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Multi-Ethnic Identity in the New Testament: Genealogies, Myths, and the Politics of Ancestry

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Abstract

This book analyzes the construction and negotiation of ethnicity in antiquity, with a particular focus on the New Testament. This work examines multi-ethnic identity by surveying Greco-Roman texts and the New Testament, as well as the use of literary constructs like genealogies, lists, and catalogues. I argue that multi-ethnic identity by its very nature is portrayed in a wide-ranging way, depending on a variety of factors. Furthermore, these literary constructs are tools used to shape and reimagine identity in response to evolving social, political, and theological circumstances.

The study begins by tracing the conceptual foundations of race and ethnicity in antiquity, situating these categories within the broader history of “scientific racism” and modern scholarship. It highlights how myths of descent, which are shared narratives linking groups to common ancestors, deities, or heroes, were central to constructing ethnic boundaries in both Greco-Roman and Jewish traditions. Far from static or uniform, these myths were highly adaptable, serving as powerful mechanisms for inclusion, exclusion, and the legitimation of social and political hierarchies.

The second section examines how the New Testament engages with and reimagines myths of descent to challenge exclusivist frameworks of ethnic identity. The study explores the narratives of figures such as Herod the Great and the Samaritans, whose identities embody the tensions between inclusion and exclusion in ancient society. These individuals and people groups are described in fluid and changing ways depending on the circumstances and literature.

The middle section of this book examines intermarriage in Jewish literature, which further illustrates how cultural integration challenged traditional ethnic boundaries. These texts reveal a nuanced negotiation of identity, allowing for the possibility of reimagined identities that bridged ethnic divides. What we see in many of these cases is that redescriptions of ethnic identity closely overlap with features of culture such as religious identity and customs.

The following section analyses the genealogies of Jesus in Matthew and Luke, which exemplify the fluid ethnic dynamics. Matthew's genealogy emphasizes Jesus' Jewish lineage while including Gentile women, signaling a fundamentally multi-ethnic construction. In contrast, Luke's genealogy traces Jesus' lineage to Adam, constructing a universal myth of descent that encompasses all humanity. Together, these genealogies transform traditional descent-based boundary markers into frameworks for multi-ethnic and universal kinship.

The final section focuses on lists in the New Testament, particularly in Acts. These lists, situated at key junctions in the narrative, highlight the growing ethnic diversity of early Christian communities. For instance, the inclusion of "proselytes" and ethnically mixed figures like Timothy demonstrates how early Christian identity expanded beyond ethnic boundaries, such as Jew, Greek, and Gentile.

Ultimately, this book argues that multi-ethnic identity was a pervasive reality in antiquity with the boundaries of identity shifting and changing depending on the author and literature. The New Testament draws upon these ancient assumptions about ethnic identity, with one of the most interpretively significant literary devices being lists and genealogies.

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Abbreviations

For a list of abbreviations, see the SBL Handbook of Style, 2nd edition.

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Author Declaration

“I declare that this thesis is my own original work and has been completed in accordance with the University of Glasgow’s guidelines for academic integrity and research ethics. It has not been submitted for any other degree or qualification at this or any other institution. All sources of information, ideas, and data from other authors have been properly acknowledged and cited.”

Printed Name: Rubin McClain

Signature:

Introduction: Race, Ethnicity, and Framing the Debate

a. Motivations for Writing

Modern identities are fluid, shaped, and adapted depending on context and circumstances over time. In today's globalized world, cultures, languages, and societies interact and blend on an unprecedented scale. While many embrace the diversity that comes with globalization, the large-scale movement of peoples also raises pressing questions about national security, cultural assimilation, and migration. In the midst of these dynamics, there is an undeniable rise in multi-racial and multi-ethnic identities. For instance, in the United States, the number of individuals identifying as multi-racial (two or more races) reached 33.8 million in 2021, accounting for 10.2% of the population—a staggering 276% increase from 2010.¹ Similarly, in 2021, 1,717,977 people in England and Wales identified as mixed-race, comprising 2.9% of the population.² 2022 in Scotland, those that identify as mixed reached 60,899, or 1.12%.³

This growing reality has prompted academic and historical endeavors, such as Critical Mixed-Race Studies and the Mixed Museum, to investigate and preserve the history of racial mixing.⁴ These efforts among others, expand our understanding of multi-racial identities, revealing them as both historical and contemporary phenomena. By exploring these realities, past and present, we can uncover a deeper awareness of how mixed identities are not an isolated phenomenon but a universal reality.

¹ “Improved Race and Ethnicity Measures Reveal U.S. Population Is Much More Multiracial,” Nicholas Jones, Rachel Marks, Roberto Ramirez, Merarys Rios-Vargas. United States Census Bureau. <https://www.census.gov/library/stories/2021/08/2020-united-states-population-more-racially-ethnically-diverse-than-2010.html>.

² “Population of England and Wales,” Office for National Statistics. <https://www.ethnicity-facts-figures.service.gov.uk/uk-population-by-ethnicity/national-and-regional-populations/population-of-england-and-wales/latest/>.

³ “Ethnic Minorities: population Composition,” The Scottish Public Health Observatory. <https://www.scotpho.org.uk/population-groups/ethnic-minorities/data/population-composition/#:~:text=The%202022%20Census%20provides%20a,%25%20are%20White%20Gypsy%2FTravellers.>

⁴ “Critical Mixed-Race Studies,” <https://criticalmixedracestudies.com>; “Mixed Museum,” <https://mixedmuseum.org.uk>.

Considering this reality, I seek to contribute to the much-needed discourse on the historical and literary dimensions of ancient ethnicity. By better conceptualizing how the ancient world understood and portrayed multi-ethnic identities, we can gain deeper insights into the complexities of our own world. In ancient literature, we find that ethnic identity is complex and multi-faceted, depicted in a variety of ways depending on the authors' intention, historical context, and genre. The fluidity we observe in ancient literature is precisely the dynamics that occur in our contemporary age. As a result, we can move beyond discussions about race and ethnicity that are entrenched in static boundaries and better appreciate how malleable identity is in our world and context.

My motivation to contribute to this field is not purely academic—it is also personal. Growing up in St. Louis, Missouri, as a multi-racial individual with a Korean mother and a white American father of Scottish ancestry, I often struggled to find role models or representation in society that resonated with my own experience. My motivation for writing this book is also rooted in a sense of obligation and privilege: the obligation to explore and represent voices and identities often overlooked in historical narratives, and the privilege to shed light on individuals and peoples in antiquity, giving space for those who struggle to see themselves reflected in the stories of the past. By examining how ancient texts negotiate the complexities of ethnicity and identity, I hope to provide a framework that enriches both scholarship and contemporary conversations about race and belonging.

b. Scope of Monograph

This monograph examines the fluidity and evolving nature of multi-ethnic identity in the New Testament and Greco-Roman literature, emphasizing the intersection between cultural adaptation and literary constructs as mechanisms for defining and preserving these identities. How one views “the Other” can be influenced by a variety of issues, histories, and contexts. Scholars like Erich S. Gruen, in *Rethinking the Other in Antiquity*, argue that the ancient world was far more interconnected than often assumed, making simplistic classifications of “the Other” problematic.⁵

⁵ Gruen, *Rethinking the Other in Antiquity*. Gruen frames his contribution on the prior work of Momigliano, *Alien Wisdom*.

This approach builds upon the work of scholars such as Edward Said, whose *Orientalism* deconstructs the Western image of Eastern peoples, tracing these representations through the history of imperialism and colonialism.⁶

Others argue that the construction of “the Other” is shaped by conflict or prejudicial attitudes toward different people groups. Jonathan Hall, in his examination of ancient Hellenic identity, suggests that Greek communal solidarity was constructed over time.⁷ He highlights the Olympic Games as a key institution that reinforced racial and ethnic distinctions, alongside the Persian invasion.⁸ In essence, Hellenic identity evolved from a fragmented city-state organization to a more unified Greek identity through these institutions and conflicts. Similarly, Benjamin Isaac, in *The Invention of Racism in Classical Antiquity*, contributes to this broader framework by examining the negative perceptions between different groups.⁹ This idea that group identity is often defined in part by conflict and the construction of “the Other” plays a significant role in much of the scholarship. One of the major aspects of this book is to evaluate how multi-ethnic identity is formed vis-à-vis “the Other”. For example, the Samaritans evince multi-ethnic identity and ethnic fluidity in the ways they are depicted by Josephus, ebbing and flowing from Samaritan and Jew.

Within the scope of this work, I address other divides, such as the separation between biblical studies and classics. For instance, Isaac’s work excludes any systematic discussion of Christian or Jewish texts, stating that “Christian texts are not considered in any systematic manner, nor are Jewish sources, whatever the language, because the Jews never became part of mainstream Greek and Roman society.”¹⁰ The structure of my work will demonstrate that this divide is artificial and hinders the examination of multi-ethnic identity in antiquity.

⁶ Said, *Orientalism*.

⁷ Hall, *Hellenicity*, 134–175.

⁸ Hall, *Hellenicity*, 175.

⁹ Isaac, *The Invention of Racism*.

¹⁰ Isaac, *The Invention of Racism*, 15. Cf. Johnson Hodge, Joseph and Liew eds. *Divided Worlds? Challenges in Classics and New Testament Studies*.

The scope of my monograph is to examine the literary portrayal of multi-ethnic identities across a range of ancient texts, with a primary focus on Greco-Roman, Jewish, and early Christian literature. While my central approach is literary, I will frame my discussion with brief historical summaries to contextualize the texts. This interdisciplinary approach acknowledges the difficulty of fully separating the historical from the literary, as each dimension clarifies and informs the other. Furthermore, this study emphasizes specific literary constructions—such as lists, genealogies, and catalogues—as critical tools for understanding how ancient writers represented and negotiated multi-ethnic identities. These literary frameworks not only reflect broader societal and cultural dynamics but also serve as creative mechanisms for defining boundaries, forging connections, and reshaping identities within mythic and historical narratives. By analyzing these constructions, I aim to provide a holistic understanding of the ways ancient texts grappled with ethnicity and the politics of identity.

c. Methodology

I employ an interdisciplinary approach that combines literary analysis with historical, social, and cultural frameworks to examine the depiction of multi-ethnic identities in antiquity. This approach takes seriously the literary context of the texts while situating them within their broader historical and cultural milieus to better understand ancient concepts of ethnicity. By acknowledging the complexity of ancient ethnicity and the multiple factors that contribute to identity formation, this methodology explores the intersection of myth, literature, and history in shaping identities.

One of the central aspects of my analysis is the construction of ancient ethnicity. For this part of my work, I utilize Anthony Smith's criteria as a foundational framework for my inquiry into the ancient world.¹¹ These criteria are supplemented and critically engaged through my own research, alongside the insights of scholars such as Shaye Cohen and Jonathan Hall. On the one hand, I affirm the significance of the "myth of descent", one of Smith's key categories, as a primary criterion for classifying people groups, while also recognizing the importance of religious identity, customs, and language. On the other hand, the myth of descent intersects with literary structures such as genealogies, lists, and catalogues, which form the second part of my analysis. As I work

¹¹ Smith, *The Ethnic Origins of Nations*, 22–31.

through my book, I emphasize the “myth of descent” as a means of linking my analysis to the literary structures in which this criterion is embedded, not negating these other realities.

My study of multi-ethnic identities necessarily involves viewing identity through the lens of fluidity. This perspective is largely informed by the work of Fredrik Barth, who argues that group identity is maintained through interactions with other groups.¹² In this framework, social boundaries are enforced in various ways that do not always align with cultural identities and shift as interactions between groups change. Rogers Brubaker also significantly contributes to my understanding of ethnic identity by pushing against the reification of ethnicity (viewing groups as entities) and instead proposes that it should be framed as relational and dynamic.¹³

The fluidity between people groups has been further explored by Eric Barreto and Stewart Penwell, both of whom analyze identity within this broader context. For example, Barreto examines the issue of Timothy’s circumcision in Acts 16, highlighting the negotiation of social and theological boundaries in relation to ethnic identity.¹⁴ Similar socializing principles are evident throughout literature, functioning as levers and prisms through which identity is constructed, whether through socio-economic status, religious affiliation, or myths of descent.

Regarding literary methodology, my analysis is grounded in the works of Athena Kirk and Robert Belknap, whose studies on literary lists inform and expand my approach.¹⁵ They conceptualize lists not merely as enumerations of items but as expressions of cultural values and resonances. This central premise serves as the overarching framework for my literary analysis of genealogies and lists in antiquity. In evaluating the structures and contexts of these literary forms, I incorporate key insights from these theorists, shaping my examination. What emerges from this analysis are fluid and adaptable identities, mirroring the shifting realities articulated in Smith’s criteria of ethnicity and the dynamic dimensions of identification explored by theorists such as Barreto.

¹² Barth, “Introduction,” in *Ethnic Groups and Boundaries*, 15.

¹³ Brubaker, *Ethnicity without Groups*, 11–13, 41–48, 64–87.

¹⁴ Barreto, *Ethnic Negotiations*; see also Penwell, *Jesus the Samaritan*.

¹⁵ Belknap, *The List*; Kirk, *Ancient Greek Lists*.

This study focuses on literary analysis, examining the portrayal of multi-ethnic identity across biographies, letters, mythographies, and historiographies from Jewish, early Christian, and Greco-Roman authors. Through close readings, I emphasize literary contexts, authorship, genre, and features like lists and genealogies, to explore how texts construct and negotiate ethnic identities. This literary focus is complemented by historical analysis, situating texts within their socio-political and cultural contexts to reveal how historical events and norms shaped representations of ethnicity. Together, these methods provide a comprehensive framework for understanding how multi-ethnic identities were constructed and communicated in antiquity

d. Contribution

My main argument consists of two interrelated components. First, multi-ethnic identity is a pervasive and fluid concept in ancient texts. Across diverse authors, literary genres, and historical contexts, multi-ethnic identity is shaped by specific assumptions and varies based on a range of factors. Central to this identity is the myth of descent, which plays a dominant—though not exclusive—role in shaping and negotiating boundaries. These boundaries are further influenced by cultural practices, language, and religious customs. Second, multi-ethnic identity intersects with literary lists, genealogies, and the myth of descent to produce negotiated identities. These literary constructs do more than catalog individuals or groups; they embed them within a mythic past, forming a genealogical fluidity, where identities are not fixed, but strategically deployed and reimagined. This idea posits that lists, genealogies, and catalogues are not static textual artifacts but dynamic tools for constructing and negotiating mixed-ethnic identity. By anchoring individuals or communities in a shared mythic lineage, these constructs create flexible frameworks that expand or redefine ethnic boundaries. This work draws on and integrates literary theory, ethnic studies, and biblical and classical studies, offering a multidisciplinary lens through which to examine how ancient texts articulated and constructed multi-ethnic identities.

Thus, my contribution consists of three key elements. First, it advances the study of multi-ethnic identities in the ancient world by expanding the scope of what is typically discussed and examined regarding ethnicity in the Greco-Roman context. Instead of focusing on ethnicity in antiquity, or focus on Egyptian or Greek identity, I expand the parameters of analysis to include mixed

identities. Second, my contribution highlights the dynamic nature of ethnic fluidity and underscores the role of literary constructs, such as lists and genealogies, in shaping and negotiating multi-ethnic identities. This analysis will emphasize the role of literary constructs in how we understand and evaluate ethnicity in the ancient world. Finally, my work challenges static interpretations of ethnic identity in classical and biblical studies, offering a more nuanced understanding of how identity was constructed and represented in antiquity. This dynamic is most apparent in the chapters evaluating the identities of New Testament figures and peoples (i.e., Timothy, Herod the Great, the Samaritans, and Jesus).

e. Summary of Chapters

In Chapter 1, “History and Theory: The Myth of Descent, Lists and Genealogies”, I define and outline my rationale for choosing the term *ethnicity* over *race*. One of the reasons for this decision is to take seriously the history of scientific racism and the obstacles of using race for ancient texts, with our modern assumptions. I examine a few definitions of ethnicity, while highlighting the role of the myth of descent in properly classifying ethnicity. I do this to combine ethnicity with the role of literary constructs in expressing and negotiating ethnic identities in antiquity. Finally, I outline the role of lists, catalogues, and genealogies to show that literary constructions reveal multi-ethnic identities, and that their construction holds significant interpretive value. Works by Robert Belknap, *The List: The Uses and Pleasures of Cataloguing*, and Athena Kirk, *Ancient Greek Lists: Catalogues and Inventory across Genres* offer a helpful framework through which I can analyze the literary dimensions of lists, providing a clear guide for my examination.¹⁶

In Chapter 2, “Multi-Ethnic Identities in Greco-Roman Contexts: Demi-Gods, Heroes, and Kings”, I focus on the multi-ethnic identities portrayed in ancient literature, such as demi-gods, Cyrus the Great, Cimon, Themistocles, and Pallas. My contribution lies in highlighting the diverse depictions of multi-ethnic identity, which are often framed by different assumptions and conditions, including status, wealth, and one’s role within the narrative. I engage with and expand upon the work of scholars such as Anise K. Strong, Stephen Lambert, Deborah Kamen, Ronald S. Hendel, Lee M.

¹⁶ Belknap, *The List*; Kirk, *Ancient Greek Lists*.

Frantantuono, and R. Alden Smith, considering the specific contexts in which they analyze multi-ethnic characters. Through this analysis, I argue that each depiction of multi-ethnic identity in ancient literature is shaped by different motivations and the cultural dynamics of the time.¹⁷

In Chapter 3, “Herod, Samaritans, and Jesus” I examine notable figures and people groups such as Herod the Great, Jesus, and the Samaritans. I explore how the myth of descent shapes contemporary understandings of Jewish/Judean identity, drawing on the work of scholars like Shaye Cohen, Steve Mason, David Horrell, Philip Esler, and Jason Staples.¹⁸ In my evaluation of the varying portrayals of Herod the Great, I demonstrate how multi-ethnic identity influences the different authorial depictions, depending on the author and purpose of the work. The Samaritans, in this analysis, emerge as a multi-ethnic people whose interactions with Jews in the New Testament challenge the simplistic, negative portrayals often attributed to them. I engage with the work of Stewart Penwell, Magnar Karveit, Gary N. Knoppers, Matthew Chalmers, and Mark A. Chancey to further develop this point, while also incorporating insights related to the geography of Galilee.¹⁹ The Samaritans emerge in this chapter as a multi-ethnic people with varying degrees of interaction with the broader Judean world. Their unique history and the texts depicting their interactions with Jews illustrate how the theoretical frameworks of Fredrik Barth and Stewart Penwell are well-suited to understanding Samaritan identity. These approaches highlight how the Samaritans are defined both by their interactions with other groups and by the “insider/outsider” paradigm, which offers valuable insights but is also, at times, subverted.

In Chapter 4, “Intermarriage in Jewish Literature: Customs, Religious Piety, and Compatibility”, I focus on mixed marriages in Jewish literature. I engage with authors such as Josephus, Philo, and texts like *Joseph and Aseneth*. My overarching goal is to demonstrate how the depiction of mixed marriages varies significantly depending on the literature, era, and context. Scholars I engage with in this chapter include Jill Hicks-Keeton, Kyu Seop Kim, Louis H. Feldman, Donna Runnalls,

¹⁷ Strong, “Mules in Herodotus,” 455–464; Lambert, “A Polis and its Priests,” 143–175; Kamen, *Status in Classical Athens*; Frantantuono and Smith, eds. *Virgil, Aeneid 8*; Hendel, “Of Demigods and the Deluge,” 13–26.

¹⁸ Cohen, *The Beginnings of Jewishness*; Mason, “Jews, Judaeans, Judaizing, Judaism,” 457–512; Horrell, *Ethnicity and Inclusion*; Esler, *Conflict and Identity in Romans*; Staples, *Israel*.

¹⁹ Penwell, *Jesus the Samaritan*; Karveit, *The Origin of the Samaritans*; Knoppers, *Jews and Samaritans*; Chancey, *The Myth*, 41–47.

Lloyd A. Thompson, and Frank M. Snowden.²⁰ Some of these scholars focus on *Joseph and Aseneth*, while others analyze the depiction of Africans in antiquity. My analysis expands upon these discussions by examining how ethnicity is portrayed and how the language surrounding it shifts within the text. For instance, scholars have debated various aspects of *Joseph and Aseneth*, such as religious conversion and cultural customs, but my focus is on how ethnicity is constructed in relation to the characters. In these cases, one's virtue, piety, and religious expression frames how characters are displayed. Some Egyptians are portrayed positively while some Hebrews are portrayed negatively, expressing how ethnicity is socialized depending on the literature, reflecting how ethnicity is fluid and adaptable. I also analyze Josephus to show how the historical and cultural context shapes the portrayal of Ethiopians. In discussing the character of Tharbis, Moses' Ethiopian wife, depicted as a beautiful and morally virtuous princess, I reveal how ancient texts frame the representation of Africans in antiquity, offering insight into the perceptions and assumptions of the time.

In Chapter 5, "Lists, Catalogues, Genealogies, and Kinship in the Ancient World", I draw on the work of scholars such as Robert Wilson, Marshall Johnson, Rodney Hood, and Robert Fowler.²¹ Specifically, I update the parameters for analyzing genealogies to include lists and catalogues, aiming to expand our horizons for what constitutes negotiated ethnic markers. I examine how prevalent lists, catalogues, genealogies, and rearranged kinship appear in a vast array of literature including mythography, biographies, Ancient Western Asian king lists, and Jewish literature. I ultimately conclude that kinship and lineage are reordered and arranged for specific purposes, such as offering justification for one's rule and establishing a sense of origins for a people group. The flexibility and fluidity of lineage is apparent in a variety of ways, reflecting the work of Kirk and Belknap in how they analyze the structure of lists.

²⁰ Hicks-Keeton, *Arguing with Aseneth*; Kim, "The Meaning of the Firstborn Son in Joseph and Aseneth," 404–416; Feldman, "Josephus' Portrait of Moses," 285–328; Feldman, "Josephus' Portrait of Moses: Part Two," 7–50; Feldman, "Josephus' Portrait of Moses: Part Three," 301–330; Runnalls, "Moses' Ethiopian Campaign," 135–56; Thompson, *Romans and Blacks*; Snowden Jr., *Blacks in Antiquity*; Snowden Jr. *Before Color Prejudice*.

²¹ Wilson, *Genealogy and History in the Biblical World*; Johnson, *The Purpose of the Biblical Genealogies*; Fowler, "Genealogical thinking, Hesiod's *Catalogue*, and the creation of the Hellenes," 1–19; Hood, "The Genealogies of Jesus," in *Early Christian Origins: Studies in Honor of Harold R. Willoughby*, 1–15.

In Chapter 6, “Genealogies in the Gospels” I investigate the multi-ethnic dimensions of genealogies in the Gospels, engaging with scholars attuned to their structural features, as well as feminist scholars focusing on the women in Matthew’s genealogy. Key contributors to this conversation include Raymond Brown, Peter-Ben Smit, Michael Kochenash, Irene Nowell, and Elaine Mary Wainwright.²² Overall, I seek to engage with and expand upon the work of Mark McEntire and Wongji Park, whose article “Ethnic Fission and Fusion in Biblical Genealogies” underscores how the structure and inclusion of women in genealogies intersect with notions of multi-ethnic identity.²³ I also examine how these genealogies resonate with the broader textual and theological message of the Gospels, helping to contextualize and interpret their meaning.

In Chapter 7, “Multi-Ethnic Identity in the New Testament: Acts, Lists, and Timothy”, I revisit the scholars of lists and catalogues (i.e., Kirk and Belknap) to examine how the lists in the book of Acts offer significant insights into multi-ethnicity. I engage with the writings of Sean Adams, Craig Keener, Charles Talbert, and Joseph Fitzmyer.²⁴ I seek to show how literary constructs such as lists, play an instrumental role in expanding the parameters of ethnic discourse in the book of Acts. The inclusion of diverse names and peoples which expand from the paradigmatic texts in Acts 1:8 follow a predictable and expanding logic, which includes gentiles, outward, to the “ends of the earth”. My analysis ends with Timothy in Acts and the matrilineal list in 2 Timothy, which is shaped by scholars such as Mitzi J. Smith, Shaye Cohen, Eric Barreto, Annette Huizenga, Ben Witherington, and Charles Joseph Bumgardner.²⁵ Ultimately, Timothy possesses a fluid and adaptable identity, which can be seen most vividly through the prism of circumcision. The

²² Brown, *The Birth of the Messiah*, 57–95; Smit, “Something about Mary?”, 191–207; Kochenash, “‘Adam, Son of God’ (Luke 3.38),” 307–325; Nowell, “Jesus’ Great-Grandmothers,” 1–15; Wainwright, *Towards a Feminist Critical Reading of the Gospel According to Matthew*; see also, Weren, “The Five Women in Matthew’s Genealogy,” 288–305; Doane, “Experiencing a Biblical Self-Consuming Artifact,” 115–146; Clements, *Mothers on the Margin*, 9–243; Dixon, *The Roman Family*, esp. 98–132; Friedeman, “Jesus’ Davidic Lineage and the Case for Jewish Adoption,” 249–267.

²³ McEntire and Park, “Ethnic Fission and Fusion in Biblical Genealogies,” 31–47.

²⁴ Adams, *The Genre of Acts*; Fitzmyer, *The Acts of the Apostles*; Talbert, *Reading Acts*; Keener, *Acts*, vol 1.

²⁵ Smith, “Paul, Timothy, and the respectability Politics of Race,” 1–13; Cohen, “Was Timothy Jewish (Acts 16:1–3)?”, 251–268; Barreto, *Ethnic Negotiations*; Huizenga, *Moral Education for Women in the Pastoral and Pythagorean Letters*; Bumgardner, “Family Relationships in the Letters to Timothy and Titus”; Witherington, *Letters and Homilies for Hellenized Christians*, 308–312.

matrilineal list of Timothy's mother and grandmother in 2 Timothy is best seen as a genealogical list conveying value to Timothy as a catalogue of faithfulness which is meant to motivate and inspire Timothy to persevere.

Chapter 1: History and Theory: The Myth of Descent, Lists, and Genealogies

1.1 Introduction

This chapter defines the terms *race* and *ethnicity*, explores how ethnicity was understood in antiquity, and examines how literary constructs such as lists, genealogies, and catalogues contribute to our understanding of ancient ethnicity. Establishing clear definitions for these terms is essential to framing the rest of this work, as they are often laden with assumptions and ideologies. Some authors use *race* and *ethnicity* interchangeably, while others treat them as distinct concepts, favoring one over the other. In this study, I will favor the term *ethnicity* over *race* and will provide an explanation of my reasoning.

Following this foundational discussion, the chapter delves into an overview of ethnic boundaries in both Greek and Jewish contexts, emphasizing the significance of the myth of descent in shaping and maintaining these boundaries. This myth serves as a critical link between the literary depiction of multi-ethnic identities and the constructs of lists, genealogies, and catalogues. Together, these literary forms not only reflect but actively shape understandings of ethnicity in the ancient world. The chapter is organized into four major sections: (1) defining key terms, (2) ethnicity in antiquity, (3) Greek and Jewish identity, and (4) the intersection of lists and multi-ethnic identity.

