emphasis on the Philippi episode by providing key contextual evidence. Chapter 16 follows Paul and Barnabas separating from each other (15:36-40), a key disjunctive event in the narrative. It begins by providing the reader with the circumstances leading up to Paul's arrival in Philippi (16:1-10), specifically Paul's dream in Troas (16:9). Pervo notes that the vision here is a distinctly Greco-Roman vehicle of

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<sup>46</sup> Tajra, *Trial of St. Paul*, 3.

<sup>47</sup> Tannehill, *Narrative Unity*, 2:201; Tajra, *Trial of St. Paul*, 4; Rapske, *Paul in Roman Custody*, 121-122.



revelation.<sup>48</sup> However, Jewish tradition also attests to visions as mediums of divine revelation.<sup>49</sup> Within the narrative this is the third vision Paul has seen,<sup>50</sup> and like other visions in Acts comes at a critical juncture in the story. The vision at 16:9 comes at a time when the frontier of gospel proclamation is about to expand significantly, viz., to a Roman audience.<sup>51</sup>

Luke cues his readers to the purpose of the narrative by mentioning the colony status of Philippi (16:12).<sup>52</sup> There is debate over how we should understand πρώτη[ς] in 16:12.<sup>53</sup> It seems likely that the sigma, proposed by some on the basis of a few Latin manuscripts, is unoriginal to the text regardless of its contribution to the verse's

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<sup>48</sup> Pervo, *Acts*, 391.

<sup>49</sup> E.g., Isa 6; Jer 1; Ezek 1; Dan 9-10. Chance, *Acts*, 280-281. The presence of visions in Acts may be considered a manifestation of the divine spirit being poured out in the last days (cf. 2:17-21; Joel 3:1-5 [LXX]). See also Loveday Alexander, "Luke's Political Vision," *Interpretation* 66, no. 3 (2012): 283-293.

<sup>50</sup> The first being his vision on the road to Damascus (9:1-9) and the second his vision of Ananias (9:12).

<sup>51</sup> Similarly, the visions of Cornelius and Peter in chapter 10 frame the narrative's explanation for how the gospel came to be preached to the gentiles, a new frontier because until then the church movement had largely been centered upon Jews and proselytes to Judaism (Acts 10:1-11:18); Peterson, *Acts of the Apostles*, 323-350; Tannehill, *Narrative Unity*, 2:128-145; Witherington, *Acts of the Apostles*, 346-365.

<sup>52</sup> Philippi had been under Roman influence since 168 BCE and became a colony after the battle of Philippi in 42 BCE. For history and background see Livy 45.29-30; Suetonius, *Aug.* 13; Appian, *Bell. Civ.* 4.105-138; Strabo *Geogr.* 7.41; Augustus, *Res Gestae* 2-3; David W.J. Gill, "Macedonia," in *The Book of Acts in Its First Century Setting*, vol. 2, *Graeco-Roman Setting*, ed. David W.J. Gill and Conrad Gempf (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1994), 400-404, 411-413; Richard A. Horsley, ed., *Paul and the Roman Imperial Order* (Harrisburg, PA: Trinity Press International, 2004), 10-11; Bruce, *Acts of the Apostles*, 357; Tajra, *Trial of St. Paul*, 5-8; Witherington, *Acts of the Apostles*, 488.

<sup>53</sup> Bruce M. Metzger, *A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament*, 2nd ed. (Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 1994), 393-395; Peterson, *Acts of the Apostles*, 458-460; Tajra, *Trial of St. Paul*, 5; Sherwin-White, *Roman Society and Roman Law in the NT*, 94-95; Bruce, *Acts of the Apostles*, 357; Witherington, *Acts of the Apostles*, 489; Pervo, *Acts*, 399.

meaning.<sup>54</sup> I follow the suggestion of Metzger who is hesitant to abandon the textual tradition of P<sup>74</sup> & A C Ψ et al.,<sup>55</sup> and take the reading, πρώτη τῆς μερίδος Μακεδονίας πόλις κολωνία, to mean, “a leading city of the district of Macedonia, a Roman colony.”<sup>56</sup> There is speculation over why this aside is included.<sup>57</sup> Witherington and Ramsay find that Luke is following the rhetorical methods of praise for a city and postulate Luke is purposefully praising his hometown.<sup>58</sup> However, more than being an insight into the author’s life, this brief statement about Philippi serves another purpose. Sherwin-White says it this way: “Paul had an adventure at Philippi of which the significance depended upon the special status of the place.”<sup>59</sup> Luke is introducing a motif that will become more pronounced throughout the narrative, viz., the explicit interaction of the gospel with Roman citizens and the Roman Empire within the narrative.<sup>60</sup> This contextual evidence

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<sup>54</sup> Witherington, *Acts of the Apostles*, 489; Peterson, *Acts of the Apostles*, 459.

<sup>55</sup> Metzger, *Textual Commentary on the Greek NT*, 395. Contra Pervo, *Acts*, 399; Tajra, *Trial of St. Paul*, 5.

<sup>56</sup> Cf. NRSV, ESV. Metzger gives three suggestions: two related to the status and political identity of Philippi. It could be either (1) “the chief city of Macedonia” or (2) “a leading city.” The first is a designation of political function and the second an honorific designation. Given the historical difficulties of calling Philippi the chief city of its district in Macedonia most commentators opt for the honorary distinction of “a leading city” (c.f. Livy 45.29). Metzger’s third option takes πρώτη to mean that Philippi was the first city to which Paul came upon his arrival in Europe. Obviously, this cannot be the case because Paul came to Neopolis first (16:11). Metzger, *Textual Commentary on the Greek NT*, 394; Witherington, *Acts of the Apostles*, 489; Peterson, *Acts of the Apostles*, 459-460.

<sup>57</sup> Metzger, *Textual Commentary on the Greek NT*, 394.

<sup>58</sup> Ramsay, *St. Paul the Traveler and Roman Citizen*, 165-166; Witherington, *Acts of the Apostles*, 489. It must remain speculative whether Luke was originally from Philippi. See also Peterson, *Acts of the Apostles*, 460; Sherwin-White, *Roman Society and Roman Law in the NT*, 94-95.

<sup>59</sup> Sherwin-White, *Roman Society and Roman Law in the NT*, 95; quoted in Witherington, *Acts of the Apostles*, 490; Tajra, *Trial of St. Paul*, 7-8.

<sup>60</sup> Rapske notes Luke is “clearly warning his reader that Paul and Silas run into trouble in a thoroughly Roman context” (*Paul in Roman Custody*, 116). Cf. Tajra, *Trial of St. Paul*, 7-8. Luke had already narrated two important events dealing with Roman officials: (1) Peter’s interaction with Cornelius (10:1-48) and (2) the episode with the proconsul

signals to the reader that the events stemming after the Philippi episode are important for understanding the overall story in Acts. In particular, how the gospel message relates to Roman identity, society, and authority.

Yet even if Luke is indicating to the reader the importance Roman identity will have on the narrative, he still chooses to postpone the mention of Paul's Roman citizenship until the end of the episode. Commentators offer various explanations for this delay. First, commentators often explain this delay through the uneven way provincial magistrates carried out Roman law.<sup>61</sup> When Paul says to the ῥαβδούχοι that the στρατηγοί have, "beaten us in public without a proper trial" (δείραντες ἡμᾶς δημοσίᾳ ἀκατακρίτους [16:37; cf. 2 Cor 11:25]), he implies that the magistrates did not follow standard procedure in dealing with his and Silas' case. However, this seems to be an unfair assessment on the part of Paul because the magistrates never knew that he or Silas were Roman citizens until after they had been beaten and thrown in prison. J.M. Kelly notes that Roman law "can be applied only to a set of facts; and if the wrong facts are established, the law will be wrongly applied."<sup>62</sup> The magistrates made no inquiry into the status of Paul or Silas and so defaulted to the accusations leveled by the slave girl's owners (16:20-21). Rapske argues that the magistrates were reprimanding Paul and Silas

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Sergius Paulus (13:4-12). However, in both those instances Roman citizenship is not considered. Sergius Paulus's belief, for example, is based, "ἐπὶ τῇ διδασκίᾳ τοῦ κυρίου (upon the teaching of the Lord)," (13:12) rather than Paul's citizen status. See Bruce, *Acts of the Apostles*, 299; Pervo, *Acts*, 325-327. Philippi is thus the first instance where Roman citizenship comes into consideration explicitly.

<sup>61</sup> E.g. Verr. 2.5.167-168; Suetonius, *Galb.* 9.1. Rapske, *Paul in Roman Custody*, 128; Lentz, *Luke's Portrait of Paul*, 127; Steve Walton, "Heavenly Citizenship and Earthly Authorities: Philippians 1:27 and 3:20 in Dialogue with Acts 16:11-40," in *The Urban World and the First Christians*, ed. Steve Walton, Paul R. Trebilco, and David W.J. Gill (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2017), 249.

<sup>62</sup> Kelly, *Roman Litigation*, 33; quoted in Rapske, *Paul in Roman Custody*, 129.

for their inflammatory actions and did not intend to carry out a full trial.<sup>63</sup> This leads to the conclusion that the magistrates, far from perverting Roman legal procedures, were, given the facts they knew, carrying out legal procedure in accord with standard judicial practices.<sup>64</sup> The magistrates knew that Paul and Silas were Jews (16:20) and their unlawful customs (ἐθὴ ἀ οὐκ ἔξεστιν [16:21]) were indications of the two's foreign status as *peregrinoi*.<sup>65</sup> Thus by asserting their rights as Roman citizens near the end of the encounter, Paul and Silas are forcing the magistrates to reevaluate how their status should be used to determine their treatment. Luke implicitly asks if the Roman magistrates, who are supposed to be the arbitrators of justice, are truly carrying out just actions for all persons under their stewardship.<sup>66</sup>

Another rationale commentators hold for Luke to portray Paul withholding his Roman citizenship in Philippi has to do with Paul's missiological agenda.<sup>67</sup> If Paul and Silas were to claim their Roman citizen rights they would incur the burden of proving such a claim. In the empire people were registered in their hometowns based on ancestry.

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<sup>63</sup> Rapske, *Paul in Roman Custody*, 128-129.

<sup>64</sup> So Rapske, *Paul in Roman Custody*, 128-129; Sherwin-White, *Roman Society and Roman Law in the NT*, 82.

