Reading Beyond the Text, Part II: Literary Creativity and Characterization in Narrative Religious Texts of the Greco-Roman World

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In the first of this two-part *ARC* article (Thompson 2000, 115–42), I suggested that the interpretive process of ancient religious texts such as the Christian New Testament writings must account for the role of extratextual elements such as ancient literary expectations and conventions. Central to ancient discussions on poetics and rhetoric was the concern for the potential elicited response from the audience. Because of that concern, I contended that the interpretation of such texts cannot focus merely on the text but also on what may happen in and after the encounter with that text by persons of the audience. That is to say, one's readings and interpretations of texts from the Greco-Roman world, particularly religious texts, must move beyond the written texts themselves and account for what those texts may potentially do both among and within those who received them.

This latent social function of ancient texts is, in varying degrees, dependent on the author's creative role in the composition of a given work. While ancient literary thought focused specifically on the author's creative and imaginative work in poetry and oratory, one finds that ancient discussions regarding Greco-Roman historiography[1] also

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referred to similar issues. For some, the fact that such issues were debated may seem rather peculiar, since one also finds within those discussions a concern for matters of historical accuracy. The actual presence of discussions regarding *both* the author's creativity *and* that author's responsibility to matters of historical accuracy may suggest that the balance of these two areas was a contentious yet key element in the composition and interpretation of ancient historiographical texts. Thus, as one attempts to read and interpret such ancient texts, and in particular historical-narrative religious texts of the Greco-Roman world such as the Christian gospels and the book of Acts or even Josephus's works, one may initially conclude that such issues regarding those creative or imaginative textual elements that move one's reading beyond the words of the text itself must also be addressed.

What, then, must the modern reader consider in the reading and interpretation of such texts? In what ways were ancient historians permitted, expected, or even encouraged to exercise their creative literary skills for the sake of the historical narrative's potential affective functions among and within its readers or audience?[2] In this second of a two-part article focusing on ancient literary issues as they relate to the contemporary interpretive process of ancient religious texts, such matters of literary creativity will be considered. This part of the article has three sections. The first section assesses the role of literary creativity in Greco-Roman historiography by turning to ancient discussions regarding such texts and their composition. The second section explores the influence of literary creativity in Greco-Roman historiography as it relates to one specific literary category, characterization. The third section turns to examples of characterization in two literary corpura—the works of Josephus and the Christian book of Acts—to indicate that ancient religious narratives also include creative textual elements that point one's reading and interpretation beyond the respective texts themselves.

Literary Creativity in Greco-Roman Historiography

Interestingly, an important issue for Greco-Roman historiography, alongside matters of historical accuracy, was the appropriateness of

literary creativity and artistry in the composition of the historical narrative. On the one hand, factual or historical truth defined ideal history, which was to be based on the unbiased investigation and research of the historian (see, e.g., Herodotus, *Histories* 1.1; Thucydides, *History of the Peloponnesian War* 1.20.3; 1.22.2). On the other hand, ancient writers recognized that the presentation of research alone, regardless of its historical accuracy, may lack the ability to attract and hold the interest of those who heard it. Since a concern for the latent social function and benefits of historiography would have motivated its composition (see, e.g., Thucydides, *History of the Peloponnesian War* 1.22.4; Polybius, *The Histories* 1.4.4, 12.25g.2; Dionysius, *Roman Antiquities* 1.1.2; Josephus, *Jewish Antiquities* 1.1.3–4), historical texts were composed in ways that valued not only their historical content but also their reception. The necessity of attracting and keeping the attention of a Greco-Roman audience required vigilance in matters of the narrative's acceptability to the potential audience (cf. Polybius, *The Histories* 29.12.1–12; see Breisach 1983, 33–34; Malitz 1990, 323–25; and Bury 1909, 166–67). Consequently, even the historian Polybius, known for his railings against those who did not write "accurate" history (see *The Histories* 1.4.11; 15.36.3), admitted the need for pleasure and interest in the writing of history and linked the idea of pleasure to the text's usefulness or benefit (see Walbank 1990, 260–62; D'Huys 1990, 267–88). The historian understood the responsibility for the attractiveness of the historical narrative and recognized that one's compositional skills contributed to its receptivity. Thus, while ancient audiences expected the historical narrative to offer an accurate account of the narrated events, there was no denying a proper role of literary creativity in that text's composition.

The critical issue in the ancient debate concentrated more on the precise *role* of pleasure and the arousal of emotions in the experience of hearing or reading the historical narrative than on the *appropriateness* of pleasure in that experience (Fornara 1983, 120). Ancient historians such as Thucydides (*History of the Peloponnesian War* 1.22.4), Polybius (*The Histories* 2.56.7–12; 3.47.6; 7.7.1ff.; 10.27.8; 15.34.1–6; 16.18.2), Josephus (*The Jewish War* 1.30; *Jewish Antiquities* 1.1–4), and Lucian (*How to Write History* 9) all stressed that the beneficial purposes of his-

tory subordinated the evocation of pleasure by the textual presentation. Nonetheless, two indications of a prominent concern for the entertaining or pleasant experience from history exist: a few historiographical fragments from 400–200 BCE that were preserved as examples of excessive creativity, and the critical and polemical comments of some historians against those fragments' authors.[3] Just as the vivid accounts of poetry and tragedy were to create an emotional effect with lasting results through the audience's learning and experience, so also was history to create a lasting, beneficial effect for its audience, often borrowing principles and techniques from poetry and rhetoric. Thus, no historian, including the critical Polybius, refrained from using literary creativity with the expressed purposes of giving pleasure, of creating interest, and of benefiting an audience (see D'Huys 1990, 271–73; de Foucault 1972, 308–10; Walbank 1972, 39–40).[4]

The author's creative contributions to the historical narrative were usually recognized in two distinct categories: the creation and organization of the literary work, and the artistic techniques used within that work. However, neither category was unique to historiography, since discussions regarding poetics and rhetoric also considered similar issues. Both the creation and organization of the literary work for its greatest potential effect were the author's responsibilities. Ancient literary theorists typically emphasized the necessity of unity in a literary work, which they linked to the "plot" or ὁ μῦθος. For instance, Aristotle emphasized that the plot, as the arrangement of incidents in poetry, included a well-planned arrangement that joined together the work's parts like a living organism (*Poetics* 7.1–10). However, the creation of unity focused not on one person or event but on πράξεως μίμησις, "the *mimesis* of action," in which every element was vital to the total work (*Poetics* 8.1–4).

The ancient concerns for the creation and unity of a literary work also influenced historiography. The historian functioned much like the poet, illustrating "the universal" (see Aristotle, *Poetics* 9.1–3) or general truths through the depiction of historical events and people. In his assessment of the histories of Herodotus and Thucydides, Dionysius contended that the historian acted as a poet both in the selection of the work's subject and in the summons of different events and persons

into a unified account (*Letter to Gnaeus Pompeius* 3; cf. *On Literary Composition* 6). Polybius stated that the synthesis of events within the historical work under a unifying theme was the historian's creative responsibility (*The Histories* 1.4.2–3, 11; 3.32.2; see Sacks 1981, 108–9; Walbank 1972, 67). Therefore, the creation and organization of the historical narrative focuses the audience's attention not only on the events but also on the relationship of those events (cf., e.g., Herodotus, *Histories* 1.1; Thucydides, *History of the Peloponnesian War* 1.23.6; Dionysius, *Roman Antiquities* 1.5.1–3; Josephus, *The Jewish War* 1.9–12; see Pedech 1964, 210). The *connection* of those historical episodes, *not the episodes themselves*, is the significant element of that narrative (Cobet 1971, 140). Thus, both the unifying theme of the historical narrative and the narrative's coherence owe their "existence" to the historian's creative and imaginative work.

The unifying theme of the historical text and its corresponding plot provided the general criteria by which the work was creatively composed. That is, the author of the historical text used these criteria for the selection of materials included in the narrative. The historian evaluated reports and traditions for their possible contributions both to the clear depiction of the preferred theme or purpose and to the potential response of the audience. Surprisingly, Dionysius preferred the work of Herodotus over the work of Thucydides. According to Dionysius, the latter's lack of selectivity resulted in an excessive inclusion of battle scenes and speeches, which he concluded would exhaust the audience (Dionysius, *Letter to Gnaeus Pompeius* 3; cf. Polybius, *The Histories* 12.25a.5; see Gabba 1991, 91–92). The implication in Dionysius's assessment was that the historical narrative must reflect some degree of clarity in direction, which would be effectively fulfilled by a *selection* of events and persons from the vast array of historical events and people.