1.2 Defining Terms

1.2.1 The Phenotypical Paradox

In our growing globalized and connected world, the multi-racial experience is common, so much so that new disciplines have sprung up in the fecund soil of academia. One such discipline is Critical Mixed-Race Studies which has seen much development in recent history.¹ The growing

¹ For a broad outline of the discipline, see Daniel, et al., “Emerging Paradigms in Critical Mixed-Race Studies,” 6–65. This article is connected to an attempted new journal aimed at highlighting critical mixed-race studies. Unfortunately, there was only one issue published, in 2014; For a globalized synthesis of the growing complexity in today’s world that considers both the difference between histories and geographical areas as well as the structural

interest in this field reflects the growing multiracial experience in our world.² Disciplines like this show that context matters, in our world and in antiquity. In a modern context, this is apparent as I wrote much of this book from the U.K. while originally from the U.S., with a first-generation Korean mother and white father with Scottish ancestry. In this way, all mixed experiences are unique and different. So, the meaning of being mixed and the associations connected to it depends on the context in which it exists.

The spectrum of identity finds significance within these predetermined contextual boundaries, often determined by binary poles of existence. In the case of the United States, historically and currently, this is typically construed as the white-Black binary.³ While this binary existence is changing, allowing for other conceptions of identities to be examined and appreciated in their own particular contexts and uniqueness, such as indigenous, Asian, and multi-racial, the white-Black binary still pervades much of U.S. discourse.

This binary in the U.S. is organized based on phenotype, or in other words, observable characteristics such as skin tone and other distinguishable biological markers. Yet, one of the misconceptions we encounter is that phenotype (observable features) is determined by both genotype (genetics) and environment, thus, making the endeavor of classifying people objectivity, a dubious enterprise.⁴

similarities of questions of identity, see Törngren, et al., “Understanding multiethnic and multiracial experiences globally,” 763–81; for a collection of essays that attempts to grapple with the mixed race experience from a philosophical perspective, see Botts, ed., *Philosophy and the Mixed Race Experience*.

² Root, ed., *The Multiracial Experience*; for an introductory historical and contemporary anthology, see Jayne O. Ifekwunigwe, ed., *Mixed Race’ Studies*.

³ Typically, Black is capitalized but white is not since capitalizing ‘White’ is commonly associated with white supremacist literature and teachings. While I am personally agnostic on the matter I will follow this general custom. For a brief conversation between these two points of view, see Columbia Journalism Review, “Why we capitalize ‘Black’ (and not ‘white’),” <https://www.cjr.org/analysis/capital-b-black-styleguide.php>; Glenn Loury, “Why I Don’t Capitalize ‘Black’: Unless It’s in a Headline (feat. John McWorter),” <https://glennloury.substack.com/p/why-i-dont-capitalize-black>.

⁴ National Human Genome Research Institute, *Phenotype*, <https://www.genome.gov/genetics-glossary/Phenotype>.

The distorted logic of racial classification is further compounded by the fact that there is more genetic variation within so called racial groups than from one group to another.⁵ Thus, monoracial categories are in one sense, illogical; we are all biologically mixed. Yet, the categories themselves are real in the sense that they affect how we interpret and understand each other. This is not to say that shared ancestry or historical associations with specific land do not have any import in how we understand identity. These are extremely important features of how we understand ourselves. But it is to say that racial classifications, as we will see, are constructed realities often hiding assumptions underneath the veneer of objectivity. It is within these social realities that disciplines such as critical mixed-race studies attempt to reassert mixed race identity and experience at the forefront of analysis. This form of analysis can intersect with topics ranging from politics, literary theory, to the biblical text. Much of the discipline today exists as a refusal to evaluate phenomena within a particular binary.⁶

1.2.2 The History of Scientific Racism

My review of scholarship up to the present day cannot be fully understood without considering its entire trajectory, including the troubling legacy of scientific racism and eugenics. In short, scientific racism is a modern phenomenon that used the language and authority of science to justify racial hierarchies and to claim the inherent superiority or inferiority of different people groups. This ideology shaped not only broader social attitudes but also influenced biblical interpretation and academic scholarship. Recognizing this history and its lasting impact enables us to more thoughtfully frame the dialogue between the modern world and antiquity.

⁵ “AAA Statement on Race,” by the American Anthropological Association, <https://www.americananthro.org/ConnectWithAAA/Content.aspx?ItemNumber=2583>.

⁶ For a response to certain objections against mixed-raced identity, see Sundstrom, “Being and Being Mixed Race”: 285–307. He argues that the hypodescent “one drop rule” forces those in the minority culture into racial categories, as opposed to places where mixed race individuals can institutionally fit outside of a binary, like in South Africa and Brazil. For a work that explores the issues of the binary and advocates for the elimination of all racial categories, see Zack, *Race and Mixed Race*. In navigating the binary and experiencing a neither/nor identity (although this is not the language used), see Alcoff, *Visible Identities*, 264–284.

Although our inquiry will span the ancient world, we much also consider the ways in which our modern racial context has been established and maintained.⁷ Modern racial theory has long been fraught with pseudo-scientific assumptions about the origins of humanity and the biological differences within each race. The origins of such scholarship found itself based and coexisting in multiple cultural and economic trends including the Enlightenment (c.1685–1815), Industrial Revolution (c.1760–1840), Native American genocides, and Transatlantic Slave Trade (16th–19th century). Although the United States, on December 18th, 1865, adopted the 13th Amendment, institutionalized racism continued to persist. After the Reconstruction era (1865–1877), the United States had Jim Crow laws and segregation up until the Civil Rights Act of 1964.

The scholarship revolving around race during the early stages of modern history dealt with questions of how being mixed had biological or inherently negative consequences. Some of the scholarship dealt with the origins of humanity and whether “races” of humans were of the same or different species (monogenesis or polygenesis).⁸ The conclusion many came to believe was that humanity derived its existence through different origins (polygenesis), leading to one argument against “race mixing” that observed the fact that different animals did not typically mix in nature. Furthermore, those that did mix, such as horses and donkeys, created mules or hinnies which were sterile, indicating for some theorists that different racial groups could/should not intermix.⁹

The 18th century saw the emergence of what we now know as *racial essentialism*, in the traditions of Aristotelian essences and Lockean real essences.¹⁰ This concept holds to the belief that racial groups possess inherent or fixed characteristics that also determine their behavior and abilities. In other words, based on this racial essentialism, large-scale generalizations and negative characteristics can be attributed to groups based on their phenotype.

⁷ For an exploration of the theory of race through history, see Ivan Hannaford, *Race*; Carter, *Race*; McCoskey, *Race: Antiquity and Its Legacy*; Nongbri, *Before Religion*.

⁸ Also, Darwin and Murray, *The Descent of Man*.

⁹ Knox, *The Races of Men*. He argues for a polygenesis origin and argues what was commonplace at the time, that race was inextricably and biologically connected to other factors such as culture and character.

¹⁰ Zack, *Philosophy of Science and Race*, 11–12; see also, Penwell, *Jesus the Samaritan*, 23. Here, Penwell helpfully locates the origins of ethnic labeling to the 1850’s as well. See also, Montagu, *Man’s most Dangerous Myth: The Fallacy of Race*; Augstein, *Race*.

The belief that human biology held unique racial properties did not appear before the 18th century.¹¹ During this time, the major thinkers such as Hume and Kant could not differentiate between biology and culture to test the philosophical essentialist assumptions they held.¹² For example, Naomi Zack observes that “scientific description of racial differences and the theories behind racial taxonomies did not exist when Hume wrote.”¹³ Nonetheless, and however we appraise these philosophers within their specific historical and philosophical contexts, subsequent racial theories appear within this intellectual lineage. Racial essentialism is a way of superimposing stereotypes, drawing conclusions about groups of people, and justifying particular attitudes against peoples based on biological markers. In other words, it encodes these negative attitudes into phenotypical characteristics, creating a racial euphemism that cross references biology to stereotypes pertaining to intelligence and character.¹⁴

How we understand mixed-race categories and perceive them contextually is critically important. Like in the case of racial superiority readings of the Bible in the Antebellum South, it is part of a larger socio-political context that first produced legislation like the Three-Fifths Compromise (1787) and the One-Drop Rule (1910). These ideas were also borrowed globally, for example, forced sterilization of people of African descent in Germany was a direct result of German eugenicists being trained in the US, admiring the sterilization laws in California, and instituting one that was ironically proved less extreme than was enacted in the U.S.¹⁵ These laws and history have created a binary of race where one is valued, while the other is not. Mixed race identity,

¹¹ Zack, *Philosophy of Science and Race*, 9.

¹² Zack, *Philosophy of Science and Race*, 13. Many point to David Hume’s infamous footnote as evidence of his racism, see Hume, “Of National Characters,” in *Essays Moral, Political and Literary*, essay XXI. His infamous footnote is footnote 10; see also, Immerwahr, “Hume’s Revised Racism,” 481–486; offering a more sympathetic and nuanced perspective, see Zack, *Philosophy of Science and Race*, 15–18. Here, Zack observes that Hume does not differentiate between race and species, or at the very least, is vague about his usage, and suggest that he used a much more simplistic racial analysis than his peers. Thus, his simplistic and ambivalent analysis, although undoubtedly prejudiced, must be seen in its historical and philosophical context. For Kant, see Kant, “Of the Different Races of Human Beings (1775),” in *Anthropology, History, and Education*, 82–97. See also, Zack, *Philosophy of Science and Racism*, 18–24.

¹³ Zack, *Philosophy of Science and Racism*, 16–17.

¹⁴ For an example of a racist essentialist approach, see Hoffmann and Fisher, *Race Traits and Tendencies of the American Negro and Appreciation and Interest* (1896).

¹⁵ Lusane, *Hitler’s Black Victims*, 129–43. The Nazi sterilization law in 1933 was inspired by the earlier California sterilization law enacted in 1922. Those that were sterilized were of mixed-race as well.

regardless of the specific ethnicities, often finds itself forced into these binaries even though they are insufficient categories for mixed identities.

There has been a strong interconnection between the rise of racialized thinking and the development of biblical scholarship. It is therefore difficult to disentangle the role that Scripture played in shaping how interpreters perceived human differences.¹⁶ Racialized ideas permeated and infused many of the philosophical and social movements of the modern world, and these currents inevitably shaped approaches to biblical interpretation.¹⁷ For example, the era of biblical scholarship devoted to recovering the “historical Jesus” was deeply conditioned by the interpreters social and political context.¹⁸ This makes it absolutely crucial to identify and critically examine the underlying assumptions that inform any attempt to present research and scholarship.

This is why the *American Anthropological Association*’s statement on race cited earlier is so important, pointing out that much of genetic variance is often seen within purported racial groups, not between groups, precisely because of the ongoing false notion throughout modern racial scientific theory that physical traits or phenotypes exhibit certain characteristics. Furthermore, this history brings us to a more modern discussion about race and ethnicity, which is delineated by two major interpretive theories, which are “primordialism” and “social constructivism”.¹⁹ In short, the primordialist approach holds to the idea that much of what constitutes ethnic and racial identities are essential to the person, biologically contingent, and thus, can be determined by physical constructs. On the other hand, the social constructivist approach argues that these identities are shaped and established through social processes and interactions.

¹⁶ Burell, “Slavery, the Hebrew Bible and the Development of Racial Theories in the Nineteenth Century,” 742; Kidd, *The Forging of Races: Race and Scripture in the Protestant Atlantic World, 1600–200*, esp. 19–53.

¹⁷ Kelly, *Racializing Jesus: Race, Ideology and the Formation of Modern Biblical Scholarship*.

¹⁸ Moxnes, *Jesus and the Rise of Nationalism: A New Quest for the Nineteenth Century Historical Jesus*. For an article that considers the multiplicity of contexts and perspectives in the early quest for the historical Jesus and how it reverberates in subsequent scholarship. One theme that is apparent in these contexts is a nascent antisemitism, see Birch, “Revolutionary contexts for the quest: Jesus in the rhetorical and methods of Early Modern intellectual history,” 35–80.

¹⁹ Reuter, “ethnic conflict,” in *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, <https://www.britannica.com/topic/ethnic-conflict>.

What is properly known as primordialism, is attributed to thinkers such as Edward Shils, who argues for “primordial attachments” between people in kinship groups, and an immense significance given to a “tie of blood”.²⁰ Later, Clifford Geertz, argued similarly in his essay “The Integrative Revolution: Primordial sentiments and Civil Politics in the New States”, that these ties are more firmly entrenched rather than any social interaction, emphasizing their inherent strength in group identification.²¹ Others point out that ethnicity is in fact socially constructed, but still maintain that it is fixed, and that the conditions for reconstituting ethnic identity are extremely difficult and rare.²² A helpful argument for primordialism is articulated by Murat Bayar, who argues for reevaluating the claims of primordialism, helpfully insisting that there is a fundamental difference in explaining and justifying racism and nationalism, pushing back against the harsh treatment of primordialism.²³

1.2.3 Modern Scholarship

Other theories were also instrumental in laying the foundation for subsequent intellectual thought to emerge. For example, Max Weber early in the 20th century was key in arguing for the social construction of ethnicity. Particularly, while writing about racial mixing and the boundaries that demarcate ethnic groups, Weber argued that common ancestry is a subjective belief that ties together people in groups.²⁴ Often, this is because of other shared customs, physical types, or memories of migration or colonization.²⁵ Although he is instrumental for articulating the subjective component to ethnic groups, especially in regards to a myth of a common ancestry, one that will be featured quite prominently in the ancient world, nonetheless, he still held to the idea that “inherited physical type” translated to race.²⁶

²⁰ Shils, “Primordial, Personal, Sacred, and Civil Ties,” 130–145.

²¹ Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures*, 259–260.

²² Evera, “Primordialism lives!”, 20–22.

²³ Bayar, “Reconsidering primordialism: an alternative approach to the study of ethnicity,” 1639–1657.

²⁴ Weber, *Economy and Society*, 385–398, esp., 389.

²⁵ Weber, *Economy and Society*, 389.

²⁶ Weber, *Economy and Society*, 385–398. He makes this claim throughout his essay.

W.E.B Du Bois, in *Dusk of Dawn: An Essay Toward an Autobiography of a Race Concept*, further challenged the norms of viewing race as a biological construct.²⁷ Du Bois articulates the education he received, where race was tied to geography and then in other contexts, to culture and customs.²⁸ Essentially, he saw through his experiences the socially constructed aspects of race and how it was foisted on African Americans.²⁹ These experiences led him to posit the helpful framework of double consciousness, in which one in a minoritized racial groups, see themselves through the lens of the majority group.³⁰ The psychological tension that one experiences is based on the imported “realities” of the majority racial groups onto others based on notions of racial essentialism.

In more recent scholarship, some have argued that ethnic groups are based on ascriptive elements, in which common origins, and “traits believed to be innate,” actually encompass a mixture of other elements like phenotype, religion, or language.³¹ Ascribed status or ascription is used to denote elements of identity that are given to someone at birth, in other words, they have no control over them.³² Ascription in essence is how others perceive and identify different people groups. Some argue that ethnicity is best understood to be a dynamic process which constantly evolves.³³ Others argue that the constructivist approach maintains two major principles, one of which is that individuals have multiple ethnic identities, not one, and secondly, they can identify in a variety of ways depending on the context and variables.³⁴

Fredrik Barth in his introduction to *Ethnic Groups and Boundaries*, challenged the primordialist understanding that people groups corresponded to cultural units, in other words, culture does not necessarily correspond to ethnic people groups.³⁵ For example, the social boundaries of people

²⁷ Du Bois, *Dusk of Dawn*, 49–67.

²⁸ Du Bois, *Dusk of Dawn*, 49.

²⁹ Du Bois, *Dusk of Dawn*, 68– 87.

³⁰ Du Bois, *The Souls of Black Folk*, 8.

³¹ Horowitz, *Ethnic Groups in Conflict*, 51–54.

³² Ascribed status is attributed to Ralph Linton, who is also an early proponent of the constructivist school of thought, see Linton, *The Study of Man*, 217–252.

³³ Nagel, “Constructing Identity,” 152–176.

³⁴ Chandra “Introduction,” 711.

³⁵ Barth, “Introduction,” in *Ethnic Groups and Boundaries*, 9–38

groups are policed, maintained, and constructed in different ways. He focuses on how ethnic groups maintain self-identity through the interactions with other groups.³⁶ Others have posited that this process of identification can occur through the idea of “categorization” in which individuals and groups define themselves based on the interactions they have with each other.³⁷ Another important work in this regard is Rogers Brubaker, *Ethnicity without Groups*, where Brubaker posits the idea that identity is not uniform and can be established by interactions on numerous levels, more akin to networks or fields, rather than by monolithic people groups.³⁸

In any case, this development of scholarship on the idea of race and ethnicity allows us to perceive some of the pitfalls that have befallen our predecessors as well as help us to gain a greater appreciation of how scholarship has shifted. Instead of racial essentialism as our operating assumption, we have a plethora of modern studies and frameworks from which to organize and interpret ancient literature and the literary devices embedded within it. It is within this history where we can posit a framework that takes seriously the history and development of this scholarship.

1.2.4 Race or Ethnicity?

As the history of scientific racism left in its wake a legacy of pseudoscience, slavery, and genocide, scholars are understandably hesitant to ascribe a genetic or biological basis for race. Today, race is understood as a social construct, succinctly typified in a statement by the *American Anthropological Association*. However, many scholars use both terms and argue that, “Ethnicity refers to perceived common ancestry, the perception of a shared history of some sort, and shared symbols of peoplehood. Race refers to a group of human beings socially defined on the basis of physical characteristics. A human group might well meet both sets of criteria at once.”³⁹ This distinction emphasizes that while race is often defined through physical characteristics and socially maintained, ethnicity is rooted in shared ancestry, history, and cultural symbols. This definition

³⁶ Barth, “Introduction,” 15.

³⁷ Jenkins, “Categorization,” 7–25.

³⁸ Brubaker, *Ethnicity without Groups*.

³⁹ Cornell and Hartmann, *Ethnicity and Race*, 33.

also evinces some ambiguity, as it posits that human groups can overlap in both sets of criteria, showing that while we attempt to make clear distinctions between them, it is not always that simple.

When we discuss the ancient world, these distinct yet overlapping terms pose further problems for interpreters, as our two contexts must be bridged. Since both “race” and “ethnicity” are at some level incongruent with the ancient world, some, like Denise Kimber Buell, argue they are interchangeable.⁴⁰ For the modern reader, race makes sense, particularly in the U.S., where whiteness and blackness are binary constructions that shapes our racial and ethnic milieu. As our contemporary discourse is shaped by our distinct and racialized history, it might be apropos to utilize “race” as a central category in the ancient world. Furthermore, my assumption when using the term “race” is that it is a social construction, *just* like it was in antiquity. For example, ancients held different assumptions about the formation of identity in essentialist ways and tied cultural and religious stereotypes to peoples as well, making the connection between past and present coherent. Yet, the ancient world and their assumptions about ethnic and racial identity was not shaped by the same histories that formed ours. Therefore, I hesitant to use “race” as an ancient construct. Furthermore, the history of scientific racism still lingers in the backdrop of this modern conversation, making the utility of the term complicated.

However, I am aware that using “race” could be done so as to draw continuity between past and present. I am also skeptical of the implicit bias against the ancient world, that only modern concepts such as history writing, sexuality, capitalism, and more specifically race have no continuity with the past. The divide typically occurs when academics differentiate between modern and pre-modern peoples. Simultaneously, I am also cognizant of the fact that with any concept in our contemporary lexicon, we reflexively import back into the ancient world. Even concepts as mundane as marriage, adoption, and family are anachronistically imported back without critical reflection. In this sense, everything is anachronistic; we cannot avoid this reality. Also, it must be

⁴⁰ Cf. Buell, *Why This New Race*, 13–15. Buell is hesitant to separate them as complete entities or to eliminate “race” when analysing ancient texts. Rather, she opts for using them interchangeably to highlight their incongruence, since “race” and “ethnicity” are both modern categories that we might import onto these texts. However, there is some critique of the enterprise of Buell, in a review of *Why This New Race*, by Margaret M. Mitchell, 173–177; and in the review of *Why This New Race*, by Peter Oaks, 139–140.

noted that even the term “ethnicity” is anachronistic, as we will see in viewing the criteria from the ancient world, people construct their own identity in similar and dissimilar ways today.

While I recognize the value of proposing a racial framework that bridges past and present, I am also keenly aware of the challenges this entails, and the distinct histories that form our worlds. Given the scope of this study and the trajectory of my research, I have chosen to use *ethnicity* rather than *race* when discussing the ancient world. This decision arises, in part, from the difficulty of articulating a coherent racialized paradigm that applies meaningfully to both antiquity and the modern era. Moreover, *ethnicity* sufficiently encapsulates the shared ancestry, history, and cultural factors that are central to my analysis, making it the more appropriate term for this study.

Additionally, because my research focuses on specific aspects of ancient ethnicity, its fluidity, and its connection to literary constructs, I determined that arguing for the use of *race* in antiquity would divert from this central trajectory. My analysis examines the literary portrayal of multi-ethnic identities and how individuals who transcend or exist beyond polarized categories, are represented across various contexts. While these identities share certain similarities, they also possess distinct historical, cultural, and social dimensions. Given these complexities, *ethnicity* remains the most precise and effective term for this study.

1.3 Defining Ethnicity in Antiquity

1.3.1 Multi-Ethnic Identity in Antiquity

One of the fundamental assumptions of this work is that multi-ethnic identity has been a perennial experience throughout history as it is described in literature.⁴¹ For example, early Greek literature such as Homer’s *Odyssey* and Hesiod’s *Works and Days* at times attempts to understand the foreign “Other” as well as construct a prehistory of the origins of humanity.⁴² This comports with the Greco-Roman world, as it was immensely diverse, and in some cases, considerable amounts of

⁴¹ See, Kennedy, Roy, and Goldman, *Race and Ethnicity in the Classical World*.

⁴² Ovid’s *Metamorphoses* is another text outlining the stages of human existence but is much later (1BCE–1CE). For ancient Near Eastern creation myths, see Dalley, ed., *Myths from Mesopotamia*.

ethnic mixing occurred.⁴³ While we do not know the degree to which mixing occurred in each social and economic strata of society, much literature portrays the ethnic background of many monarchs and leaders as mixed, for example, one of the most well-known being Cyrus the Great.⁴⁴ In the case of Alexander the Great, he held Persian styled weddings for himself and his companions, with the attempt to create unity and stability between the Greeks and Persians.⁴⁵

In Hebrew Scripture, like in the case of Noah's sons, Shem, Ham, and Japheth, along with the genealogical recording tying them to specific regions and people groups (Gen 9:19; 10:1–32), indicates an ability to construct ethnic histories.⁴⁶ Although intermarriage in these contexts were not always seen positively, we know a considerable amount of it occurred, depending on the contexts, since a number of these texts reference mixed marriages.⁴⁷ Furthermore, Second Temple and later Rabbinic literature also are cognizant of such unions.⁴⁸ Along with other literature and environments, Hebrew Scripture was attuned to the reality of intermarriage and mixed identities.

Some contexts, like in Rome, evinced a more diverse and multi-ethnic milieu. Erich Gruen notes, “The idea of autochthony or indigenous origins never made much headway in Rome... Romans represented themselves without embarrassment as a composite people who belonged intimately to

⁴³ Hays, *From every People and Nation*, 142–4. He cites four reasons for high levels of ethnic mixing, 1) *Pax Romana*, which would have created a context of trade and commerce; 2) mixing of Roman soldiers and auxiliaries throughout the empire; 3) large number of displaced slaves; and 4) ethnic Greeks and Romans who emigrated to other lands. This contrasts with a static view of ethnicity in the text without reference to the precise economic and historical conditions of ethnic movement in the Greco-Roman world. It also resists the impulse to reduce NT ethnicity to the binary of Greek/Barbarian, and Jew/Gentile.” There are also references to cultural and ethnic mixed contexts in other Greco-Roman literature, see Polybius, *Hist.* 1.78.8–9; Dionysius of Halicarnassus, *Ant. rom.* 6.1.1–3; even full cities in Sicily were described as mixed with barbarians thus being mixed; Plutarch, *Tim* 1.4; some are described as “half-breed” Greeks, Plutarch, *Crass.* 31.1; the ἔθνος (nations) of the Armenian, Syrian, and Arabians according to Strabo, share similarities in language, life, and physical features because they share a geographical region (Strabo, *Geogr.* 1.2.34).

⁴⁴ Apuleius, *Apol.* 24.3; Herodotus, *Hist.* 1.91.

⁴⁵ Arrian, *Anab.* 7.4. For his soldiers, he did not allow the children of Macedonian soldiers with Asian wives to come back to Macedonia with them because of the possible conflict between families and peoples (Arrian, *Anab.* 7.12.2).

⁴⁶ Noah and his sons have also been subject to a fraught history of scientific racism. For one early example of this type of interpretation, see, Doggett, *Two Discourses on the Subject of Slavery*, 6; For a history of the curse of Ham, see Goldenberg, *Black and Slave*. eds. Dale C. Allison, et al. *Studies of the Bible and Its Reception*.

⁴⁷ Lev 24:10; 2 Sam 17:25; 1 Kings 11:1–8; 1 Chr 2:17, 34–5; 1 Kgs 7:13–14 (father was from Tyre); Neh 13:23–27; Ezra 9:1–10:44; Mal 2:10–16.

⁴⁸ *Jub.* 30:7–17; *m. Qiddushin* 3.12; *m. Yevamot* 7.5

the broader Mediterranean world.”⁴⁹ While some groups erected mythic pasts or established clear delineations between people groups, Romans welcomed this ethnic ambiguity. In another passage, Gruen adds, “Roman traditions claimed no purity of lineage... Mixed ancestry, in fact, was part of the Roman image from its inception.”⁵⁰ While their “purity” was instantiated through a lineage system linking them to the ancient Trojans, it was also clearly retrofitted within their unique mixed and diverse ethnic context. Thus, while all cultures and people groups experienced ethnic mixing, some did more so than others. In this way it can be challenging to conceptualize a unified framework for ethnicity in the ancient world, when for instance, Roman ethnicity was constructed and framed in its own unique ways.⁵¹

However, there are similarities between these people groups, such as the reality of ethnic mixing itself, along with a penchant for finding one’s identity within the grand scope of history. Hesiod’s historical progression in *Works and Days* and sections of the biblical text, such as Genesis 1–11 and Daniel 2, posit that humanity has been marked by distinct stages.⁵² These overlapping ideas between Hesiod and Hebrew Scripture express a more macro vision of the origins and stages of history for humanity. Hesiod outlines the “Age of Men,” tracing the dissolution of humanity through successive stages, each symbolized by a different metal (with the exception of the fourth age, associated with demi-gods).⁵³ This progression is important because it outlines a theoretical hierarchy of humanity, one that can be adapted to classify humans in the present age.⁵⁴ Specifically, the further back one can trace humanity, the “purer” it is perceived to be. In this framework, literary

⁴⁹ Gruen, *Rethinking the Other*, 249.

⁵⁰ Gruen, *Rethinking the Other*, 345.

⁵¹ Berthelot, *Jews and Their Roman Rivals*, 343–347; for a discussion on Roman racial theory, see McCoskey, *Race: Antiquity & its Legacy*, 75–80.