<sup>65</sup> W.W. Buckland, *A Text-Book of Roman Law from Augustus to Justinian*, 3rd ed., ed. Peter Stein (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1963), 92; du Plessis, *Textbook on Roman Law*, 108-109; Rapske, *Paul in Roman Custody*, 120-121; Sherwin-White, *Roman Society and Roman Law in the NT*, 9-15; Witherington, *Acts of the Apostles*, 497.

<sup>66</sup> Bryan, *Render to Caesar*, 103-104. John Calvin hints at this. He finds that the Roman magistrates were only concerned about human authority and not God's divine justice, he writes: "Such is the fear of the wicked, because they have an amazed (i.e. dull) conscience before God, they do long time flatter themselves in all sins, until the punishment of men hang over their heads" (*Commentary on Acts*, 127). See also the comments by Rudolf Gwalther, Homily 112, in *Reformation Commentary on Scripture*, 235-236.

<sup>67</sup> Rapske, *Paul in Roman Custody*, 133-134; Walton, "Heavenly Citizenship and Earthly Authorities," 249-250.

A magistrate would register a *professio* verifying if the person was free born and file a wooden diptych signed by seven witnesses for the family. For Paul and Silas a claim of citizenship would require them to produce the original *professio* or a similar travel document called a *testatio*, or if those were unavailable, to call for witnesses who could attest to their citizen status.<sup>68</sup> The last option especially was a time consuming and expensive endeavor.<sup>69</sup> Thus in terms of their mission, a claim to Roman citizenship in Philippi would have slowed Paul's and Silas' progress immensely. Luke avoids having to narrate this necessary formality by postponing the revelation of Paul's and Silas's *civitas* and having the magistrates hurry them out of the city.<sup>70</sup>

Thirdly, according to commentators, Paul may also have delayed declaring his citizenship because such a claim would have confused the gospel message which he and Silas were preaching.<sup>71</sup> It is useful to quote Rapske here:

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<sup>68</sup> Military veterans could also receive a bronze *diploma militaris*, but it is extremely unlikely the Paul or Silas would have such an emblem. Cf. Suetonius, *Nero* 12; Cicero, *Verr.* 2.5.161; Jane F. Gardner, *Being a Roman Citizen* (London: Routledge, 1993), 179; Fritz Schulz, "Roman Registers of Births and Birth Certificates," *JRS* 32 (1942): 83-84; Fritz Schulz, "Roman Registers of Births and Birth Certificates: Part II," *JRS* 33 (1943): 59, 63-64; Jerome Murphy-O'Connor, *Paul: A Critical Life* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), 40-41; Bart D. Ehrman, *Peter, Paul, and Mary Magdalene: The Followers of Jesus in History and Legend* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 108; Sherwin-White, *Roman Society and Roman Law in the NT*, 147-149; Sherwin-White, *Roman Citizenship*, 314-316; Lentz, *Luke's Portrait of Paul*, 27; Rapske, *Paul in Roman Custody*, 130-133.

<sup>69</sup> Rapske, *Paul in Roman Custody*, 133; Walton, "Heavenly Citizenship and Earthly Authorities," 249.

<sup>70</sup> Cf. John Calvin, commenting on Acts 22:25-29, also questions why Luke does not show Paul formerly establishing his citizenship. He finds that even though Luke does not narrate it, Paul must have given proof to the Roman authorities involved (Calvin, *Commentary on Acts*, 310).

<sup>71</sup> Rapske, *Paul in Roman Custody*, 133; Walton, "Heavenly Citizenship and Earthly Authorities," 249-250; Witherington, *Acts of the Apostles*, 501-502; Peterson, *Acts of the Apostles*, 473.

The self-defense of an early citizenship claim would probably have been construed by the magistrates and populace as an assertion of commitment to the primacy of Roman, over against Jewish (i.e., Christian), customs. The signals sent would also have put the church at risk of dissolution if the new Philippian converts did not possess the Roman franchise. At the least, there would have been uncertainty surrounding Paul's commitment to his message.<sup>72</sup>

This claim that Paul's gospel message and Christian identity are incompatible vis-à-vis Roman identity has been a cause for some to argue Paul's Roman citizenship is a Lukan invention.<sup>73</sup> Paul's Roman citizenship thus exhibits irregularities at this point in the narrative, and either Paul or Luke found ways to evade the difficulties that arose from his claim to *civitas*.

#### *Roman Citizenship as a Climactic Rhetorical Strategy in Acts 16*

What I now offer is an argument that seeks to reconcile these two claims. I argue that (1) Luke did "invent" this account, not in the sense that he falsely ascribed Roman citizenship to Paul and Silas, but that he retold the events in a climactic way which would maximize the rhetorical effect this story would have on its readers. This rhetorical strategy (2) had the effect of legitimizing Paul's gospel message in the eyes of Christians and Romans by demonstrating the gospel's infusion into all levels of society.<sup>74</sup>

As we have seen in *Against Verres*, the franchise of Roman citizenship held certain weight in Cicero's argument (e.g. *Verr.* 2.5.169). Cicero builds up to the charges involving Roman citizens by first mentioning Verres' immoral character, nefarious deeds, and treatment of non-citizens (e.g. *Verr.* 2.3.59; 2.4.48). Because the sanctity of

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<sup>72</sup> Rapske, *Paul in Roman Custody*, 134; quoted in Witherington, *Acts of the Apostles*, 501-502; Walton, "Heavenly Citizenship and Earthly Authorities," 249-250.

<sup>73</sup> Lentz, *Luke's Portrait of Paul*, 131-132; Stegemann, "War der Apostel Paulus ein römischer Bürger?," 223-224.

<sup>74</sup> See pages 72 ff. below.

citizenship was of such esteemed value in the mind of Cicero's audience he left it until the end of his narrative. The charge that Verres had violated the rights of Roman citizens was tantamount to him having committed treason, to defiling the prestigious image of Rome throughout the world (*Verr.* 2.5.149).<sup>75</sup> Thus he writes Verres' trial is "a question of the life and existence of Roman citizens, or in other words, of each and every one of ourselves" (*Verr.* 2.5.139). This draws his readers into an emotional response through the assertion that Verres' actions are an attack on the audience itself.<sup>76</sup>

Luke presents Paul's Roman citizenship in a similar way. The episode at Philippi begins by mentioning the special status of Philippi as a Roman colony (Acts 16:12): thus setting the scene in a Roman context and thereby bringing the rights and status of Roman identity to the forefront of the reader's mind. However, Luke does not present Paul's Roman citizenship right away. Rather, he builds up to Paul's *civitas* by describing Paul's character through his actions in the city.<sup>77</sup> First, Paul is a Jew. This is visible through Paul and his cohorts' Sabbath day prayer gathering (τῇ τε ἡμέρᾳ τῶν σαββάτων ἐξήλθομεν ἔξω τῆς πόλεως παρὰ ποταμὸν οὗ ἐνομιζόμεν προσευχὴν εἶναι [16:13]) and by the accusations leveled against them (Ἰουδαῖοι ὑπάρχοντες [16:20]). Paul is also an outsider. The actions of the slave girl's owners (16:19-21) and the magistrates' decision to incarcerate Paul and Silas (16:22-24) indicate they were foreigners, *peregrinoi*, in the eyes of the Philippian residents.<sup>78</sup> According to Rapske, Paul's punishment was

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<sup>75</sup> Rapske, *Paul in Roman Custody*, 42.

<sup>76</sup> Vasaly, "Cicero's Early Speeches," 96.

<sup>77</sup> John W. Mauck, *Paul on Trial: The Book of Acts as a Defense of Christianity* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2001), 124-125.

<sup>78</sup> Witherington, *Acts of the Apostles*, 497; Rapske notes that the accusers assumed a superior status to that of Paul and Silas (*Paul in Roman Custody*, 120-121).

justifiable and proper, in the eyes of his accusers at least, based on his identity as a Jew and outsider.<sup>79</sup> That suddenly changes when Paul declares his Roman citizenship (ἄνθρώπους Ῥωμαίους ὑπάρχοντας [16:37]). Suddenly the actions taken against Paul are unjustifiable and improper (ἐφοβήθησαν δὲ ἀκούσαντες ὅτι Ῥωμαῖοί εἰσιν [16:38]).<sup>80</sup> We have seen Cicero take a similar course. When he describes Verres mistreating Sicilians and other foreigners he implies that such treatment is justifiable, although deplorable, given they are outsiders (*Verr.* 2.3.59). But when Roman citizens are involved (e.g. Gaius Martinius, 2.3.60; Quintus Lollius, 2.3.61-63), suddenly that behavior becomes an abasement to the ideals of Rome. *Civitas* thus is a tool used by Cicero and Luke to exhort their readers to uphold the image of Rome, though in different ways. Cicero is calling his audience to preserve the Roman image from the abasement wrought by one nefarious governor, whereas Luke is challenging Roman magistrates to maintain their espoused roles as worldly justice keepers.<sup>81</sup> In comparing the Philippi episode with *Against Verres*, we thus see how Roman citizenship functions rhetorically as a climactic element within both narratives.

Cicero used Roman citizenship to rouse an emotional response from his audience that would condemn Verres' moral character. In Acts 16, Roman citizenship appearing at a climactic point forces the magistrates to reevaluate the moral character of Paul. In this manner Paul's *civitas* serves an apologetic role between the Church and the Roman state.<sup>82</sup> The magistrates now see him as a social equal and treat him with the dignity and

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<sup>79</sup> Rapske, *Paul in Roman Custody*, 128-129.

<sup>80</sup> Cf. Cicero, *Rab. Post.* 4.12; Tajra, *Trial of St. Paul*, 28.

<sup>81</sup> Walton, "The State They Were In," 35. See pages 72 ff. below.

<sup>82</sup> Walton finds five views in existing scholarship for the apologetic role of Acts ("The State They Were In," 2). Acts was possibly (1) a political apology on behalf of the church



respect deserved of a vindicated Roman citizen when they lead him out of the city.<sup>83</sup>

Thus, Luke demonstrates the gospel message of Paul has legitimacy within Roman circles<sup>84</sup> by providing an example of Christian faith that is compatible with allegiance to Rome.<sup>85</sup> Paul himself, while being a Roman citizen, is nevertheless able to retain his faith identity by testifying about his commitment to his faith in Christ (Acts 16:37; 22:3-21; 24:21; 26:29; cf. Phil 3:4-11).