Other statements contained in ancient historiographical texts confirm the selective character of ancient historiographical texts. The preface to Herodotus's work implies a selective judgment of what he considered important (*Histories* 1.1; cf. 5.65; see Lateiner 1989, 59–75). Part of Polybius's condemnation of Timaeus centred on what the former perceived as a *lack* of selectivity, contending that Timaeus's work included *everything* rather than a selection of relevant episodes

(*The Histories* 12.25i.6). The two major works of Josephus both mention something about selectivity and limitations of what each specific work would include (*The Jewish War* 1.17–18; *Jewish Antiquities* 1.7). Since the plot would entail not only the arrangement of episodes but also the *mimesis* of action, the historical narrative should include those elements that were significant contributions to the plot's collective action. Conversely, the narrative should exclude other insignificant events and characters (see Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca 1969, 116; Mandell and Freedman 1993, 32–33; Satterthwaite 1993, 346–48). The silence regarding what happened at a given event or even the extent to which an episode or personality was developed reflects a selective process that the historian's creative judgments would have controlled (see Cochrane 1965, 31–32; cf. Demetrius, *On Style* 4.222).

The precise literary arrangement of the various narrative parts was as critical to the narrative plot as the selective process. Dionysius stressed the importance of the narrative's ability to coax the audience along through the course of events, so that the listeners would not become wearied or bored (*On the Style of Demosthenes* 45). Obviously, the audience's attentiveness was critical to the narrative experience, especially when one considers the importance of *each* selected narrative episode. Since a random presentation of events that did *not* lead the audience to the next event was considered to be deficient and ineffective, the importance of the audience's attention could not be underemphasized (see Aristotle, *Poetics* 9.11). Therefore, the arrangement of narrative events functions in a twofold way: the development of the thematic or conceptual unity of the historical work, and the social concern for the audience's response due to its experience of the narrative presentation.

The concern for literary arrangement was not confined only to matters of holding the audience's interest. The effectiveness of the ancient historical text is found in what one may describe as "the narrative process." The description of one event does not provide the basis for history, nor does that one depicted event *alone* deliver the didactic or moral benefit. However, single events, linked in an interrelated work of art, contribute cumulatively to the potential benefits and functions of history. The narrative directs (but does not coerce) the audience

toward its potential outcomes by taking it step by step through the selected events. The text urges the audience to make judgments based on tentative interpretations from the presentation of previous narrative episodes (cf. Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca 1969, 491). Thus, descriptions of narrative events and their effect on the audience depend on the audience's involvement in and judgments of earlier episodes. Only in the narrative process, through which the audience accumulates impressions and makes judgments along the way, may the audience advance to a coherent understanding of the narrative (see Iser 1974, 275, 288; 1978, 112). This cumulative effect is what Longinus identified in the presentation of narrative events—an effect through αὔξησις or "amplification" (*On the Sublime* 11.1–12.2, cf. 23.1; cf. Dionysius, *On Thucydides* 19). Thus, the narrative only offers one episode at a time; such offerings should be presented with clarity and completeness. Lucian advised the historian to introduce the subsequent episode only after finishing the first one, allowing each episode to contribute to the narrative as a whole (*How to Write History* 55). These historians compared their work with drama or tragedy; they and their audiences visualized individual episodes like scenes of a play (Fornara 1983, 171–72). Each part contributes to the whole, but each part does not contribute equally. Through a conscious combination of literary patterns and the creative arrangement of narrative events, a historical narrative would creatively and potentially escort the audience to a point of final judgment(s) and potential response(s).

Therefore, the creative arrangement of the historical narrative brings clarity and interest to what it describes. The narrative plot itself, not the chronological account of a certain historical period, dictates the arrangement of the events or episodes. That is not to say that chronology has *no* significance to the ancient historical narrative. However, chronology is of secondary importance to the work's purposes. Dionysius denounced Thucydides' work because its chronological and topographical subdivisions make the narrative difficult to follow (*On Thucydides* 9; *Letter to Gnaeus Pompeius* 3; cf. Lateiner 1989, 120; and von Fritz 1967, 1.1:780–84). Polybius stressed his preference for a chronological arrangement of materials, but that was due to his belief that the chronological method was most effective in bringing

clarity to the subject (*The Histories* 4.28.3–6; 5.31.6; 38.5.1–4; see Walbank 1957–79, 1:562). Josephus promised to write κατὰ τὴν οἰκείαν τάξιν ("according to the proper order"; *Jewish Antiquities* 1.16) which he clarified later as τὸ κατὰ γένος ἕκαστα τάξαι ("the arrangement according to subject"; *Jewish Antiquities* 4.197).[5] Lucian suggested that the historian give considerable attention to narrative arrangement and emphasized the importance of both progression and smoothness to the narrative's flow (*How to Write History* 47–48, 55). Aristotle had correctly observed that, if the events of history only have a temporal relation to each other, poetry was "more scientific and serious than history" (*Poetics* 9.3; 23.2). That is, chronology did not explain anything by itself. Thus, ancient historical narratives were arranged with plot, themes, and potential effects in mind. Within these texts, the connection between events was determined by the creative judgments of the historian rather than by the temporal sequence of the events themselves.

The other major category by which the creative contributions of the author were often recognized in ancient historiography is the use of artistic techniques. The importance of artistic technique to history writing paralleled ancient educational and rhetorical interests in literary style and technique. Just as Greco-Roman education emphasized the reading of classical literature and the imitation of literary style, so also did history writers look to the study of literature for technical assistance in the creation of narratives that would potentially evoke desired responses. Literary techniques include everything from word choice to word order, from the arrangement of events to the emphasis on particular events, and from different writing styles to the importance of vivid description (see, e.g., Aristotle, *Poetics* and *Rhetoric*; Demetrius, *On Style*; Dionysius, *The Critical Essays*; and Longinus, *On the Sublime*). Lucian stated that literary techniques were helpful to τὴν προσήκουσαν, literally "the one who heard" or the one whom the narrative addressed, not for the ποίησις of the work itself (*How to Write History* 35). In the composition of the historical narrative, then, the adoption of certain literary techniques would potentially assist the audience in the realization of the potential effects and benefits of history. The author turned to different artistic devices in the attempt to repre-

sent φύσις (see Longinus, *On the Sublime* 22.1). The creative work of the historian was a success if the members of the audience perceived the described events as though they were actually happening before them, for such an experience provided an opportunity for improvement (see Dionysius, *On Literary Composition* 20; cf. Polybius, *The Histories* 12.25h.3–5).

Although the value of artistic techniques was found in their assistance in the *mimetic* quality of the narrative, the creative composition of the historical narrative stressed the centrality of its social function. Thus, any adopted literary device or technique must assist in the fulfillment of that function. The primary aim of historiography was the beneficial effect of an audience, not the demonstration of the author's literary skill.[6] Longinus contended that the effect or greatness of any literary text depends on "the mere force of composition and verbal carpentry," not on exquisite style or literary technique (*On the Sublime* 40.1–2). Dionysius's criticism against Thucydides' work implies similar sentiments: the narrative often lapses into a literary style that would be inaccessible to his audience, and this habit limits the work's potential function (*On Thucydides* 51–52; cf. Grube 1965, 229; Gabba, 1991, 67–69).

The reception of historiography and other literary works required a covert quality of artistic composition (see Dionysius, *On Thucydides* 51; Demetrius, *On Style* 1.19; Longinus, *On the Sublime* 17.2). Thus, the historian served as the text's creative composer. The historian decided which events were more fully developed or magnified as important ones and which events were treated scantily as less important.[7] For instance, Polybius's work often depicts characters or events by using common literary forms or *topoi*, thereby creating through familiarity a certain impression in the audience's minds while underscoring something of significance (e.g., *The Histories* 15.9.1–15.16.6). Other works employ literary *topoi* to describe scenes or individuals in early sections of the historical narrative that provide the audience with patterns or images with which to judge later narrative episodes or characters (cf. Toohey 1992, 14). Dionysius stressed that the description and arrangement of narrative materials in two contrasting groups, especially regarding significant characters in the work, was a forceful means by

which to create the desired effect. By focusing on the contrast between two character groups rather than a description of every "finicky detail," Dionysius suggested that the narrative could powerfully emphasize the "whole thesis" (ὅλῃ τῇ θέσει) with the "whole antithesis" (ὅλῃ τῇ ἀντίθεσιν; *On the Style of Demosthenes* 21). However the author composed the work, the use of artistry for the sake of emphasis required restraint through moderation. Too much literary creativity may diminish the potential effect on the audience (see Dionysius, *On the Style of Demosthenes* 18; *On the Sublime* 16–29). The desired effect of that creative presentation depends on the narrative *experience* shared by that audience. Thus, the social function of historiography limited the text's artistic and creative elements to that which would potentially achieve that end.

The social function of Greco-Roman historical narrative, therefore, was critical to the concerns for an artistic literary work that accentuated progression and clarity. The oral presentation or reading of the literary text demanded an arrangement and clarity that allowed for the audience's understanding, interest, involvement, and responses without the privilege of reviewing the presented *textual* accounts. The created narrative must present clearly and convincingly its themes and purposes. By drawing the members of the audience into the narrative action, the text would potentially guide them in making their own judgments, both by what was presented and by what was not.[8] This combination of the presentation of each event with the stimulation of the audience's interest and emotions may lead to appropriate and beneficial responses at the presentation's conclusion.