⁵² Gnuse, “Greek Connections,” 131–43. He argues that Y and P traditions of Genesis consulted Hesiod’s writings. One interesting point of difference is that the biblical author understands human devolution in relation to sin, while Hesiod does not; see also Nelson, *God and the Land*, 71. Although, certain ages were connected to a lack of reverence to the gods (silver) as well as had a proclivity toward violence (bronze).

⁵³ Hesiod, *Op.* 109–201. See also, Noorden, *Playing Hesiod*, for an account of how Hesiod’s “myth of the races” was subsequently used by later Greco-Roman authors away from the long-entrenched themes so commonly analyzed.

⁵⁴ However, Hesiod’s taxonomy can also be interpreted in other ways, see Most, “Hesiod’s Myth of the Five (or Three or Four) Races,” 104–27. He argues that Hesiod’s taxonomy is not meant to be linear degeneration of humanity, but instead a way to compare current human existence with the past and future. Or for the thesis that the age of Heroes was an insertion, see Athanassakis, *Hesiod*, 92–93.

constructs like genealogies become crucial for understanding how one's lineage connects to a mythic past filled with heroes, deities, and demi-gods. The very act of tracing one's ancestry back with the aid of literary structures, anchors one's present identity in something both concrete and mythic. In viewing the larger paradigms of humanity and the specific examples of ethnic mixing and multiplicity, we find literature attempting to conceptualize and understand how people groups came to be and how they conceived of themselves.

1.3.2 Which Criteria?

Just like the different attempts to understand humanity as a whole, we equally find it difficult to neatly classify ethnicity in either the ancient or modern world. Yet, one commonly cited and helpful definition is the one offered by Anthony D. Smith. He presents six criteria for understanding ethnicity, which are (1) a collective name; (2) a common myth of descent; (3) a shared history; (4) a distinctive shared culture; (5) an association with a specific territory⁵⁵; and (6) a sense of solidarity.⁵⁶ Smith states,

For the purposes of the analysis that follows, such “reality” as we shall impute to *ethnie* is essentially social and cultural: the generic features of *ethnie* are derived, less from ‘objective’ indicators like fertility, literacy or urbanization rates (important though these are in given circumstances), than from the meanings conferred by a number of men and women over some generations on certain cultural, spatial and temporal properties of their interaction and shared experiences.⁵⁷

It is essential to recognize the inherently social and collective mechanisms involved in group identification. The stories, identities, and interpretations of a people's past are passed down through

⁵⁵ There are also counter examples of travelling nomadic groups in modern and ancient times without strict association with a specific territory.

⁵⁶ Smith, *The Ethnic Origins of Nations*, 22–31.

⁵⁷ Smith, *The Ethnic Origins of Nations*, 22.

generations, solidifying a shared sense of identity.⁵⁸ However, this does not mean that these mechanisms of group solidarity are mere fantasies or imaginary constructs. On the contrary, they can be very real and meaningful criteria for belonging. Yet, it is important to note that these identifications are often less objective than we might assume. For example, none of Smith's criteria reference biological realities; instead, they focus on a collective sense of identity, a shared myth of descent, or an association with a particular land. These factors are not necessarily the same as having a material historical lineage or possessing a biological progenitor.

Smith's criterion of the "myth of descent" is particularly relevant here, which is one of his six defining characteristics of ethnic groups. Although Smith argues that the notion of common descent is a crucial identity marker for people groups, it does not necessarily correspond to a biological or genetic reality but can also be "social and cultural."⁵⁹ This is a helpful qualification. It is not that biological or genetic realities do not exist, but identity is more complex than only one of those realities.

Two scholars offer additional insight and helpful qualifications as they evaluate Smith's framework. Shaye Cohen astutely identifies three of these criteria, including "a sense of common origins," as existing entirely in the minds of the people groups.⁶⁰ This means that although these self-conceptions help to structure and shape a community, they are nonetheless, socially constructed. Jonathan Hall on the other hand, opines that the most significant of these criteria for ethnic consciousness is the myth of shared descent.⁶¹ He argues in another place that while the Dorians of the Peloponnese traced their ancestry to Doros, they likely did not believe they all literally descended from Doros.⁶² In other words, regardless of how significant the myth of shared descent is for establishing ethnic consciousness, it is a crucial component of what ties a people together. They collectively identify a people through establishing a deity or hero, in this case

⁵⁸ Smith, *The Ethnic Origins of Nations*, 22.

⁵⁹ Smith, *The Ethnic Origins of Nations*, 22.

⁶⁰ Cohen, *The Beginnings of Jewishness*, 6. His criteria have expanded from Smith's earlier work, see Smith, *The Ethnic Revival*, 66.

⁶¹ Hall, *Ethnic identity in Greek antiquity* 25.

⁶² Hall, *Hellenicity*, 15.

Doros, as their eponymous founder and foundational leader of their people group. Although I do not see the idea of shared descent as the absolute criterion by which to determine ethnicity, I cannot but help see its immense importance in the identification of people groups and its importance in political and theological discourses. While I concur with Hall, scholars such as Horrell caution against overemphasizing this criterion over others.⁶³

We see multiple reasons why the myth of descent might not be the primary criterion to evaluate ethnicity. For example, Herodotus records how Perdiccas Alexander delivered a message on behalf of Mardonius to the Athenians, Lacedaemonians, and Spartans, urging them to side with Xerxes. The Athenians refuse and respond to the Spartan envoys stating,

For there are many great reasons why we should not do this, even if we so desired; first and chiefest, the burning and destruction of the adornments and temples of our gods, whom we are constrained to avenge to the uttermost rather than make covenants with the doer of these things, and next the kinship of all Greeks in blood and speech, and the shrines of gods and the sacrifices that we have in common, and the likeness of our way of life, to all which it would ill beseem Athenians to be false (LCL, Godley).⁶⁴

The Athenians' rationale for remaining loyal to "Hellas" includes: (1) the destruction of temples, (2) the shared kinship of all Hellenes in blood, speech, gods, and religious practices, and (3) the shared way of life. In this sense, there is more to identity than just the shared myth of descent but religious and social customs as well. However, some, like Hall, challenge the idea that Herodotus is providing a definition of Hellenic identity at all.⁶⁵ While it is true that these elements function more as narrative devices than as a systematic account of ethnicity, they remain useful for understanding the criteria of kinship, identity, and belonging.

⁶³ Horrell cautions against putting this much stock in one single criterion as the defining characteristic of an ethnic group, see Horrell, *Ethnicity and Inclusion*, 95.

⁶⁴ Herodotus, *Hist.* 8.144.2.

⁶⁵ Hall, *Hellenicity*, 190. Hall argues, "I would suggest that Herodotus is here attempting to broaden the defining criteria of Hellenicity beyond purely ethnic elements and that this particular passage provides an important key to a strategy that can be recognized throughout the *Histories*."

However, if we do use Herodotus to explain the shared characteristics of identity, one needs to examine the close connection between religion and ethnicity, which commonly appears together. For example, in Herodotus' account, the Athenians argue that they cannot betray their people, citing reasons such as common descent, language, customs, and *religious rituals*.⁶⁶

Paula Fredriksen comments on the assumptions underlying ancient contexts, noting that “ancient peoples were born into their relationships with their gods...ethnicity was an expression of cult.”⁶⁷ This idea is echoed by Horrell, who argues that religion and ethnicity should be seen as “frequently overlapping terms.”⁶⁸ The notion that religion and ethnicity were inextricably connected does make sense of how Herodotus understood them, when he stated,

As to the usages of the Persians, I know them to be these. It is not their custom to make and set up statues and temples and altars, but those who make such they deem foolish, as I suppose, because they never believed the gods, as do the Greeks, to be in the likeness of men; but they call the whole circle of heaven Zeus, and to him they offer sacrifice on the highest peaks of the mountains; they sacrifice also to the sun and moon and earth and fire and water and winds.” (LCL, Godley)⁶⁹

Herodotus observes that the Persians fundamentally differ in their worship practices from the Hellenes. They do not conceptualize the Hellenic deities anthropomorphically, nor do they revere all the deities to the same extent as the Hellenes. The deities they do worship, they have adopted through the influence of the Assyrians and Arabians.⁷⁰ This marks an important distinction in self-

⁶⁶ Herodotus, *Hist.* 8.144.2 In modern discussions of race and ethnicity, we must consider the complex history of colonialism and religious expansion, and the problematic essentializing of religious/ethnic groups such as those who practice Islam. In contrast, in the ancient world, it was quite normal to link cultic practices to people groups.

⁶⁷ Fredriksen, *The Pagan's Apostle*, 34; see also Fredriksen, “Mandatory Retirement: Ideas in the Study of Christian Origins Whose Time has Come to Go,” 232; Fredriksen, “What ‘Parting of the Ways’?,” in *The Ways That Never Parted: Jews and Christians in Late Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages*, 23.

⁶⁸ Horrell, *Ethnicity and Inclusion*, 88; see also Malkin, ed., *Ancient Perceptions of Greek Ethnicity*. For an early articulation of the problem with understanding religion in antiquity, see Smith, *The Meaning and End of Religion*, 20–21.

⁶⁹ Herodotus, *Hist.* 1.131.11.

⁷⁰ Herodotus, *Hist.* 1.131.11.

identification between these groups. Notably, the only deity the Persians worship in a manner somewhat akin to the Greeks is Zeus, although their interpretation of him is inaccurate. They also revere Aphrodite, though under another name—Mitra.⁷¹ Here Herodotus ties ethnic identification closely with cultic practices.

This divergence in religious practice and the resulting self-identification highlights how religious and ethnic categories were often intertwined in antiquity. Just as the Persians' religious practices marked a distinction from the Hellenes, early Christians' religious participation led them to be labelled as a "third race," transcending traditional ethnic boundaries, which led many to misunderstand how they fit into a distinct cult.⁷² Judith Lieu's observation about the malleability of religious and ethnic identity in early Christian literature aligns with this understanding in the sense that in many cases, they adapted and transcended conventional ethnic language concerning their identity.⁷³ The flexibility of these categories in antiquity, whether in Herodotus' description of Persian worship or the early Christian redefinition of identity, highlights the fluidity of ethnicity and its close connection to religion. This provides a useful framework for understanding how identities, both in the ancient world and in modern discussions, could evolve and adapt in response to shifting cultural and religious landscapes. Although mixed race identity is not the same as the early Christian moniker of "third race," there are some interesting parallels between the two.

Denise Kimber Buell, in *Why This New Race*, explores the ethnic discourse early Christians employed to establish their identity.⁷⁴ While much of her work focuses on an era different from my own analysis, her insights remain crucial, particularly her discussion of ethnicity as both

⁷¹ Herodotus, *Hist.* 1.131.11.

⁷² Lieu, *Christian Identity in the Jewish and Graeco-Roman World*, 253, 239–68. She shows the continuity/discontinuity of Christians connecting their identity with Israel but also seeing discontinuity with that history as well as with pagan attempts to differentiate and demean Christians. The self-identification through the act of "othering" is further developed 269–97. (Clement of Alexandria, *Strom.* 6.5; *Diogn.* 1, 5; *Herm. Sim.* 9.17; Suetonius, *Nero* 16.2; Tertullian, *Nat.* 1.8 [he argues that this is regarding belief not race]; *Scorp.* 10; *Mart. Pol.* 14, 17 [righteous race]). In a Jewish context this is apparent as well, see Josephus, *Ant.* 20.263; Tacitus, *Hist.* 5.5.2.

⁷³ For early Christian examples of engaging with ethnic language (γένος) for its movement as well as transcending it, see Lieu, "Identity Games in Early Christian Texts," in *Identities and Ideologies in Early Jewish and Christian Texts, and in Modern Biblical Interpretation*, 59–71. Also found within her larger text, Lieu, *Neither Jew nor Greek*; See also, Gruen, "Christians as a 'Third Race': Is Ethnicity at Issue?" in *Christianity in the Second Century: Themes and Developments*, 235–249.

⁷⁴ Buell, *Why This New Race*, 2–3.

malleable and fixed.⁷⁵ She states, “Like their contemporaries, Christians defined themselves through selective interaction with existing social practices and interpretation of how these practices pertained to identification.”⁷⁶ One of the valuable ways Buell outlines this fluidity is by showing how religion helps to define race and ethnicity in antiquity.⁷⁷ For example, ethnoracial difference in antiquity could often be demarcated by religious affiliation.⁷⁸ Buell writes, “While religious practices can be adopted or rejected, and can be used to illustrate the fluid end of the spectrum, they were also understood to be closely tied to the fixed end because religious practices (especially sacrifices) both produced and reinforced kinship.”⁷⁹ This fixity emerges because a distant ancestor, real or imagined, roots a claim that their progeny may inherit, thus affixing them to a permanent ancestry.

Buell argues that early Christian identity formation was shaped by multiple factors, which utilized ethnic reasoning, using both fixed and malleable aspects of ethnic identity. She outlines four strategic uses for Christians using ethnic reasoning. These include: (1) race/ethnicity was deemed to be produced and indicated by religious practices; (2) fluid ethnicity and racial language fit the Christian ways they talked about conversion, transformation, etc.; (3) the juxtaposition of fluidity and fixity enabled early Christians to make universalized claims, arguing that everyone should be a Christian; and (4) early Christians used ethnic reasoning to compete with one another, in polemical terms.⁸⁰

She uses this framework to support her claim that the concept of a “third race” makes sense within its historical context, as race was understood as connected to flexible practices and evolving identities. Christians, in turn, used this self-understanding to distinguish themselves from other

⁷⁵ Buell, *Why This New Race*, 6–10. She takes her approach from anthropologist Ann Stoler; Ann Laura Stoler, “Racial Histories and their Regimes of Truth,” 198.

⁷⁶ Buell, *Why This New Race*, 37.

⁷⁷ Buell, *Why This New Race*, 41–49. “(1) to mark differences between groups, helping to produce a collective civic or ethnoracial identity—especially under conditions of colonialism and diaspora; (2) to enable ethnoracial transformation; (3) to establish connections between otherwise distinctive groups; and (4) to assert and regulate differences within groups.”

⁷⁸ Buell, *Why This New Race*, 42–43.

⁷⁹ Buell, *Why This New Race*, 42–43.

⁸⁰ Buell, *Why This New Race*, 2–3.

groups. They promoted their “race” as an inclusive movement and asserted that membership in this identity was preferable to others.⁸¹ All of these aspects of being a “third race” oscillate between the poles of fixity and fluidity as seen by the strategic employment and positioning of Christian identity.⁸²

In outlining “three aspects of Christian universalism,” Buell highlights how ethnic reasoning contributes to these ideals.⁸³ In brief, these aspects are that anyone could become a Christian, there was an aspiration for all people eventually to join, and Christianity presented an ideal way of life for all to follow.⁸⁴ Buell describes ethnic reasoning that draws on the fluidity of ethnic discourse as “aggregative,” in other words, “because they serve to bring ethnic groups together.”⁸⁵ This stands in contrast to an “oppositional” definition of Christian identity, which emphasizes how Christians are different from others. For example, Buell discusses Justin Martyr’s understanding of Christian identity, noting that Justin rejects circumcision and adherence to the Mosaic law as defining markers, since they are too particularized and stand in tension with a more universal conception of Christianity.⁸⁶

Different aspects of identity were also influenced by how they were situated in the diaspora. In his writings on the Jewish diaspora, John Barclay offers a useful distinction between race as strictly a biological, genetic, and physical reality, and ethnicity, which he defines in terms of both social and

⁸¹ Buell, “Rethinking the Relevance of Race for Early Christian Self-Definition”: 449–476. In Buell, *Why This New Race*, 14. Here, Buell points out that ethnic cleansing and blatant racial injustice occurs regardless of whether “race” is used. Cf., Du Toit, “Ethnic reasoning and early Christian identity: A Pauline theological perspective,” 1–9. He argues that ethnic reasoning does not adequately consider the role of faith in Christian self-identity. For example, this tension occurs in between relating to physical Abraham through faith and Pauline language of differentiating between flesh and Spirit, which God’s people identify with the Spirit and not by the “flesh.” See also Fee, *God’s Empowering Presence*. Fee argues that the defining characteristic of God’s people is to be animated by his Spirit.

⁸² Buell’s argument also directly contrasts with the essentialized conceptions of race and ethnicity in contemporary discourse. Viewing Christianity as a non-ethnic, universal identity, she argues, undermines the Jewishness of the early Christian texts and leads to anti-Semitic implications.

⁸³ Buell, *Why This New Race*, 140–151.

⁸⁴ Buell, *Why This New Race*, 140.

⁸⁵ Buell, *Why This New Race*, 140. Her framework of aggregative and oppositional, which is utilized in Jonathan Hall’s analysis. Up until the 5th century BCE, Greek self-identity was constructed in an aggregative nature, then after the 5th BCE, it was oppositional, see Hall, *Ethnic Identity*, 47. Later on in this chapter, I discuss Jonathan Hall’s view of aggregative and oppositional ethnic constructions.

⁸⁶ Buell, *Why This New Race*, 110–111.

biological, as shared customs and ancestry.⁸⁷ He argues that ancestry and custom were central to Jewish identity in the diaspora.⁸⁸ What is particularly significant in the case of a mixed individual in the diaspora is the multi-dimensional nature of their identity, as they are embedded within a different cultural context.⁸⁹ The diaspora itself also reshapes a sense of belonging, where one exists in a foreign land yet maintains a connection to the homeland. Barclay notes, “The multi-locale attachments of diaspora—belonging both here and there—create an ambiguity of identity, whose particular configurations vary, of course, from case to case.”⁹⁰

Sung Uk Lim integrates multiple sociological and rhetorical models of “racial-ethnic” identity.⁹¹ In his framework, he argues that identities such as Hellenicity and Jewishness evolved depending on context, with religious practices playing a key role in shaping these identities. Furthermore, he contends that ethnic minorities in the diaspora experienced a fluid yet fixed relationship with their homeland, where identity could shift while still retaining a strong connection to their place of origin.⁹²

Considering the discussion on the significance of the myth of shared descent, religion, and ethnic identity, I propose prioritizing the shared myth of descent. This is not because it is the most dominant aspect of identity, but because it is deeply intertwined with genealogies, which serve as vehicles for preserving and reinforcing these narratives. Genealogies, in turn, become instrumental

⁸⁷ Barclay, *Jews in the Mediterranean Diaspora*, 402. “I here take ethnicity to refer to a combination of kinship and custom, reflecting both shared genealogy and common behaviour.”

⁸⁸ Barclay, *Jews in the Mediterranean Diaspora*, 404, ff.

⁸⁹ When discussing specific mixed tribes, Strabo comments that even if they were mixed, the predominate culture of ἡ Ἑλληνικὴ ἢ βαρβάρου, (either Hellenic or Barbarian) has made description of this “mixed tribe” impossible (Strabo, *Geogr.* 14.4.25 [c679]); but Strabo has no issue describing other regions as being inhabited by mixed peoples (Strabo, *Geogr.* 13.3.13; 16.2.2, 34); he even comments on the mixed Greek and Campanian peoples as Roman but with many vestiges of Greek culture (Strabo, *Geogr.* 5.4.7); see also, Philostratus, *Epist.* 71.

⁹⁰ Barclay, “Introduction: Diaspora Negotiations,” in *Negotiating Diaspora Jewish Strategies in the Roman Empire*, 2. See also, Hall, “Cultural Identity and Diaspora,” in *Colonial Discourse and Post-Colonial Theory*, 227–37. He argues that the diaspora experience is constructed through hybridity, a constant transformation with the present, past, and vast diversity within a specific location. This contrasts with the traditional conception of diaspora with a foreign people with a singular tie to a historic homeland.

⁹¹ Lim, “Race and Ethnicity Discourse in Biblical Studies and Beyond,” 120–142. He uses the hyphen in order to show the interchangeability and fluidity between these terms.

⁹² Lim, “Race and Ethnicity Discourse in Biblical Studies and Beyond,” 133–4. These interpretive framework structures are part of a twelve-point arrangement.

in constructing and sustaining the collective memory of lineage, binding people together through shared stories of origin and heritage. We see that even through the flux of ethnic identification through different vehicles, the politics of ancestry is often navigated through a purported ancestor.

1.4 Jewish and Greek Identity

1.4.1 what does it mean to be Jewish?

A central component of this analysis is the question of lineal descent, who is considered a Jew, Judean, or Samaritan, and whether these categories overlap or intersect.⁹³ Along with this idea of shared descent, is the question of who was a Jew or Judean in the ancient world and what terms we should use in the 21st century considering the vast space in historical and cultural context. Understanding these terms more precisely will help us to see how people groups self-identify and how they are depicted by ancient authors. Cohen argues until the second half of the second century BCE, the term Ἰουδαῖος should be understood as an ethno-geographical designation, referring specifically to those originating from the region of Judea. However, this term later expanded to include those who did not reside in the ancestral lands but worshiped God as religious converts, or those who were not ethnically related but politically aligned.⁹⁴ In other words, according to Cohen, a shift occurred during the Hasmonean period, wherein Ἰουδαῖος evolved from an ethnic-geographical identity to a religious-political one.⁹⁵ Cohen's analysis here is insightful for understanding the political dimensions of ethnicity and how figures like Herod could be incorporated into this ethnic category, a topic we will explore later.

Following the 2nd century BCE, the term adapts and changes. The major turning point happens gradually after the Hasmonean rebellion, including the incorporation of the Idumeans and Itureans into the Hasmonean state and the religious development of gentile conversions which led to a shifting of "Jewish" identity.⁹⁶ A major part of this evolution was the changing concept of *politeia*,

⁹³ For a brief survey of question of being Jew or Judean, see Grabbe, *A History of the Jews and Judaism in the Second Temple Period*, vol 2, 124–165, esp., 153–165.

⁹⁴ Cohen, *The Beginnings of Jewishness*, 69–106.

⁹⁵ Cohen, *The Beginnings of Jewishness*, 70, 81, 90.

⁹⁶ Cohen, *The Beginnings of Jewishness*, 109–37.

which referred to both citizenship and the political structures that defined its practice, such as laws, constitutions, and ways of life.⁹⁷ Cohen describes it as, “The *politeia* of an individual is his citizenship; the politeia of a state is its way of doing things.”⁹⁸ “Judaism” was thus framed within the Hellenistic framework of a *politeia*, combining these ideas, with its closest model shaped after the Greek Achaean League; a coalition of peoples conceived of as united citizens but with different ethnicities.⁹⁹ The innovation distinguished between citizenship and ethnicity.¹⁰⁰ The Idumean and Iturean incorporation into the Judean state was possible within this framework.

However, some scholars place the transition of ethnic identification of Ἰουδαῖος at different historical moments, while others critique Cohen’s use of the term “religion,” noting that in the ancient world, religion was often inseparable from ethnic identity.¹⁰¹ Steve Mason highlights the challenges of applying modern concepts of religion to the ancient world. He argues that before the early 3rd century CE, “Judaism” (Ἰουδαϊσμός) as we understand it today, was described in literature as a set of ancestral or ethnic customs and traditions. The concept of Ἰουδαϊσμός evolved in the early 3rd century CE, when it began to take on the connotation of a comprehensive religious system, especially in Christian writings and by the 4th century CE, stood in contrast to “Christianity” as a distinct religious category.¹⁰² Given this historical development, scholars like Mason contend that “Judean” is a more accurate term for describing Jews in the ancient world because of its ethno-geographical implications.¹⁰³ In other words, Judeans were considered to be connected to the land, while the term “Jew” as we understand it today, is typically understood to be a religious/ethnic term, depending on the person and context, making its application to the

⁹⁷ Cohen, *The Beginnings of Jewishness*, 125. Citing, De Romily, *Rise and Fall* 69–76; Bordes, “*Politeia*”.

⁹⁸ Cohen, *The Beginnings of Jewishness*, 125. He cites Hecataeus as the first to articulate the idea associating Moses with a constitution (Diodorus Siculus, *Lib.* 40.3.3); Antiochus III as describing *politeia* as a “way of life” (Josephus, *Ant.* 12.142).

⁹⁹ Cohen, *The Beginnings of Jewishness*, 128–29. Polybius describes the Achaean League (Polybius 2.37.10–11); the League also had a shared temple (Polybius 2.39.6); they kept their distinct ethnicity but were subsumed under a political union (Polybius 2.38.4; Plutarch, *Aratus* 9.4).

¹⁰⁰ Cohen, *The Beginnings of Jewishness*, 127

¹⁰¹ Some date this transition earlier, see Blenkinsopp, *Judaism*, 27–28. See also Mason, “Jews, Judaeans, Judaizing, Judaism”: 457–512; Esler, *Conflict and Identity in Romans*,” 70–74.

¹⁰² Mason, “Jews, Judaeans, Judaizing, Judaism,” 457–512.

¹⁰³ Mason, “Jews, Judaeans, Judaizing, Judaism,” 495.

ancient context anachronistic.¹⁰⁴ In this case, both Idumeans and Samaritans, would also be defined as “Judeans” since they also lived in this region.¹⁰⁵

Yet, Mason’s analysis is not without its faults. For instance, the model he employs does not always align with what we see in some ancient texts, like in the cases when the usages of Ἰουδαῖος in the Gospel of John is used fluidly where the term Judean may not fully capture this flexibility.¹⁰⁶ In John 4:22, Jesus tells the Samaritan woman that “salvation comes from the *Judeans*. If “Judean” is the proper translation, would not the Samaritan people, as Judeans, also be included? This would make the statement problematic in the context of Jesus’ conversation with the Samaritan woman as he contrasts Jewish and Samaritan notions of worship and identity. Or note, that if translating Ἰουδαῖος as Judean is meant to distance the term “Jews” from the over-generalized view that might result from reading the “Jews” as Jesus’ opponents, it is important to rebut this notion by remembering that Jesus, his disciples, and other positive figures are described as Ἰουδαῖος as well.

Furthermore, “Judean” was not always strictly a geographical term, and evidence of religious “conversion,” found in texts like *Joseph and Aseneth*, outside of Judea, challenges the idea of using it solely as an ethno-geographical designation.¹⁰⁷ Ruth and Aseneth illustrate that people could join Israel through marriage and were described in “ethno-religious” terms.¹⁰⁸ In chapter four, “Intermarriage in Jewish Literature: Customs, Religious Piety, and Compatibility,” I highlight the diverse perspectives on intermarriage that both align with and resist simple explanations. Often, as seen in *Joseph and Aseneth*, authors linked customs and religious piety to ethnicity.

¹⁰⁴ Josephus refers to Apion in ethnic, not religious, terms, as the category of religion did not exist in the way it does today (Ag. Ap. 2.144).

¹⁰⁵ Philip Esler argues that translating Ἰουδαῖος as “Jew” overlooks the territorial aspect of what it meant to be a Judean in the ancient world, see Esler, *Conflict and Identity in Romans*, 62–68.

¹⁰⁶ Fortes, “‘The Judeans’ for οἱ Ἰουδαῖοι?”: 365–387, esp., 380–382. See also, Esler, *Conflict and Identity in Romans*, 68–74.

¹⁰⁷ Mason, “Jews, Judaeans, Judaizing, Judaism,” 503–506; Robert Doran points out that “Judean” can miss the ethnic and religious connotations since it is a narrow geographical term, Doran, *2 Maccabees*, 24.

¹⁰⁸ Horrell, *Ethnicity and Inclusion*, 114–115.