However, this should not mean Paul is appealing to his Roman citizenship as the epitome of his ability to bring the gospel to all people.<sup>86</sup> Just the opposite, as Witherington writes, “[Luke] is interested in defending or legitimizing the viability of being a Christian in the Greco-Roman world, regardless of one’s sex, race, social status,

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to Roman officials; Burton Scott Easton, *Early Christianity: The Purpose of Acts, and other papers* (Greenwich, CT: Seabury Press, 1954), (2) an apology on behalf of the Roman state to the Church; Paul W. Walaskay, ‘*And so we came to Rome*’: *The Political Perspective of St. Luke*, SNTSMS 49 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), (3) provided legitimation for the church’s identity; Philip Francis Esler, *Community and Gospel in Luke-Acts: The Social and Political Motivation of Lucan Theology*, SNTSMS 57 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), (4) equipped the Church to live in the Roman empire; Richard J. Cassidy, *Society and Politics in the Acts of the Apostles* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1987), (5) not interested in politics at all; Jacob Jervell, *The Theology of the Acts of the Apostles* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1996); Barclay, *Pauline Churches and Diaspora Jews*, 386. See the discussions on pages 72 ff. below.

<sup>83</sup> The Western text adds that the magistrates recognized Paul and Silas were ἄνδρες δίκαιοι, giving further justification for their innocence. See the notes in Peterson, *Acts of the Apostles*, 474; Witherington, *Acts of the Apostles*, 499; Tajra, *Trial of St. Paul*, 28-29.

<sup>84</sup> Even if those circles misunderstand what is said (cf. Acts 17:6; 18:14; 26:31-32).

<sup>85</sup> Walton, “The State They Were In,” 7-9; Witherington, *Acts of the Apostles*, 810-812. A second example is the Philippian jailer who accepts Paul’s message along with his entire household (Acts 16:25-34). Other examples include the centurion Cornelius (10:1 ff.) and Sergius Paulus (13:12).

<sup>86</sup> Cf. Rapske, *Paul in Roman Custody*, 133-134; Witherington, *Acts of the Apostles*, 501-502; Walton, “Heavenly Citizenship and Earthly Authorities,” 249-250; Peterson, *Acts of the Apostles*, 473.

or place of residence.”<sup>87</sup> The characterization of Paul in Acts 16 demonstrates that Roman citizenship is just one of several components of Paul’s identity. This falls in line with Barclay who argues Paul’s gospel was “subversive” to the Roman imperial identity “by reducing Rome’s agency and historical significance to just one more entity in a much greater drama.”<sup>88</sup> This is not to say Luke is unconcerned with politics; rather, he uses a purposeful description of the Roman empire via *civitas* to exhort his audience to faithful witness in Christ. Paul’s Roman citizenship appears at this climactic point in order to show that the gospel is being brought to Jews and to gentiles—of whom Romans are a part (cf. Acts 1:8). In this way Luke purposefully narrates the events in Philippi, placing Paul’s Roman citizenship at a climactic point to serve a narrative and theological purpose; the gospel message is being revealed to all members of society, small and great, Jews and Romans, and each member of society is challenged to respond faithfully to it.

### **Roman Citizenship in Acts 22**

Acts chapter 22 contains the second explicit reference to Paul’s Roman citizenship (22:25-29). By examining the comparative features of Acts 16 and 22 we can further see how Luke uses Paul’s Roman citizenship as a climactic narrative device. There are similarities and differences between this episode and the one at Philippi (16:16-40). Both are set in a legal context and both contain Paul’s claim to *civitas* at points where Paul is about to endure injustice at the hands of Roman authorities.<sup>89</sup> Both claims

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<sup>87</sup> Witherington, *Acts of the Apostles*, 812.

<sup>88</sup> Barclay, *Pauline Churches and Diaspora Jews*, 386. Contra Wright, “Paul’s Gospel and Caesar’s Empire,” 160-183; see the discussion in Walton, “The State They Were In,” 1-2, 33-35.

<sup>89</sup> Rapske, *Paul in Roman Custody*, 128-129, 139-140; Tajra, *Trial of St. Paul*, 27, 73-74; Witherington, *Acts of the Apostles*, 499, 677.

to citizenship also come after Paul is accosted by an unruly crowd (16:22; 21:35). Finally, both episodes end with the Roman authorities releasing Paul from custody, though to differing degrees (16:39; 22:29-30).<sup>90</sup> The events in Jerusalem differ from those in Philippi in that the former are set in the larger context of Paul's final journey to Rome, whereas the latter are set within Paul's missionary work among the churches.<sup>91</sup> The episode in Jerusalem also contains a speech of Paul (22:1-21), whereas the Philippi episode includes the account of the Philippian jailer (16:25-34).

Paul's encounter with the Roman authorities in Jerusalem begins with Paul traveling from Ephesus to Tyre and then on to Caesarea (21:1-14). While staying with Philip in Caesarea a prophet named Agabus foretells of Paul's custody should he travel to Jerusalem (21:10-11), but Paul still resolves to continue (21:13-14). After arriving in Jerusalem Paul meets with James and the elders (21:18-19). Although they are encouraged by God's work among the gentiles through Paul, there is concern that Paul's ministry in Jerusalem may not be met as favorably (21:19-20). The believers in Jerusalem were zealous for the law and Paul's work among the gentiles called his commitment to the law into question (21:21-22).<sup>92</sup> To demonstrate Paul's commitment to the law, James and the elders suggest that Paul pay for the vows of four men.<sup>93</sup> Paul agrees and takes the

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<sup>90</sup> Rapske, *Paul in Roman Custody*, 28-35, 145.

<sup>91</sup> Rapske, *Paul in Roman Custody*, 134; Witherington, *Acts of the Apostles*, 487, 644.

<sup>92</sup> Not that Paul had broken Torah *per se*, but that he did not demand Torah obedience for converts; Luke Timothy Johnson, *The Acts of the Apostles*, SP 5 (Collegeville, MN: Michael Glazier, 1992), 375. See also Witherington, *Acts of the Apostles*, 648; I. Howard Marshall, *Acts*, TNTC (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1980), 362; Haenchen, *Acts of the Apostles*, 609; Charles H. Talbert, *Reading Acts: A Literary and Theological Commentary*, rev. ed. (Macon, GA: Smyth & Helwys, 2005), 186.

<sup>93</sup> This would demonstrate Paul's generosity but also allow him to purify himself to visit the Temple after having been abroad; Peterson, *Acts of the Apostles*, 586-687.

men to the temple to complete their purification and their vows (21:23-26).<sup>94</sup> This exchange in Acts 21:18-26 is similar to the events described in 16:1-5.<sup>95</sup> There, Paul met Timothy and circumcised him on account of those Jews who knew his father was a Greek. The narrator then describes Paul preaching about the decision from the elders in Jerusalem (cf. 15:23-29). Both episodes thus contain a controversy involving Paul's interaction with gentiles<sup>96</sup> and Paul submitting to a decision made by the Jerusalem elders.<sup>97</sup>

The author characterizes Paul in two ways before climactically disclosing his Roman citizenship. First, Luke indicates Paul faithfully holds religious commitments. By describing Paul financing the vows of four men and going through the rite of purification himself, the author demonstrates Paul's commitment to Mosaic law.<sup>98</sup> This paints a portrait of Paul which is devout, generous, and law abiding. Paul characterizes himself in like manner in his speech that follows (22:1-21). To begin, Paul claims faithfulness to his Jewish heritage. He emphasizes that he was raised in Jerusalem and educated under the respectable leader Gamaliel according to the strictness of the Jewish ancestral Law (ἀνατεθραμμένος δὲ ἐν τῇ πόλει ταύτῃ, παρὰ τοὺς πόδας Γαμαλιὴλ πεπαιδευμένος κατὰ ἀκρίβειαν τοῦ πατρῶου νόμου [22:3; cf. 5:34]).<sup>99</sup> He also compares his zeal for the Law

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<sup>94</sup> The men were possibly under Nazirite vows (cf. Num 6:1-21; 19:11-13). Paul most likely was undertaking a shorter form of purification; Haenchen, *Acts of the Apostles*, 612; Witherington, *Acts of the Apostles*, 649. The specific vows and rites are unclear; Johnson, *Acts of the Apostles*, 375-376.

<sup>95</sup> Marshall, *Acts*, 363.

<sup>96</sup> Or in Timothy's case a person who was uncircumcised.

<sup>97</sup> Witherington, *Acts of the Apostles*, 476-477, 648-650.

<sup>98</sup> Witherington, *Acts of the Apostles*, 649; Haenchen, *Acts of the Apostles*, 612.

<sup>99</sup> Cf. Gal 1:14; Phil 3:5-6. An origin in Jerusalem gave greater credence to Paul's Jewish legitimacy. See the discussions in Witherington, *Acts of the Apostles*, 668-669; Haenchen, *Acts of the Apostles*, 624-625; Peterson, *Acts of the Apostles*, 597.

with that of the crowd's (ζηλωτῆς ὑπάρχων τοῦ θεοῦ καθὼς πάντες ὑμεῖς ἐστε σήμερον [22:3]). Additionally, Paul points to Ananias as a means of confirming his and other Christians' commitment to the law, saying he was a devout man according to the law (ἄνθρωπος ἐυλαβὴς κατὰ τὸν νόμον) and that other Jews could testify to his reputation (μαρτυρούμενος ὑπὸ πάντων τῶν κατοικούντων Ἰουδαίων [22:12]). Paul also expresses his commitment to obeying Christ's commands. He responds to Christ's direction to go to Damascus (22:10; cf. 26:19). Additionally, he is obedient to the vision he receives while in the temple (22:17-21).

Second, Luke demonstrates Paul's reputable civic character. Paul's exchange with the tribune over his identity indicates that Paul is not inciting violent behavior (21:37-39). The tribune is surprised that Paul is able to speak Greek (Ἑλληνιστὶ γινώσκεις [21:37]) because he had assumed Paul was an Egyptian radical who had recently disturbed the region (οὐκ ἄρα σὺ εἶ ὁ Αἰγύπτιος ὁ πρὸ τούτων τῶν ἡμερῶν ἀναστατώσας [21:38]).<sup>100</sup> The way Luke narrates this scene seems to indicate that the tribune's remark appalled the apostle because he has Paul give a tart response: εἶπεν δὲ ὁ Παῦλος· ἐγὼ ἄνθρωπος μὲν εἰμι Ἰουδαῖος, Ταρσεὺς τῆς Κιλικίας, οὐκ ἀσήμου πόλεως πολίτης (And Paul said, "First of all, I am a Jewish man, from Tarsus, a citizen of no unimportant city" [21:39, author's translation]).<sup>101</sup> Paul's response to the tribune indicates to the reader that Paul is of

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<sup>100</sup> Cf. Josephus, *J.W.* 2.261; *Ant.* 20.169. Witherington, *Acts of the Apostles*, 661-662; Rapske, *Paul in Roman Custody*, 136-137; Tajra, *Trial of St. Paul*, 70-71. Greek was the common language in Egypt at the time so it is puzzling why the tribune would be surprised to learn that Paul knew Greek if he had assumed Paul was an Egyptian; Haenchen, *Acts of the Apostles*, 621; Marshall, *Acts*, 371. It may be appropriate to translate the tribune's remarks as expecting an affirmative response: "You know Greek. Then are you not the Egyptian..." so NIV; ESV; Peterson, *Acts of the Apostles*, 592.