How, then, does one compare the historian's claims to accuracy and truthfulness to the historian's role as the creator of the narrative? Did the artistic element of the historian's task give license to create fictional events and persons? To be sure, these allowances for artistry and imagination opened the door for the creation of fictional elements. Thucydides admitted that the speeches in his work were not verbatim quotations yet insisted on their appropriateness for the narrated event and speaker (*History of the Peloponnesian War* 1.22.1; see Hornblower 1991, 1:58–60; Beye 1987, 220–23; Brunt 1993, 150–53; and Grube 1965, 35–36.).[9] Recent studies have concluded that Josephus probably

invented and coloured details within events to increase the narrative's vividness and dramatic interest, although he considered his work to be faithful to the historical events (see, e.g., Cohen 1979, esp. 31, 181, 233; Cohen 1982, 385–405; Gauger 1977). Although the work of these ancient historians was confined to the historical arena, *literary* concerns rather than historical ones dominated the ancient critical discussion. For instance, Dionysius assessed Thucydides' work on the basis of literary style and technique, not on the basis of historical accuracy (see Malitz 1990, 347–48; Wheeldon 1989, 59–60; cf. Dubuisson 1990, 237–38). The encroachment of rhetorical theory into literary topics apparently influenced Greco-Roman historiography a great deal, so much so that ancient audiences may not have asked about the historical accuracy of what was presented (von Fritz 1967, 1.1:790–91).

Therefore, the evidence suggests that considerable tension existed over the role of literary creativity in the composition of ancient historiographical texts. The convergence of literary and historical considerations created a dilemma for the ancient historian:

> He must tell the truth, and do it brilliantly and meaningfully. He must capture the reader by his art, instruct, edify, and eternalize virtue and infamy—especially infamy. At his most ambitious, the historian was an artist seeking by means of his art, but in fidelity to the truth, to be the teacher or the conscience of his people, or both. Conversely, he sought to capture the vividity and drama of the world he described for the delight and fascination of his readers. Clearly the historian was in the awkward position of serving two masters, what we call art and science. (Fornara 1983, 99)

The ancient situation reflects a dual concern for artistic creativity *and* historical fidelity.[10] Nonetheless, these concerns were subservient to the text's potential social functions. That is to say, these historical narratives do not reflect interest in the described events *per se* but in the *significance* of those depictions for the audience (cf. Davidson 1991, 18–20). Thus, one may conclude that ancient historical narratives (including religious ones) are creative, artistic compositions that are not ends in themselves but means by which potential effects on the audience may occur.

Characterization in Greco-Roman Historiography

Just as the ancient historical narrative reflects interpretive judgments, creative arrangement, and artistic embellishment, the narrative depiction of characters also reflects similar matters. One may offer for consideration the suggestion that *characterization* within the historiographical text opens wide for the contemporary reader a window through which the rhetorical and creative elements of that text may be clearly seen.

The importance of characters to historiography is related to the very essence of the narrative. If ancient historiography, like poetry, includes plot as a *mimesis* of action, then human beings and groups are critical to that presentation. The focus of poetry and history is not mere action but *human* action, πρᾶξις. The term πρᾶξις is derived from the verb πράττω or πράσσω, denoting not only activity or physical action but "the notion of a moral or intellectual *program* aimed at a goal" (Else 1986, 80–81). Thus, the importance of human "actors" or "agents of action" comes as no surprise. These persons or groups, the story's characters, are critical to the potential success of the narrative presentation. Of course, one cannot adequately study these characters apart from the narrative (contra Garton 1957, 247). Nonetheless, the study of characterization requires one to consider various aspects of characterization that serve as elements of the ancient literary text, that reflect the creative aspects of that text, and that contribute toward the potential rhetorical functions of the historiographical narrative. Although one may point out numerous aspects of characterization, several stand out prominently in Greco-Roman literature as they relate to the present study: indirect or implicit characterization, direct or explicit characterization, descriptive categories of characterization, the cumulative aspect of characterization, and the role of character interaction and interplay in characterization.

1. Indirect or implicit characterization

One aspect of characterization in Greco-Roman literature is related to the prominent literary focus on πρᾶξις or human action. It may be said that implicit characterization, in which a character is indirectly

described through her actions, is the dominant form of characterization in Greco-Roman literature (cf. Gowler 1991, 130; Shepherd 1994, 88). A focus on a character's actions is to be expected, given the ancient understanding of the relation between such action and human "character," ἦθος.[11] For instance, Aristotle stressed that ἦθος was subordinate to the plot because no "character" existed apart from action (*Poetics* 6.8). A character's ἦθος was observable in her actions because it was both related to the cause of action and developed through that action.[12] That is, human action exposes or reflects ἦθος when a person's choice or προαίρεσις is revealed (Halliwell 1986, 164). Thus, included in the ancient understanding of ἦθος are the elements of choice, rationality, and responsibility that influence all human action (see Halliwell 1990, 35).

This understanding of the relation between action and ἦθος helps to explain why the predominate means of characterization in Greco-Roman literature was indirect or implicit. Given the concern that the author's creative hand remain somewhat hidden from the audience's view, the narrative focuses the audience's attention on a chosen group of interacting characters and describes selected actions that implicitly reveal the ἦθος of each character or group which informed those actions (Pelling 1990, 256). Such a focus on the characters' actions provides little explicit information about those persons or groups. The narrative merely tells about a selection of the actions of certain characters that the persons of the audience may have seen if they had witnessed the described events themselves. However, this textual information provides the bases on which that audience must make its judgments and decisions about those characters. The advantage of *indirect* characterization is the audience's *direct* participation in the narrative events as presented (see Demetrius, *On Style* 4.222).

Through the use of indirect characterization, described actions of the narrative participants implicitly attribute certain characteristics to them. Ancient historical narratives often include speeches and dialogue as part of the described narrative action (cf. Auerbach 1953, 39). These speeches and conversations have a dual function: they reflect the thoughts of the presented speaker, and they often function as vehicles through which the narrator may indirectly guide the audience's devel-

oping judgments and understanding (see Hunter 1973; Immerwahr 1966). These words on the lips of a reliable character often serve as implicit commentary for the narrator, which may assist the audience in the evaluation of events and characters (see Booth 1983, 3–20). Thus, one aspect of characterization in Greco-Roman literature for which one's reading of ancient narrative texts must account is the use of indirect or implicit characterization, the description of characters that selectively focuses on what the reader herself may see if she were an eyewitness of the events.

2. Direct or explicit characterization

A second aspect of characterization in Greco-Roman literature is the use of direct or explicit characterization in the presentation of characters. The use of indirect or implicit means of characterization did not exclude the employment of direct descriptions or explicit statements of certain characters. The ancient historical narrative often includes explicit descriptions or judgments about certain characters that provide additional information that the audience may need in the evaluation of those characters' actions. These direct descriptions or overt statements may reveal motives, emotions, or thoughts to which the audience would not have had access if witnessing the events firsthand. Such materials may also take the form of a summary that directly informs the audience about certain actions or typical behaviour and may offer some basic conclusions. Given the preferred use of indirect description, however, explicit statements, descriptions, and conclusions about a character suggest something about the importance of the provided information and suggest the narrator's concern that the audience correctly understand the respective action and its related ἦθος (see Sternberg 1985, 93–102; Alter 1981, 117). In other words, by telling something about the character directly to the audience, the narrator may limit to some degree the audience's role in making the necessary connections and judgments.

The major histories from the Greco-Roman era all include direct characterization. For instance, while Thucydides' *History of the Peloponnesian War* is often cited as a prominent example of implicit characterization (see Westlake 1968), explicit statements of judgment or de-

scription are not absent.[13] Polybius often addresses his audience directly (see Walbank 1972, 92; *The Histories* 10.26.9). One need not read far into the respective works of other ancient historians, such as Xenophon, Polybius, and Josephus, before finding examples of explicit characterization. However, it should be noted that this additional means of describing characters in the ancient historical work rarely provides for a full development of those characters that one may typically find in modern literary works. Such representation probably reflects the influence of orality in Greco-Roman culture (cf. Kelber 1983, 69). While these historical narratives may often describe particular circumstances or narrative events in significant detail, the description of the characters is typically restricted only to a few details necessary to envisage the situation or event (see Garton 1957, 249; Goldhill 1990, 102). Simplicity in characterization was the representative feature of Greco-Roman literature in general (Pelling 1990, 246–47). Thus, the general practice was to provide (either directly or indirectly) *relevant* information concerning the narrative's characters, so that the audience may potentially be coaxed along to make necessary judgments and connections. Of course, the scarcity of information about the characters also implies that a significant number of textual gaps undoubtedly remain, for which the members of the audience must account in their attempts to understand the narrative. Nonetheless, the study of a given work's characterization requires due regard for what the narrative states either directly or explicitly about those characters (Pelling 1990, 248–49).