In terms of religious “conversion,” early fictional conversion stories often focused on belief in the God of Israel.¹⁰⁹ While the Hebrew Bible does not explicitly contain the concept of belief-based conversion, it foreshadows this possibility.¹¹⁰ Cohen states, “But in none of these texts, even in the eschatological visions, is there a sense that non-Israelites somehow become Israelites through acknowledging the God of the Israelites.”¹¹¹ Although belief was instrumental for one’s “conversion” this does not imply that their identity was ethnically transformed, even though, Jewish identity over time shifted to focus much on conduct and a way of living.¹¹²

Jason Staples, in his work, *The Idea of Israel in Second Temple Judaism*, insightfully addresses the problem of exile and land dispossession in defining Israel, which contributes to this conversation.¹¹³ Staples navigates the complexities of translating Ἰουδαῖος in its ethnic, religious, and geographical contexts, asserting that, “There was no transition from ‘Judaean’ ethnicity to ‘Jewish’ religion; instead, Jewishness was both religious and ethnic in antiquity and remains so today.”¹¹⁴ Accordingly, he translates the term as “Jew,” using transliterations where he finds it necessary.¹¹⁵ Furthermore, Staples demonstrates that scholarly proposals that view “Israel” as referring to those who self-identify as Jews, while Ἰουδαῖος pertains to outsiders’ references to Jewish people is inadequate.¹¹⁶ He demonstrates how this insider/outsider paradigm falls short in

¹⁰⁹ Judith 14:10; 2 Maccabees 9:13–16; and describing conversion as such, Philo, *Virtues* 20.102–3. 2 Maccabees and Judith were written around the turn of the 1st century BCE, while Philo was writing in the early part of the 1st century CE.

¹¹⁰ Cohen, *The Beginnings of Jewishness*, 130–32. Cohen lists these examples, “Non-Israelites can bless Israel’s God: Exod. 18:10, 1 Kings 5:21 and 10:9; can sacrifice to him: Exod. 18:12, cf. Mal. 1:11; can be impressed by his power and miracles: Josh. 2:9–10, 1 Kings 8:42–43, 2 Kings 17:32–33, Dan. 3:31–33; can acknowledge him as God, perhaps the greatest of Gods: Exod. 18:11, Josh. 2:11, 2 Kings 5:15, Ezra 1:2, Dan. 4:34 and 6:27–28. Famous vision: Isa. 2:1–4, cf. Mic. 4:1–5.”

¹¹¹ Cohen, *The Beginnings of Jewishness*, 131.

¹¹² Cohen, *The Beginnings of Jewishness*, 132–35. Philo, *Ag. Ap.* 2.210.

¹¹³ Staples, *Israel*, 25–53.

¹¹⁴ Staples, *Israel*, 19.

¹¹⁵ Staples, *Israel*, 20.

¹¹⁶ Staples, *Israel*, 25–53.

explaining specific shifts in terminology within primary texts, while also exposing the antisemitic roots of this view, as favored by earlier interpreters like Karl Georg Kuhn.¹¹⁷

Another significant aspect of Staples' work is his analysis of the terms "Israel," "Israelite," and "Hebrew." By examining Josephus' use of "Israel," Staples concludes that for Josephus, it is largely time-bound, applied to all Israelites up until the division of the kingdoms, after which it refers specifically to the Northern Kingdom. Staples argues that Josephus believed most of Israel did not return from exile, clarifying why "Judean/Jew" is used to describe those in the land instead.¹¹⁸ "Hebrews" is employed to refer to people from both kingdoms, without necessarily invoking the term "Israel," since as a time-bound concept "Israel" would not apply to those from the southern kingdom. Staples notes, "Instead, *Ioudaios* is a term denoting a person descended from the southern kingdom of Judah or otherwise incorporated into that ethno-religious group (italics original)," thus placing "Jew/Judean" within the broader category of Israel.¹¹⁹ In other words, "Judean/Jew" is a subset of the larger term of "Israel." However, Staples also observes that Israel has a variance of meanings, depending on the author and the context in which it is being used. Another feature of the term "Israel" is its usage in eschatological contexts to refer to the future gathering of all "Israel".¹²⁰ In all, I find Staples' work to be the most comprehensive, sensitive to the data, and appropriately fluid when examining specific ethnic designations in context.

Following Staples, I also propose to view these designations within a range of meanings, alternating between terms based on the context of usage.¹²¹ My position is that such distinctions depend heavily on context and factors like the individual, era, location, and status which has shaped

¹¹⁷ Staples, *Israel*, 26–27, citing Kuhn, "Ἰσραήλ, Ἰουδαῖος, Ἑβραῖος," 3:359–69 (360); a more recent articulation of the insider/outsider paradigm, see, Elliot, "Jesus the Israelite Was Neither a 'Jew' Nor a 'Christian'", 119–154.

¹¹⁸ Staples, *Israel*, 52.

¹¹⁹ Staples, *Israel*, 52.

¹²⁰ Staples, *Israel*, 339–348.

¹²¹ Staples, *Israel*, 4. He states, "The aim is therefore not to establish a discrete, stable entity or a specific, single meaning of the word "Israel" but rather to assess the range of possible interpretations when a person referred to "Israel" or "Israelites" in the Second Temple period in light of the traditional narrative substructure of the concept that could assumed by participants in the discourse and how the concept was developed and contested throughout the Second Temple period."

how people perceived one another. In essence, it depends on who is being discussed and from whose perspective.¹²² As a general rule, I concur with how Staples utilizes these terms.

1.4.2 What does it mean to be Greek?

Although multiple works examine Greek identity, a very influential argument is developed by Hall, who articulates his own six-part classification.¹²³ Notable, is not only his stress on the myth of shared descent but also the development of identity through time and social institutions, which help to frame ethnic identity as fluid experiences. For instance, Hall argues that in classical Greece, Olympia and Delphi helped constructed the ethnic and geographical parameters of identity, respectively.¹²⁴ The Delphic Amphictyony was an ancient Hellenic religious organization, a coalition of cities surrounding a cultic center. Many argue that the sanctuary of Apollo and its Pythian oracles, up until the 340's, contributed to a Pan-Hellenic identity, but Hall instead emphasizes the early Olympic Games, like the stephanitic games, held at interregional sanctuaries in the 6th century BCE.¹²⁵ Some of these events, especially early on, were limited to those who could prove their Hellenic identity.¹²⁶ Hall states, "Olympia is as we have seen, intrinsically linked with the affirmation of Hellenic descent by at least the beginning of the fifth century."¹²⁷ Over time, the Pan-Hellenic identity became entrenched through multiple institutions. In other words, this ethnic/cultural identity was not inherent, but rather, fostered and developed through these social institutions—the games and cultic centers.

¹²² Esler, *Conflict and Identity in Romans*, 49. Esler makes a similar point with his concept of "situational ethnicity," where a multi-ethnic individual may shift their loyalties and identifications based on the circumstances they face; see also, Grabbe, *A History of the Jews and Judaism in the Second Temple Period*, vol 4, 497. For Grabbe, Jew has a religious connotation while Judean has a geographical one.

¹²³ Hall, *Hellenicity*, 9–10. For other works examining Greek identity, see Hall, *Inventing the Barbarian*; Morgan. *Athletes and Oracles*; Cartledge, *The Greeks*.

¹²⁴ Hall, *Hellenicity*, 134–36.

¹²⁵ Hall, *Hellenicity*, 136, 154. The sanctuary of Apollo was founded during the 8th BCE. Those other sanctuaries include Zeus at Olympia (5th BCE) and Nemea (6th BCE), Apollo at Delphi (7th BCE), and Poseidon at Isthmia (7th BCE).

¹²⁶ Hall, *Hellenicity*, 154. See also Herodotus, *Hist.* 5.22; 6.126–281 Lucian, *Herod.* 1.

¹²⁷ Hall, *Hellenicity*, 161.

But Hellenic identity was not only developed via social institutions but through a collective galvanizing in response to the Persian War (480–479 BCE).¹²⁸ This idea is substantiated by Thucydides' claim that the term (Ἕλληνας) was not universally used till much later and that Homer did not use the term “Barbarian” since the Hellenes were not perceived as a collective in contrast to the Persians.¹²⁹ In this way, in seeing the Persian as the “Other” the Hellenes were able to self-identity as a distinct and unified whole.

Yet, some critics, such as Philip Esler, accuse Hall of setting boundaries that may be too essentialist in his treatment of ethnicity. For instance, Hall argues that by the fourth century BCE, cities from Spain to Afghanistan could participate in the “paradigm of Hellenism” as a cultural construct, but he is quick to note that this participation does not necessarily entail an ethnic component.¹³⁰ Esler critiques Hall for “in particular the exaggeration of the role of descent in the determination of ethnicity—something for which others have criticized him.”¹³¹ This disagreement hinges on the idea that, while individuals from culturally Greek backgrounds could be seen as culturally Greek, they would not necessarily be considered ethnically Greek without a biological, physical, or purported lineage of descent.

Part of this disagreement stems from Hall's evolutionist assumptions regarding Hellenic genealogies and his division between pre- and post-fifth century BCE Greek identity, particularly in response to the pressures of the Persian Wars.¹³² Depending on the context, Hall's work seems to shift between affirming a direct connection between biological realities and offering a broader, more expansive view of ethnic identity. For example, Hall acknowledges the growing diversity of the Greek people and posits that Greek identity up to the fifth century BCE was aggregative and defined “from within” by the similarities between groups based on a shared myth of common

¹²⁸ Hall, *Hellenicity*, 175.

¹²⁹ Hall, *Hellenicity*, 175, citing Thucydides, *Hist.* 1.3.2–3.

¹³⁰ Esler, *Conflict and Identity in Romans*, 57, citing Hall, *Ethnic Identity in Greek Antiquity*, xiii. Esler states, “Hall cannot accept that people living in Spain or, say, in Alexandria, Syrian Antioch, or even in Rome, calling themselves (Ἕλληνας), educated in Greek literature and rhetoric, speaking Greek, attending the gymnasium and the theatre, participating in the worship of Greek gods, and, most importantly, engaged in conflict with other groups in their city, are ‘ethnically’ Greek unless presumably they have a physical lineage from Greek colonists.”

¹³¹ Esler, *Conflict and Identity in Romans*, 54–61, esp., 57.

¹³² Hall, *Ethnic Identity in Greek Antiquity*, 48.

descent. After the fifth century, however, identity was more likely defined “from without,” shaped by external opposition, particularly in response to the Persian threat. This distinction in Greek self-definition is crucial to understanding Hall’s contribution. While the accusation that Hall is a “primordialist,” as Esler claims, is exaggerated, it is clear that ethnicity in antiquity is a complex issue.¹³³ Hall recognizes that aspects of ethnic identity were mythic, constructed, and negotiated—such as the myth of ethnic origins and the genealogies of the Argolids—while at the same time acknowledging that cultural traditions and the importance of ancestry were often seen as fixed.¹³⁴

Directly relevant to this disagreement is the discussion on customs as a differentiating marker between people groups.¹³⁵ Isocrates provides one of the most well-known articulations of this idea. In praising the prominence of Athens, Isocrates asserts that the term “Hellenes” does not refer to a “race” (γένους), but to an “intelligence” (διανοίας). This title, he claims, is more appropriately applied to those who share our “education” (τῆς παιδεύσεως) than to those who share a “common nature” (τοὺς τῆς κοινῆς φύσεως).¹³⁶ Much of the scholarly contention surrounding Isocrates’ text revolves around its interpretation. Hall suggests that, after the fifth century BCE, being Hellenic was more about cultural identification than ethnic affiliation.¹³⁷ In contrast, Esler accuses Hall of misinterpreting Isocrates as “eradicating” the ethnic nature of the term.¹³⁸ Hall argues that this cultural-linguistic but non-ethnic model of Hellenism is evident in the Hellenistic world, where other cities and peoples could participate in the paradigm of Hellenism without being considered ethnically Greek.¹³⁹ Esler counters that Hall’s interpretation would only be valid if he held primordial assumptions about ethnicity.¹⁴⁰ In other words, Isocrates’ view seems to suggest that

¹³³ Esler, *Conflict and Identity in Romans*, 57.

¹³⁴ Hall, *Ethnic Identity in Greek Antiquity*, 40–50, 77–88.

¹³⁵ Horrell, *Ethnicity and Inclusion*, 136–177; Mason, “Jews, Judaeans, Judaizing, Judaism,” 484; Esler, *Conflict and Identity in Romans*, 52. Here Esler makes the comment that the Greek and Romans were ethno-centric based on customs, not racial grounds.

¹³⁶ Isocrates, *Paeng*. 4.50.

¹³⁷ Hall, *Ethnic Identity in Greek Antiquity*, xiii.

¹³⁸ Esler, *Conflict and Identity in Romans*, 57.

¹³⁹ Hall, *Ethnic Identity in Greek Antiquity*, xiii.

¹⁴⁰ Esler, *Conflict and Identity in Romans*, 57.

while others can be identified as Greek based on shared cultural traits, they are not necessarily Greek by ethnic or racial standards.

The solution I propose is that identity is often contingent upon the evaluator—the one determining the ethnic identity of an individual or group. In other words, ethnicity is often defined by who is making the decision about identity. I suggest that the most significant aspect of ethnicity is group identification, which typically assumes some form of common descent, whether real or imagined. This common descent provides unifying principles that bond a group together. Customs, language, and appearance serve to define and maintain the boundaries of this identity, distinguishing the group from others. To put it another way, purported lineage is the primary way in which a group polices its own identity internally, while customs, language, and appearance function to keep external boundaries in place.

As we see, ethnic identity is contingent on a multitude of factors. Forcing universal criteria onto group and individual identities is difficult, considering the variety of relevant influences and histories that make sense of these ethnic demarcations. Identity is especially complicated when individuals are multi-ethnic, as they can transition between different people groups, identities, and cultures.¹⁴¹ As will become clear throughout this work, ethnic identities are fluid and negotiable, influenced by the context and socio-political circumstances in which they are utilized.

1.4.3 Ethnicity in the New Testament

The discussion of ethnic identity is also refracted through Christian texts, with several works examining how the nascent faith both redefined and engaged with ethnicity.¹⁴² Horrell highlights trends in research that historically contrast an ethnically exclusive Judaism with an ethnically

¹⁴¹ Morgan, “Society, Identity, and Ethnicity in the Hellenic World,” in *Ethnicity, Race, Religion*, 34–38. Here Morgan has a helpful discussion about multi-ethnic identity and “code-switching” showing the variety of identities in any given context.

¹⁴² See Esler, *Conflict and Identity in Romans*; Kuecker, *The Spirit and the “Other”*; Hellerman, *Jesus and the People of God*; Hurtado, *Destroyer of the Gods*; for a source that maintains multiple identities, see Johnson Hodge, *If Sons, Then Heirs*; and for an analysis of a specific inclusive metaphor, see Burke, *Adopted into God’s Family*; see also, Borgen, *The Gospel of John*, 79–99, esp., 92–95. Borgen comments on the “cosmic broadening” of the fourth Gospel, comparing it to the Hellenistic tendency toward internationalization.

inclusive Christianity, which directly affects how we define ethnic labels and see Jewish-Christian relations.¹⁴³ One remedy to address this dichotomy is to recall that Jesus and his disciples and most early Christ followers were Jewish themselves.¹⁴⁴ The Jewishness of the faith helps us to see how anachronistic it is to place notions of religious “conversion” onto ancient Jewish followers of Christ. A notable example of this is the often cited contemporary sermon illustration of “Saul” converting to “Paul” after he encounters Jesus. Instead of viewing this as the same name in different contexts, one Jewish and the other in predominantly Greek, some sermons explain this as a name change signifying a conversion, which ultimately deemphasizes Paul’s Jewishness. Instead of viewing this as a “religious conversion” in the modern sense of this phrase, moving from one religion to another, it would be much more appropriate to see this as more of a change of perspective. A further layer to this complexity is the antagonistic history of Christian-Jewish relations, which can negatively affect how we see the text today.¹⁴⁵ In regard to the specific usage of ethnic designations, Amy-Jill Levine insists that we should recognize some continuity between ancient and modern terms, warning that using “Judean” might inadvertently lead to a “de-Judification” of the text.¹⁴⁶ In these ways, ethnicity is framed by the our assumptions, text, and history.

Ethnic demarcations are notably redefined and rearranged in the New Testament, where notions of ancestry and lineage influence identity.¹⁴⁷ Luke’s genealogy connects the Messiah to Adam, creating a kinship tree that encompasses all humanity (Luke 3:23–38). The literary depiction of the Samaritans as both foreign and kin to the Jews in the Gospel also reveals this expanding spectrum of identification with the Christ-following movement (Luke 9:51–56; 10:25–37; 17:11–

¹⁴³ Horrell, *Ethnicity and Inclusion*, 21–46. See also Park, “Multiracial Biblical Studies,” 435–459. Here Park argues to move away from monoracial to multiracial biblical studies, deemphasizing “whiteness” as a methodological process. Horrell also address this in Horrell, “Ethnicisation, Marriage and Early Christian Identity: Critical Reflections on 1 Corinthians 7, 1 Peter 3 and Modern New Testament Scholarship,” 439–460. For a response to this, arguing that drawing a distinction between Judean and early Christian identity does not necessitate a Christian universalism or superiority, see Esler and Mason, “Judean and Christ-Follower Identities: Grounds for a Distinction,” 439–515. Horrell responds to this rebuttal by Esler and Mason, clearing up certain points of disagreements. One of the major strengths of Horrell’s response has to do with how he clearly articulates the ethnic fluidity within identities, see Horrell, “Judean Ethnicity and Christ-Following Voluntarism? A Reply to Steve Mason and Philip Esler,” 1–20.

¹⁴⁴ Fredriksen, *When Christians Were Jews*.

¹⁴⁵ Levine, *The Misunderstood Jew*.

¹⁴⁶ Levine, *The Misunderstood Jew*, 159–166.

¹⁴⁷ Horrell, *Ethnicity and Inclusion*, 96–111.

19). This linkage not only connects the Messiah to humanity but also frames the Gospel within the universal scope of God's plan, relating to other aspects of Luke-Acts, such as Pentecost and the conclusion of Paul's journey to Rome (Acts 2, 28).

In the Gospel of John, Jesus responds to Judeans who claim to be Abraham's descendants, acknowledging their heritage yet asserting they are children of the devil, implying they are not truly from Abraham, or at the very least, taken over by a diabolical and supernatural ancestry (John 8:33–47).¹⁴⁸ This general concept is articulated in Romans, where not all descendants of Abraham are considered his true offspring; rather, true descendants are defined as children of the promise, not merely by physical descent (Rom 9:6–8). Paul echoes this idea in Galatians, where he references Abraham's descendants (Gal 3:7, 29) and argues that the promises given to Abraham are ultimately fulfilled in Christ (Gal 3:16).¹⁴⁹

Another aspect of identity worth exploring involves metaphors of ethnicity related to autochthony or being indigenous to the land. This is a widely acknowledged concept that spans different eras, cultures, and literary genres. Adam and Eve are described as formed from the soil (עֶפְרָה) (Gen 2:7), with Philo referring to them as “earth-born.”¹⁵⁰ In Greek contexts, being “earth-born” denotes indigenous status.¹⁵¹ Other literature describes how Prometheus formed humanity from clay, underscoring a similar connection to the land.¹⁵² Being rooted in the land conveys prestige among ancient peoples. For instance, Croesus, king of Lydia, ranked Greek allies by the length of time they had inhabited their lands when seeking alliances after Cyrus's rise to power.¹⁵³ The myth of Deucalion and Pyrrha also ties humanity's origins to the earth; after a great flood, they repopulated the earth by throwing stones over their heads, which became men and women.¹⁵⁴ This myth

¹⁴⁸ See Estrada III, *A Pneumatology of Race in the Gospel of John*. See also Benko, *Race in John's Gospel: Toward an Ethnos-Conscious Approach*. Here Benko argues for a cosmological-racial framework, reimagining of spiritual kinship in broader and more comprehensive manner.

¹⁴⁹ Bekken, *Paul's Negotiation of Abraham in Galatians 3 in the Jewish Context*; Harris, *Christ-faith and Abraham in Galatians 3–4*.

¹⁵⁰ Philo, *Virt.* 203; see also Josephus, *Ant.* 2.67.

¹⁵¹ Euripides, *Bacch.* 263–65, 538–44, 1015; Pindar, *Ol.* 9.40–46; Apollodorus, *Lib.* 3.4.1; *Metam.* 1.75–88

¹⁵² Pausanias, *Descr.* 10.4.4.

¹⁵³ Herodotus, *Hist.* 1.56; Plato, *Menex.* 237b–239a.

¹⁵⁴ Apollodorus, *Lib.* 1.7.2.

highlights the metaphorical connection between people and stone (ὄθεν καὶ λαοὶ μεταφορικῶς ὠνομάσθησαν ἀπὸ τοῦ λαῶς ὁ λίθος).¹⁵⁵

Some New Testament authors subvert Jewish ancestral claims, redefining lineage using the ancient notion of autochthony. For instance, the author of the Gospel of Matthew depicts John the Baptist, while baptizing in the Jordan River wilderness, warning the Pharisees and Sadducees not to rely on their lineage from Abraham. John asserts that God can raise up children for Abraham from stones (λέγω γὰρ ὑμῖν ὅτι δύναται ὁ θεὸς ἐκ τῶν λίθων τούτων ἐγεῖραι τέκνα τῷ Ἀβραάμ) (Matt 3:9). Here, the idea of autochthony is reframed, with stones symbolizing the potential for God to establish a people in contrast to those that might appeal to their lineage. Similarly, the “living stones” metaphor appears in 1 Peter, where the author calls Jesus the “living stone” (λίθον ζῶντα), and believers are described as “living stones” being built into a spiritual house (1 Peter 2:4–5). In essence, the New Testament reconfigures, scrutinizes, and rearranges ideas of lineage and identity in different ways.

1.5 Lists and Multi-Ethnic Identity

This section explores the intersection of lists, catalogues, and genealogies with the concept of multi-ethnic identities. These identities are worth examining not only within their distinct genres and contexts but also considering the unique literary frameworks that shape them. Literary constructs like lists and genealogies often serve as tools for constructing, negotiating, and redefining ethnic boundaries and identities, highlighting their integral role in the literary and cultural imagination of antiquity.

1.5.1 What are Lists, Catalogues, and Genealogies?

Before we explore ancient lists, catalogues, and genealogies, it would be helpful to define exactly what these are. As Robert Belknap assesses modern literary lists, he produces a helpful definition,

¹⁵⁵ Apollodorus, *Lib.* 1.7.2.

At their most simple, lists are frameworks that hold separate and disparate items together. Lists are plastic, flexible structures in which an array of constituent units coheres through specific relations generated by specific forces of attraction. Writers can build these structures so that they appear random or create them so they seem to be organized by some overt principle.¹⁵⁶

Belknap's definition for a list is intentionally encompassing, yet his efforts provide a satisfactory beginning. Belknap elaborates on lists and their broad design, remarking that, "Lists enumerate, account, remind, memorialize, order. Lists take several sizes, shapes, and functions, ranging from directories and historical records to edicts and instructions."¹⁵⁷ Lists then, can occupy many forms, sizes, and purposes and by evaluating the individual items within the lists, a coherent logic can be surmised.¹⁵⁸

This arrangement of separate items is a key feature. He distinguishes a list by the organizational logic that links these items, arranging them in sequence.¹⁵⁹ This means that the ordering and sequential pattern are the logics that underpin a list. Belknap further argues that "the list is simultaneously the sum of its parts and the individual parts themselves."¹⁶⁰ In other words, the key to interpreting any list lies not solely in its individual components, but in how those components come together to form a cohesive and discernable whole. A list, then, can be viewed as a unified piece of information, where the parts are essential to understanding the entire structure, which are ordered in a sequential pattern.

Examining Greek lists in antiquity, Athena Kirk defines a list as "a kind of text that is either presented as or is recognizably serial, and that is recursive, potentially extendable *ad infinitum*."¹⁶¹ What stands out in lists, according to Kirk, is their construction through a discernibly recursive

¹⁵⁶ Belknap, *The List*, 2. He also explores different types of lists including catalogue, inventory, itinerary, and the lexicon, some of which will not be discussed in this chapter.

¹⁵⁷ Belknap, *The List*, 6.

¹⁵⁸ Belknap, *The List*, 15.

¹⁵⁹ For example, names for dogs is the binding or organizational feature of the list in Xenophon, *Cyn.* 7.5.

¹⁶⁰ Belknap, *The List*, 15.

¹⁶¹ Kirk, *Ancient Greek Lists*, 8. Italics hers. She cites, Eco, *The Infinity of Lists*.

and patterned logic. For her, an intriguing philosophical possibility of lists is that they could, in theory, extend indefinitely. While the conception of a list could include the possibility of extending to infinity, lists as we encounter them, are constrained by a multitude of factors that limits its length. Kirk also helpfully outlines the central functions of lists: (1) to collect, or to gather items into the same location; (2) to count, and thus, to enumerate the total count of items; (3) to collate, or to organize the items in a specific order; (4) to conjure, or to bring items to mind without their physical presence; and (5) to create, that is, to form a new composition so it can be viewed as a whole or evaluated independently from its individual components.¹⁶² For Kirk, these are the operating logics that pervade lists.

Like Belknap, this is also a broad definition of lists. Kirk addresses the variety of literary constructions such as catalogues, accounts, and inventories, and decides to include all of them under the umbrella designation of a “list,” collapsing these ideas for her own purposes.¹⁶³ This is understandable seeing that Kirk’s work is particularly focused on the types of lists that outline physical items such as inventories and so a more nuanced definition of categories that she does not extensively engage with is not necessary.

Kirk also asserts that Greek lists serve as a means of expressing cultural values, rather than merely recording them.¹⁶⁴ In other words, much can be gleaned from examining how the author or compiler organizes and arranges material in this literary form. The structure of these lists reveals the implicit values embedded within the composition. A list of participants might be arranged in descending order of importance, or the reverse. Alternatively, a list of cities might be organized in a chiasmic structure or are oriented by geographical locations. In any case, lists are not created in a vacuum; their form and structure are purposeful and reflect specific reasons for their arrangement. Furthermore, these “cultural values” are discerned through a close reading of these lists in their own literary context.

¹⁶² Kirk, *Ancient Greek Lists*, 9. I reworded her list here to avoid a long quotation, with minimal changes to keep the essence of her description.

¹⁶³ Kirk, *Ancient Greek Lists*, 7.

¹⁶⁴ Kirk, *Ancient Greek Lists*, 8.

Yet, there is another important aspect of lists that I find relevant for this chapter, that is, beyond their serial structure, other organizational logics may operate within discernable patterns. A chiasmic structure could be an organizing principle within a list, shaping its internal order.¹⁶⁵ Patterns within lists may be arranged in descending or ascending order, as seen in the genealogies of Matthew and Luke. In one case, the genealogy is chronologically ordered from beginning to end (Matthew 1:1–17), while Luke is chronologically inversed (Luke 3:23–38).