<sup>101</sup> The conjunctive μέν...δέ helps to emphasize Paul's exasperation at the tribune's remarks; Bruce, *Acts of the Apostles*, 453.

respectable civic stock.<sup>102</sup> Rapske argues that this response indicates Paul is appealing to his rights as a citizen of Tarsus.<sup>103</sup> Tajra, on the other hand, finds the term πολίτης in this case to be “non-judicial,” and thus Paul’s response functions only to distinguish him from the nefarious Egyptian Jew.<sup>104</sup> As many have pointed out, being called an “Egyptian” was tantamount to a social slur.<sup>105</sup> So in the context of the tribune’s remarks, Paul is distancing himself from a demeaning description. However, he adds a qualifying statement by saying he is from Tarsus, a citizen of no insignificant city.<sup>106</sup> When considering the alternate reading from the D-text (ἐν Ταρσῷ δὲ τῆς Κιλικίας γεγεννημένος) we should assume that Paul is claiming he is a citizen of Tarsus and is not just indicating his place of domicile.<sup>107</sup> Still, this should not be understood to mean Paul is appealing to his political rights as a citizen of Tarsus *per se*; rather he is correcting the tribune’s derogatory comment.<sup>108</sup> The status of Paul and his home city demand more

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<sup>102</sup> On the status of Tarsus see Strabo, *Geogr.* 5.1.6. Paul is certainly pointing to the respectability of Tarsus, but it is doubtful whether his statement should be understood that he is taking pride in his hometown; Ramsay, *St. Paul the Traveler and Roman Citizen*, 240. On the formulaic boast about cities see, Euripides, *Ion* 8; Strabo, *Geogr.* 8.6.15; Witherington, *Acts of the Apostles*, 662.

<sup>103</sup> Rapske, *Paul in Roman Custody*, 76, 137; Witherington, *Acts of the Apostles*, 663.

<sup>104</sup> Tajra, *Trial of St. Paul*, 80.

<sup>105</sup> Lentz, *Luke’s Portrait of Paul*, 29; Rapske, *Paul in Roman Custody*, 137; Witherington, *Acts of the Apostles*, 662. Jews often held Egyptians in contempt (e.g. Philo, *Alleg. Interp.* 3.38; Strabo, *Geogr.* 17.1.12).

<sup>106</sup> The litotes helps emphasize the status of Tarsus; Bruce, *Acts of the Apostles*, 453; Peterson, *Acts of the Apostles*, 592.

<sup>107</sup> Contra, Tajra, *Trial of St. Paul*, 80. The change from πολίτης to γεννάω indicates that the scribes of the D-text found Paul’s status as a citizen of Tarsus to be troubling and so changed it to resolve this issue and to harmonize it with 22:3 (cf. Rapske, *Paul in Roman Custody*, 76). The possibility of Paul being a citizen of Tarsus has been discussed on page 13 ff. above.

<sup>108</sup> Witherington, *Acts of the Apostles*, 662-663; Peterson, *Acts of the Apostles*, 592-593; Marshall, *Acts*, 372.

respect than what the tribune had previously offered.<sup>109</sup> In this way, the text classifies Paul as a citizen of Tarsus but only as a way to impugn an insulting comment. Thus, because of the comparison of Paul with the Egyptian Jew, we should assess Paul as a person of high social status and upstanding moral character.

But why does Paul not just appeal to his Roman citizenship at this point if he is trying to reveal his social status to the tribune?<sup>110</sup> Conzelmann suggests the author intentionally withholds Paul's Roman citizen to heighten its disclosure later.<sup>111</sup> Rapske, by contrast, suggests, "The priority given to Tarsian over Roman citizenship, however, has an ancient logic to it."<sup>112</sup> There is truth in both these claims.

First, the fact that the author chose to reveal Paul's Tarsian citizenship before his Roman *civitas* to the tribune follows the logic of the story and of ancient social status conventions.<sup>113</sup> Luke first defines Paul as a faithful Jew. He submits to the authority of the Jerusalem leaders, pays for the vows of four men, and undergoes purification (21:18-27). The conflict that arises in the Temple is not whether Paul is of high social status, but whether he is obedient to the law. There is simply no need at this point for him to disclose his Roman citizenship. In fact, it would be detrimental for Paul to proclaim his

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<sup>109</sup> On the status of Tarsus see Strabo, *Geogr.* 14.5.12-15; Bosworth, "The City of Tarsus and the Arab-Byzantine Frontiers in the Early and Middle 'Abbāsid Times," 268-269; Rapske, *Paul in Roman Custody*, 73-75; Witherington, *Acts of the Apostles*, 662-663.

<sup>110</sup> So Cassidy, *Society and Politics*, 101. Stegemann, "War der Apostel Paulus ein römischer Bürger?" 205. Cf. Mauck who does not find Paul's disclosure of his Roman citizenship in Acts 22 to be delayed, relative to its disclosure in Acts 16 (*Paul on Trial*, 154).

<sup>111</sup> Conzelmann, *Acts of the Apostles*, 183. Haenchen also sees this as an intentional move on the part of the author, the delayed disclosure of Paul's Roman citizen creating "unprecedented tension" for the scene (*Acts of the Apostles*, 635). Marshall, *Acts*, 379.

<sup>112</sup> Rapske, *Paul in Roman Custody*, 141.

<sup>113</sup> Rapske, *Paul in Roman Custody*, 141.

*civitas* before the Jewish crowd because, as Rapske writes, “In such a context as this, ‘Jew’ and ‘Roman’ are strictly antithetic.”<sup>114</sup> Additionally, Paul’s response to the tribune that he is a citizen of Tarsus is fitting within the story (21:39). Paul is responding to a derogatory comment in kind (see above). Whereas the tribune thought Paul was an un-reputable man from an un-reputable region, Paul in turn replies that he is a respectable citizen from a respectable city.

Second, the delay of Paul revealing his *civitas* to the tribune does indeed create narrative tension within the story. Further, this delay seems to be intentional. We can see this in the structure of the transition between Paul’s exchange with the tribune and his speech to the temple crowd:

**A** Paul says he is a Jew from Tarsus in Cilicia (21:39)

**B** Paul addresses the crowd in Hebrew (21:40)

**C** Opening words, “Men and brothers...” (22:1)

**B’** The crowd hears Paul speaking in Hebrew (22:2)

**A’** Paul says he is a Jew from Tarsus in Cilicia, raised in Jerusalem (22:3)

We can certainly classify this transition as having a chiastic structure. We might also use the term *hysteron proteron* to describe how this transition retains continuity within the narrative.<sup>115</sup> Paul’s public response to the crowd begins with a casual mention of the events that transpired between him and the tribune privately. In this case, the last things mentioned during Paul’s encounter with the tribune are Paul’s Jewish and Tarsian

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<sup>114</sup> Rapske, *Paul in Roman Custody*, 142.

<sup>115</sup> The term *hysteron proteron* and its use are often attributed to Homer, though it is debatable whether it is unique to the Homeric corpus or simply a component of communication at large; Cicero, *Ep. Att.* 1.16.1; Bassett, “ὕστερον προτερον ὁμηρικῶς,” 41-42; Bassett, *The Poetry of Homer*, 119; cf. Elizabeth Minchin, “How Homeric Is ‘Hysteron Proteron?’” *Mnemosyne* 54 (Dec. 2001): 638. The term refers to the inverted ordering of events or responses to questions; Aelius Theon, *Exercises* 82; Aune, *Dictionary of NT and Early Christian Literature and Rhetoric*, 225.



identity (21:39-40). In order to transition into Paul's speech, Luke has Paul repeat the statement of his religious and civic identities (22:3). Sandwiched in between this is Luke's narration concerning the address in Hebrew. Thus, this segue into Paul's speech inverts the order of the statements preceding it, i.e. *hysteron proteron*.<sup>116</sup> In other words, the author uses the idea of Paul's Tarsian citizenship as the connecting link that ties these two sections of the story one to the other. In this regard, Paul's Tarsian citizenship is a narrative device that provides continuity within this unit of the text and creates tension as we wait for the tribune's response to Paul's status until after the speech in the Temple.<sup>117</sup>

Paul's Roman citizenship plays a similar role in transitioning the narrative into his trial in Jerusalem and Caesarea (22:28 ff.). Luke intentionally placed Paul's *civitas* at the end of the encounter with the tribune to facilitate this narrative transition. We can see this through the structure of this section and its vocabulary:

- A Paul asks if it is legal to flog a Roman, un-condemned (22:25)
- B The tribune bought his citizenship, Paul was born a citizen (22:27-28)
- C The tribune is afraid he bound a Roman, convenes a meeting (22:29-30)
- B' Paul, "I have lived (πεπολίτευμαι) before God in all good conscience" (23:1)
- A' Paul is struck, contrary to the law (παρανομῶν) (23:2-3)

The structure provides a bridge between Paul's encounter with Roman authorities and his dealings with the Jerusalem council. Two themes are present and repeated: (1) the idea of civic identification and (2) conduct toward civic members. Luke first describes how Paul was taken into the Roman barracks to be examined by the whip (μάστιξιν ἀνετάζεσθαι [22:24]). During this process Paul asks the centurion involved: εἰ ἄνθρωπον Ῥωμαῖον καὶ

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<sup>116</sup> Aelius Theon, *Exercises* 82; Aune, *Dictionary of NT and Early Christian Literature and Rhetoric*, 225; Bassett, "ὕστερον προτερον ὁμηρικῶς," 42; Minchin, "How Homeric Is 'Hysteron Proteron?'," 638

<sup>117</sup> Contra, Rapske, *Paul in Roman Custody*, 142. Cf. Haenchen, *Acts of the Apostles*, 635; Conzelmann, *Acts of the Apostles*, 189-190.