3. Descriptive categories of characterization

A third aspect of characterization in Greco-Roman literature is the descriptive categories by which the historical text portrays its human participants. That is, the interpreter must consider not only the indirect or direct characterization within the text (including *intra*textual connections) but also the categories or manner (including both *inter*textual and *extra*textual connections) by which the narrative presents those characters and from which the audience would construct and evaluate them. A critical issue regarding characterization in Greco-Roman literature, which is articulated most distinctively in several essays by

Christopher Gill, concerns two descriptive categories of character portrayal: characters as typical figures, and as individual personalities (see Gill 1983, 469–87; 1984, 149–66; 1986, 251–73; 1990, 1–31).

The portrayal of characters as typical figures focuses on the use of common social categories in their description. This kind of characterization, which Gill designates as the "character-viewpoint," describes narrative participants as those who reflect or violate typical, social behaviour. Such characters are often portrayed in similar ways, so that the individuality of a character sometimes seems to have been lost (cf. Beye 1987, 17). However, the important distinction here is not necessarily the degree to which characters are depicted in typical, social categories but the evaluative framework by which these characters are depicted and assessed (cf. Holgate 1999, 92–99). Gill suggests that this descriptive categories of characterization reflect normative and cultural assumptions about human nature and behaviour:

> [T]he person is, typically, treated as a "moral agent," responsible for his actions and their consequences, and also responsible, at some level, for his feelings, and, at some other level, for the qualities or character-traits expressed in those actions and feelings. Typically too, the person is treated as, in principle at least, a rational being, whose actions derive from his beliefs and desires and reflect his intentions and motives. (Gill 1986, 252)

Thus, characters are presented in the narrative by means of social conventions and norms (see Aristotle, *Poetics* 15.2; Gill 1986, 260). This characterization of the persons or groups within the narrative from a "character-viewpoint" allows for an assessment of such characters based on these social categories rather than individuality (see Dionysius, *On the Style of Demosthenes* 21). In addition, this means of description assists the audience in comparing and contrasting characters by the employment of similar, socially-accepted ideals or categories (cf. Gill 1986, 257; see Easterling 1990, 88; Gill 1984, 164–65; Halliwell 1990, 45, 50; Plümacher 1972, 16). This portrayal of characters thereby guides the audience to make judgments and evaluations regarding them based on the descriptive categories that are used.[14]

The portrayal of characters as individual personalities focuses on their narrative description as unique individuals. Unlike the "character-viewpoint," the "personality-viewpoint" does not portray the character with socially-defined hues but examines the person according to that character's distinctiveness as a unique personality. Although both viewpoints employ descriptive statements to express the respective concerns, the latter is less evaluative. More common for the "personality-viewpoint" are statements and scenes that induce the audience either to try to understand or to share the character's point of view (Gill 1986, 253). Such descriptions direct the audience's attention to the character's thoughts and emotions rather than to her action (Gill 1986, 256). However, the primary concern is the arousal of the audience's emotions, not the character's thoughts and emotions (cf. Gill 1984, 151–53; see Aristotle, *Poetics* 17). Consequently, the "personality-viewpoint" does not confirm social attitudes and assumptions but tends to question their validity (Gill 1990, 6–7). On the one hand, Plato's fear of poetry's social power suggests a similar dynamic: that an audience may be induced to share a character's emotions or to respond with empathy rather than to make appropriate judgments about that character (Plato, *The Republic* 10.605c–d; see Gill 1986, 258–59; 1984, 164–65; cf. Booth 1983, 377–78). On the other hand, such characterization parallels the Aristotelian concern that the tragic character is presented as one with whom the audience may identify (Aristotle, *Poetics* 15.5). Thus, the portrayal of characters from a "personality-viewpoint" usually prompts understanding, not judgment (see Aristotle, *Poetics* 15.2).

These two descriptive categories of characterization—the "character-viewpoint" and the "personality-viewpoint"—provide some useful concepts in one's reading and interpretation of ancient historical narratives (cf. Halliwell 1990, 58ff.). These two viewpoints provide assistance in assessing characters in three areas: the explanation of actions, the evaluation of those characters and their actions, and the adoption of a particular perspective (cf. Gill 1990, 3–6). On the one hand, the "character-viewpoint" explains the *reasons* for the actions of a character as an active moral agent. This means of characterization identifies a framework of social conventions for the appraisal of the character. The

"character-viewpoint" takes no special account of the perspective of the persons involved and may even appear to come from an unbiased perspective. On the other hand, the "personality-viewpoint" explains the *causes* of action directed toward the passive character. This means of characterization appraises the character through that one's individuality or distinctiveness and tends to encourage the audience to identify with the perspective of one of the characters. These distinctions suggest not only that characters in Greco-Roman literature may be described in different ways but also that these different forms of characterization may have different foci and functions. Each distinctive type of characterization carries implicit, extratextual assumptions, so that one must account for these different descriptive categories of characterization in the reading and interpretive process of ancient historical narratives.

The evidence from ancient thinkers and literature suggests that Greco-Roman audiences would have expected both kinds of characterization. Generally, these two descriptive categories of characterization correspond to ancient generic categories. On the one hand, the "character-viewpoint" dominates the character portraits in history and oratory. On the other hand, the "personality-viewpoint" dominates the character portraits of poetry and drama, particularly tragedy (see Gill 1986, 269–72; Halliwell 1990, 58). However, one must not insist on making such sharp distinctions, since ancient literary principles and practices did not adhere to strict distinctions. Ancient literature often includes *both* kinds of characterization within a given work (see Gill 1986, 251–73; 1990, 1). The significance, then, lies in the distinctive *function* of these two categories of characterization. Failure to distinguish between these two descriptive categories of characterization potentially leads to incorrect conclusions on issues such as function, theme, and point of view, if one takes seriously the expectations inherent to the narrative itself.

4. The cumulative aspect of characterization

A fourth aspect of characterization in Greco-Roman literature is the cumulative effect of pictures, scenes, judgments, etc. through the successive reading of the narrative. That is, the characterization in a nar-

rative depends partly on the accumulation of images and effect in one's encounter of those characters through the presentation or reading of that text. To be sure, tension exists between the sense of completeness in the depiction of a particular episode and the cumulative effect of the entire narrative. As already mentioned, each narrative scene was expected to reflect a sense of completeness and to contribute to the narrative itself (cf. Aristotle, *Poetics* 8.4). On the one hand, each episode invites the audience to make judgments, based on the depiction of the events and the characters involved. On the other hand, the narrative process that guides the audience from one event to another has an evolutionary quality, in which effect and judgment accumulate and are redefined by the experience of each pericope. Since the narrative actions infer possible "character" traits or motives of the characters, these portrayals function within the narrative much like the specific episodes: each incidental depiction of a character contributes cumulatively to the narrative plot and to that character's portrayal.

The cumulative aspect of characterization in Greco-Roman literature is critical to the rhetorical nature of these ancient texts. Although action both signifies and strengthens the ἦθος of the character, the ancient theorists recognized that an isolated act may deceive the observer since a person's actions may not always reflect one's ἦθος (Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics* 3.2.1). Several examples of similar action provide substantiation about a person's ἦθος (see Aristotle, *Rhetoric* 1.9.31). The characterization of an individual or group in a narrative relies on a cumulative effect in a number of possible ways: through the presentation of several selected examples of that character's actions, through interaction with other characters, and through comparison or contrast with other characters. A character is not only inseparable from the narrative events or actions but also identifiable in the interaction with other characters (see Easterling 1990, 88). Along the way, the accumulation of pictures and impressions within the narrative invites from the audience certain kinds of responses or judgments that, after retrospection, may also need revision at later points in the narrative (see Pelling 1990, 102; cf. Iser 1974, 287–88; 1978, 112). Thus, this dynamic aspect of characterization, as part of the process of hearing or reading the

narrative presentation, must be taken into account as one seeks to interpret and understand the text and its rhetorical dimensions.

5. The role of character interaction and interplay in characterization

One final aspect of characterization in Greco-Roman literature that has been mentioned above is the particular role of character interaction and interplay in characterization. Perhaps the most basic and essential element in the portrayal of characters is the web of relationships within which all narrative participants are found (see Darr 1992, 41–42). Within a narrative, one encounters any given character in a context that is itself shaped by other characters. Thus, one's assessment and judgments regarding one character occur in the shadows of others. In other words, narrative characters often "reveal other characters—to make, by their own choices and acts, rhetorical judgments on the choices and acts of others" (Springer 1978, 191). The interaction and interplay between different characters potentially stimulate the audience to compare and contrast them within the overall rhetoric and strategies of the work itself (see Dionysius, *On the Style of Demosthenes* 21; Harvey 1965, 53). Differences and similarities, conflict and harmony, and opposition and support between different characters all offer the audience some significant images from which to build and evaluate the characters in a particular narrative (Cancik 1997, 695). Consequently, the portraits of various characters in an ancient narrative are interdependent. The ancient audience would construct and assess one character in light of both the other narrative characters and that character's narrative function.