Lists are also organized based on the relative importance of the items themselves. In the case of the disciple lists, they are arranged by the implicit logic of importance, with Simon Peter listed at the front and Judas in the back (Matt 10:2–4; Mark 3:16–19; Luke 6:12–16). In the case of John’s Gospel and the disciples listed there, they do not appear in the same sequential and serial manner as the Synoptics of Acts. While some of the disciples are grouped together or mentioned as a collective in the narrative, they lack the features that I would constitute as a list (John 1:44; 6:67–71; 12:21–22). Additionally, the versatility of lists allows for compilations to develop along “horizontal” or “vertical” axes, flowing sequentially or layering items on top of one another, which is another pattern that appears in different list structures.¹⁶⁶ As we see, different types of patterns are embedded in lists, highlighting the importance of intentional and contextual readings of these literary structures.

The purpose of lists varies based on factors such as genre, length, content, and structure. For instance, Belknap observes that, much like other literary elements such as dialogue and speech, lists can have both literary and functional roles.¹⁶⁷ He comments on the catalogue of ships in the *Iliad*, noting that they convey the vast magnitude of the war and provide historical and geographical information for the audience.¹⁶⁸ This purpose contrasts with that of genealogical lists

¹⁶⁵ Thomson, *Chiasmus in the Pauline Letters*; Brouwer, *The Literary Development of John 13–17*; Rhee (Sung Yul), “The Role for Understanding Christology in Hebrews 1:1–14,” 341–362; Porter and Reed, “Philippians as a Macro-Chiasm and its Exegetical Significance,” 213–231; Messmer, “A Possible Chiasmic Center for Primary History (Genesis-2 Kings),” 232–240; Decaen, “An Embedded Chiasmic Order in Matthew”: 56–74; Heil, “The Chiasmic Structure and Meaning of Paul’s Letter to Philemon,” 178–206.

¹⁶⁶ Belknap, *The List*, 21–27.

¹⁶⁷ Belknap, *The List*, 12.

¹⁶⁸ Belknap, *The List*, 10. The catalogue of ships, the Hellenic side (Homer, *Il.* 2.494–759); the Trojan side (Homer, *Il.* 2.816–2.867); for other catalogues, see Apollodorus, *Lib. Epit.* 3.9–15, 34; Herodotus, *Hist.* 7.89–99; Vergil, *Aen.* 7.641–782; 10.163–214.

in mythography or other narratives, which are typically framed through lineage, highlighting the connection from the deities to the origins of humanity, making sense of the mythical past.¹⁶⁹ This narrative framing is also different from other lists, such as those enumerating vice and virtues, offering a more pedagogical function to the order.¹⁷⁰ The purpose and function of lists are influenced if they are embedded in a literary narrative, as opposed to those that are not. For example, the narrative flow preceding or following a list can offer clues for the reader. These clues are also seen in the ways in which these lists, like in the *Iliad*, are included in subsequent reception history, as instantiations of cultural value.¹⁷¹ It is apparent that several factors influence how we evaluate the purpose and function of lists, ranging from structure, context, and audience.

For this work, the list is the most general category and while it can be purposefully ordered, it is not as specific or defined as catalogues or genealogies. In other words, catalogues are considered lists, but lists are not considered catalogues. Belknap states, “Lists differ from catalogues in presenting a simple series of unites, without the descriptive enhancement a catalogue usually provides. The catalogue is more comprehensive, conveys more information, and is more amenable to digression than the list.”¹⁷² In this sense lists are typically more simply constructed while catalogues are more detailed and comprehensive.

Similarly, genealogies are also considered lists but lists and catalogues are not considered genealogies. In this way, genealogies are much more defined than the other forms since they are organized based on ancestry (real or purported), which are decidedly not central components to either lists or catalogues. The claims of a literary lineage usually trace back to a single progenitor,

¹⁶⁹ Strabo, *Geogr.* 7.7.2; 7.7.8; 8.3.19; 8.5; 8.6.22; 8.7.1; 9.1.18; 9.5.23; 10.4.10; 10.21; 13.1.50; 13.1.53; 13.4.2; 13.4.3; 14.1.2; 14.2.17; 14.3.10; 15.3.24; 17.1.43; Pausanias, *Descr.* 1.5.3; 1.11.1; 2.4.3–4; 2.6.2–4; 2.11.6; 2.18.4–7; 2.19.1; 2.20.4; 3.15.6–8; 3.16.6, 10; 4.3.4; 4.4.2–4; 5.1.4–11; 5.3.6–7; 5.29.4–5; 7.18.4; 8.4.1; 8.5.7; 9.37.1–2; Herodotus, *Hist.* 1.7, 8, 16, 74–75, 92, 96, 102–103; 6.125–127; 7.61–83; Jewish literature also contains genealogies and genealogical references, Sib. Or. 1:65–124, 3:281–87; Tob 1:1; Jdt 8:1; Bar 1:1; 1 Macc 1:1, 2:1–5; Jub. 4:1–33, 7:18–19; 8:1–8; 11:7–8, 14; 33:21–23; 44:11–34; Ps.-Philo 1–2; 4–5; 42:1; Philo, *Prob.* 10 (446); Josephus, *Ag. Ap.* 1:7, Josephus, *Life* 1.

¹⁷⁰ Aristotle, *Eth. Eud.* 2.3.4; 4.5–6:10; Plato, *Georg.* 525; Philo, *Sacr.* 32; Horace *Ep.* 1.1.33–40; *Wis.* 8:7; 14:25–26; Matt 15:19; Mark 7:21–22; Rom 1:29–31; 13:13; 1 Cor 5:10–11; 6:9–10; 2 Cor 6:9–10; 12:20; Gal 5:19–21; Eph 4:31; 5:3–5; Col 3:5, 8; 1 Tim 1:9–10; 2 Tim 3:2–5; Titus 3:3; Jas 3:15; 1 Pet 2:1; 4:3, 15; Rev 9:21; 21:8; 22:15.

¹⁷¹ Spufford, *The Chatto Book of Cabbages and Kings: Lists in Literature.*

¹⁷² Belknap, *The List*, 3.

which arranges the descendants based on a recursive and sequential pattern. But although the logic or organization is specific, the literary form is also versatile since it can be woven into historical or biographical narratives or exist as the primary feature of the work itself.

In his discussion on oral genealogies, Robert R. Wilson utilizes anthropological studies to analyze biblical ones, consulting modern anthropological contexts that are geographically and culturally like ancient Israel.¹⁷³ In doing so, he identifies three formal characteristics of oral genealogies that are instructive for our purposes: segmentation, depth, and fluidity. Although Wilson's work is older, it offers a great starting point in identifying how genealogies are constructed.

The first element to oral genealogies is segmentation, which is the grouping of a person and all their progeny.¹⁷⁴ This organizational grouping can minimally be one generation or can increase with each ancestor along with their expanding familial line, that is, their children and branching progeny. Within the possible structures allowed, the maximal segmentation finds its conclusion as it reaches the founding ancestor. The second characteristic of genealogies is depth, which is the vertical set of progenies.¹⁷⁵ Depth is therefore not concerned with any horizontal sense of familial relationship. For example, a son and his father would be a genealogical depth of one, since the lineage traces one generation from the individual to their one descendent. And finally, the third formal characteristic of oral genealogies is fluidity.¹⁷⁶ This occurs in several ways which could include a change from one generation to another, an additional name within a segmentation, erasure of a name, adoption, and variational genealogies. This criterion is shared by other scholars as well. For example, Robert Fowler's analyses Hellenic genealogies through three lenses: (1) fluidity, (2) segmentation, and (3) filiation.¹⁷⁷ The only difference is (3) filiation, which is the determination of rights and inheritances, based on the lineage and whether it is patrilineal or matrilineal.

¹⁷³ Wilson, *Genealogy and History*, 13–18. Here he outlines a brief history and framework for using anthropological data in understanding biblical genealogies.

¹⁷⁴ Wilson, *Genealogy and History*, 18–21.

¹⁷⁵ Wilson, *Genealogy and History*, 21–26.

¹⁷⁶ Wilson, *Genealogy and History*, 27–36.

¹⁷⁷ Fowler, "Genealogical thinking": 3–4.

The purpose of lists, catalogues, and genealogies are vital to understanding how they are utilized and understood. Wilson states, “Any discussion of the form and function of oral genealogies must bear in mind the fact that a genealogy’s form can never actually be separated from its function.”¹⁷⁸ Therefore, how lineages function are vital for their understanding.¹⁷⁹ Fowler, as he observes the fluidity within Hellenic genealogies asserts, “They are far more important in their social function to early societies than they are as records that would satisfy a modern scholar; indeed, if they were incapable of change, it would pose a serious problem for these societies.”¹⁸⁰ In other words, the malleability of lists signify something of their value. They were not static and fixed; they were fluid and dynamic. These genealogies could take shape based on their intended purpose and adapt to their circumstances.

Furthermore, genealogies encompass a wide spectrum of classifications, like individual, family, tribal group, or ethnic peoples. These lists could even change based on the culture and genre in which they were embedded. Hall draws a distinction between the genealogies represented in the Gospels and other Hellenic ones. He argues that for the Gospels, there is an insistence on direct lineal ancestry as opposed to Hellenic genealogies, which employ metaphorical ancestors that are meant to define relationships between different ethnic groups.¹⁸¹ This idea seems to be more apparent through the expansive ethnic genealogies. While it is true that Jewish culture emphasized direct lineal descent through an ancestor such as Abraham more so than Greco-Roman ethnic groups, specifically Hellenic groups, there are certain instances where the Hellenic or Roman individual employ their lineage as if they were to be taken literally which we will see later.

1.5.2 Summary

¹⁷⁸ Wilson, *Genealogy and History*, 18.

¹⁷⁹ Johnson, *The Purpose of the Biblical Genealogies*. He states, “It is my special concern in the present study to determine the purpose of the biblical genealogies within their literary contexts, that is, to ascertain the extent to which the genealogical form was utilized by the authors of the particular book or source to communicate his characteristic theological convictions.” ix.

¹⁸⁰ Fowler, “Genealogical thinking,” 3.

¹⁸¹ Hall, *Hellenicity*, 15.

This section examines how lists, catalogues, and genealogies intersect with the concept of multi-ethnic identities, exploring their literary frameworks and cultural significance. These constructs are not only tools for recording and organizing information but also for constructing, negotiating, and redefining ethnic boundaries. Key definitions and characteristics of lists, provided by scholars like Belknap and Kirk, reveal their versatility in organizing items through discernible patterns such as order, hierarchy, or thematic arrangements. Lists, catalogues, and genealogies vary in complexity and purpose, from simple enumerations to intricate genealogical records tracing ancestry. Greek lists often reflect cultural values through their structure, while genealogies, as explored by Wilson and Hall, display segmentation, depth, and fluidity, adapting to social and narrative needs, also expressing their cultural values.

Furthermore, this discussion emphasizes how these literary forms are shaped by their context and purpose. For example, genealogies in the Gospels focus on direct ancestry, contrasting with Hellenic genealogies, which often use metaphorical ancestors to symbolize relationships. Across these forms, the flexibility and dynamic nature of lists and genealogies highlight their integral role in shaping identities and cultural memory in antiquity. In other words, they are instantiations of cultural value and extend and define the boundaries of ethnicity.

1.6 Conclusion

The history of scientific racism, alongside modern discussions of phenotype, culture, and biology, significantly shapes how we understand and define the terms *race* and *ethnicity*. Given these complexities, I have chosen to use the term *ethnicity* when discussing the ancient world, while remaining sympathetic to, and understanding, of those who might opt for different terminology. I also provide a working definition of ethnicity that draws on both modern and ancient perspectives, prioritizing the myth of shared descent as a central component. Subsequently, I explore how Jewish and Greek identities are constructed, engaging with key scholarly discussions surrounding these identities. Finally, I demonstrate how a multi-ethnic examination intersects with the literary constructs of lists, catalogues, and genealogies. These literary devices do more than organize information—they embed and instantiate ethnic logics, portraying and reinforcing ethnic identities while communicating their complexities.

Chapter 2: Multi-Ethnic Identities in Greco-Roman Contexts: Demi-Gods, Heroes, and Kings

2.1 Introduction

From the earliest formations of kinship groups, political entities, or territorial bands, societies have grappled with understanding and categorizing individuals with mixed backgrounds.¹ Individuals with multiple ethnic identities possessed diverse ancestry, resulting in a blended lineage that may intersect with various cultural and linguistic signifiers, such as customs and language. While these identities are socially constructed and lack a biological basis, they still influence how people perceive and engage one another. In this way, like our contexts today, the ancient world categorized people differently depending on these various factors.²

Considering the multiplicity of identities in the ancient world, the aim of this chapter is to explore the portrayal of these identities in Greek and Latin literature. This examination will span different time periods and geographical locations. The overarching methodology of this chapter is informed by classicists and biblical scholars such as Jonathan Hall, Denise Kimber Buell, Shaye Cohen, and Eric Barreto, that examine ethnicity in their respective contexts showing a fluidity and adaptability to identity.

In light of the portrayal of demi-gods and other multi-ethnic figures in ancient literature, an important question arises: how might Jesus have been perceived within this broader cultural milieu? In certain respects, the infancy narratives, particularly the virginal conception of Jesus, would have suggested, to ancient audiences, that Jesus was a figure akin to demi-gods, who were

¹ For example, see Beckman, “Foreigners in the Ancient Near East,” 203–216; Bahrani, “Race and Ethnicity in Mesopotamian Antiquity,” 48–59; in the classical world, see Isaac. *The Invention of Racism*; Price, Finkelberg, and Shahar, *Rome: An Empire of Many Nations*. For an evaluation of hybrid identity at the Jewish cemetery at Beth She’arim, see Peppard, “Personal Names and Ethnic Hybridity in Late Ancient Galilee,” in *Religion, Ethnicity and Identity in Ancient Galilee*.

² It is, in other words, important to understand the social constructive element of race/ethnicity in the ancient world and how that relates to being of multiple binaries. See Bahrani, “Race and Ethnicity in Mesopotamian Antiquity,” here Bahrani points out the difficult of mapping onto Mesopotamian Antiquity, categories that were created millennia later to understand race/ethnicity.

often born through divine-human unions. From this vantage point, Jesus could be interpreted within existing frameworks of semi-divine status. However, subsequent Christian theology, especially as articulated at the fourth ecumenical council in Chalcedon (451 CE), explicitly rejected the mixing of natures. Instead, Chalcedon affirmed that Jesus exists in two full and unconfused natures, fully God and fully human, without contradiction or division.³

The broader argument of this chapter centers on the portrayal of multi-ethnic figures in antiquity, including demi-gods, and how these figures embody similar ethnic logics and narrative functions. While I do not delve deeply into Jesus' identity within the demi-god paradigm, I acknowledge the overlapping thematic territory. The comparison between Jesus and demi-gods raises important questions about how divine and human identities were perceived and constructed in antiquity, but a full treatment of this subject lies beyond the scope of this chapter.

The literary corpora under examination will encompass Greek and Latin historiographies, poems, epics, and biographies. Additionally, this analysis will commence with an exploration of demi-gods in Greco-Roman literature. Although mythical, their portrayal offers valuable insights into how mixed identities were perceived and understood in ancient times, thereby providing a comparative framework for other examples. The sections of this chapter will proceed in a general chronological and linguistic sequence: (1) demi-gods; (2) Cyrus the Great in Herodotus' *Histories*, (3) Cimon and Themistocles in Plutarch's *Lives*, and (4) Pallas in the *Aeneid*.

2.2 Demi-Gods in Antiquity

The initial focus of this chapter is to explore the depiction of multi-ethnic identity among those considered to be demi-gods in ancient literature, including both Greco-Roman and Jewish contexts.⁴ This section will show the complexity in the ways in which demi-gods were described and in doing so, highlighting the myth of shared descent along with the socialized boundaries in which these identities were formed. For example, Anthony Smith's criteria for defining ethnicity

³ Leith, *Creeeds of the Churches*, 34–37; Davis, *The First Seven Ecumenical Councils*, 170–206.

⁴ Evslin, *Gods, Demigods & Demons*; Hard and Rose, *The Routledge Handbook of Greek Mythology*; Zajko and Hoyle, eds. *A Handbook to the Reception of Classical Mythology*.

is a “myth of descent”, which establishes people within a shared origin story.⁵ This shared myth binds people together in a mythic past wherein they can root themselves, anchor their identity, and share a vision of the historic past with their community. We see this myth of descent in operation here as well as throughout this chapter.

Although demi-gods are not strictly “multi-ethnic”, they evince the same logics of multi-ethnic construction that necessitates a binary existence from which fluidity and adaptability of identity occurs. In this way, demi-gods were a type of ethnic category, in that they exhibit the same logics of existence. One of the main roles that demi-gods occupy is to provide the link between humanity and deities and helping to establish the ethnic solidarity of people groups.

2.2.1 Mesopotamian, Hebrew, and Classical Greek Conceptions of Demi-Gods

Semi-divine beings permeated a wide range of literature with their origin tales and legendary exploits. Early Mesopotamian literature demonstrates that heroes are often demi-gods, like Gilgamesh, the offspring of the king Lugalbanda and the goddess Ninsun.⁶ Interestingly, in Gilgamesh’s case, he is two-thirds deity and one-third human, defying conventional and theoretical biological consistency.⁷ In any case, Gilgamesh’s mixed identity serves multiple functions in the epic, for example, he has access to the divine via his mother as well as possesses the ability to fight off the divine creation, Enkidu, and become friends with him.⁸ Demi-gods and others like Gilgamesh also serve to link divine to human through their respective genealogies, often related to the divine right of Mesopotamian kings.⁹

⁵ Smith, *The Ethnic Origins of Nations*, 22–31.

⁶ *Gilg* 1.

⁷ *Gilg*. 1. For a work that evaluates the underlying sources and views the epic through the lens of conflict between competing forces of values, such as the competing ideologies of transience and eternity, or in other words, humanity and divinity, see Abusch, “The Development and Meaning of the Epic of Gilgamesh,” 614–622.

⁸ *Gilg*. 1–2. Another aspect of the epic can be seen to solidify kingly rule against competing lineage claims, see Lanoue, “Le rêve de Gilgamesh,” 553–573. For an analysis of Enkidu as a hybrid figure, see Cassin, “Le Semblable et le différent,” in *Hommes et bêtes entretiens sur le racism*, 115–127.

⁹ Sazonov, “Complex Genealogies in Mesopotamia,” 231–248. See also, Woods, “Sons of the Sun,” 78–96.

However, examples exist where semi-divine beings were viewed negatively, like in Hebrew scripture where the Nephilim were a result of the “sons of God” and mortal women.¹⁰ In this case, the negative appraisal is substantiated by the close relationship between these unions, the wickedness of humanity, and subsequent judgement.¹¹ Ronald Hendel succinctly describes the relationship between the negative appraisal and the mixing of identities, that “Gen 6:1-4 presents a mixing of categories-of gods and mortals-and the procreation of a hybrid category of demigods which it is in the nature of the myth to suppress.”¹² In this case, the hybrid nature of Nephilim offers a clear motivation for the flood and highlights the negative appraisal given to divine and human mixture. Subsequent Jewish and Christian literature corroborates this bleak picture by elaborating or referencing these acts negatively, like in the book of *Jubilees*, the apocalyptic first book of *Enoch*, and Petrine literature.¹³

Along with Mesopotamian and Jewish literature, the motif of demi-gods is recurrent in classical Greek literature.¹⁴ Hesiod’s *Theogony* depicts an era populated by heroes and demigods with little distinction between them. Hesiod’s portrayal emphasizes the propensity of gods like Zeus to sire children with mortals, resulting in a lineage of demi-gods.¹⁵ Furthermore, like the end of the era established by the flood in the Genesis era, Hesiod’s *Works and Days* shows a transition between the ages of humanity. In particular, the transition between the fourth age of the demi-gods to the fifth and current age of humanity was marked by evil, wars, and wanton violence, implying an

¹⁰ Gen 6:4.

¹¹ Gen 6:5–6. Based on its Mesopotamian background, Drawnel argues that the “giants” of Genesis 6 should be identified with violent and evil demons, not Mesopotamian warrior kings, see Drawnel, “The Mesopotamian Background of the Enochic Giants and Evil Spirits,” 14–38; for a source that interprets the giants as Mesopotamian warrior kings, see Kvanvig, *Primeval History*. For a source that reexamines the phrase “son of God” in Genesis 6, see Launay, “Les fils du texte: Genèse 6,1–4,” 41–59; on the origins of the Genesis 6 account in relation to its function and connection to the larger Mediterranean myths like the Trojan war in Homer’s writings, see Hendel, “Of Demigods and the Deluge,” 13–26; for more sources about the second temple debate about these texts, see Reeves, “Utnapishtim in the Book of Giants?,” 110–115; Huggins, “Noah and the Giants: A Response to John C. Reeves,” 103–110.

¹² Hendel, “Of Demigods and the Deluge,” 23.

¹³ Jub. 4.16–26; Gen. Rab 26.7; 1Q20.2; 4QEnGiants; 1 Enoch 1–36 is especially devoted to unpacking and condemning these unions. See also, Reed, *Demons, Angels, and Writings in Ancient Judaism*; Reed, *Fallen Angels and the History of Judaism and Christianity*; Stuckenbruck, “The ‘Angels’ and ‘Giants’ of Genesis 6:1–4 in Second and Third Century BCE Jewish Interpretation,” 354–377; other literature includes, *Wisdom of Solomon*, 3 *Maccabees*, 3 *Baruch*; 1 Pet 3:18–20; 2 Pet 2:4; Jude 6; in Philo, *De gigantibus*; Josephus, *Ant.* 1.3.1.

¹⁴ There is evidence of this schema in ANE literature as well, see West, *The East Face of Helicon*, 312–319.

¹⁵ Hesiod, *Theog.* c.960ff, 969–1020.

untenable epoch of history, although the direct correlation to a “judgement” like the flood is not explicit.¹⁶ Hesiod is keen to establish a mythic past within a genealogical framework which connects human to divine, which can help contextualize ethnic identity and creates a sense of origins to a mythic past. This myth of descent clarifies how humanity came into existence while securing a link to the divine.

Similar references to demi-gods can be found in works by Homer, where their achievements and military prowess are closely intertwined with their status.¹⁷ The association between warrior prowess and divine lineage not only elevates the status of these heroes but also reflects the hierarchical structure of the age of humanity depicted in Hesiod’s *Theogony*. Consequently, attributes such as valor, heroic exploits, and elevated social standing are bestowed upon these semi-divine beings, reinforcing their significance within the cultural and literary landscape of antiquity. In this sense, they can be moral exemplars or instantiations of courage and bravery as well. This implies that this lineage and descent is directly connected to the heroes and offers a rationale for human success.

2.2.2 The Problem of Diverging Accounts

One challenge in documenting the lineages of demi-gods lies in the diverse and sometimes conflicting genealogies found in sources. Depending on the specific individual, there exists a wide array of accounts, each presenting its own rendition of the demi-god’s lineage. Differing accounts can also be explained by the geography and context in which certain literature was created.¹⁸ When addressing the difficulty in properly recording the lineages of heroes and demi-gods, given the multitude of stories, Diodorus Siculus aptly articulates this challenge when he states, “but the greatest and most disconcerting obstacle of all consists in the fact that those who have recorded the deeds and myths of the earliest times are in disagreement among themselves” (Oldfather,

¹⁶ Hesiod, *Op.* 155–173. To see the connections between Genesis 1–11 and the Hesiod, see Gnuse, “Greek Connections,” 130–192; arguing against the idea that in other of Hesiod’s works, like the *Catalogue of Women*, there is a distinction between demi-gods and humanity in the heroic age, Gonzalez, “The Catalogue of Women and the End of the Heroic Age (Hesiod fr. 204.94–103 M-W),” 375–422.

¹⁷ See Homer, *Il.* 2.511–866; 6.150–156; 11.260–263, 298–304, 305–310; 16.860; 17.190–207; 21.185–190.

¹⁸ Duev, “The Family of Zeus in Early Greek Poetry and Myths,” 121–144.

LCL).¹⁹ Consider Dionysius, commonly believed to be the offspring of Zeus and Semele. Depending on which source one consults, there exist conflicting claims regarding his identity, birth, lineage, and origin, making a cohesive narrative difficult to ascertain.²⁰ Although challenging to determine any historical veracity to such claims, the social and cultural import of these lineages become even more apparent.

Given that the ancient Greeks venerated a multitude of deities and wrote literature with certain goals in mind, that may not comport with our modern historiographical sensibilities, it is unsurprising that these lineages could become muddled in ancient sources.²¹ In rearranging a genealogy or lineage, an ancient author could purposefully connect a demi-god to a people group or establish a kingly lineage for a current ruler. Another consideration of the diversity of accounts is whether a collection of demi-gods is referenced, like in an age or as a collective, or individually, which might then change the assumptions relevant to their descriptions.²² For example, in transitioning between the fourth and fifth age of humanity, Hesiod describes the current age in bleak terms in contrast to the heroic age, marked by demi-gods in the age prior.²³ This juxtaposition creates a sense that the mythic past was profoundly better, while creating a sense of realism for the current age.

2.2.3 The Good and Bad of Descent

In most cases, descending from a deity often bestowed status, prestige, and extraordinary abilities upon individuals. Take, for example, Zetes and Calais, the twin sons of Boreas and Oreithyia. Boreas, revered as the god of storms, the north wind, and winter, was frequently depicted with

¹⁹ Diodorus Siculus, *Lib.* 4.1.

²⁰ Homer, *Hymn.* 7; Euripides, *Bacch.* 1–5; Apollodorus, *Lib.* 3.4.3; Hesiod, *Theog.* 940–942; Diodorus Siculus, *Lib.* 3.62, 74; Philostratus, *Vit. Apoll.* 2.9.

²¹ Fletcher, “Systematic Genealogies in Apollodorus,” 59–91; Tibiletti, “Commenting on Pindar,” 166–177; Wiseman, “Legendary Genealogies in Late-Republican Rome,” 153–164; Scanlon, *Greek Historiography*; Marincola, *A Companion to Greek and Roman Historiography*.

²² Particularly in the Archaic period, see Delattre, “HMIΘEOΣ En Question,” 481–510.

²³ Hesiod, *Op.* 155–173.

wings.²⁴ When Zetes and Calais reached maturity, they sprouted wings, mirroring their father's divine lineage and symbolizing their connection to the deity.²⁵ This physical manifestation of their ancestry highlights how lineage could manifest in tangible attributes. However, not all individuals with divine lineage were endowed with special abilities or viewed positively. Consider Scirion, the robber, who, despite his divine heritage, met a tragic end at the hands of Theseus, highlighting that lineage did not always guarantee favorable outcomes.²⁶ Or Eryx, a demi-god king in Italy, was killed by Heracles, another demi-god, when they fought each other.²⁷ In some cases, demi-gods exist in the same manner and face the same unfortunate outcomes as humans in battle.

While demi-gods often possessed augmented abilities or exceptional qualities compared to other humans, they were not typically regarded as equals to deities. An illustrative example of this distinction is found in the myth of Orion, a demi-god who became the companion of Dawn (Eos). Despite his semi-divine status as the son of Poseidon and Euryale, Artemis ultimately killed Orion, as it was deemed inappropriate for gods to form bonds with mortals.²⁸ This instance reveals the inherent hierarchy between gods and demi-gods, despite the latter's remarkable attributes and semi-divine status. Demi-gods may exist with heightened abilities and exceptional qualities, but they are not deified. Furthermore, there existed a belief among some that individuals born of both gods and mortals were destined for misfortune.²⁹ This notion suggests that the blending of divine and mortal heritage could lead to unfavorable outcomes, adding another layer of complexity to the portrayal of demi-gods in Greco-Roman mythology. The idea that descent confers status, attributes, and qualities, is something that authors depict of demi-gods, which reflect the general cultural assumptions of ethnicity.