ἀκατάκριτον ἔξεστιν ὑμῖν μαστίζειν (“Is it permissible (i.e. legal) for you to whip a Roman man who is un-condemned?” [22:25]).<sup>118</sup> This begins an exchange between the tribune and Paul on the status of their respective *civitas*. Paul affirms that he is a Roman citizen (22:27). The tribune then seeks to determine the nature of Paul’s citizenship.<sup>119</sup> The tribune states that he purchased Roman citizenship for a large sum of money (ἐγὼ πολλοῦ κεφαλαίου τὴν πολιτείαν ταύτην ἐκτησάμην [22:28]).<sup>120</sup> By contrast, Paul says he was born a citizen (ἐγὼ δὲ καὶ γεγέννημαι [22:28]). This comparison sets Paul in a higher social status than even the tribune.<sup>121</sup> The revelation of Paul’s status also changes how the tribune, and others, engage with Paul in the scene. They physically step back from Paul and become fearful because of their former treatment toward him (καὶ ὁ χιλίαρχος δὲ ἐφοβήθη ἐπιγνοὺς ὅτι Ῥωμαῖός ἐστιν καὶ ὅτι αὐτὸν ἦν δεδεκώς [22:29; cf. 16:38]).<sup>122</sup>

Paul’s interaction with the Sanhedrin also contains the idea of civic identification and conduct toward civic members. Paul begins his address by saying: ἄνδρες ἀδελφοί, ἐγὼ πάσῃ συνειδήσει ἀγαθῇ πεπολίτευμαι τῷ θεῷ ἄχρι ταύτης τῆς ἡμέρας (“Men and brothers! I have lived in all good conscience before God until this very day” [23:1]). The word πεπολίτευμαι is a critical link that connects the end of Acts 22 with chapter 23 and

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<sup>118</sup> Torture like this was typically used when other means of extracting information from the accused had been exhausted; Rapske, *Paul in Roman Custody*, 139. Roman citizens could only be scourged after being convicted (Dig. 48.18.10-12; Cicero, *Verr.* 2.5.170); Garnsey, *Social Status and Legal Privilege*, 261; Rapske, *Paul in Roman Custody*, 50; Witherington, *Acts of the Apostles*, 677.

<sup>119</sup> Rapske, *Paul in Roman Custody*, 144.

<sup>120</sup> On the purchase of citizenship see Dio Cassius 60.17.5-7; Johnson, *Acts of the Apostles*, 392; Peterson, *Acts of the Apostles*, 609.

<sup>121</sup> Rapske, *Paul in Roman Custody*, 143-145; Peterson, *Acts of the Apostles*, 609.

<sup>122</sup> There were stiff penalties for mistreating a Roman citizen (e.g. Cicero, *Verr.* 2.5.171); Witherington, *Acts of the Apostles*, 678.

provides a transition into the remainder of the narrative.<sup>123</sup> As has been discussed,<sup>124</sup> πολιτεύω had a slightly different meaning in Greco-Roman usage than it did in Jewish and Christian parlance.<sup>125</sup> Non-Jews and non-Christians used πολιτεύω to describe πόλις participation and conduct (e.g. Aristotle, *Pol.* 3.5, 1279a35; Diogenes Laertius 1.53);<sup>126</sup> Jews and Christians related it to living in accordance with God's law (e.g. Phil 1:27; Josephus, *Life* 1.12).<sup>127</sup> Both circles gave πολιτεύω an ethical sense in regard to participation and proper conduct within their respective institutions (e.g. 2 Macc 6:1; Strabo, *Geogr.* 1.4.9). By using this word in close proximity to Paul's encounter with the tribune, Luke connects these two sections of the text together with the idea of civic identification and participation.

On the one hand, a Greco-Roman audience would no doubt associate Paul's use of πολιτεύω with his status as a Roman citizen by birth. On the other, a Jewish audience would hear in Paul's statement a claim of obedience to the Jewish law. However, it is unlikely that the characters within the story would have heard both connotations of πολιτεύω. It is doubtful, for example, that the tribune would have been present at the meeting, though the story suggests he was within hearing distance as he intervened when a commotion broke out (23:10).<sup>128</sup> Rather, Luke's narration of the story seems more for

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<sup>123</sup> Witherington, *Acts of the Apostles*, 687.

<sup>124</sup> See pages 27 ff. above.

<sup>125</sup> See also the discussion in Barrett, *Acts*, 2:1057-1058.

<sup>126</sup> *LSJ*; Blok, *Citizenship in Classical Athens*, 240-245.

<sup>127</sup> 2 Macc 6:1; 11:25; 3 Macc 3:4; 4 Macc 2:8, 23; 4:23; 5:16; Add Esth E. 16:15-16; *Pol. Phil* 5:2; 1 Clem. 3:4; 6:1; 21:1 54:4; Herm. *Sim.* 5 6:6; Tcherikover, *Hellenistic Civilization and the Jews*, 168, 296 ff.; Bruce, *Acts of the Apostles*, 463.

<sup>128</sup> Witherington, *Acts of the Apostles*, 686-687; Tajra, *Trial of St. Paul*, 97. There is also debate over whether this was a meeting of the high council or some other type of *ad hoc* meeting; Witherington, *Acts of the Apostles*, 686; Haenchen; *Acts of the Apostles*, 640; Rapske, *Paul in Roman Custody*, 147.

the benefit of the reader. Paul's citizenship, therefore, is better understood through narrative-critical avenues than through historical-critical ones.<sup>129</sup> Luke is concerned with narrative coherency. Thus he has reordered the actual events and supplied needed vocabulary in order to tell a fluid and compelling story.<sup>130</sup> By doing this he sets up the characters within the story as metonyms for certain values and creates a mode of discourse with his audience. In other words, Luke has set up a bit of dramatic irony that reveals an implicit comparison between the treatment of citizens by Roman magistrates and the treatment of "citizens" by the Jewish leaders.

A distinction should be made between the types of "Jewish leaders" present at the meeting (23:1-6). The high priest, Ananias (23:2), was known for his violent and corrupt behavior (Josephus, *Ant.* 20.131; 20.205-213) so Luke may be criticizing him directly.<sup>131</sup> The text also indicates that there were Sadducees and Pharisees at the meeting (23:6). We thus have a variety of Jewish leadership represented at the meeting. What is clear from Luke's account, however, is that none of these Jewish groups are willing to give Paul justice based on his "civic" character.<sup>132</sup> While the Pharisees and scribes were willing to say that they found nothing wrong with Paul based on his Pharisaic identity (οὐδὲν κακὸν εὐρίσκομεν ἐν τῷ ἀνθρώπῳ τούτῳ [23:9]) their declaration is not based on his "civic" character based on the use of πολιτεύω (23:1). Further, the squabble these Jewish leadership sects have over Paul's declared hope in the resurrection (23:6-8; cf.

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<sup>129</sup> For studies on narrative-criticism see James L. Resseguie, *Narrative Criticism of the New Testament: An Introduction*, rev. ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2005); Mark Allen Powell, *What is Narrative Criticism?* GBS (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1990).

<sup>130</sup> Cf. Lucian, *Hist. Conscr.* 48; Tannehill, *Narrative Unity*, 2:285; Haenchen, *Acts of the Apostles*, 639-643.

<sup>131</sup> Witherington, *Acts of the Apostles*, 688.

<sup>132</sup> Tajra, *Trial of St. Paul*, 97; Peterson, *Acts of the Apostles*, 618.

Josephus, *Ant.* 18.11-17; *J.W.* 2.164-166) is an opportunity for Luke to show that Paul's message must now go to the gentiles (cf. 18:6; 28:28).<sup>133</sup> Luke narrates the tribune coming down and rescuing Paul from being torn to pieces (23:10) and it is from this point forward that Paul is protected only by the Roman allegiance to justice.<sup>134</sup>

The comparison brought on by Luke's use of dramatic irony begins with Paul's moral status in each instance. In the first instance, Paul's Roman citizenship puts him in a high social sphere and by extension a good moral standing. In the second instance Paul's good conduct towards God reveals his reputable moral character. Thus, in both cases Paul's characterization would assume he be properly treated. This assumption is conveyed in terms of legality. In the interaction with the Romans, Paul asks if it is "legal" to whip someone who is a Roman and un-condemned (22:25). In the interaction with the Sanhedrin, he states it is not "legal" (παράνομον, i.e. against the law) for him to be struck as he was (23:3). The contrast occurs in how the Romans authorities and the Jewish leaders respond to the revelation of Paul's moral status. In the case of the Romans, Paul's characterization revealed via his *civitas* causes them to reassess their treatment of Paul (22:29). For the Jewish leaders, Paul's moral character has little bearing on their treatment of him; in fact it causes them to act contrary to the law (23:3). Thus, in both cases, Paul is faced with the prospect of having to endure injustice. He appeals to his moral character, in terms of civic identity, but receives different responses. This creates a

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<sup>133</sup> Two of the major themes in Acts are: (1) the hope of the resurrection (e.g. 4:2; 17:32; 24:21; 26:6-8; 28:20) and (2) the gospel going to the gentiles (e.g. 2:39; 13:46; 18:6; 22:21; 26:20; 28:28).

<sup>134</sup> The Jews, in a broad sense, joined themselves in a conspiracy to kill Paul directly after these events (23:12-15). Haenchen, *Acts of the Apostles*, 643.

narrative tension on how these two parties, the Roman and the Jews, will administer justice in light of Paul's civil status.

### *Conclusions*

By comparing the two instances in Acts where Luke introduces Paul's Roman citizenship into the narrative with Cicero's delayed exposition on the mistreatment of Roman citizens by Verres, we can see how Roman *civitas* functions as a topic of narrative discourse and appears structurally as a climactic element within both these texts. Both authors use Roman *civitas* as a means to reveal the moral character of their subjects. Further, two detractions against the historicity of Paul's Roman citizenship are mitigated by viewing Roman *civitas* as a culminating rhetorical element.<sup>135</sup> We have seen a variety of Greco-Roman authors including, Dionysius of Halicarnassus, Plutarch, and especially Cicero,<sup>136</sup> utilize the prestige of Roman citizenship to make final appeals to the morals of their characters. Therefore, the way Luke presents Paul's citizenship within Acts is far from "un-Roman"; its presentation at the end of a narrative section is actually in line with how other Greco-Roman authors present Roman *civitas* in their works. Paul's delay in revealing his citizenship is thus not a Lukan invention, but an attempt to follow the conventions of rhetoric regarding *civitas*. We now turn to how Luke's audience may have responded to Paul's citizenship.