An examination of characterization in Greco-Roman historiography must consider the literary and social contexts of which it is a part. The portrayal of characters is only one element of the ancient narrative, yet it contributes significantly to the potential social functions of that text. Thus, the interpretation of such texts must consider the unique nature of characterization as part of the ancient literary text. The five aspects of characterization in ancient literature mentioned above were creatively combined together in various ways to present images and experiences of characters within the plot that would potentially and effec-

tively move its audience to arrive at appropriate judgments and responses. Thus, these creative portraits of characters provide an accessible window through which one may peer in the attempt to understand and interpret the ancient religious text, not only by what that text presents and describes but also by what it may potentially evoke.

Characterization and the Interpretation of Narrative Religious Texts from the Greco-Roman World: Two Examples

How, then, does the respective characterization of an ancient narrative point the modern reader's interpretation beyond the text itself? And how should the modern interpreter consider such issues when reading and seeking to understand an ancient religious narrative? Of course, such matters cannot be thoroughly covered here. Nonetheless, for the purposes of this study, examples of characterization from two literary corpura—the works of Josephus and the Christian book of Acts—will be briefly examined to illustrate how the creative textual elements of the characterization of these ancient religious narratives point one's reading and interpretation beyond the respective texts themselves.

1. The works of Josephus

The works of Flavius Josephus, the Hellenistic-Jewish historian of the first century CE, provide one corpus of religious narrative material from the Greco-Roman world within which one may explore the role of characterization in the potential rhetorical and social functions of those texts. For the purposes of this study, attention will be given only to one example of Josephus's characterization that has been the subject of recent critical study: his portrayal of the Pharisees within his two major works.[15]

The character group of the Pharisees appears sixteen times in the works of Josephus. Of these references, nine are extended discussions of this group (*The Jewish War* 1.110–14; 2.162–66; *Jewish Antiquities* 13.171–73, 288–98, 400–432; 17.41–45; 18.11–15; *The Life* 10–12, 191–98) and seven are more incidental (*The Jewish War* 1.571; 2.411; *Jewish Antiquities* 15.3–4, 370; 18.4, 23; *The Life* 21). The first mention of the Pharisees in *The Jewish War* depicts them positively: they had a

reputation for exemplary piety and for exposition on the laws (*The Jewish War* 1.110; see Mason 1991, 84–110). This reputation gained them considerable influence with Queen Alexandra, who had succeeded her husband Alexander Janneus (*The Jewish War* 1.111). However, Josephus explicitly describes the Pharisees, in contrast to public perception, as selfishly manipulating Alexandra, which explains their depicted behaviour of ruthlessness and murder (*The Jewish War* 1.111–13; cf. Mason 1995, 161). One last incidental reference to the Pharisees (*The Jewish War* 1.571), which summarizes Herod the Great's charges against Pheroras's wife, provides implicit commentary through another character that builds on this negative image by insinuating that the group was concerned for monetary advantage.[16] Both explicitly and implicitly, these first glimpses in Josephus's portrait of the Pharisees identify negative traits of personal ambition.

The last significant contribution in *The Jewish War* to Josephus's characterization of the Pharisees offers a mixture of images. The familiar description of the different philosophical schools (αἵρεσις) of Judaism (*The Jewish War* 2.119–66) concludes with a brief distinction between the Pharisees and Sadducees. Josephus's contrast between these two groups presents the former more positively than the latter, both in their treatment of other people and in ὁμόνοια (*The Jewish War* 2.166). However, much of this contrast's positive effect is overshadowed by other narrative elements, such as the previous affirmative depiction of the Essenes' superiority to *all* Jewish schools in harmonious living and development of community (*The Jewish War* 2.119, 122; cf. Mason 1995, 162). In addition, this final portrait of the Pharisees also describes them as those "who are considered to interpret the laws with accuracy" (*The Jewish War* 2.162), which reflects through similar vocabulary the earlier negative imagery of the Pharisees' reputation and contradicting behaviour. Therefore, the cumulative effect of these images suggests that the reader should come to a modified understanding of ὁμόνοια in the Pharisees' depiction.[17] Although the narrative does not describe the Pharisees as creators of στάσις, neither does it explicitly depict their motives for ὁμόνοια (*The Jewish War* 1.10, 2.411). A possible inference left for the reader may be that the political influ-

ences and advantages enjoyed by the Pharisees motivated their ὁμόνοια (cf. Mason 1991, 173–76).

Therefore, in *The Jewish War* the characterization of the Pharisees includes both positive and negative elements that Josephus presents both implicitly and explicitly. Josephus portrays this group with few character traits and little depth. Nonetheless, the negative descriptions of political advantage and influence, not the positive descriptions of adherence to Jewish νόμοι, implicitly dominate the ὁμόνοια of the Pharisees in the narrative. Consequently, in the context of *The Jewish War*, these *negative* descriptions also function *positively* to exonerate the Pharisees for the war and fall of the Jewish nation.[18] This portrait of the Pharisees reveals certain perspectives regarding the causes of the war, suggesting that neither Jewish thought nor the group's political ambitions provoked the στάσις that led to th war. Even so, this portrayal encourages the audience or reader to view the Pharisees' political activities with disfavour.

Whereas Josephus wrote *The Jewish War* to recount accurately the causes and events of the war between Rome and the Jews (*The Jewish War* 1.1–12), the stated purpose of *Jewish Antiquities* is different: the representation of Jewish history and thought to the Greeks as beneficial and "worthy of attention" (*Jewish Antiquities* 1.1–17; cf. Mason 1995, 163). The narrative begins with Moses and the biblical history of the Jewish people. Consequently, the Pharisees appear as characters later in the work.[19] The first reference to the Pharisees in *Jewish Antiquities* also includes the Essenes and the Sadducees, providing a neutral summation of each school's (αἵρεσις) position περὶ τῶν ἀνθρωπίνων πραγμάτων (*Jewish Antiquities* 13.171–73). Although this short reference reveals little about the Pharisees, they are initially presented as the moderating group between two opposing positions concerning fate and human volition (see Mason 1991, 202–12; 1995, 168).

The portrait of the Pharisees becomes more complex in an extended description of the rift that developed between them and John Hyrcanus, the ruler and high priest (*Jewish Antiquities* 13.288–98). Prior to this section, Hyrcanus is favourably presented as securing peace and prosperity for the Jewish people (*Jewish Antiquities* 13.230–87). Josephus also mentions three things about Hyrcanus: (1) he was a dis-

ciple of the Pharisees, (2) he treated them well, and (3) he enjoyed their support (*Jewish Antiquities* 13.289–91; see Mason 1991, 219–21). Nonetheless, one finds between these two emphases a statement about the "envy of the Jews" against Hyrcanus and, more specifically, the Pharisees' hostility (*Jewish Antiquities* 13.288). However, Josephus's description of the problems focuses the blame on two "trouble-makers" (*Jewish Antiquities* 13.290–96). Although Josephus describes the Pharisees as siding with Hyrcanus against the mendacity about him, the narrative scene suggests that the Pharisees were forced into a precarious situation. Hyrcanus misinterpreted the Pharisees' soft judgment against the liar as an approval of the falsehood, but Josephus adds a note of explanation that vindicates them to the audience (*Jewish Antiquities* 13.293–95). Thus, Hyrcanus was manipulated into leaving the Pharisees, joining the opposing party of the Sadducees, annulling all Pharisaic practices, and punishing all who observed those practices (*Jewish Antiquities* 13.296). Thus, the depiction of the Pharisees in their rift with John Hyrcanus presents them (and Hyrcanus) sympathetically as tragic heroes of two unscrupulous individuals.

The major depiction of the Pharisees in Josephus's works is found in the thirteenth book of *Jewish Antiquities* (400–432). This narrative account parallels the pericope of *The Jewish War* that describes the Pharisees' rise to power and influence with Alexandra (*The Jewish War* 1.110–14). However, the portrait of Alexandra is different here: traits of conspiracy and deceit replace qualities of virtue and piety (see, e.g., *Jewish Antiquities* 13.308, 320; Mason 1991, 248–49). The Pharisees did not exploit her; she offered them power (*Jewish Antiquities* 13.400; cf. Mason 1995, 170). Nonetheless, the characterization of the Pharisees remains largely the same as in *The Jewish War*, although the character of Alexandra is presented differently. Josephus's summary of Alexander Janneus's advice to his wife negatively depicts the Pharisees' influence and power over the populace, whom the Pharisees were able to sway even when motivated by envy (*Jewish Antiquities* 13.401–2; cf. Mason 1995, 170). Alexander advised Alexandra to share her power with the Pharisees, but Josephus depicts them again as those who seized her power, brutally eliminated opponents, and manipulated public opinion of the queen (*Jewish Antiquities* 13.405–15, esp. 409).