²⁴ Hesiod, *Theog.* 378–379; *Cat.* 40a; Nonnus, *Diony.* 6.18–19; Apollodorus, *Lib.* 1.111.

²⁵ Ovid, *Metam.* 6.675–720; Pindar, *Pyth.*, 4.180–185; Apollodorus, *Lib.* 3.199; Apollonius Rhodius, *Argo.* 1.212 ff.

²⁶ Apollodorus, *Lib. Epit.* 1.2.

²⁷ Eryx, a king of the city Eryx in Italy, had a few different lineages, but it was clear that he was a demi-god (Apollodorus, *Lib.* 2.5.10; Diodorus Siculus, *Lib.* 4.22.6–23.3; 4:83 1–4; *Hyg. Fab.* 260; Cato, *Orig. frag.* 6b). Although he was gifted with abilities to fight and with strength, he was killed by Heracles when they fought each other (Vergil, *Aen.* 5.387–484). Heracles was also known for killing the son of Poseidon, Cteatus, see Pindar, *Ol.* 10.25–27.

²⁸ Homer, *Ody.* 5.115–135; Apollodorus, *Lib.* 1.4.3–4.

²⁹ Euripides, *Ion* 505–10.

2.2.4 The Literary Framing of Demi-Gods

Embedded within literature is the way that authors shape and narrate their content via the depiction of semi-divine humans and lineages. For instance, in mythology, tracing the lineages of demi-gods served to delineate the flow and breadth of history. This tradition persisted in the works of authors such as Apollodorus, who continued to elucidate the intricate mythological genealogies, creating a sense of flow and structure to the work.³⁰ Epics and poems further exemplify this pattern by prominently featuring the lineage and parentage of demi-gods within the narrative.³¹ Sometimes they appear as asides, but often they transition the narrative from one segment to another. The deliberate emphasis on ancestry and heritage serves to aid the reader or listener in identifying key figures in the story while accentuating their attributes and lineage, thereby providing insight into their significance within the narrative.

Above all, literary patterns that showcase one's proximity to deities, often achieved through lineage, serve as a powerful mechanism to underscore the importance of characters within the narrative. Having mixed lineage is not inherently negative for the individual; rather, its significance lies in the nature of the parental lineage.³² This literary trope provides a framework upon which the deeds and achievements of characters are built. The infusion of divine blood into one's lineage establishes an interpretive structure for the audience, highlighting the exceptional nature of the character. For example, numerous great men and rulers boasted divine parentage in their lineage. Suetonius recounts the auspicious omens surrounding the birth of Caesar Augustus, attributing his lineage to Apollo.³³ Given Augustus' notable achievements and exploits, this divine lineage

³⁰ See, Apollodorus, *Lib.* 1.3.2; 1.4.1; 1.7.2–3; 2.4.1–2, 9.8; 3.1.1, 4.3; 10.3, 10.7, 12.1, 14.3, 15.7 (cf. Plutarch, *Thes.* 3.1); Epit.1.2; 5.1, 2, 3; Ovid, *Metam.* 1.390; Hesiod, *Cat.* 1; Euripides, *Herc. fur.* 1–10; Hesiod, *Theog.* c.940ff.

³¹ Apollonius of Rhodes, *Argon.* 1.170–175; 1.210; Nonnus, *Dion.* 1.145; 3.280–87; 5.213–215 (cf. Hesiod *Cat.* 40a); Herodotus, *Hist.* 1.147; Diodorus Siculus, *Lib.* 4.5; Euripides, *Ion* 5–15; Hesiod, *Theog.* 1011; this is evident in Latin epics as well, see Virgil, *Aen.* 1.580–585; 3.90–100; 5.35–41; 8.190–97; 8.608; Apollodorus, *Lib.* 3.12.1 see also Homer, *Il.* 20.215–17; Ovid, *Metam.* 1.390; 3.340; 6.679; 9.437; 11.301.

³² One scholar aptly observes that the dual lineage of heroes, with one divine and one human parent was indicative of a remarkable individual, see Hudson, *Worshipping a Crucified Man*, 45. Hudson is commenting on the ways in which Justin Martyr leaves certain details about Jesus' life uncommented on, relative to the idea of Jesus' death, that he goes on at length to explain for his audience.

³³ Suetonius, *Aug.* 94.4.

benefited his stature. In ancient mythology, interactions between deities and humans were not uncommon.³⁴ Plutarch notes the Egyptians' distinction between relationships involving women and deities versus men and deities.³⁵ The nature of the divine lineage shapes the individual's destiny, creating a hierarchy of humanity through their relationship with the divine.

A prime example of how literary structure embeds cultural values about demi-gods is how Plutarch describes Fabius Maximus, a Roman general and statesman, whose mother was said to be part nymph and part deity through her lineage to Heracles.³⁶ For Plutarch, this divine lineage not only bestowed upon Fabius Maximus a prestigious heritage, elevating his status, but also facilitated the emergence of several illustrious individuals within the Fabii family.³⁷ Another example is Julius orating his aunt's genealogy, which connected to the gods. Julius purposely orates this mythic lineage to leverage their family's divine lineage in support of his own right to rule.³⁸ Thus, the infusion of divine blood into the human lineage serves as a pivotal literary device, enriching the narrative and providing a framework for understanding the exceptional achievements of notable individuals as well as to establish key political support.

In this section, we see that demi-gods link the divine and ordinary. They existed in the mythic past and were reconfigured and shaped to establish meaning for the ethnic groups that derived their lineage from them. Demi-gods are also shown to be appraised both negatively and positively, indicating that not all mixture is positive. What matters most is what mixtures are present in an individual, and the purpose of the author in citing the demi-god, which seems to be more important than the mixture itself. Furthermore, like Athena Kirk's assertion that lists instantiate an expression of cultural value, the linking of the divine and ordinary through specific literary constructs such as genealogies, reveal these cultural values of the power of descent and embodied virtues.³⁹ In all, literary structures intertwine with genealogical and ancestral formulations.

³⁴ Plutarch, *Num.* 48.

³⁵ Plutarch, *Num.* 48.

³⁶ Plutarch, *Fab.* 1.

³⁷ Plutarch, *Fab.* 1.

³⁸ Suetonius, *Jul.* 6.1.

³⁹ Kirk, *Ancient Greek Lists*, 8.

2.3 Cyrus the Great in Herodotus' *Histories*

Cyrus the Great, an enigmatic figure from the 6th century BCE, occupies a significant place in history as a revered ruler.⁴⁰ He is renowned for liberating Jewish captives and facilitating their return to Judea, earning distinguished mention in Jewish literature.⁴¹ Additionally, he is credited as the founder of the expansive Achaemenid Empire.⁴² Born to Cambyses, the king of Anshan, a kingdom situated in Parsa, modern-day southwestern Iran, Cyrus had a multi-ethnic lineage.⁴³ On the other side of his lineage, his mother, Mandane, was the daughter of Astyages, the Median king.⁴⁴ Yet, while Cyrus the Great is multi-ethnic, like the other figures in this chapter, he is also of nobility and royalty, which makes him a distinct individual in regards to the way he functions in literature. We will see how Cyrus fits into some of the assumptions of multi-ethnic figures while also being shaped by his social and political context.

While a plethora of writings depict Cyrus, his portrayal is most notably captured in the works of Herodotus.⁴⁵ Despite some skepticism regarding the historical reliability of Herodotus, his

⁴⁰ Waters, *King of the World*; Briant, *From Cyrus to Alexander*, 31–61; Mitchell, *Cyrus the Great*; Jacobs and Rollinger, *A Companion to the Achaemenid Persian Empire*; the dearth of Persian and Median sources for Cyrus shows a reliance on Greek ones, although there are attempts to construct an “Iranian” perspective of Cyrus the Great, see Irannejad, “The Ancient Iranian Perception of Cyrus the Great,” 231–253.

⁴¹ And Cyrus is often connected to alluded to in relation to the construction of the temple: 2 Chron 36:22–23; Ezra 1:1–4; 4:3–5; Isa 41:2, 25; 44:28–45:1, 13–14; 48: 14–15. 3 *Sib. Or.*, 286–294.

⁴² Dusinberre, *Empire, Authority, and Autonomy in Achaemenid Anatolia*; Potts ed., *The Oxford Handbook of Ancient Iran*; Wiesehöfer, *Ancient Persia*; Waters, *Ancient Persia*; for a source that shows the historical link and disconnect between the Achaemenids and the later Sasanian Persians, see Daryaei, “The Construction of the Past in Late Antique Persia,” 493–503; see also Canepa, “Technologies of Memory in Early Sasanian Iran,” 563–596.

⁴³ For an exploration of why Cyrus associates his rule with Anshan in ways that his successors did not, see Stronach, “Cyrus and the Kingship of Anshan,” 55–69; on a related note, Darius’s possible antagonism toward Median ideology is expressed through the self-portrayal of his lineage vis-à-vis Cyrus, see Soudavar, “Astyages, Cyrus and Zoroaster,” 45–78.

⁴⁴ Herodotus, *Hist.* 1.107. Astyages had a portentous dream about his daughter so he gave her away to Cambyses, a Persian because of its alarming nature; Xenophon, *Cry.* 1.2.1.

⁴⁵ Other later sources include Ctesias of Cnidus’ *Persian history*, Xenophon’s *Cyropaedia*, the *Babylonian Chronicles* and Aeschylus’ *Persae*. Much of the events in Herodotus diverge with the other accounts. Some are understandably skeptical about the reliability of Herodotus’ account, because of the nature of Herodotus’ historiographical assumptions, see Waters, *Herodotus on Tyrants and Despots*; Baragwanath and Bakker, eds., *Myth, Truth, and Narrative in Herodotus*; Howe, et al., eds. *Ancient Historiography on War and Empire*; see also Flower,

historiographical writings offer valuable insights.⁴⁶ Regardless of the historical veracity of such descriptions, Herodotus' depiction of Cyrus as multi-ethnic helps us to uncover the assumptions of ethnicity, and the role of social status as an inherent characteristic within individuals. Thus, the main insight of this section is that Herodotus is actively utilizing the ancient theory that status and virtue are inherited through lineage, not in a social sense, but in an ontological one. This ancient theory will be most vividly displayed through the contrast Herodotus makes through Cyrus' upbringing vis-à-vis his inherited traits. Cyrus is confined to his destiny, which is shaped and framed through his multi-ethnic identity as well as his esteemed social status.

2.3.1 Inherited Traits

In Herodotus' account, Astyages was alarmed by a portentous dream about his daughter Mandane's potential to usurp him if she married another Mede, so he gave her in marriage to Cambyses, a Persian.⁴⁷ Following this political alliance, another ominous dream that hints at his demise, leads Astyages to separate Cyrus from his mother and father, fearing political instability.⁴⁸ Astyages then instructs Harpagus, his steward, to kill Cyrus, but instead, Harpagus entrusts Cyrus to a herdsman named Mitrdates and his wife Cyno, who desired a child of their own, but could not conceive.⁴⁹ At this point, the contrast between Cyrus' inherited traits and upbringing begins. That is, despite being raised in a bucolic and simple setting, Cyrus' innate nature as a future ruler becomes evident as he grows up. Among the other children, Cyrus displays his inherent kingly authority, effortlessly assuming a leadership role and issuing orders to his children peers.⁵⁰ This early display of

"Herodotus and Persia," in the *Cambridge Companion to Herodotus*, 274–289; Zaccarini, "Ruling through Fear," 538–557.

⁴⁶ Munson, "Who Are Herodotus' Persians?," 457–470. Regarding the Persians, Munson states, "Although Herodotus, needless to say, does not get everything right, he provides a great deal of authentic information. Even some of his inaccuracies are illuminating, as they are rooted in Persian traditions or discourse" (pp. 457–8); see also Flower, "Herodotus and Persia," in *The Cambridge Companion to Herodotus*, 274–289. Herodotus mixes story patterns and particular literary techniques for specific purposes, like adapting them for his own audiences and enhancing his own historical credibility, see Chiasson, "Myth and Truth in Herodotus' Cyrus Logos", in *Myth, Truth, and Narrative in Herodotus*, 213–232. See also McWilliams, "Hybridity in Herodotus," 745–755.

⁴⁷ Herodotus, *Hist.* 1.107.

⁴⁸ Herodotus, *Hist.* 1.108.

⁴⁹ Herodotus, *Hist.* 1.108–113.

⁵⁰ Herodotus, *Hist.* 1.114–115.

leadership foreshadows Cyrus' future greatness and emphasizes Herodotus' portrayal of him as a figure destined for greatness from birth. One like Cyrus, who has inherited such traits from his Median and Persian royal lineage, cannot fight against the tide of such a destiny.

In contrasting the overriding “genetic” traits over the social and developmental setting of Cyrus, Herodotus utilizes the theory that the characteristics related to royalty, leadership, and virtue are inherited. This theory reflects the widespread notion held in antiquity, that there were characteristics embedded within different people groups as an ontological reality.⁵¹ This notion is echoed in Herodotus's depiction of Cyrus' parents and upbringing. For example, Herodotus claims that Cyrus' mother is of a much nobler race, while his father is inferior.⁵² In this way, Cyrus inevitably manifests the traits inherited from his parents. In antiquity, it was held that physical attributes and behaviors can be traced back to ancestors, according to the prevailing beliefs of the time. Thus, Herodotus suggests that Cyrus' upbringing is imbued with the expectation that he will naturally exhibit the qualities inherited from his lineage.⁵³ By articulating Cyrus' upbringing in this manner, Herodotus implies that Cyrus inherently possesses the attributes passed down through his ancestry.

We see the concept of inherited characteristics in other literature as well. For instance, Livy recounts Manlius Vulso's description of the mixed Greek-Gauls as a “lesser breed”.⁵⁴ Similarly, Livy portrays these people as retaining their “Gallic spirit,” suggesting that their original ethnic makeup had not yet been diluted by other influences.⁵⁵ Livy's perspective, though veiled in

⁵¹ Isaac, *The Invention of Racism*, 55–168, esp. 74–82. Here inherited traits are commented on quite extensively by Isaac. This also recalls the way Herodotus talks about the ancestral customs of the Issedones, who when their fathers die, it is said that they eat some of his meat, *mixed* with goat, perhaps indicating or disparaging the status of the Issedones, see Herodotus, *Hist.* 4.26.

⁵² Herodotus, *Hist.* 1.91; see also Euripides *Suppl.* 219–225, 289–296, 1295–1305; *Phoen.* 813–821, 911–944; Plato, *Tim.* 18d–191; *Resp.* 414d–415c, 459a–e; *Menex.* 237b–238b, 238e–239a; *Leg.* 3.692e–693e; Aristotle, *Pol.* 1.1.5 (1252b), 1.2.7, 1.2.12–14, 1.2.18–19; Xenophon, *Cry.* 1.1.3. See this type of inheritable trait in other places such as *Hist.* 3.101 where Herodotus claims that people from India have black semen, which correlates to the color of their skin, cf. Aristotle, *Hist. an.* 3.22 (523a17–18), where Aristotle disputes this claim.

⁵³ See Suetonius, *Nero* 1; Plutarch, *Mar.* 46.

⁵⁴ Livy *Rom. Hist.* 38.17.9–11, “hi iam degeneres sunt, mixti” that is to say, they are inferior, lesser, or degenerate.

⁵⁵ Livy *Rom. Hist.* 37.8.4–5. For sources about Gallo-Greek identities, see Mullen, *Southern Gaul and the Mediterranean*. Much of what we have in this time and region entails epigraphic and archaeological evidence, for

compliments regarding the Gallic spirit, implies an assumption that mixing with other groups, in this case, the Greeks, had a degenerative effect, diluting the original traits. However, Lucius Florus offers a contrasting view, suggesting that the ferocious temperament of the Gallo-Greeks was softened by the Asian climate, suggesting that the environment over lineage played a large role in their temperament.⁵⁶ Florus also notes that the origins of the Gallo-Greeks were “mixed and confused,” underscoring the complexity of their ancestry.⁵⁷ These differing perspectives on inherited traits are not unique to Livy and Florus but are echoed in various other literary works as well.

Another example of this theory is evident in Book 4 of *Histories*, where Herodotus focuses on the Scythians, where he also briefly mentions the Pelasgians and Athenians.⁵⁸ This section in his *Histories* is precipitated by Darius’ invasion of Scythia following his conquest of Babylon.⁵⁹ Herodotus provides fascinating descriptions of the Scythian people, offering literary insights into their culture and society. One of the most intriguing aspects highlighted by Herodotus is the multi-ethnic children living among the Scythians. He notes that while the Scythian army was engaged in warfare, the slave men and native Scythian women bore a new generation, resulting in a mixed population.⁶⁰ When the returning Scythian army encountered this new generation back home, the new generation attempted to resist, leading to a conflict. The Scythians devised a strategy involving horsewhips to subdue the mixed children. This attempt worked since the multi-ethnic offspring reverted to their slave nature once they saw the whips.⁶¹ In other words, they responded to the whips, even though they had not been used on them before, solely because of their “slave nature”. This narrative further suggests that Herodotus believed in the theory that characteristics associated

Hellenistic linguistic influence and diversity, see Bats, “Grec Et Gallo-Grec: Les Graffites Sur Céramique Aux Sources De l’Écriture En Gaule Méridionale (Ile-Iers. Av. J.-C.),” 7-20.

⁵⁶ Florus *Rom. Hist.* 1.27.3–4.

⁵⁷ Florus *Rom. Hist.* 1.27.3–4, “mixta et adulterata est”.

⁵⁸ Further relevant comments on the Scythians and other people groups include *Hist.* 4.2–5, 78–80, 108–109, 145–146; see also, Hartog, *The Mirror of Herodotus*, 3–33. In general, the Scythians are portrayed as having bizarre and ghastly customs, *Hist.* 4.72–75, perhaps rooted in their aversion toward Greek customs, *Hist.* 4.76; see also Thomas, *Herodotus in Context*, esp. 42–74 in reference to Scythians.

⁵⁹ Herodotus, *Hist.* 4.1.

⁶⁰ Herodotus, *Hist.* 4.3.

⁶¹ Herodotus, *Hist.* 4.4.

with parentage were inherited by their offspring. This belief is reflected in his portrayal of Cyrus, the Scythians, as well as throughout his work. In another place, Cicero contends that certain people were “born to be slaves”, indicating that one’s destiny was tied to inherited traits passed along by lineage and ancestry.⁶²

2.3.2 Mixed-Parentage, Social Status, and Destiny

Furthermore, it is notable that Herodotus employs an intriguing moniker to describe Cyrus: the term “mule” (ἡμίονος) alluding to Cyrus’s mixed parentage.⁶³ He elucidates this usage by explaining that Cyrus had dual parentage, with his mother hailing from a higher status than his father. Herodotus states,

For that mule was in truth Cyrus; who was the son of two persons not of the same nation, of whom the mother was the nobler and the father of lesser estate; for she was a Median, daughter of Astyages king of the Medians: but he was a Persian and under the rule of the Medians, and was wedded, albeit in all regards lower than she, to one that should be his sovereign lady (Godley, LCL).⁶⁴

This interpretation contextualizes the mule metaphor, which symbolizes a blend of a female horse and a male donkey. Thus, while a pejorative term is used to describe Cyrus and his identity, he is simultaneously portrayed as a figure of high status and kingly demeanor.⁶⁵ Thus, it is relevant to comment that the juxtaposition between parents, and the term of mixture adds complexity to the understanding of Cyrus’ character. Mixture between parents can take on multiple forms, such as ethnic and social. It can also take on a variety of senses, depending on the context and

⁶² Cicero, *Prov. cons.* 5.10.

⁶³ Herodotus, *Hist.* 1.55, 56, 91. See Strong, “Mules in Herodotus,” 455–464. Herodotus himself, at the very least, had extended family with mixed Greek and Carian descent (455). Perhaps this connection reveals something of his sympathies for characters like Cyrus. See also, Munson, *Telling Wonders*, 248–250. See also, Aristotle, *Gen. an.* 746a–749a; Aelian, *Nat. an.* 12.16.

⁶⁴ Herodotus, *Hist.* 1.91.

⁶⁵ Other usages in Herodotus are for regular mules: 1.59; 3.151, 153; 4.28, 30, 129; 7.57. For instance, the pejorative connotations come into effect in the sense that mules are sterile creatures (3.151).

circumstances of the individual in question. In this case, while both parents are of esteemed lineage and social standing, in relation to his mother's status, his father was deemed lesser.

Yet, it was common among ancient rulers to have mixed parentage due to the alliances formed by their parents, which often united different kingdoms and people groups.⁶⁶ For example, in the case of Alexander the Great, marriages were a form of alliances and took on a strategic element.⁶⁷ In the case of Cimon in Athens, his mother was of Thracian royalty while his father was a notable Athenian citizen, signifying a shared alliance and a way to build rapport between Athens and Thrace.⁶⁸ At least in the case of Herodotus, the offspring of these political and ethnic alliances could be referred to as “mules”. Anise Strong notes that in the case of Herodotus “mules” were frequently used to describe rulers with mixed ancestry, with a sense that this included a destiny. Strong states that these rulers,

invariably have both great and surprising destinies. When successful, they rebel against established dynasties and overthrow kingdoms, upsetting the normal order of inheritance. In other cases, the mule-figures are killed by enemies that seek to restore ethnic purity to society. Mules are symbols of revolution and attempted change in the *Histories*; these revolutions are often marked by an attempt to blend or conglomerate distinct cultural *nomoi*, or customs.⁶⁹

In Herodotus' examples, individuals of mixed ethnic and social backgrounds are often depicted as possessing a political destiny. Herodotus mentions these instances to illustrate the political instability that can arise from such unions. For instance, the marriage between the Minyae and Spartans resulted in political turmoil.⁷⁰ Their lives could also end in tragedy, like in the cases of Pallas, son of Evander, Scirion the robber, and king Eryx.⁷¹ In these cases, multi-ethnic identities

⁶⁶ Xenophon *Cry.* 1.5.3; 3.2.23; Plutarch, *Alex.* 47.3.

⁶⁷ Carney, “Alexander and Persian Women,” 563–583. Here, Alexander's relationship to foreign women is seen in relation to his political aspirations.

⁶⁸ Plutarch, *Cim.* 4.

⁶⁹ Strong, “Mules in Herodotus,” 456.

⁷⁰ Herodotus, *Hist.* 4.145–146.

⁷¹ Vergil, *Aen.* 5.387–484; 10.480–490; Apollodorus, *Lib. Epit.* 1.2.

do not exist in a vacuum, but function in the narrative in grand and surprising ways. These multi-ethnic individuals often become agents of change and destiny.

Thus, Cyrus' multi-ethnic identity significantly influences how we interpret his narrative. He is depicted through the lens of multiple identities, being both of Median and Persian descent.⁷² Herodotus highlights the significance of Cyrus' maternal lineage, noting that his mother, Mandane, the daughter of Astyages, the Median king, comes from a "superior mother" (μητρὸς ἀμείνωνος).⁷³ Moreover, Cyrus is also viewed through the prism of social class. Despite his humble upbringing in a pastoral setting, his inherited kingly status and traits shine through. The juxtaposition between his inherited traits and the condition of his environment highlights the theory of race and ethnicity that Herodotus assumes. The mule metaphor for Cyrus reveals another dimension to this conversation. Mixed ethnic and political alliances resulting in multi-ethnic children are perceived to be fated by destinies, of either greatness or political upheaval. Herodotus' portrayal of Cyrus emphasizes the complexities at work in someone's mixed ethnic and social identities.

2.4 Cimon and Themistocles in Plutarch's *Lives*

Plutarch's biographies, notably those of Cimon and Themistocles, offer insights into the prominent figures from ancient Greece and Rome, spanning various roles such as generals, politicians, and rulers. Plutarch skillfully juxtaposes Greek and Roman individuals, often emphasizing their ethnic backgrounds. Yet, Cimon and Themistocles are not paralleled, they occupy separate biographies in the writings of Plutarch. They are intriguing examples since they both were contemporaries in ancient Athens, sharing semi-Greek heritage, but originating from distinct socio-political contexts.

Examining the lives of Cimon and Themistocles, not examined against their Roman counterparts, allows for a nuanced understanding of how individuals of multi-ethnic backgrounds were depicted

⁷² For an article that evaluates Greek depictions of Persians through art, see, Miller, "Persians: The Oriental Other," 39–44; Miller, "Persians in the Greek Imagination," 106–123; Stewart, "Imag(in)ing the Other: Amazons and Ethnicity in Fifth-Century Athens," 571–597; for a source that delved into the shift of Greek perspectives on Persians and the Persian Empire, see Morgan, *Greek Perspectives on the Achaemenid Empire*.

⁷³ Herodotus, *Hist.* 1.91.

within the same historical context, since both Lucullus and Camillus were not multi-ethnic.⁷⁴ Although this comparison is contrary to how Plutarch intended his *Lives* to be read, there is still benefit to this endeavor. For example, the similarities and differences between Cimon and Themistocles are noteworthy. Despite living before the enactment of Pericles' laws (450/51 BCE), which defined legal and social statuses more rigidly, only Themistocles is portrayed in Plutarch's works, much later, with the label of "bastard" (νόθος).⁷⁵ This designation is anachronistic, as Plutarch is applying his definition back onto Themistocles.⁷⁶ It is also important to note, as I explore further in this chapter, that the status of "bastard" (νόθος) could carry different meanings depending on the context. The term was not universally applied and could denote a range of social and legal conditions. One key qualification is that in the ancient concept of being a "bastard" differs significantly from modern understandings of illegitimacy. In the ancient world, the term often had concrete legal implications, affected matters such as inheritance, civic status, and social inclusion, whereas today, it tends to function primarily as a social label of opprobrium, with legal consequences largely vestigial or symbolic.

Thus, this analysis constitutes the major goal of this section, which is to examine why Plutarch would use the language of "bastard" for Themistocles and not Cimon. The contention is that Plutarch ties together religious and ethnic identifications to substantiate the status of Themistocles because of the relatively low social standing of his parents, whereas Cimon is not described as a "bastard" because of his parents' high social standing. What ties this interpretation together is the Pericles' law, which shows that "bastard" has dual connotations, one of status and one of ethnicity. The flexibility of ethnicity and status are revealed through Plutarch's description of these two figures.

⁷⁴ No mention of their Roman counterparts having any mixed parentage, see Plutarch, *Luc.* 1.1; *Cam.* 1.1–2.

⁷⁵ Plutarch, *Them.* 1.2.

⁷⁶ Humphreys, "The Nothoi of Kynosarges," 88. "Bastard" is in direct reference to Themistocles and not Cimon. But this also applies to him as well. K.R. Walter aptly highlights the interpretive challenges posed by this lack of contextual data, cautioning against drawing definitive conclusions without sufficient evidence, see Walter, "Perikles' Citizenship Law," 314–336. He argues that the law was intended to exclude children of slave women by Athenian fathers and had to be framed in a more broadly defined way.