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<sup>135</sup> Stegemann, "War der Apostel Paulus ein römischer Bürger?," 202, 205-206; Lentz, *Luke's Portrait of Paul*, 58.

<sup>136</sup> Dionysius of Halicarnassus, *Ant. rom.* 10.17; 10.22; Plutarch, *Pomp.* 80.3; Cicero, *Verr.* 2.5.170.

### **Part III: The Response to Citizenship**

Luke's placement of Paul's Roman citizenship within the narrative of Acts has a climactic rhetorical function. But how might have Luke's audience responded to this narration and how does Paul himself respond in his letters?

#### **Responses from Acts**

Scholars typically take three approaches to understanding how Paul's Roman citizenship in Acts may have affected Luke's audience.<sup>1</sup> First, it could function as part of Luke's argument *pro ecclesia*, which sought to defend the church to Roman officials.<sup>2</sup> Second, it could be part of Luke's argument *pro imperio*, which provided a framework for the church to understand the actions of Roman authorities.<sup>3</sup> Third, it may simply be part of Luke's *Heilsgeschichte* that neither denounced Roman authority nor promoted a political agenda.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> There is, of course, a degree of overlap between these three approaches. For an overview of the secondary literature on this topic see Walton, "The State They Were In," 1-12.

<sup>2</sup> O'Toole, "Luke's Position on Politics and Society in Luke-Acts," 4-8; Wright, "Paul's Gospel and Caesar's Empire," 181-183; Mauck, *Paul on Trial*, 124-125; Henry J. Cadbury, *The Making of Luke-Acts*, 2nd ed. (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1999); Easton, *Early Christianity*; Hans Conzelmann, *The Theology of St. Luke*, trans. Geoffrey Buswell (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1982); Tajra, *Trial of St. Paul*; Bruce, *Acts of the Apostles*, 23-25; Haenchen, *Acts of the Apostles*, 102; Conzelmann, *Acts of the Apostles*, xlv-xlvi.

<sup>3</sup> Walaskay, 'And so we came to Rome'; Maddox, *The Purpose of Luke-Acts*; C.K. Barrett, *Luke the Historian in Recent Study* (London: Epworth, 1961); Esler, *Community and Gospel in Luke-Acts*; Peterson, *Acts of the Apostles*, 36-39; Witherington, *Acts of the Apostles*, 68-74.

<sup>4</sup> Richard J. Cassidy, *Society and Politics in the Acts of the Apostles* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1987); Jervell, *The Theology of the Acts of the Apostles*; Eric Franklin, *Christ the Lord: A Study in the Purpose and Theology of Luke-Acts* (London: SPCK, 1975); Barclay, *Pauline Churches and Diaspora Jews*; Alan J. Thompson, *The Acts of the Risen Lord Jesus: Luke's Account of God's Unfolding Plan*, NSBT 27 (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2011); Walton, "The State They Were In," 29-35; Marshall, *Acts*, 17-23; Johnson, *Acts of the Apostles*, 7-9.

The argument *pro ecclesia* is the most common.<sup>5</sup> It posits that Luke wrote Acts to demonstrate to Roman authorities that Christianity and Christians themselves were not a threat to the sovereignty of Roman rule.<sup>6</sup> In some cases this argument goes so far as to say Luke was advocating for Christianity to be a *religio licita*.<sup>7</sup> Luke used Paul as a prime example to demonstrate Christianity's innocence.<sup>8</sup> Paul is proof that upstanding Roman citizens can also be Christians. However, there are two reasons why this approach may not have been effective for Luke's audience. First, if Luke was writing to Roman authorities the text he presented would not have clearly demonstrated Christianity's innocence.<sup>9</sup> C.K. Barret puts it another way: "No Roman official would ever have filtered out so much of what to him would be theological and ecclesiological rubbish in order to reach so tiny a grain of relevant apology."<sup>10</sup> Luke's trial scenes in Acts, while relevant for

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<sup>5</sup> So, Walaskay, '*And so we came to Rome*', 3-4.

<sup>6</sup> For example Bruce Winter argues Gallio's ruling vindicated Christianity and even set legal precedent that limited the prosecution of Christians as anti-Roman for professing Jesus ("Gallio's Ruling on the Legal Status of Early Christianity," 218-224). Also Mauck, *Paul on Trial*, 154-155.

<sup>7</sup> The term *religio licita* does not seem to be attested in any Roman source but was perpetuated by Tertullian (*Apol.* 21.1). See also Tessa Rajak, "Was There a Roman Charter for the Jews?" *JRS* 74 (1984): 107; Witherington, *Acts of the Apostles*, 539-544; Conzelmann, *Acts of the Apostles*, xlvii-xlviii. Cf. Josephus, *Ant.* 14.211-228; 16.162-166; 19.283. Jews were often granted special privileges through the institution of *πολίτευμα*, but these rights did not expressly constitute religious recognition by the state. See Tarn, *Hellenistic Civilisation*, 220-223; Jan Willem van Henten and Pieter Willem van der Horst, eds., *Studies in Early Jewish Epigraphy* (Leiden, Netherlands: E.J. Brill, 1994), 204-210; H. Stuart Jones, "Claudius and the Jewish Question at Alexandria," *JRS* 16 (1926): 27-28; Calvin J. Roetzel, *Paul: The Man and the Myth* (Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina Press, 1998), 21-22; Michael Grant, *Saint Paul* (New York: Crossroad Publish Company, 1982), 13-14; Tcherikover, *Hellenistic Civilization and the Jews*, 311-314; Lentz, *Luke's Portrait of Paul*, 25; Francis Lyall, "Roman Law in the Writings of Paul – Aliens and Citizens," *EvQ* 48, no. 1 (1976): 13.

<sup>8</sup> E.g. Ramsay, *St. Paul the Traveler and Roman Citizen*, 198-200.

<sup>9</sup> Cassidy, *Society and Politics*, 152-155.

<sup>10</sup> Barrett, *Luke the Historian*, 63.



the narrative, hardly contain enough material to constitute an adequate courtroom reconstruction.<sup>11</sup> Second, although Paul is portrayed as a model Roman citizen, trouble does seem to follow in his wake (e.g. Acts 17:6; 19:29; 21:33-35).<sup>12</sup> This could seriously undermine the argument that Christianity was a benign establishment within the Roman Empire.<sup>13</sup> Christianity, while not directly threatening the sovereignty of Rome, was steadily turning the world upside down by creating civil disturbances among Jews, Greeks, and Romans (Acts 17:6; 18:2; 19:23 ff.; cf. Tacitus, *Annals* 15.44).<sup>14</sup> In these regards it is difficult to see Luke's argument being directed purely towards Roman authorities as an apologia on behalf of the church.

The idea that Luke made an argument *pro imperio* is less common.<sup>15</sup> This type of argument is directed toward the church and seeks to explain how believers should understand the actions authorities within the Roman Empire.<sup>16</sup> On one end of the spectrum lies the belief that Luke favors the Roman Empire and portrays it in a positive light.<sup>17</sup> On the other end is the idea that Luke is showing the church that the Roman Empire, while having flaws, is subservient to God and is used as a tool to further

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<sup>11</sup> For example, the truncated court scene in 24:1-8; Walaskay, '*And so we came to Rome*', 58; Witherington, *Acts of the Apostles*, 704.

<sup>12</sup> Cassidy, *Society and Politics*, 148-149; Walaskay, '*And so we came to Rome*', 15-22; Christopher Kevin Rowe, *World Upside Down: Reading Acts in the Graeco-Roman Age* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), 92.

<sup>13</sup> It could even be taken as treasonous (Dig. 48.4.1.1). Rapske, *Paul in Roman Custody*, 42.

<sup>14</sup> Cassidy, *Society and Politics*, 149; Rowe, *World Upside Down*, 96-102.

<sup>15</sup> So Walaskay, '*And so we came to Rome*', 14; Cassidy, *Society and Politics*, 156.

<sup>16</sup> Walaskay, '*And so we came to Rome*', 64; Cassidy, *Society and Politics*, 156-157; Witherington, *Acts of the Apostles*, 73-74; Peterson, *Acts of the Apostles*, 37-39; Johnson, *Acts of the Apostles*, 7.

<sup>17</sup> Walaskay, '*And so we came to Rome*', 64.

disseminate his plan of salvation to the world.<sup>18</sup> Paul, as a Roman citizen, exemplifies this second understanding as he is part of the Roman infrastructure but nonetheless is God's servant in bringing the message of salvation to the gentiles (Acts 9:15; 22:21; 26:19). Still, there are two problems that negate Luke's apology *pro imperio* as the main emphasis within Acts.<sup>19</sup> First, an argument *pro imperio* would imply that some people in the church saw the Roman Empire as a threat to Christianity's mission or existence. Early Christians certainly experienced persecution at the hands of the Romans (e.g. Acts 8:1; Mart. Pol. 1.1 ff.; Ign. *Eph.* 1.1; Tacitus, *Annals* 15.44; Pliny the Younger, *Ep.* 10.96). However, the persecution of Christians in the first century, during the time of Luke's writing, seems to be sporadic and isolated.<sup>20</sup> There does not seem to be any systematic persecution of Christians perpetuated by the state during this time. Two exceptions might be: (1) Nero's persecution of Christians after the fire of Rome in 64 CE (Tacitus, *Annals* 15.44) and (2) Domitian's reign in 81-96 CE (cf. Rev 2:13).<sup>21</sup> In later centuries the Roman state took a more active role in the persecution of Christians, such as with Decius (250 CE) and Valerian (258 CE) (Eusebius, *Hist. eccl.* 6.39; 7.10). However, most large-scale persecutions until the time of Diocletian (303 CE) seem to have been instigated by mob violence, like the martyrdoms at Lyons (Eusebius, *Hist. eccl.* 5.1).<sup>22</sup> Thus, one could

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<sup>18</sup> Daniel Marguerat, *The First Christian Historian: Writing the 'Acts of the Apostles'*, SNTSMS 121 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 29-31; Esler, *Community and Gospel in Luke-Acts*, 222; Peterson, *Acts of the Apostles*, 37-38.

<sup>19</sup> See the discussion in Peterson, *Acts of the Apostles*, 38.

<sup>20</sup> E. Mary Smallwood, "Domitian's Attitude toward the Jews and Judaism," *CP* 51, no. 1 (Jan 1956): 1-13. On Acts being written in the first century see the discussions in Bruce, *Acts of the Apostles*, 9-10; Conzelmann, *Acts of the Apostles*, xxxiii; Pervo, *Acts*, 5-7; Peterson, *Acts of the Apostles*, 4-5.