This portrayal of the Pharisees, which seemingly contrasts with the earlier picture, would potentially urge the audience to reevaluate this group. The subtle implication is that the Pharisees' inimical response to Hyrcanus, whose depiction as a group initially seems positive, may have arisen because they lost their position of power, not because of Hyrcanus's abuse *per se*.

The depiction of the Pharisees in *Jewish Antiquities* continues to focus on the self-serving behaviour of this Jewish group. Two incidental references to individual Pharisees are somewhat neutral in description, although in both cases they were recipients of royal honour or leniency because of the assistance given to Herod (*Jewish Antiquities* 15.3–4, 370). However, when the Pharisees reappear later in the narrative, Josephus explains that they used προμήθεια, "foresight" or the ability to predict the future, in these instances for harmful purposes and their self-promoting interests. The result was the execution of a number of them (*Jewish Antiquities* 17.41–45; cf. 8.418). Surprisingly, the initial impression of this last major description of the Pharisees seems to contrast with the previous negative imagery, as Josephus again briefly describes the three schools of Jewish thought in a positive light (*Jewish Antiquities* 18.12–15). However, Josephus's description of the Pharisees' influence includes the term πιθανώτατος ("influential"), the same term with implicit connotations of dishonesty and unscrupulousness that Thucydides used in his negative depiction of Cleon (*Jewish Antiquities* 18.15; see Mason 1991, 300–305; Eckstein 1990, 178). Also surrounding this brief explication of the three Jewish schools of thought are two references that suggest connections between the Pharisees and the revolutionary party (*Jewish Antiquities* 18.4, 23). Josephus seems to isolate, as he had done in *The Jewish War*, the rebels from *traditional* Jewish thought. However, the inference of Pharisaic involvement in the στάσις presents a negative image to Josephus's implied Greek audience (cf. Cohen 1979, 237–38). Josephus acknowledges the positive traits and beliefs of the Pharisees but characterizes them largely as a "power-hungry" group that used power for their advantage and opposed those who did not recognize their leadership.[20] Thus, as Josephus depicts them, the Pharisees function negatively in *Jewish Antiquities* as contributors to division among the Jews.

The portraits of the Pharisees in Josephus's two major historiographical works provide the opportunity to examine the function of characterization in one's attempts to read and interpret religious narrative texts. In both cases, Josephus's description of the Pharisees includes some explicit information to supplement the implications of the narrative's action. Josephus's depiction of the Pharisees focuses largely on two roles: their religious role as one of three Jewish schools of thought, and their political role. As a result, Josephus does not present the Pharisees as fully developed or knowable characters. In this brief inquiry, one must note that both portraits emphasize *both* positive *and* negative traits. On the one hand, the Pharisees enjoyed a reputation for piety and zealousness toward traditional regulations. On the other hand, the Pharisees played a significant role in the political arena that was usually depicted in character-viewpoint ways in terms of their advantage and hunger for power. However, these two portraits differ regarding issues of ὁμόνοια and στάσις: the Pharisees of *The Jewish War* sought peace and unity (although Josephus implied a self-serving motive), but the Pharisees of *Jewish Antiquities* were associated with rebels or revolutionaries (cf. Mason 1991, 259). Since the same creative hand was the source of these two distinct portraits of the Pharisees, one may conclude that these distinctive portrayals of the Pharisees were developed to contribute to the potential rhetorical and social effects of the respective texts. Thus, one's reading of the texts must consider the function of the respective portrait as part of the particular narrative, which was creatively composed for the sake of what may occur within the audience that encounters it.

2. The Christian book of Acts

In the Christian New Testament, the book of Acts contains a number of fascinating character portrayals that reflect the ancient concerns for what may occur beyond the hearing or reading of a religious narrative. Elsewhere, I have argued that the Lukan narrative juxtaposes portrayals of the Jewish believers and the Jewish religious leaders in ways that potentially coax the audience to reevaluate their understandings about what it means to be the people of God (Thompson 1998, 327–44). Given my conclusions, one must reassess the charges of anti-Semitism

that are often raised against the Lukan writings due to the variety of Jewish images and the complexities of these Jewish characters. For the purposes of this study, a similar contrast between another pair of character portrayals—the Jewish-Christian Paul and the Jewish people—provides another example of the potential functions of characterization that directs one's readings beyond the Acts narrative itself.

As the main character in the latter half of Acts, the character Paul stands out as a model or example with whom the audience may identify. The Lukan description of Paul is presented in "glowing terms," and the narrative portrays him both as credible and as exemplary to the audience. In examining this portrayal of Paul, then, two general areas stand out prominently for consideration.

First, the characterization of Paul presents him as a loyal, devout Jew. Both in the narrative action and in Paul's speeches, his fidelity to Judaism is obvious. Paul's loyalty to Judaism is most prominent in the Lukan descriptions of Paul's typical custom: Paul went first to the Jewish synagogue when he arrived in a city and proclaimed his message there. The account of the first of the so-called "missionary journeys" begins with a brief description of Paul's proclamation of "the word of God in the synagogues of the Jews" in Salamis (Acts 13:5). The described ministry efforts in Pisidian Antioch reinforce and expand upon this custom: Paul and Barnabas went to the synagogue on the Sabbath and, after the invitation to speak, Paul proclaimed the gospel in direct continuity with Judaism (13:16–41). After the sermon, Paul and Barnabas were requested to return the next Sabbath, with many of the Jews and worshipping proselytes following them (13:42–43). Thus, the portrait of Paul in this first major pericope is one of loyalty to Judaism and of ministry within a Jewish context. In subsequent scenes, the narrative seems to deploy a pattern in which the synagogue served as the first location in a particular city to which Paul directed his efforts, thereby emphasizing his faithfulness to Judaism as well as his priority of mission to the Jews (cf. 14:1; 17:1–2, 10, 17; 18:4; 19:8; see Tannehill 1990, 175).

The Lukan Paul was also a faithful adherent to the Jewish law. In Acts 16:1–5, Paul not only circumcised Timothy himself "because of the Jews who were in those places" (16:3) but also served as a messen-

ger of the regulations upon which the Jerusalem council had agreed (16:4; cf. 15:19–21, 28–29). The implicit endorsement of these regulations by Paul and his ministry assistants adds to this Lukan portrait of the law-observant and Jewish-loyal Paul (Slingerland 1986, 308). Whether Ernst Haenchen was correct in identifying this passage as a tradition that Luke adopted because it "seemed to speak in favour of his pet theory that the Pharisee Paul strictly observed the law" (Haenchen 1971, 482) is beside the point. The passage provides the basis for denying the charge made later (21:21; cf. 25:8) that Paul was not a law-observant Jew and that he taught against the law (Tyson 1992, 150).[21] That Paul was accused in Philippi of being a Jew (16:20) provides "outside" (i.e., non-Jewish and or/non-Christian) testimony to collaborate the Lukan portrait of Paul's fidelity to Judaism (see Rosenblatt 1995, 66).

The so-called "defense speeches" and other statements ascribed to Paul in Acts 21–28 substantiate the Lukan characterization of Paul as a loyal, law-observant Jew. Since the narrator presents Paul as a reliable character whom the audience may trust, Paul's words may function to accentuate what the narrator wishes to say. Although Paul was nearly murdered by the mob in Jerusalem that dragged him out of the temple because of accusations that he had broken the law (21:27–31), his speech before his Jewish accusers depicts him as a good, faithful Jew and ζηλωτὴς ὑπάρχων τοῦ θεοῦ (22:3). Before the Jewish council, he called himself a Pharisee (23:6). Even before the Roman Jewish leaders, Paul claimed innocence of any charges in relation to their Jewish customs (28:17). Thus, both what the narrator places on Paul's lips and what he mentions in the accounts depict what the audience is urged to see: Paul was a loyal, law-observant Jew who had not done *anything* against Judaism. The Acts narrative presents him as a model Jew of whom any Jew could be proud (see Tyson 1992, 170).

Second, Luke also depicts Paul as a good citizen. On three occasions, Paul was suspected of or charged with crimes against the Roman government (16:20–21; 21:38; 24:5; cf. 24:12; 25:8). Paul was, however, acquitted each time by one or more governmental officials. What is significant to note is that, in the case of the charges brought against Paul in Acts 21–28, Paul was declared innocent by Roman officials a

total of three times (23:29; 25:25; 26:31). Thus, the Roman government judicially opined that Paul was innocent of any charges that would warrant death (such as treason or malefaction against the Romans). Although the Roman officials themselves are not presented in the most favourable light,[22] they function narratively as friends of Paul who protected him from his accusers, enemies, and opponents. These political figures, then, serve as character witnesses by testifying to Paul's innocence of the charges against him (cf. Gaston 1986, 135). The Lukan narrative presents Paul as a good citizen, as one who was innocent of disruptive activity in the eyes of the political authorities.