2.4.1 Citizenship in Fifth Century BCE Athens

We must first briefly articulate the context in which these men lived to better understand the depiction that Plutarch offers. During the fifth century BCE, Athens experienced a period of significant political, social, and cultural transformation, where it emerged as a dominant power in the Greek world, both militarily and culturally.⁷⁷ Athens was sacked and destroyed by the Persians around 480/470BCE, yet, despite this catastrophic setback, Athens embarked on a remarkable period of recovery and resurgence, which culminated in the formation of the Delian League, an Athenian-led coalition of city-states.⁷⁸ This coalition effectively propelled Athens into a position of dominance, ushering in what historians refer to as the “Athenian Empire”.⁷⁹ This period marked a golden age for Athens, characterized by economic prosperity and regional leadership.⁸⁰

A significant development during this era was the writing of the “Peace of Callias” around 449 BCE, a treaty that established a non-aggression pact between the Delian League, represented by Athens, and Persia. Negotiated by the Athenian politician Callias, the peace treaty sought to ensure stability and security in the region.⁸¹ Soon after, in 451/0 BCE, Athenians enacted Pericles’ citizenship law, a landmark piece of legislation that introduced stringent criteria for Athenian citizenship. According to this law, both parents were required to be Athenian for their offspring to

⁷⁷ This followed its victory over the Persian Empire in the Greco-Persian Wars. This period saw the rise of democratic governance under leaders such as Themistocles and Pericles, who championed the ideals of citizenship, equality before the law, and civic participation.

⁷⁸ Camp, “The Persian Destruction of Athens,” in *The Destruction of Cities in the Ancient Greek World*, 63–68, 70–84. Drawing from both archaeological findings and literary records, it is evident that Athens was soon rebuilt, with economic stability restored and naval supremacy reclaimed.

⁷⁹ For a history from the sack of Athens to its height as a geo-political entity, see Powell, *Athens and Sparta*, 5–101. See also, Kallet, “The Origins of the Athenian Economic Arche,” 43–60.

⁸⁰ For sources about the economic, legal, and democratic backdrop to Athens, see Economou, *The Economy of Classical Athens*; Ober, *Democracy and Knowledge*; Harris, *Democracy and the Rule of Law in Classical Athens*; Lanni, *Law and Justice in the Courts of Classical Athens*; Pritchard, *War, Democracy and Culture in Classical Athens*; Pritchard, *Public Spending and Democracy in Classical Athens*; Josine Blok, *Citizenship in Classical Athens*; Neils and Rogers, eds. *The Cambridge Companion to Ancient Athens*.

⁸¹ For sources that mention or possibly allude to the peace negotiations, see Plutarch, *Cim.* 13.4; Diodorus Siculus, *Lib.* 12.4.4–6; 12.26.2; Herodotus, *Hist.* 7.151. However, scholarly debates persist regarding certain aspects of the Peace of Callias, including questions surrounding its authenticity.

inherit Athenian citizenship status.⁸² This marked a departure from previous citizenship norms wherein only one parent needed to be Athenian, which reflected a change toward a more exclusive approach to citizenship.

Classical Athens discriminated against foreign-born residents, particularly concerning citizenship rights.⁸³ The city held deep-seated concerns regarding its mixed-race population and placed a high value on maintaining “pure lineages.”⁸⁴ This exclusionary trend continued into the 4th century, when Athens prohibited marriages between citizens and metics.⁸⁵ This sentiment reflected a broader societal and historical apprehension towards intermarriage and migration as well.

Recent scholarship challenges the notion that stark binaries existed between citizens and non-citizens in ancient Athens. These proponents stipulate that Athens was, in fact, a cosmopolitan and diverse city, characterized by the reality that at times, it was difficult to determine whether one was a citizen or a non-citizen.⁸⁶ While Athens certainly maintained restrictive citizenship policies, its identity as a cosmopolitan and mixed metropolis suggests a more complex and multifaceted social landscape than previously assumed.⁸⁷ Much like the difficulty in identifying citizens of any metropolitan society today with an influx of migrants, ancient Athens also showcased this complexity.

That being said, salient points can be made regarding citizenship, for instance, citizenship held importance in the civic and social fabric of Athens.⁸⁸ Generally, Athenian citizenship was granted

⁸² Plutarch, *Per.* 37.1–5; Aristotle, *Ath. Pol.* 26.3. There were clear distinctions between citizens and non-citizens. This discrimination extended beyond to include women. For work dedicated to evaluating women in antiquity and in particular, classical Athens, see Pomeroy, *Goddesses, Whores, Wives and Slaves*, 57–119.

⁸³ Lape, *Race and Citizen Identity in the Classical Athenian Democracy*, 240–284, where naturalization in Athens supported notions of superiority in home born Athenians; Cooper, “Worst of all He’s an Egyptian,” 59–81.

⁸⁴ Issac, “Proto-Racism in Graeco-Roman Antiquity,” 39–40.

⁸⁵ Bakewell, “Forbidding Marriage: ‘Neaira’ 16 and Metic Spouses at Athens,” 97–109.

⁸⁶ See, Vlassopoulos, “Free Spaces,” 33–52. Vlassopoulos also explores these identities, within the context of a spatial analysis.

⁸⁷ Athens was quite mixed, culturally and linguistically, Aristotle, *Ath. Pol.* 2.7–8

⁸⁸ Further reading on citizenship and identity, see Christ, *The Bad Citizen in Classical Athens*; Croix, Harvey, and Parker, *Athenian Democratic Origins and Other Essays*; Manville, *The Origins of Citizenship in Ancient Athens*; Cartledge, *The Greeks*; more specifically, see Lanni, *Law and Justice in the Courts of Classical Athens*, 18–24.

to males who reached the age of eighteen and were registered in the *deme* of their fathers.⁸⁹ This registration process served as a formal recognition of their Athenian lineage and conferred upon them the rights and responsibilities associated with this privilege. Entrance into Athenian citizenship granted individuals the opportunity to actively participate in various aspects of civic and cultic life. Citizens had the right to vote in democratic assemblies, hold public offices, and contribute to the decision-making processes of the city-state. Additionally, citizenship afforded individuals access to religious festivals and rituals, allowing them to engage in communal worship and participate in the cultural life of the city.⁹⁰

Yet, there is debate over the exact importance and role of Athenian citizenship in classical Athens.⁹¹ Some argue that citizenship was primarily determined by one's lineage and allowed for involvement in political affairs, while others argue that citizenship was more inclusive and much more concerned with participation in local cults and religious practices.⁹² For example, in Demosthenes' speech regarding the trial of Euxitheos, the defendant argues for his Athenian citizenship by highlighting both his lineage and his family's history of cultic participation. Euxitheos asserts that both of his parents were legitimate citizens and points to his family's religious and cultic service to the city to substantiate this.⁹³ This judicial defense effectively ties together lineage with religious and cultic devotion, emphasizing the interconnectedness of civic

⁸⁹ Manville, *The Origins of Citizenship in Ancient Athens*, 7–8. For an article that evaluates the institutional structures in relation to the citizenship procedures, see Kierstead, "Associations and Institutions in Athenian Citizenship Procedures," 444–459. An adopted heir could also be enrolled in the deme of his adoptive father, see Harris, *Democracy and the Rule of Law in Classical Athens*, 365–370.

⁹⁰ Manville, *The Origins of Citizenship in Ancient Athens*, 8–9.

⁹¹ For example, some debate the extent of how important descent was to political officeholding, see Davies, "Athenian Citizenship," 105–21; reprinted in *Athenian democracy*, 18–39.

⁹² Blok, *Citizenship in Classical*, 1–46, where she addresses J.K. Davies' and other scholars' focus on property rights and political activity. Blok argues that they essentially take this perspective from Aristotle (*Aristotle, Pol.* 1275b17–22), which is not necessarily applicable to Athens, but to citizenship and the polis in general. For example, by Aristotle's own admission, the purpose of writing *Politics* is to argue that the one residing in the polis is the happiest (*Aristotle, Pol.* 1328b33–9). In another place, Aristotle states that a feeling of connection leads to intermarriage within a city, which leads to sacrificial rites and social clubs (1280 b–1281 a10). Again, here is the insistence on religious rites as well as an implied statement on shared descent. According to Blok, a central aspect of Athenian citizenship is rooted in a reciprocal bond between civic engagement in the polis and religious devotion to the gods, see Blok, *Citizenship in Classical Athens*, 47–99.

⁹³ Demosthenes, *Eub.* 17–56. This speech likely occurred in 346/5 BCE, a bit later than the initiation of the Pericles Law. For a good overview and analysis of this speech, see MacDowell, *Demosthenes the Orator*, 288–293. See also, Worthington, *Demosthenes*.

identity and religious practice in classical Athens.⁹⁴ Citizenship was not exclusively an ethnic demarcation in ancient Athens and could be implemented in a fluid and flexible way.⁹⁵ Although not strictly similar, the connectedness between religious and ethnic identity is reflected in the statement by Paula Fredriksen, that “ethnicity was an expression of cult.”⁹⁶ We even see here, that citizenship, ethnicity, and religious commitments coalesce into a specific identity.

Pericles’ law also had a transformative impact on the selection of priests. Before the law, priests were exclusively appointed from specific *genos* (kinship groups), tracing their lineage through ancestral descent, making the case that religious participation and ethnic identity were inextricably linked. However, after the enactment of Pericles’ law, the appointment of priests was no longer restricted to particular *genos*, which allowed for more participation of other Athenians, reflecting a broader democratization of religious roles.⁹⁷ So, while the bar for citizenship was raised through Pericles’ law, priestly status was opened beyond specific *genos*.⁹⁸ In this case, the religious participation that opened to all citizens, allowed for greater civic and religious loyalty to be gained. All of this presents the backdrop for our reading of Cimon and Themistocles, which are presented by Plutarch in both similar and dissimilar ways.

⁹⁴ Demosthenes, *Eub.* 54.

⁹⁵ Lanni, *Law and Justice in the Courts of Classical Athens*, 18, n. 3. Lanni cites both, Scafuro, “Witnessing and False Witnessing: Proving Citizenship and Kin Identity in Fourth-Century Athens,” in *Athenian Identity and Civic Ideology*; and Cohen, *The Athenian Nation*, 79–103, to establish his point. In an earlier article, S.C. Humphreys presents an intriguing perspective on the purpose of Pericles’ citizenship law, suggesting that its primary aim was to prevent aristocratic members from marrying non-Athenians. This measure aimed to safeguard collective solidarity within Athenian society by preserving the purity of Athenian lineage, see Humphreys, “The Nothoi of Kynosarges,” 93–94. However, it is notable that Pericles himself advocated for his own son’s citizenship, despite his wife Aspasia being from Miletus, hinting at the presence of identities that are both/and—ambiguous and fluid (Plutarch, *Per.* 37.4–5); In this case, Pericles’ other sons died in a plague and therefore, his νόθος was next in his succession, showing this flexibility in citizenship inclusion.

⁹⁶ Fredriksen, *The Pagan’s Apostle*, 34.

⁹⁷ Lambert, “A Polis and its Priests,” 143–175.

⁹⁸ By mandating that both parents be Athenian for one to inherit citizenship, Pericles’ law effectively raised the requirements for inclusion in the cultic framework from the citizens, see Blok, “Perikles’ Citizenship Law,” 141–170. Others suggest that the law was enacted in response to a significant increase in the Athenian citizen population, prompting a restriction on the number of citizens. This rationale is explicitly mentioned by Aristotle in his *Constitution of the Athenians* (*Ath. Pol.* 26.4). Pericles, decades after the citizenship rule, encouraging women to bear more children Thucydides, *Hist.* 2.44.3–4. See also Xenophon, *Hell.* 1.6.24; Aristophanes, *Lys.* 591–597; Pomeroy, *Goddesses, Whores, Wives and Slaves*, 66–67. Rebecca Futo Kennedy adds another layer to the discussion by framing the citizenship law in terms of its impact on foreign women. According to Kennedy, the impetus for the citizenship law may have been the desire to regulate the status of foreign women in Athenian society, see Kennedy, *Immigrant Women in Athens*.

2.4.2 Cimon and Themistocles

This brings us back to an overview of Plutarch's literary description of these men. Notably, their parentage reflected a mixture of ethnicities, both having non-Greek mothers. Cimon's lineage is noteworthy, as his mother, Hegesipyle, hailed from Thracian royalty as she was the daughter of King Olorus.⁹⁹ Cimon's father, Miltiades, was an esteemed Athenian citizen, renowned in his own right. Plutarch also highlights a significant connection between Cimon's family and Thucydides, the renowned historian, underscoring the familial and intellectual ties within ancient Greek society.¹⁰⁰ He is also described as affluent, having immense social standing, and a royal pedigree that is recognizable to Athenians. In essence, Cimon represents the best of Athens, even though he is mixed.

On the other hand, Themistocles' lineage presents a stark contrast to that of Cimon with Plutarch explicitly describing Themistocles as a "bastard".¹⁰¹ Plutarch emphasizes the obscurity of Themistocles' family background, noting that it did little to bolster his reputation.¹⁰² Furthermore, discrepancies exist regarding the name and origins of Themistocles' mother, adding to the ambiguity surrounding his familial heritage. Plutarch suggests that her epitaph identifies her as Abrotonon from Thrace, while another source, Phantias, asserts that she was Euterpe from Caria, highlighting the lack of certainty regarding Themistocles' maternal lineage.¹⁰³ While his mother's origins were uncertain, his father's origins were not. Themistocles' father, Neocles, hailed from

⁹⁹ Plutarch, *Cim.* 4.

¹⁰⁰ Plutarch, *Cim.* 4.2.

¹⁰¹ Plutarch, *Them* 1.1, "νόθος δὲ πρὸς μητρός". This designation carried significant social and legal implications in ancient Athens, particularly after Pericles' law. The discussion surrounding the status of νόθοι in ancient Athens is often intertwined with the citizenship law, which imposed restrictions on Athenian citizenship based on parentage, see Plutarch, *Per.* 37.2–5; See Carawan, "Pericles the Younger and the Citizenship Law," 383–406. Carawan argues that Pericles' law was later amended in 430/29 allowing fathers to adopt their νόθος if they did not have any legitimate heir's contrary to scholarship contending that Pericles was given an exception.

¹⁰² Plutarch, *Them.* 1.1.

¹⁰³ There was much diplomacy, trade, and cross pollination going on between Athens and Thrace at this time. Consequently, there were also many Thracian migrants in Athens, which explains how both Themistocles and Cimon had Thracian ancestry. See Garland, *Introducing New Gods*, 111-114; Sears, *Athens, Thrace, and the Shaping of Athenian Leadership*. Plutarch, *Them.* 1.1–2.

Athens, specifically from the deme Phrearrhian and the tribe of Leontis, emphasizing the disparity between Themistocles' parents.¹⁰⁴ Plutarch even makes great pains to connect Themistocles to Heracles, who was considered “not legitimate among the gods” (γνήσιος ἐν θεοῖς).¹⁰⁵ So, it is within the framework of the Pericles' law, that religion and citizenship are explicitly tied together, and it is my estimation that Plutarch writes about Themistocles with this law in mind.

Furthermore, it is noteworthy that the language of Pericles' law did not explicitly or outrightly exclude νόθοι from citizenship.¹⁰⁶ There were two main categories of νόθοι: 1) children born to a citizen and a noncitizen, often referred to if the mother was the foreigner (μητρόξενος), and 2) children born out of wedlock to two Athenian citizen parents.¹⁰⁷ This is described in earlier writings which indicate that citizenship status for bastards varied depending on the specific circumstances, with some being recognized as citizens while others were not, particularly those falling into the second category.¹⁰⁸ Plutarch's accounts shed further light on the consequences of Pericles' law, suggesting that a persecution arose against “bastards” after its enactment, with many individuals labeled as such, were convicted and sold into slavery.¹⁰⁹ So while they may not have been explicitly barred from citizenship, their existence could be quite precarious.

Similar to Cimon, Themistocles experienced a period of waywardness in his youth, marked by degenerate behavior.¹¹⁰ Like Cimon, he too faced slander and ultimately found himself in exile.¹¹¹ Despite these challenges, both figures are portrayed in highly favorable terms, particularly

¹⁰⁴ Plutarch, *Them.* 1.1.

¹⁰⁵ Plutarch, *Them.* 1.2.

¹⁰⁶ Walter, “Perikles' Citizenship Law,” 317.

¹⁰⁷ Kamen, *Status in Classical Athens*, 62.

¹⁰⁸ Aristotle, *Ath. Pol.* 1278a26–34; 1319b8–10. Much of this scholarly conversation is predicated on the work of Harrison, *The Law of Athens*, where he argued that bastards could still be citizens of Athens (pp. 63–65); see also MacDowell, “Bastards as Athenian Citizens,” 82–91, who further argues for Harrison's position; for a response to this, see Rhodes, “Bastards as Athenian Citizens,” 89–92, who is not convinced they could not be citizens; clarifying some of these issues, see Patterson, “Those Athenian Bastards,” 40–73.

¹⁰⁹ Plutarch, *Per.* 37.3–4. However, debates persist regarding the accuracy and veracity of Plutarch's claims, underscoring the complexities surrounding the interpretation of historical sources and the need for caution in drawing conclusions, see Walter, “Perikles' Citizenship Law,” 334. Walter argues that Plutarch conflated two sources.

¹¹⁰ Plutarch, *Them.* 2.5–6.

¹¹¹ Plutarch, *Them.* 22.1–3.

regarding their prowess in statecraft and generalship. While both Cimon and Themistocles demonstrated astute strategic acumen and engaged in battles against barbarian adversaries, Plutarch's narrative tends to highlight Themistocles' exploits with slightly greater emphasis and detail. For instance, as Plutarch recounts one of Themistocles' voyages and ensuing battles, he digresses to discuss an elegy inscribed on a slab near a temple of Artemis in Olizon. This elegy commemorates Themistocles' military achievement, wherein a past victory, the Athenians successfully repelled advances from various Asian forces, showcasing his lasting impact on Athenian history.¹¹²

Themistocles is also depicted as possessing a remarkable ability to navigate and transcend cultural boundaries, demonstrated in his capacity to engage in dialogue with Persian kings.¹¹³ Plutarch portrays him as highly esteemed not only among his fellow Greeks but also among foreigners, showcasing his exceptional cultural sensitivity and diplomatic finesse.¹¹⁴ Furthermore, Themistocles' interactions with the Persian court reveal a romantic dimension to his endeavors as well. Plutarch suggests an intimate relationship between Themistocles and the mother of the Persian king, adding a complex and intriguing layer to his diplomatic and personal exploits.¹¹⁵

2.4.3 Themistocles and Heracles

Most notably, Themistocles spent a significant amount of time at Kynosarges, where he endeavored to persuade other high-status youths to join him in physical training.¹¹⁶ Within this context, Plutarch draws a parallel between Themistocles' mixed identity and that of Heracles, who, like Themistocles, had a mortal mother, thus possessing a hybrid identity.¹¹⁷ This is a natural

¹¹² Plutarch, *Them.* 8.3.

¹¹³ Plutarch, *Them.* 23–24.

¹¹⁴ Plutarch, *Them.* 24.4.

¹¹⁵ Plutarch, *Them.* 24.5.

¹¹⁶ Plutarch, *Them.* 1.3.

¹¹⁷ Plutarch, *Them.* 1.3. See also, an inscription in honor of Hercules (IG I³ 3). Indeed, being associated with Heracles held certain advantages for Themistocles, as evidenced by Heracles' legendary connection to the founding of the Olympic Games, see Pindar, *Ol.* 10; Lysias, *Ol.* 33. 1-2. For more on the founding of the Games see: Polybius, *Hist.* 12.26.2; Pausanias, *Descr.* 5.7.9; Apollodorus, *Lib.* 2.7.2; Diodorus Siculus, *Lib.* 4.53.4-5; Cimon's father Miltiades was also connected to heracles via the Olympic games, see Plutarch, *Cim.* 1.4; Herodotus, *Hist.* 6.39–41.

connection for Plutarch since Heracles was the patron of the Kynosarges. Plutarch suggests that Themistocles' affinity with Heracles stems from the fact that Heracles was not considered a fully legitimate deity, similarly, reflecting a blended heritage.¹¹⁸ Moreover, Themistocles is credited with playing a role in erasing distinctions between aliens and legitimate citizens, emphasizing his efforts to transcend societal boundaries and promote inclusivity within Athenian society, a theme throughout Plutarch's biography.¹¹⁹

The close relationship between Themistocles and Heracles is also established by the architecture and spatial dynamics within the narrative. For instance, Themistocles' initiative to persuade other youths to join him at the gymnasium outside the city serves to foreshadow his future leadership capabilities, political acumen, and success in naval battles.¹²⁰ This literary spatial motif shows Themistocles' early mastery of leveraging physical environments to achieve his goals, laying the groundwork for his later triumphs on both political and military fronts. Themistocles also shows his leadership acumen even as a young child, like Cyrus who orders his young friends to do his bidding. Moreover, the renowned temple of Heracles, which housed a public gymnasium, was of great importance in Athenian society.¹²¹ Situated outside the city walls, near the bank of the Ilissos river and surrounded by a grove, the Kynosarges served as a focal point for various cultural and philosophical activities.¹²² Even rulers were divinized there, like for example, Demetrius the Besieger, in 290 BCE.¹²³ Thus, the association with Heracles, coupled with Themistocles' strategic

¹¹⁸ Plutarch, *Them.* 1.2.

¹¹⁹ Plutarch, *Them.* 1.2, “καὶ τούτου γενομένου δοκεῖ πανούργως τὸν τῶν νόθων καὶ γνησίων διορισμὸν ἀνελεῖν”.

¹²⁰ Beck, “Biography Plutarch,” in *Space in Ancient Greek Literature*, 439–462, esp. 453; Banta, “The Gates of Janus: Bakhtin and Plutarch's Roman *meta-chronotope*,” in *The Sites of Rome: Time Space, Memory*, 238–270. In the biographies that recede back to the mythical past, Plutarch roots his narrative in architecture and space.

¹²¹ This is not necessarily unique to gymnasiums. For instance, the main gymnasium, the Academy, or Plato's Academy was also located outside of the city walls, along with Lyceum (Plato, *Lys.* 203a). In fact, all three gymnasiums were in relative walking distance, see Rihill, “Teaching and learning in Classical Athens,” 168–190, fig. 1 (p. 175). See also, Christopoulous, “Greek Combat Sports and Their Transmission to Central and East Asia,” 431–459. The importance of the gymnasium, combat sports, and heroic cult of the Greeks were reestablished in conquered territories. For a source evaluating the location of the Cynosarges in relation to its surrounding areas, see Billot, “Le Cynosarges, Antiochos et les Tanneurs: Questions de Topographie,” 119–156.

¹²² Diogenes Laertius 6.1 (Antisthenes) (13); Pausanias, *Descr.* 1.19.3; furthermore, near the gymnasium existed a bridge, further substantiating the claim that the Cynosarges was by a river (Aelian, *Var. hist.* 8.14).

¹²³ Versnel, *Coping with the Gods*, 444–456; Rose, “Demetrius Poliorcetes, ‘Kairos’, and the Sacred and Civil Calendars of Athens,” 258–287; Wheatley and Dunn, *Demetrius the Besieger*, 345–358; Worthington, *Athens*

use of space and architecture, adds depth to his character, portraying him as a figure capable of transcending boundaries—whether cultural, physical, or mythical—in his pursuit of greatness.

The central point in this section is that multi-ethnic identity functions in different ways in ancient Athens depending on the circumstances, era, and social statuses involved. In the case of Themistocles, Plutarch explicitly and retrospectively frames him through the Pericles' law, which codified the rule that both parents needed to be Athenian for the child to be granted citizenship. Themistocles' relationship to the Kynosarges, much like Euxitheos earlier in the section reveals Plutarch's motivation to connect his identity to religious structures. Plutarch also refers to him as a "bastard", a moniker he curiously refrains from using for Cimon, who on the other hand, is extolled by virtue of his royal and acclaimed family line, while also having a Thracian mother. For Plutarch, ethnicity is weighed against prestige and social status. In other words, ethnicity was not the only factor that determined one's identity in the eyes of Plutarch's readers, and thus for first century Greco-Roman readers.

2.5 Pallas in the *Aeneid*

2.5.1 Pallas is Disqualified

The *Aeneid* provides another example of the convergence of divinity, humanity, and ethnicities. In this Latin epic, following Aeneas and the Trojans' arrival in Italy, Aeneas has a significant encounter with Evander. Evander warmly welcomes Aeneas, who also hails from a divine lineage. Evander is described as descending from the deity Hermes and of the nymph Themis.¹²⁴ And so, while Evander is of a divine lineage, so is his son, Pallas, who is both descended from a divine and multi-ethnic through his Sabine mother.¹²⁵ It is at this genealogical juncture and point in the epic that Pallas' identity is of extreme interest, especially in contrast to Aeneas.

After Empire, 71–102; Kuhn, "Ritual Change during the Reign of Demetrius Poliochretes," in *Ritual and Communication in the Graeco-Roman World*, 265–281.

¹²⁴ Evander is said to be son of Hermes (Dionysius of Halicarnassus, *Rom ant.* 2.1.3). For a source evaluating the lineage of Latin kings going back to Saturn, see Schiebe, *Vergil und die Tradition von den römischen Urkönigen. Hermes*.

¹²⁵ For sources on the prominence of Apollo in the Augustan age, see Miller, *Apollo, Augustus, and the Poets*; Miller, "Ovid and Augustan Apollo," 165–180.

Leading up to the introduction of Pallas is Vergil's portrayal of Evander, who is credited with the establishment of the city of Pallantium by the Tiber River years before the Trojan War.¹²⁶ Pallantium, a prominent city in Roman thought and history, later merged into and became an integral part of the city of Rome.¹²⁷ Evander recognizes the familial relationship between himself and Anchises, Aeneas's father, and thus, are bonded by their distant yet relevant genealogical relationship.¹²⁸ We see, as in other places, that the shared myth of descent shapes and aligns people groups, in this case, those that are depicted as being distant relatives.¹²⁹

When Aeneas seeks Evander's aid upon their arrival to the mainland, the context of their meeting is framed by their respective ethnicities, which results in an alliance. Prior to their encounter, Pallas appears in the narrative and questions Aeneas about his lineage, to which Aeneas responds by recounting their shared heritage back to Dardanus, the founder of Troy.¹³⁰ Dardanus is depicted as the common ancestor of both the Trojans and the Arcadians, which makes sense of their shared lineage and ethnicity.¹³¹ This initial exchange unveils the familial bonds between their peoples and sets the tone for a peaceful dialogue as Pallas, astonished by this revelation, eagerly brings the two men together.¹³² When Aeneas meets Evander, he once again comments on their shared ancestry and how it undergirds their eventual alliance.¹³³ Evander further affirms this shared connection by

¹²⁶ Papaioannou, "Founder, Civilizer and Leader," 630–702. Here Papaioannaou argues that the Arcadian origins of Evander are highlighted to show the positive Hellenic influence on Rome. Evander is also held as prominent in Vergil's work unlike other Latin foundation myths; Evander's role is adapted in Ovid's *Fasti*, see Fantham, "The Role of Evander in Ovid's 'Fasti'", 155–172.