<sup>21</sup> Smallwood, "Domitian's Attitude toward the Jews and Judaism," 1-13.

<sup>22</sup> See the discussion in G.E.M. de Ste. Croix, "Why Were the Early Christians Persecuted?" *Past & Present*, no. 26 (Nov 1963): 15.

argue that the church in the first century had little use for a systematic apology on behalf of the Empire's actions. Second, Luke does not hide the fact that Romans were capable of great injustice by repeatedly showing Roman corruption and brutality (e.g. Acts 16:37; 18:17; 24:26).<sup>23</sup> This makes it difficult to say that Luke was entirely pro-Roman in his approach to narrating these events.

This leaves the third option that Luke is not concerned with directly addressing the issue of how the church should relate to the Roman Empire *per se*, but rather is mainly concerned with describing to the audience how the early church participated in God's salvation history.<sup>24</sup> The Roman Empire and Roman institutions, like Paul's citizenship, just happened to be a part of the story and so were included, though not as driving factors.<sup>25</sup> There are two benefits to this approach. First, it allows readers to see how both Roman justice and injustice can be parts of God's history for the church.<sup>26</sup> God is able to use flawed institutions to bring about his goals and benevolent governments need not be instrumental to his plans. Second, this approach allows sovereignties to be properly aligned.<sup>27</sup> In Acts, God acts as sovereign over history while institutions, communities, and individuals can align themselves or be aligned to this sovereignty to varying degrees:<sup>28</sup> a theological-historical approach not unlike that of the Septuagint (e.g.

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<sup>23</sup> Cassidy, *Society and Politics*, 152-153.

<sup>24</sup> Johnson, *Acts of the Apostles*, 8; Thompson, *The Acts of the Risen Lord Jesus*, 19; Marshall, *Acts*, 22-23; Squires, *The Plan of God in Luke-Acts*, 1-3.

<sup>25</sup> Cassidy, *Society and Politics*, 102-103; cf. Rapske, *Paul in Roman Custody*, 143; Haenchen, *Acts of the Apostles*, 635; Bryan, *Render to Caesar*, 103.

<sup>26</sup> John Chrysostom (*Hom. Act. 48*) writes on this idea concerning Acts 22:29: "See how God permits many results to occur through human ways, both in the case of the apostles and with the rest of humankind." Squires, *The Plan of God in Luke-Acts*, 180-185; Bryan, *Render to Caesar*, 103-104.

<sup>27</sup> Squires, *The Plan of God in Luke-Acts*, 184; Bryan, *Render to Caesar*, 103.

<sup>28</sup> Squires, *The Plan of God in Luke-Acts*, 184; Johnson, *Acts of the Apostles*, 8-9.

Isa 10:5; Jer 25:9).<sup>29</sup> Still, this approach seems to minimize the prevalent role of the Roman Empire and Roman rulers within the latter half of Acts.<sup>30</sup> While Rome's sovereignty is certainly secondary to God's, Luke gives it certain emphasis, which should not be overlooked.<sup>31</sup> Therefore, Luke may not be promoting an overt political agenda, either for the church or for the Roman Empire, but he is demonstrating through Paul's citizenship that Rome has a special role to play at this point in history for the furtherance of the gospel in the Mediterranean world.<sup>32</sup>

The placement of Paul's citizenship within the narrative of Acts points to this special role. In both Acts 16 and 22 Paul's *civitas* comes into play when Paul is suffering, or about to suffer, at the hands of Roman injustice. Luke is thus implicitly critiquing the Roman legal system. Luke tacitly asks whether the Romans, who are supposedly the arbitrators of peace, are truly capable of administering justice when their institutions are blatantly biased towards outsiders.<sup>33</sup> Christopher Bryan puts Luke's question this way: "Will the Emperor fulfill the purpose for which God has given him power or not?"<sup>34</sup> In the same manner, Cicero directly asks the Roman court whether they can truly be

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<sup>29</sup> Rosner, "Acts and Biblical History," 78-80; Squires, *The Plan of God in Luke-Acts*, 1-3.

<sup>30</sup> Contra Walton, "The State They Were In," 16; Conzelmann, *Acts of the Apostles*, xliii.

<sup>31</sup> Bruce, *Acts of the Apostles*, 24; Tajra, *Trial of St. Paul*, 3, 86; Adams, "Paul the Roman Citizen," 315; Murphy-O'Connor, *Paul*, 39.

<sup>32</sup> Bryan, *Render to Caesar*, 103-104.

<sup>33</sup> Mauck argues it is the Jews rather than the Romans who disdain Roman law (*Paul on Trial*, 155).

<sup>34</sup> Cf. Isa 44:28. Bryan, *Render to Caesar*, 104. Rudolf Gwalther says it this way: "This was a grievous sin in the tribune. And by this all who are in authority should learn not to be excessively rash or cruel in interrogating and punishing... Therefore, all who are in authority should strive to fulfill justice, for the judgements of God are committed to them, and one day the Lord will require the blood of his servants from their hands..." (Homily 146, in *Reformation Commentary on Scripture*, 310).

considered Rome's leaders if they allow a person like Verres blatantly to oppress everyone under his rule, from the foreigner to the Roman citizen. He exhorts the court and its president, Manius Glabrio:

Suscipe causam iudiciorum; suscipe causam severitatis, integritatis, fidei, religionis; suscipe causam senatus, ut is hoc iudicio probatus cum populo Romano et in laude et in gratio esse possit.

Be the champion of the law courts; be the champion of impartiality, of integrity, of faith, of religion; be the champion of the Senate, that this trial may be approved, and be able to be held in the praise and the grace of the Roman people (*Verr.* 1.51 [author's translation]).

Both Luke and Cicero use Roman citizenship as the final litmus test for how Romans administer justice. Paul asks whether it is legal to flog a Roman citizen (22:25) and Cicero states that to do so is not only a crime but also an abomination (*Verr.* 2.5.170). Cicero has a vested interest in maintaining fair Roman justice because he is a part of the Roman judicial system. Luke on the other hand critiques Roman authorities to demonstrate Rome's role as steward of justice vis-à-vis God's plan regarding salvation history.<sup>35</sup> Thus, when Luke and Cicero bring Roman citizenship into their arguments they are critiquing the espoused role of Rome as steward of peace and justice.

Unfortunately, we do not have a clear picture of whether or not the Roman court was able to redeem itself as steward of justice in the case of Verres.<sup>36</sup> But we do see the Roman reaction to this critique in Acts. In Acts 16 the Roman magistrates apologize and release Paul respectfully once they realize he is a Roman citizen (16:38-39).<sup>37</sup> In Acts 22 the Roman tribune draws back from Paul and releases him into a lightened and dignified

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<sup>35</sup> Rowe, *World Upside Down*, 87-89.

<sup>36</sup> Verres fled before he could be brought to trial. Vasaly, "Cicero's Early Speeches," 90.

<sup>37</sup> Rapske, *Paul in Roman Custody*, 128-129; Tajra, *Trial of St. Paul*, 28-29; Witherington, *Acts of the Apostles*, 499.

form of custody (22:29-30).<sup>38</sup> In this way, when Luke tacitly asks whether Roman authorities will submit themselves to the sovereignty of God to spread the message of the gospel to all people, Roman authority responds positively. When it is revealed that a Roman citizen too can be a member of the new Christian sect the Romans are forced to reassess how they treat their subjects. In this way, the Lucan apologetic, according to Walaskay, “is not an appeal for religious toleration under the protective law of *religio licita*, but an appeal to the state to extend civil rights equitably and fairly to all its citizens including Christian citizens.”<sup>39</sup> Romans authorities can no longer group Christians, like Paul, as inherently dangerous malcontents, now they must understand them as upstanding citizens who have the same right to justice as anyone else.<sup>40</sup>

The same cannot be said for the Jewish authorities. Luke presents Paul and his message of salvation as having a divine prerogative to preach to all peoples, Jew and gentile (Acts 9:15; 13:2). Further, Luke establishes Paul’s credentials as a devout Jew, a generous man, and a person of sound moral and religious character (20:18-24; 22:3-5; 28:3-6). Yet despite this portrayal the Jews still reject Paul, and by extension God’s plan of salvation for the gentiles (e.g. 18:6; 22:18-21; 28:24). This rejection contrasts with the Romans who rightly reevaluate Paul and the credentials of his message (cf. 16:38-39; 22:29).<sup>41</sup> In Acts 16, after the magistrates release Paul and Silas from prison, Luke narrates the events in Thessalonica. There some Jews and Greeks believe in Paul’s

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<sup>38</sup> Rapske, *Paul in Roman Custody*, 146; Tajra, *Trial of St. Paul*, 75.

<sup>39</sup> Walaskay, ‘*And so we came to Rome*’, 9; cf. Conzelmann, *Theology of St. Luke*, 142-144; Conzelmann writes, “Luke does not appeal to specific Roman laws, but to imperial justice” (*Acts of the Apostles*, xlvii).

<sup>40</sup> Walaskay, ‘*And so we came to Rome*’, 9; Conzelmann, *Theology of St. Luke*, 142-144; Conzelmann, *Acts of the Apostles*, xlvii.

<sup>41</sup> Rapske, *Paul in Roman Custody*, 143-145; Peterson, *Acts of the Apostles*, 609-610.

message, but the majority of the narration revolves around those who reject the message (Acts 17:5-7). Certain jealous Jews (17:5) said that Paul and his fellow Christians were “acting contrary to the decrees of Caesar” (ἀπέναντι τῶν δογμάτων Καίσαρος πράσσουν [17:7]), when it was just shown in Philippi that Paul and Silas were vindicated for their actions through Roman authority (16:35-39).<sup>42</sup> Likewise, in Acts 22, after the tribune reassesses what constitutes proper legal action in light of Paul’s citizenship the Jewish leaders act contrary to what constitutes proper legal action even when presented with Paul’s upstanding civic character (πεπολίτευμαι) before God (22:25-23:3).<sup>43</sup> As readers, we can see in this contrast that the Romans act lawfully in light of God’s message of salvation to the world, but the Jewish authorities cannot tolerate this.<sup>44</sup> Therefore, Paul’s Roman citizenship acts as a climactic rhetorical device that highlights how Roman authorities can participate in God’s plan of salvation for all peoples by committing themselves to administering justice equitably to both Roman citizens and outsiders.