In summary, the Lukan portrait of Paul is a most positive one. The Lukan narrative presents Paul as a good, exemplary Jew, the portrait of whom is supported by his behaviour, his own testimony, and the testimony of others. In addition to Paul being presented as a model Jew, he was also a model citizen, with his innocence having been definitely declared by the Roman political officials. In other words, the Lukan narrator directs the audience's attention to a couple areas of importance by which to evaluate this character: religion and politics. But why did the Lukan narrator describe Paul in these and not other ways? Why would these two categories be used in presenting the character of Paul instead of other categories?

The answers to the above questions may come more readily when one briefly examines the characterization of the Jewish people in Acts 13–28. In the latter half of the narrative, the Jewish people function as the enemies or opponents of Paul. This generalization should not be taken to mean that *all* descriptions of the Jewish people are negative. For instance, Luke describes both negative and positive responses to the Christian message during Paul's journeys (13:1–21:14). Both responses are illustrated in the Lukan account of Paul's sermon in the synagogue of Pisidian Antioch (see Tannehill 1990, 175; Rosenblatt 1995, 48; Tyson 1992, 132). The sermon was followed by some degree of success or acceptance (13:43). One finds that this success occurred among both the Jews and Gentile converts to Judaism. However, what appears to be great success, as indicated by the description that "almost the whole city" gathered to hear Paul preach again (13:44), quickly turned to a sense of Jewish rejection and opposition

(13:45; Tyson 1992, 132). Jewish rejection apparently had nothing to do with the content of Paul's sermon but the apparent success that he enjoyed that triggered their jealousy (13:45). The result of the Jewish rejection was Paul's declaration that he would turn to the Gentiles, and he was eventually driven out of the region by the Jewish-led opposition. This portrait of the Jewish people in Pisidian Antioch, then, includes partial acceptance of the Christian message, followed by a general sense of rejection. What remains unclear to the reader is the status of the Jews who responded positively to Paul and his message. At best, the Jews of Pisidian Antioch have become divided over the preaching of the gospel (cf. Matera 1990, 86; Jervell 1996, 34–43; Tyson 1984, 582).[23] What is apparent is that the audience is left with a negative picture of the Jewish people, due to the rejection of the Christian message.

Throughout the narrative section dealing with Paul's journeys, "the Jews" (as Luke typically calls them) are described largely in negative ways as Paul's opponents. The intensity of that opposition toward Paul, beginning with Acts 17, seems to increase as Luke presents a picture of "increasing Jewish hostility and opposition to the gospel" (Sanders 1987, 77). Whereas Jack Sanders contends that Luke specifically intended to put the Jews in a bad light (Sanders 1987, 76), Robert Tannehill offers another explanation: that Luke sought to create a pathetic feeling for Israel, which had failed to fulfill the divine expectations created for the people and to which the beginning of the Gospel of Luke alludes (Tannehill 1985, 79, 81–82). Nonetheless, the narrator does report some degree of positive response. While every stop of the Pauline itinerary in Acts does not mention Jewish rejection and opposition, the narrative always mentions Jewish and/or Gentile acceptance of the Christian message. Interestingly, the negative response of the Jews in this section of Acts always arises out of the positive response to the Christian message on the part of both some Jews and some Gentiles. Thus, the developing Lukan portrait of the Jewish people in Acts 13–28 is one of schism or division within the Jewish community that has been created by the different responses to the Christian message (cf. Hare 1979, 37).

In the events surrounding Paul's last journey to Jerusalem and the resultant trials, the Lukan portrait of the Jewish people becomes more negative. One finds few positive aspects in the picture of the Jews in Acts 21–28. To be sure, the Jewish leaders in Rome initially responded to Paul in a cordial manner (28:17–22) and, once again, some Jews believed the Christian gospel and some did not (28:24–25). However, these chapters reflect much more negatively on the Jewish people: they accused Paul unjustly (21:27–29), they fabricated charges against him (24:13), and they called for his execution (22:22). Thus, the Lukan narrator depicts the Jewish people so negatively that they even conspired to "attack their own good brother" by deceit and even murder (23:12–14; 25:2–7; cf. Slingerland 1986, 317). Although positive references are not absent in these latter chapters, the negative aspects dominate the portrait of the Jewish people in contrast to the positive portrait of Paul.

One final image to be mentioned here is the picture of the Jewish people as citizens. In Greco-Roman culture, the peaceful well-being of the *polis* was a fundamental goal, since order in the *polis* was to reflect order in the cosmos. The disruption of political order was perceived as disruption of the cosmic order. Thus, the Lukan descriptions reflect negatively upon the Jewish people. The Jewish people are presented as those who stirred up the masses and who instigated violent activity (13:50; 14:2; 17:5; 17:13; 21:27). In Acts, gatherings of Jewish persons are frequently described as "mob scenes," which are characterized by violent behaviour and disorder (21:30–36; 22:22–23; 23:6–10). These same people, along with their leaders, are pictured as plotters of murder against innocent people (23:12–14; 25:2–7). Thus, the portrait of the Jewish people is one of a group of contentious, seditious people who were disruptive and disorderly.

When one examines these two characters as they interact within the Acts narrative, one begins to see the contrasts emerge, particularly in the areas of religious and political behaviour. On the one hand, the Lukan narrator presents the model Jew, Paul. Paul always began his mission among the Jews, always observed the law, always gave a positive impression about his ministry and life, and always lived as a good citizen. On the hand, the narrator generally presents the Jewish people

in such a contrasting way that the audience cannot help but notice the differences. In general terms, the Jewish people typically opposed Paul, typically behaved in ways that were inconsistent with the law, typically created tension and division, and typically behaved in disorderly and disruptive ways. The Jewish people, then, function within the narrative as enemies of Paul. Since Paul is described in such a way that the audience is encouraged to relate to him, the audience would potentially view the Jewish people in negative ways. Thus, this portrait of the Jewish people assists the audience to make judgments and decisions regarding the Christian gospel in ways that are modeled by Paul rather than the Jewish people (see Dionysius, *On the Style of Demosthenes* 21). The Lukan characterization, therefore, points beyond the text itself by urging the audience to respond in ways consistent with the narrative.

Concluding remarks

Often in historical studies, the scholar's attempts to interpret an ancient text focus on the discovery of the relationship between, on the one hand, the text itself and, on the other hand, historical events and persons. Thus, the interpretation of a given text seems to be dependent on the interpreter's abilities to discern the necessary connections between the descriptions or arguments of that text and historical contingencies. However, if the critical issues of literary theory and historiography in the Greco-Roman world are taken seriously in the reading and interpretation of ancient religious texts, then such historical concerns *alone* are not adequate for these tasks. It may be that an ancient religious text such as the Christian book of Acts, which shares characteristics that one finds in the Greco-Roman historiographical traditions, must be interpreted in light of those critical literary issues. Central to the interpretive task, then, is not merely the *historical* aspects of the narrative's depicted events but also the *creative* aspects of that text, such as the narrative's characterization or depiction of key characters, that coax the audience or reader toward potential judgments, experiences, and responses. Of course, the problem with one's recognition of these matters is that one can never be sure how the earliest audiences

may have actually responded. This forces the interpreter to move beyond the "certainties" and "tangibilities" of the given text to more uncertain areas of probabilities and possibilities. Nonetheless, if one is to read and interpret the ancient religious text in ways that account for the creative and imaginative textual elements, then one must also read beyond the words of the text itself, seeking to discover what that text may do in and among those who encounter it.

Notes

[1] There were five different types of historical writing in the Greco-Roman era: genealogy (the recording of heroic tradition that attempts to bring a sense of unity to the often conflicting data of legends, myths and aetiology), ethnography (the description of foreign lands and peoples), history or historiography (the description of the deeds, or πρᾶξεις, of humanity), horography (the year-to-year record of the *polis* or state from its beginnings), and chronology (the systematic arrangement of world events within one work). See the first chapter of Fornara, 1983, for a useful delineation of the features of each historical writing.

[2] Although modern literary theory focuses on the reader, ancient thought focused on the hearing audience. Thus, the issues regarding the potential effect of the historical text on an audience must be taken into account as one now addresses the *contemporary* reading and interpretation of the text.