### Responses from Paul

Paul’s response to his Roman citizenship in his letters is ambiguous.<sup>45</sup> In summary, the Roman Empire and Roman *civitas* are not as directly prevalent in Paul’s epistles as in Acts.<sup>46</sup> Still, there are different avenues scholars have taken to

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<sup>42</sup> Peterson, *Acts of the Apostles*, 482; Johnson, *Acts of the Apostles*, 309-310.

<sup>43</sup> Witherington, *Acts of the Apostles*, 687.

<sup>44</sup> Mauck, *Paul on Trial*, 155.

<sup>45</sup> It is also debatable whether Paul even claims to have Roman citizenship in his letters. Stegemann, “War der Apostel Paulus ein römischer Bürger?,” 221-227; Tajra, *Trial of St. Paul*, 88.

<sup>46</sup> This is to say that Rome and its empire are still mentioned (e.g. Rom 13:1-7; Phil 1:12) but do not play as large a narrative role as in the last half of Acts. Tajra, *Trial of St. Paul*, 88.

understanding Paul's stance towards his *civitas* and his relationship to the Roman Empire.<sup>47</sup> These avenues correspond with the approaches scholars take to understand Acts' relationship with politics. First is the argument that Paul had a positive view towards the Empire.<sup>48</sup> Second is the widely held view that Paul opposed the Empire, whether actively or implicitly.<sup>49</sup> Third is the understanding that Paul was not concerned with politics at all or that he only saw such matters as tangential to God's plan of salvation for the church and the world.<sup>50</sup> Here, I offer two examples from Paul's letters that are similar to the presentation of Luke's stance towards *civitas* in Acts.

In Philippians Paul makes a similar argument for why the Philippian believers should live according to God's gospel as it appears in Acts. Paul exhorts his readers to "live as citizens worthy of the gospel of Christ" (ἀξίως τοῦ εὐαγγελίου τοῦ Χριστοῦ πολιτεύεσθε [Phil 1:27]). Given the context of the Philippian church being situated within the Roman colony of Philippi, Paul's exhortation carries with it two layers of meaning.<sup>51</sup> The use of the verb πολιτεύομαι here, as in Acts 23:1, connects the Greco-Roman idea of

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<sup>47</sup> See the discussion in N.T. Wright, *Paul and the Faithfulness of God* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2013), 1272-1273.

<sup>48</sup> Bruno Blumenfeld, *The Political Paul: Justice, Democracy and Kingship in a Hellenistic Framework* (London: T&T Clark, 2001); Wright, *Paul and the Faithfulness of God*, 1272.

<sup>49</sup> See the various essays in Richard A. Horsley, ed., *Paul and Empire: Religion and Power in Roman Imperial Society* (Edinburgh: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 1997); Richard A. Horsley, ed., *Paul and Politics: Ekklesia, Israel, Imperium, Interpretation* (Harrisburg, PA: Trinity Press International, 2000); Horsley, *Paul and the Roman Imperial Order*; Wright, *Paul and the Faithfulness of God*, 1305-1319.

<sup>50</sup> Barclay, *Pauline Churches and Diaspora Jews*, 363-387; Bryan, *Render to Caesar*, 103-104.

<sup>51</sup> G. Walter. Hansen, *The Letter to the Philippians*, PNTC (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2009), 1-2, 94-95; Witherington, *Acts of the Apostles*, 687.



living as a citizen with the Jewish idea of conducting one's life with faith towards God.<sup>52</sup>

For comparison, in Acts 22 and 23, Luke makes the argument that Paul has acted worthily according to Roman standards because of his Roman citizenship and worthily according to Jewish standards because of his conduct (22:28; 23:1).<sup>53</sup>

Additionally, Paul also makes an appeal to his outstanding Jewish credentials in Philippians. He writes:

Εἴ τις δοκεῖ ἄλλος πεποιθέναι ἐν σαρκί, ἐγὼ μᾶλλον· περιτομῇ ὀκταήμερος, ἐκ γένους Ἰσραὴλ, φυλῆς Βενιαμίν, Ἑβραῖος ἐξ Ἑβραίων, κατὰ νόμον Φαρισαῖος, κατὰ ζήλος διώκων τὴν ἐκκλησίαν, κατὰ δικαιοσύνην τὴν ἐν νόμῳ γενόμενος ἄμεμπτος.  
If another person thinks he has confidence in the flesh, I have more: circumcised on the eighth day; of the Israelites, from the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews; according to the Law, a Pharisee; according to zeal, a persecutor of the church; according to righteousness in the Law, I became blameless (Phil 3:4-6 [author's translation]).

Thus, as in Acts (cf. 22:1-21), Paul establishes himself as an upright and moral person before his audience.<sup>54</sup> However, Paul uses these credentials to point his audience towards the resurrection. We can thus see how Paul makes an effective appeal to his readers by utilizing whatever characteristics he possesses that allow him to preach the gospel message (cf. 1 Cor 9:19-23).<sup>55</sup> Paul goes on to say that his true credentials lie in being able to participate in Christ's resurrection (τοῦ γινῶναι αὐτὸν καὶ τὴν δύναμιν τῆς ἀναστάσεως αὐτοῦ [Phil 3:10]). Similarly, in Acts Paul shouts to the Jewish leaders that

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<sup>52</sup> Hansen, *Philippians*, 94-95; Witherington, *Acts of the Apostles*, 687. See page 27 above.

<sup>53</sup> Rapske, *Paul in Roman Custody*, 83, 90; Murphy-O'Connor, *Paul*, 36-41.

<sup>54</sup> Hansen, *Philippians*, 223.

<sup>55</sup> On Paul using his various characteristics to preach the gospel, see the discussions in Mark Harding and Alanna Nobbs, eds., *All Things to All Cultures: Paul Among Jews, Greeks, and Romans* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2013); Stanley E. Porter, ed., *Paul: Jew, Greek, and Roman* (Leiden: Brill, 2008).

the real reason he is on trial is the hope of the resurrection (περὶ ἐλπίδος καὶ ἀναστάσεως νεκρῶν ἐγὼ κρίνομαι [Acts 23:6]). In this way, both Paul in his letter to the Philippians and Luke in Acts are challenging the reader (1) to participate in the proclamation of God's salvation in a "civic"<sup>56</sup> manner and (2) to see that this participation centers on the resurrection of Christ.

In Romans, Paul lays out what he believes is properly ordered authority in regards to God and the state (13:1-7).<sup>57</sup> Here Paul calls state authority "God's servant" (θεοῦ γὰρ διάκονός ἐστιν [Rom 13:4]) and "God's ministers" (λειτουργοὶ γὰρ θεοῦ εἰσιν [Rom. 13:6]). Because all authority is derived from God, argues Paul (13:1), believers should submit themselves to the authority placed over them. Likewise, because human authority is given by God, those entrusted with authority are accountable to God (13:3-4).<sup>58</sup> Paul's argument in Romans is thus similar to Luke's tacit argument in Acts 16 and 22. In Acts, Luke is challenging the Romans authorities to think about whether they are faithfully carrying out the justice entrusted to them when they interact with Paul. At first, they seem to fall short of their prerogative by mistreating Paul.<sup>59</sup> But upon the revelation of Paul's *civitas* they rightly align themselves with conduct proper to administering justice.

In this way, Luke and Paul both show that the Roman Empire, its rulers, and its institutions all participate in God's plan for salvation. How these institutions act as stewards of God's authority is reflected in how they treat their subjects. Rome's

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<sup>56</sup> Meaning as a "citizen" both of God's kingdom and of Rome's empire.

<sup>57</sup> Colin G. Kruse, *Paul's Letter to the Romans*, PNTC (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2012), 489.

<sup>58</sup> Bryan, *Render to Caesar*, 103-104; Kruse, *Romans*, 495-497. Cf. Robert H. Stein, "The Argument of Romans 13:1-7," *NovT* 31 (1989): 334. Rudolf Gwalther, Homily 146, in *Reformation Commentary on Scripture*, 310.

<sup>59</sup> Stein, "The Argument of Romans 13:1-7," 334.

sovereignty is secondary to God's, and so it must act accordingly. Luke is not promoting an explicit political agenda for how state authority should behave, but he is demonstrating through Paul's citizenship that Rome has a role to play in furthering the gospel to all people, from small to great.

### **Conclusion**

Cicero and Luke use Roman citizenship as a climactic element in their narratives. As Gaius Verres' prosecutor Cicero intended to reveal Verres' nefarious moral character. Cicero does this by characterizing Verres using similar methods as ancient biographies, which seek to demonstrate the moral character of their subjects. Cicero groups together episodes from Verres' career involving similar themes and characters. He characterizes Verres starting with his personality, his foibles, his treatment of low status persons (*Verr.* 2.2.25-26), his abasement of the allies of Roman (*Verr.* 2.4.60 ff.), and ends with his utterly detestable treatment of Roman citizens (*Verr.* 2.5.60 ff.). Because Roman *civitas* was of such value to Cicero's audience this delay maximizes its rhetorical effect. Thus, when Cicero mentions someone's Roman citizenship it is a paramount means to disgrace Verres (*Verr.* 2.1.13-14).

Luke's characterization of Paul follows a similar pattern. Luke utilizes the medium of historiography, but with an emphasis on God's salvation history, to draw conclusions about Paul's moral character and the urgency of his message. As interpreters of this historiographic text we should concern ourselves more with how Luke characterizes Paul than whether or not the historical description of him is accurate. Luke characterizes Paul first as a Jew and then as an outcast but concludes by portraying him as a Roman citizen. Thus, like Cicero, Luke uses Roman citizenship as a climactic

narrative element to reveal Paul's virtuous moral character. Additionally, when portraying Paul as a Roman citizen Luke leverages the two meanings of "civic" used between Roman and Jewish circles to present a subtle critique of Roman and Jewish authority. The Roman response to Paul's *civitas* shows that Roman authorities are capable of helping disseminate Paul's message to all peoples due to his social status. By contrast, the Jewish authorities reject Paul's message and him bringing it to the gentiles even when confronted with his credentials and divine prerogative. The treatment of Roman citizens in Acts is an indication of how Roman and Jewish authorities act as stewards of God's justice and act as servants ready to carry God's message of salvation to all peoples.

Both authors use Roman citizenship as the epitome of their subject's character. Cicero uses it to demonstrate Verres' detestable nature, and Luke employs it to show Paul's legitimate role in bringing his message to all nations. Roman citizenship is more than a personal description in these works. It is a rhetorical device meant to force the reader to reevaluate the moral character of the subject —whether for the better or the worse.

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