[3] Two ancient historians who apparently employed descriptions of sensational events were Duris of Samos and Phylarchus. Duris was known as a writer of emotional and sensational scenes (see fragments 76T12; 76F5, 7, 14, 18, 52 in Jacoby 1923, 58) who also wrote critically of two historians, suggesting that Ephorus and Theopompus made no attempt in their work at dramatic *mimesis* with its associated pleasure and that they concerned themselves only with formal aspects of writing (fragment 76F1). Phylarchus was condemned by Polybius (*The Histories* 2.56.1-16) for his "eagerness to arouse the pity and attention of his readers ... always trying to bring horrors vividly before our eyes" (2.56.7-8; LCL). Cf. Malitz 1990, 337-38, who suggests that the tendency was to write history in order to stir the emotions, and that few historians were oriented strictly to factual substance; von Fritz 1967, 1.1:469-70; D'Huys 1990, 267-70; Fornara 1983, 124-29; and Walbank 1985, 224-26.

[4] See D'Huys 1990, 271-73, who points to Polybius's description of a battlefield (*The Histories* 15.14.1-9) as an example of literary adornment that would heighten the audience's emotions. See also de Foucault 1972, 308-10, who charges that Polybius used the same methods of dramatic description that he criticized others for using, citing 9.6.3 and 15.26-33 as two examples of stir-

ring the emotions of the audience; and Walbank 1972, 39-40. Dionysius criticized historians after Herodotus for their lack of πάθος, at least at times (see *On Thucydides* 15, 23). However, Herodotus was praised for the pleasure (ἡδονή) of his prose text (*On Thucydides* 23) and especially the παθητικόν of his work (*On Thucydides* 24). On the entertaining nature of Herodotus's work, see Waters 1985, 6-7, 40, 66; Lateiner 1989, 24-25, 212; Shimron 1989, 82; and von Fritz 1967, 1.1:469.

[5] Recent studies have indicated a lack of chronological precision in Josephus's arrangement of events, but have also uncovered a thematic organization of events. See, e.g., Cohen 1979, 3-23, 66-67; and Rajak 1983, 144-73.

[6] This is not to say, however, that there was *no* concern for literary technique or dramatic presentation. Cf. Brunt 1993, 181-82, who suggests that historians *did* seek to outshine their predecessors in their dramatic and often sensational descriptions, but that did not eradicate the beneficial aim of history.

[7] See Dionysius, *On Thucydides* 13-18, who reprimanded Thucydides for his lack of care in the development (ἐξεργασία) of certain episodes. See also Lucian, *How to Write History* 32, 56. Cf. Dionysius, *On the Style of Demosthenes* 18; and Longinus, *On the Sublime* 23.4, who disagree concerning *how* the historian should emphasize certain matters.

[8] See Demetrius, *On Style* 4.222, who credits Theophrastus with the important consideration that "not all points should be punctiliously and tediously elaborated, but some should be left to the comprehension and inference of the hearer, who when he perceives what you have left unsaid becomes not only your hearer but your witness, and a very friendly witness too. For he thinks himself intelligent because you have afforded him the means of showing his intelligence. It seems like a slur on your hearer to tell him everything as though he were a simpleton" (LCL).

[9] Polybius stressed the importance of recording precisely the words of others (*The Histories* 2.56.10; 12.25b.1; cf. 3.20.1-5). However, 29.12.9-12 implied that the historian may use his own words, even in speeches. See Walbank 1972, 43-44. Cf. Hunter, 1973, and Immerwahr, 1966, who reflect the modern scholarly opinion that speeches in Greco-Roman historiography were literary vehicles of the author's comments or concerns.

[10] Lucian's essay, *How to Write History*, advocated the principles of *both* the historians (like Thucydides and Polybius) *and* the rhetoricians, with no apparent tension between the two.

[11] For the sake of clarity, ἦθος or "character" will specifically depict the Greek term. The word "character" (without additional punctuation) refers to an individual or group presented in a literary work.

[12] Aristotle stated that "character and thought are the natural causes of any action" (*Poetics* 6.7; LCL). In his *Nicomachean Ethics*, Aristotle considered the relation between human activity and ἕξις, in that ἕξις or "disposition" was developed by one's actions (2.2.1). At the same time, one's ἕξις also determined the motives for one's actions (3.5.17). The individual's προαίρεσις or "choice" between good and evil provided the basis for the moral development of ἕξις (3.2.11). The two concepts of ἕξις and ἦθος were interrelated in that both were acquired and realized in action. However, ἕξις was the disposition or "habit" to act in a certain way, whereas ἦθος was the ethical quality of that action. Thus, the actions or dialogue of the literary text best reveal a person's ἦθος if they indicate some kind of προαίρεσις (*Poetics* 15.2). If προαίρεσις is not indicated, two scenarios are possible. One scenario suggests that the person or group may reflect a developed disposition or ἕξις in a given action but not reflect precisely the ἦθος or ethical quality of that action (cf. *Nicomachean Ethics* 3.2.1). A second scenario suggests that the action is not of a moral nature, not demanding a choice between "good" and "evil." Cf. Halliwell 1986, 150-51 and Pearson 1968, 76-83.

[13] E.g., on the character Pericles, see *History of the Peloponnesian War* 1.127.3; 1.139.4; and 2.65.5-13; on Cleon, see 3.36.6 and 4.21.3. See the chapter "Explicit Judgments on Ability and Character" in Westlake (1968, 5-19), where other examples of explicit judgment are briefly examined.

[14] Two examples of such means of description are found in the respective historiographical works of Herodotus and Thucydides. In Herodotus's *Histories*, the description of Croesus provides a paradigm for the depicted careers of the Persian rulers that followed and for Herodotus's interpretation of history (Thompson 1996, 113-24; cf. Beye 1987, 208-13; von Fritz 1967, 1.1:466). In Thucydides' *History of the Peloponnesian War*, the characters of Pericles and Cleon are depicted in contrasting ways that suggest problems in Athenian political policy (Thompson 1996, 124-32; de Romilly 1963, 110-55; Westlake 1968, 23-42; cf. Beye 1987, 231; see Brunt 1993, 142-43).

[15] This brief inquiry of the characterization of the Pharisees in Josephus's works relies extensively on the work of Steve Mason, 1991, whose methodological approach to Josephus's depiction of the Pharisees provides a critical analysis of the various appearances of Pharisees in the works. For an overview of scholarly treatments of the Pharisees in Josephus's writings, see his chapter two (18-39).

[16] The charges against Pheroras's wife were pressed by Herod the Great, whom Josephus depicts favourably in *The Jewish War* as a loyal friend (1.391), pious (1.400), and generous (1.426-28). Thus, the audience could judge this insinuation against the Pharisees as credible, since Josephus had depicted the accuser as a credible character. This implicit characterization, therefore, comes from another character, but one who indirectly expresses Josephus's views con-

cerning the Pharisees. See Cohen 1979, 111; cf. Mason 1995, 161-62; and Thackeray 1929, 65.

[17] See Mason 1991, 170-73, who suggests that the concepts of ὁμόνοια and στάσις (cf. 2.216) stand at the centre of the narrative of *The Jewish War*, with ὁμόνοια as an ideal that characterized genuine Jews. Conversely, Josephus negatively depicts the rebels as having abandoned the concern for ὁμόνοια. See Rajak 1983, 81-91.

[18] The Pharisees exit the narrative as those seeking the problems' resolution, not στάσις or war. Neither the Pharisees nor any other Jewish αἵρεσις are mentioned again in this work, which implies that Jewish thought was not the reason for στάσις. Cf. Villalba i Varneda 1986, 13-19, 28-30, who points particularly to Book 4 and its characterization of individuals and communities through actions that lead to Jerusalem's destruction.

[19] In *Jewish Antiquities*, the characterization of individuals from Jewish history reflects the moral or beneficial purpose of the work for the Greeks. Attridge 1976, 115-37 stresses Josephus's focus on the emotions and passions that sway individuals and groups, indicating a mixture of desired effect on the audience: the moral judgment of characters, and a sympathetic identification with them. Cf. Bilde 1988, 81; and Villalba i Varneda 1986, 79-88.

[20] I.e., the Pharisees in *Jewish Antiquities* are presented positively for their contributions as one school of Jewish thought or philosophy. The negative picture focuses on the Pharisees as a Jewish *political power*. Thus, Josephus lauds Jewish thought but condemns the Pharisaic abuse of power and divisive behaviour.

[21] The accusations against Paul in Acts 18, 19, and 21 all suggest that Paul was *not* a faithful Jew. However, one must not confuse that perspective with the narrator's perspective, which seems to urge the audience to see Paul in more faithful ways. See my forthcoming essay on Acts 21 (Thompson forthcoming).

[22] For instance, Felix looks for a bribe from Paul (Acts 24:26), and Festus seems to provide King Agrippa with a different account of Paul's hearing before him than what is recorded (cf. 25:6-12, 13-22).

[23] I would argue, however, that the Lukan narrative focuses more precisely on the division that occurred because of the hostile reaction of the Jewish people, not because of the preaching of the gospel *per se*.

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