¹²⁷ Vergil *Aen.* 8.

¹²⁸ Vergil, *Aen.* 8.155–175. For an article that explores the different origin stories of Evander, see Delcourt, "Évandre à Rome Réflexions autour de quatre interprétations de la légende," 829–863.

¹²⁹ Smith, *The Ethnic Origins of Nations*, 22.

¹³⁰ Pallas calls out to Aeneas and asks him, "What race are you?" Vergil, *Aen.* 8.115; 125–145. They are also connected via Mercury and Atlas, the grandson and grandfather deities respectively, see Vergil, *Aen.* 8.135–137; 138–139; 142. For different references to Atlas, see Sev. Ad *Aen.* 8.134; Hesiod, *Theog.* 507; Diod. 3.60; 4.27; Plat. Critias, 114; Sev. Ad *Aen.* 4.247. For a discussion on the possible identities of Atlas, see also Eden, *A Commentary on Virgil: Aeneid VIII*, 63–64; Nakata, "Egredere o Quicumque es," 352–354. For a source on the appearance of Mercury and a discussion on the negotiated relationships between deities and characters, see Fratantuono, "Lethaeum ad fluvium: Mercury in the 'Aeneid'", 295–310.

¹³¹ Vergil, *Aen.* 3.167; cf. 7.205ff.

¹³² Vergil, *Aen.* 8.121–125.

¹³³ Vergil, *Aen.* 8.132, 134, 135–137, 142. Nakata, "Egredere o Quicumque es: Genealogical Opportunism and Trojan Identity in the Aeneid," 335–363. Nakata states, "When he meets Evander, Aeneas fabricates a genealogy

recognizing the resemblance between Aeneas and his own father.¹³⁴ In this case, the shared myth of descent affects the physical resemblances between people.

The shared connection between these two figures sets the stage for Aeneas' request to Evander.¹³⁵ After spending time together and discussing the purpose of their visit, Evander pledges his support for Aeneas. However, he also expresses reluctance to lead both the Trojan and Italian armies due to his advanced age.¹³⁶ More interestingly, even though he disqualifies himself based on his advanced age, he also excludes his son from leading the mixed armies as well. Evander provides a curious rationale for not allowing Pallas to assume leadership of the combined forces. Despite Pallas' royal and divine lineage, Evander cites his mixed heritage, with a Sabine mother, as the disqualifying factor. He explicitly states, "My son I would urge to accept, were it not that, being of mixed blood, with a Sabine mother, he draws part of his nationality from her. You, to whose years and race Fate is kind, whom Heaven calls, take up your task, most valiant leader of Trojans and Italians both" (LCL, Fairclough).¹³⁷ Remarkably, Pallas is deemed ineligible to lead the unified armies due to his dual ethnic identity, even despite his royal and semi-divine status.

Scholars offer various perspectives on Pallas' multi-ethnic identity and its relation to his inability to lead the combined army of Italians and Trojans. Some argue that Pallas's unsuitability stems from the reluctance of the Etruscans to accept an Italian-born king, thus disqualifying him from military leadership. One scholar notes, "With Italian blood in his veins Pallas was ineligible to be the foreign leader of the Etruscans (8.503). But even though born in Italy and of an Italian mother the more important part of his 'native origin' was the civil rights and status he inherited from his

featuring an unexpected connection as a basis for an alliance" (352). There is also an element of divine orchestration and practicality to Aeneas seeking help from Evander (8.51–56; 8.146–147).

¹³⁴ Vergil, *Aen.* 8.150–170.

¹³⁵ Bishop, *The Cost of Power*, 174. Here Bishop argues that Vergil is affirming Greek influence and primacy in the Mediterranean by acknowledging this shared relationship. Also, he argues that this serves to create a Roman empathetic sentiment toward Evander. Another clue is Evander's relationship to Heracles in the narrative.

¹³⁶ Vergil, *Aen.* 8.508–509.

¹³⁷ Vergil, *Aen.* 8.510–512 *natum exhortarer, ni mixtus matre Sabellahinc partem patriae traheret. tu, cuius et anniset generi fatum indulget, quem numina poscunt,ingredere, o Teucrum atque Italum fortissime doctor.* See also, Heinze, *Virgil's Epic Technique*, 145–146. Here Heinze comments on Vergil's literary technique of creating and expanding on the narrative. See also, Putnam, *Virgil's Epic Designs*. Here, Putnam evaluates the many examples of Ekphrasis in the Aeneid, which is evident in other Latin and Greek literature, but most notably in Homer's works.

father and his father's city."¹³⁸ In this reasoning, although Pallas was ineligible to lead the armies, he still held remarkable status within the ethnic hierarchy of the Italian people groups.

But at some level, this still does not answer *why* Pallas was excluded from leading the armies. Another dimension which will help this analysis is evaluating the function of the Etruscans in the narrative. The Etruscans became allies with the Trojans in book eight and in part were compelled by their own civil war. Mezentius the cruel king of the Etruscans aided Turnus in the battle against Aeneas and the allied armies but was eventually deposed.¹³⁹ In the narrative, the Etruscans played a valuable role in Aeneas' victories.¹⁴⁰ Before these battles, they come to Aeneas' aid based on a prophecy that they will be led by a non-Italian leader.¹⁴¹ This prophecy helps to frame Evander's reluctance to establishing his son as the leader of the armies.

Yet, portents alone do not fully explain this phenomenon. Other scholars observe that Pallas's youth is not seen as a hindrance to his command of the Etruscans; rather, it is his mixed blood that renders him ineligible, framing the discussion more along ethnic lines.¹⁴² These scholars assert that these details reflect the poet's concern with the amalgamation of different ethnicities in the future Rome.¹⁴³ From their perspective, Vergil emphasizes the mixed lineage of Pallas either as a result of, or in consideration of the ethnic diversity in Roman life and culture. Thus, in doing so, Vergil offers a subtle commentary on the reality of mixed heritage within the broader context of Roman

¹³⁸ Vergil, *Aen.* 8.503. Eden, *A Commentary on Virgil: Aeneid VIII*, 145; for a work that looks at descriptions of Etruscans in Latin literature, see Bittarello, "The Construction of Etruscan 'Otherness' in Latin Literature," 211–233; see also Korenjak "The Etruscans in Ancient Literature," in *Etruscology*, 35–52; MacIntosh, ed., *The Etruscan World*.

¹³⁹ Vergil, *Aen.* 8.495–505. Much of Evander's speech is dedicated to the backstory of Mezentius, Vergil, *Aen.* 8.470–519, 568–571; 10.773–776; see also Sullivan, "A Virgilian Creation," 219–225; Burke, Jr. "The Role of Mezentius in the 'Aeneid'", 202–209. Here Burke focuses much detail on the portrayal of Mezentius from the point of view of Aeneas, as well as the father-son motif throughout; Basson, "Vergil's Mezentius: A Pivotal Personality," 57–70; Wijsman, "'Gesander alter Mezentius,'" 58–70. Mezentius is mentioned by Cato, *Orig. Frig.* 6a; 8b; 9; Macrobius, *Sat.* 3.5.10; Pliny, *Nat.* 14.88; Livy, *Hist.* 1.2–3; Dionysius of Halicarnassus, *Ant. rom.* 1.64, 65; 2.5; Ovid, *Fast.* 4.880–895.

¹⁴⁰ Vergil, *Aen.* 9.9–10.

¹⁴¹ Vergil, *Aen.* 490–495. Prophecies are a large part of the *Aeneid*, and many are fulfilled in the narrative, see Bishop, *The Cost of Power*, 27–49. See also, Smith, *The Primacy of Vision in Virgil's Aeneid*. Smith argues that the shift in Augustan preference toward imagery away from rhetoric. In some cases, this results in a preferences visionary experience, including divine and aspects of fate that relate to the aspects of prophecy.

¹⁴² Frantantuono and Smith, *Virgil, Aeneid* 8, 571.

¹⁴³ Frantantuono and Smith, *Virgil, Aeneid* 8, 572.

society. The realities were that Rome was a major metropolitan area with a diverse population.¹⁴⁴ It is for this reason that Aeneas is portrayed as a unifier of different groups and ethnicities, whereas Pallas is not. The problem with this perspective is that Pallas reflects the reality of Rome as Vergil understood it. Even though Aeneas is not mixed like Pallas (or in Vergil's Rome), is he the uniting force of the mixed armies? In my estimation, this seems unlikely. Instead, in the following section I will argue that Aeneas establishes a hierarchy of control over the varied ethnic identities. In other words, Pallas unifies, while Aeneas leads and dominates.

Vergil's motivations to highlight Aeneas as a uniting figure reinforces the idea that Pallas is unfit to lead the armies. However, Evander does offer his son to accompany Aeneas, symbolizing the alliance between them.¹⁴⁵ As the story unfolds, Pallas meets his demise during battle, slain by Turnus. This untimely death serves as a catalyst for Aeneas' pursuit of vengeance and the eventually victory.¹⁴⁶ The revenge exacted on behalf of Pallas also reinforces the close relationship that Aeneas had with him. So, although Pallas is not fit to lead the armies, Vergil makes great pains to connect these characters.¹⁴⁷ All of this to say, Pallas is not simply a subsidiary figure, although Aeneas is preeminent in the narrative. Pallas occupies an essential role for Vergil, as a proxy, and vicarious character, through which the ethnic history of Rome can coalesce.

¹⁴⁴ The genetic diversity of Rome has been traced, see Antonio, et al. "Ancient Rome": 708–714; see also, Price, *Rome*; Isaac, *The Invention of Racism*.

¹⁴⁵ For a source that more broadly looks at embraces and physicality in book 8 but also focused on the interaction between Evander and Aeneas, see Gramps, "Embraces in *Aeneid* 8", 1–22, esp. 14–16.

¹⁴⁶ Vergil, *Aen.* 10.454–56. For a work that situates the deaths throughout the text in a thematic fashion, see Genovese, "Deaths in the 'Aeneid'", 22–28; Carstairs-McCarthy, "Dido, Pallas, Nisus and the Nameless Mothers in *Aeneid* 8–10", 199–219. Here, McCarthy explores the significance of Pallas's death and the act of Aeneas covering his body with the tunic embroidered by Dido; O'Sullivan, "Death *ante ora parentum* in Virgil's Aeneid," 447–486; Paschalis, "The Epic Hero as Sacrificial Victim," 135–138; Pallas plays a large role in the ending of the Aeneid, see Putnam, *The Humanness of Heroes*.

¹⁴⁷ Lyne, *Further Voices in Vergil's Aeneid*, 155–160. Lyne draws a connection and compares and contrasts this relationship with Achilles and Patroclus. The connection of the Aeneid to the Iliad is frequently commented on, see Williams, *The Aeneid*, 11–24; Newman, "Virgil's Iliad: Reflections on a Secondary Epic," in *Virgilian Studies. A Miscellany dedicated to the memory of Mario Geymonat*, 344–401; Heinze, *Virgil's Epic Technique*, 169, where Heinze also points out the relationship between Aeneas and Pallas, but calls Aeneas the ideal mature warrior, and Pallas the ideal youth. Aeneas as the perfect hero also evident in its reception history, see Hardie, *The Last Trojan Hero*, 79–82.

2.5.2 Roman Ethnic History

Another aspect of this vignette of Aeneas' encounter with Evander is that up to this moment, Evander pays homage to Heracles, who is a demi-human, and is referenced a few times in the epic.¹⁴⁸ Heracles was himself mixed and was intimately connected to the Arcadians, perhaps emphasizing the ethnic ambiguity and flexibility of Evander and his kin. So, what exactly does Heracles, Arcadians, Sabines, and the Etruscans, have to do with Pallas' mixed identity in the narrative? Vergil was under no obligation to mention Pallas in the narrative, but he did, explicitly rearranging his ethnicity and lineage to place him in such a critical role in the epic. Thus, the main contention of this section is that Vergil is establishing a point about Roman ethnicity as he contrasts Pallas to Aeneas. In this way, Pallas is seen to represent the ethnic ambiguity of Rome in Vergil's time.

If this is the case, then it is salient to observe the ethnic history of Rome. For example, within the framework of Roman ethnicity during the early Republic, scholars observe that central Italian cities, including Rome, historically demonstrated adaptability and inclusivity toward foreign peoples and ideas.¹⁴⁹ For example, many of the early foundation stories included how refugees were integral to the formation of the city.¹⁵⁰ It was also commonly believed that the Latins, Sabines, and Etruscans comprised the original mixed peoples of Rome.¹⁵¹ This ethnic complexity meant

¹⁴⁸ Vergil, *Aen.* 8.100–105; 540–545. Some scholars argue that the *Aeneid* was written with the intention of making Aeneas into the Greek version of Heracles, and therefore, the national hero of Italy, see Galinsky, "Hercules in the Aeneid," in *Oxford Readings in Vergil's Aeneid*, 277–294.

¹⁴⁹ Bradley, *Early Rome to 290 BC*, 233–234; furthermore, the political structures and institutions oscillated between stability and flux, see Walter, *Politische Ordnung in der Römischen Republik*; to see the evolution of immigration policies, see Moatti, "Immigration and Cosmopolitanization," in *The Cambridge Companion to Ancient Rome*, 77–92; Lavan and Ando, eds. *Roman and Local Citizenship in the Long Second Century CE*; Cecchet and Busetto, *Citizens in the Graeco-Roman World*; Eberle, "Making Roman Subjects before and after Augustus," 321–370.

¹⁵⁰ Lee-Stecum, "Roman Refugium: Refugee Narratives in Augustan Versions of Roman Prehistory," 69–91; Dench, *Romulus' Asylum*.

¹⁵¹ Etruscans were one of the three original tribes, Varro, *Rust.* 2.9–10; Cicero, *Rep.* 3.4; See also Livy, *Hist.* 1.13.8; 1.30; Plutarch, *Rom.* 20.2. The Sabines, among others, constituted the diverse amalgamation of people groups that contributed to the formation of Rome itself, see Valditara, *Civis romanus sum*; Serres, *Rome*, 117–160; For brief comments on the Sabines after the institution of Rome, see Neel, *Early Rome*, 78–79; Bradley, *Early Rome to 290 BC*, 233–236; See Rosenstein, *Rome and the Mediterranean 290 to 146 BC*, 82–91, esp. 83; For a source that evaluates the subjugation of the Italian peninsula, see Heuß, *Römische Geschichte*, 72–98.

that the idea of what it meant to be Roman was multifaceted and had to include notions of culture and identity beyond a singularity.

This openness of inclusion extended to specific peoples like the Sabines, who feature prominently in Rome's history, despite being ethnically distinct from the Romans.¹⁵² Even the second king of Rome, Numa Pompilius, was Sabine.¹⁵³ They were also notable in the legend of the *Rape of the Sabine Women*, where according to this myth, the Romans abducted Sabine women to populate their newly established city.¹⁵⁴ This retrospective ethnic intertwining was valuable for prominent families who traced their lineage back to the Sabines, contributing to the narrative of Rome's mixed identity. The inclusion of the Sabines in Rome's foundation stories explained and reconciled the diverse ethnic origins of the city's inhabitants. This narrative device underscored the complexity of Roman ethnicity and highlighted the inclusive nature of Roman society, which embraced and integrated diverse cultural elements into its collective identity. But this inclusivity, as the foundation story suggests, is not peaceful nor pleasant.

The key to understanding Pallas is the literary setting in which it was written. For example, citizenship was an ongoing process that eventually included the full rights of those living in the Italian peninsula after the Social War (91–87BCE).¹⁵⁵ In this way, citizenship was a way to maintain control and to prioritize the power of Rome. This elevation of full citizenship reveals the double-edged sword of inclusivity and power in Roman society.¹⁵⁶ Vergil's *Aeneid* also coincided with Augustus' reign. From the time of the Social War there were multiple battles and civil wars

¹⁵² For ancient authors describing the geography, see Strabo, *Georg.* 5.3.1; Pliny, *Nat.* 3.108–110; for an introductory description of the Sabines, see Farney and Masci, "The Sabines," in *The Peoples of Ancient Italy*, 543–557.

¹⁵³ Plutarch, *Num.* 1.4.

¹⁵⁴ Livy 1.9.14–16; See Potter, *Rome in the Ancient World*, 22–32, esp. 24. Although many of these stories resemble Greek tradition, they are still vitally important stories, see also De luce, "Roman Myth": 202–205; Griffiths, "Where did Early Roman History come from?", 79–81.

¹⁵⁵ The Sabines were the first citizens to transition from *civitas sine suffragio*, or citizenship without voting rights, to *optimo iure*, attaining full citizenship status. These rights of citizenship were given in 290 BCE then fully realized in 268 BCE. Secondly, citizenship was given to the rest of the Italian communities following the Social War. See Isayev, *Mobility and Place in Ancient Italy*, 311–359. See also, Dart, *The Social War, 91 to 88 BCE*; Bispham, *From Asculum to Actium*.

¹⁵⁶ Forsythe, *A Critical History of Early Rome*, 77. Of course, there was an ongoing reality of Italian integrations before the Social War, see Isayev, *Mobility and Place in Ancient Italy*, 342–344.

that Octavian or Caesar Augustus won, including the Liberator's Civil War, and the War of Actium. Augustus in this sense brings peace and the *Pax Romana* to the world through his reign and subdues civil unrest and forces that represent competing loyalties. This historical context brings us back to the *Aeneid*, which makes clear that Pallas, as a proxy for Greek, Sabine, and multi-ethnic identities is not deemed worthy to lead the armies, but Aeneas is.¹⁵⁷ Aeneas stands as an Augustus figure who brings peace over-against the ongoing ethnic fluctuations, diverse loyalties, and competing claims of kingship.¹⁵⁸ Aeneas is not the unifier, that represents the multitude of ethnic identities, but a leader who exerts his domination over-against the multitude of ethnic identities.

In this juxtaposition of Aeneas and Pallas, we see one of the apparent motivations for Vergil's inclusion of Pallas, especially when one realizes that Pallas has other lineages in comparable literature.¹⁵⁹ As Vergil creates and expands on the narrative, it resulted in the creation of Pallas as a fusion of Greek and Latin identities.¹⁶⁰ Vergil essentially reconfigures Lavinia to marry Aeneas, who in other literature is Pallas' mother, while making an explicit connection from Heracles to Evander and thus, to Pallas. Additionally, Vergil attaches a Sabine lineage to Pallas.¹⁶¹ Pallas is purposefully invented as a multi-ethnic character that is subservient to the uniting figure of Aeneas.

Pallas is related to Evander, the Arcadians, and the Sabines to establish a highly regarded character, but not quite as important as the one who is to be the future king of Latium.¹⁶² So, while references to the Arcadians through Evander reveals a Greek connection and Heracles supports this, there is

¹⁵⁷ Vergil, *Aen.* 8.511–14.

¹⁵⁸ For a source evaluating late Republic conceptions of kingly reigns, see Sigmund, 'Königtum' in *der Politischen Kultur des Spätrepublikanischen Rom*, esp, 241–311.

¹⁵⁹ For example, contrary to Vergil, other authors record the idea that Pallas was the son of Heracles and Lavinia, the daughter of Evander (Dionysius of Halicarnassus, *Rom. Ant.* 1.32.1; 1.44.1; Polybius, *Hist.* 6.3.11a1); In these accounts, Pallas is the grandson of Evander and the child of Heracles. But in Vergil, he is the son of Evander and his Sabine mother, and consequently, unfit to lead, which is seen in contradistinction to Aeneas (Heinze, *Virgil's Epic Technique*, 145–146. Here Heinze argues that Pallas is an invention by Vergil to establish the dual identity of Pallas).

¹⁶⁰ Heinze, *Virgil's Epic Technique*, 145–146.

¹⁶¹ The main reason why Vergil reconfigured this connection for Aeneas, was to link him with Lavinia. The marriage partner of Lavinia would be the future king of Latium, where the future site of Rome would be.

¹⁶² For a source evaluating Roman views of Greeks, see Benjamin Isaac, *The Invention of Racism in Classical Antiquity*, 381–410.

also an implicit relationship to being mixed. The Sabines were also significant because it established a shared citizenship but for those not quite Roman enough. In other words, while the Sabines occupied an important role in the establishment of Rome, they were not the same. Vergil establishes this hierarchy by using ethnic language and by mixing Pallas. Being mixed is of less value than being pure Roman.

In conclusion, there are evident literary motivations behind the portrayal of Pallas in this manner. The narrative foreshadows the involvement of the Etruscans through a divine prophecy that supports the eventual leadership of Aeneas. Moreover, this foreshadow is doubly strengthened by the depiction of Aeneas as the unequivocal central figure in the story. However, beyond these literary considerations, there is a profound insight to be gleaned from Pallas' character. The concept of multi-ethnic identity evokes both positive and negative connotations depending on the context. Pallas emerges from a deeply rooted genealogical lineage within the *Aeneid*, being both of royal and divine descent. Typically, such lineage would confer multiple dimensions of significance upon an individual. Yet, within the specific context of political dynamics and divine omens, Pallas is relegated to the role of Aeneas' companion rather than assuming leadership of the armies. Pallas' specific multi-ethnic mixture is seen as a detriment to the overall military goals of the Trojans and Italians. He is a mixture of Sabine and Arcadian. As such, he takes a secondary role to Aeneas. Aeneas on the other hand, controls and leads the mixed armies asserting a hierarchy over-against the diversity that Vergil saw and witnessed.

2.6 Conclusion

(1) Demi-gods are featured throughout all kinds of literature and eras. They are the bridge between the divine and the human, with heroic capabilities and supra-natural abilities. In the case of heroes and kings that are demi-gods, they can serve as a conceptualization of ethnic mixing, where ancestry determines virtue, status, and justification for their rule. In essence, demi-gods exemplify the same logical inferences in how they are constructed and maintained. They are the hinge points that ethnic groups appeal to in order to understand their own existence and are reconfigured through literature which shows their fluid nature. Demi-gods are also portrayed in both positive and negative terms, highlighting some of the assumptions an author might have about their human

ethnicity. In doing so, the author is displaying assumptions about demi-gods, much like how stereotypes and generalizations existed for ancient people groups. In essence, demi-gods exemplify an ethnic logic of their own that merged the divine and human.

(2) Cyrus' story showcases the tension between royal lineage, social class, and inherited traits. Despite his noble ancestry, Cyrus's upbringing in a humble context reflects social class tensions which in many cases would determine one's outcome in life. Yet, because Herodotus' understanding of race and ethnicity is largely dictated by an understanding that inherited traits come by way of the lineage, and the assumptions associated with those people groups, he describes Cyrus as overcoming his socio-economic setting, exemplifying his noble and multi-ethnic traits. Furthermore, Cyrus' inherited traits, given by his parents also shapes his destiny. Herodotus calls him a "mule" which is both a crude way to refer to someone as well as holding significance for one's fate. "Mules" are either fated for a destiny that is great because they stand as intermediaries between political alliances or can be tragic characters. Ultimately, Herodotus displays his assumptions about race and ethnicity which is largely determined by the theory of inherited traits, reflecting much of what the ancient world believed.

(3) Plutarch offers us a very interesting window into his perspective on race, ethnicity, and how that intersects with citizenship. His works on Cimon and Themistocles also reveals how one can retrospectively describe someone's multi-ethnic identity in light of later citizenship laws, and the setting in which they inhabited. The Pericles law was instituted after the lives of Cimon and Themistocles, and yet, Plutarch had no issue with referring to Themistocles as a "bastard", which is anachronistic, while leaving this descriptor absent from his examination of Cimon. This is even more fascinating since they both are Athenian and Thracian. One of the most important considerations for transcending this retroactive citizenship law is Cimon's wealth, status, and relationship to royalty. For the case of Themistocles, his exploits, cultural fluidity, and relationship to the Kynosarges are accentuated to show that he surpassed the limits of his parents' lineages, specifically his mother's. In other words, ethnicity was not the only factor that determined one's legitimacy in the eyes of Plutarch, who attempts to describe both men, living as contemporaries, within the same context, with the same multi-ethnic identity, differently, based on their social boundaries.

(4) Vergil's *Aeneid* reflects a larger discussion on diversity and ethnicity in the Roman world. Ethnic language is immensely important for this epic, leading characters into alliances with one another, and helping to frame the roles and functions of other characters. Pallas' identity demonstrates that ethnic mixture can be ambiguous, flexible, and simultaneously meaningful. Despite hailing from both royal and divine lineages, Pallas' identity is perceived as disadvantageous to his military leadership due to specific circumstances within the narrative, such as the divine portent and the emphasis on Aeneas as the main character. Yet, what is cited as absolutely disqualifying for Pallas is not his youth, inexperience, or temperament, but precisely his multi-ethnic identity. In this way, it is best to see Pallas in contrast to Aeneas. Both are mixed and both hail from royal and divine lineage, but Pallas' mixtures are seen as inferior. He is Arcadian and Sabine, which Plutarch assumes is perceived as less than, Aeneas' ethnic background.

Chapter 3: Herod, Samaritans, and Jesus

3.1 Introduction

In this chapter, I show how depictions of multi-ethnic identity influence how we read specific characters and people groups in the New Testament. As these individuals are depicted in their specific contexts, it is crucial to read them through the lens of their fluid and evolving ethnic identities within the literary depictions of individual authors. This examination will reveal that authors have different motivations for their emphasis or deemphasis of these characters' ethnic identity. In other words, it is used for specific means.

It is important to note that this chapter employs a literary-historical approach to the biblical texts as well as to extrabiblical sources. To enrich and contextualize particular passages and literary narratives, relevant historical background will be considered. At times, this chapter may appear to give considerable attention to certain historical aspects, such as the contexts surrounding the Samaritans and Herod. However, this historical material is always intended to illuminate and support the literary portrayal of these figures.

There are three main foci, expanding numerous authorial depictions. In the case of Herod the Great, different authors portray him differently, some emphasizing his lineage and multi-ethnic identity, while others are more concerned with his right to rule. For the Samaritans, similarities and dissimilarities between the Gospels and Josephus' depiction exist. Josephus portrays them as ethnically different, yet fluid enough to be considered Jewish by the Romans. In the Gospels, the history of interpretation has fixated on their "other" status, while missing the fluid aspects of their identity. Thus, this chapter will focus on three key components of multi-ethnic identity as reflected in different parts of the text: (1) Herod the Great, (3) the Samaritans, and (4) Jesus in John 8:48.

3.2 Herod the Great

3.2.1 Josephus's Portrayal of Herod the Great

Herod the Great is portrayed across various sources, with the main accounts provided by Josephus and the New Testament.¹ While these sources overlap in some ways, they are better seen to offer contrasting depictions of Herod. This literary depiction contrasts to other projects, which see the various depictions of Herod(s) as a composite figure, like in the work of Frank Dicken, in Herod as a Composite Character in Luke-Acts.² Instead of examining the diversity of portrayals of Herod the Great in one text, I will examine his literary depiction in a variety of texts. It is my contention that Josephus' portrayal of Herod focuses more intently on his ethnic identity, while the Gospels, particularly Matthew's account, juxtapose Herod with Jesus, emphasizing issues of rule and legitimate lineage. I will also explore Eusebius' account, which is less concerned about Herod's multi-ethnic identity but more so with his right to rule in contrast to Jesus. Although Matthew's Gospel is not entirely unconcerned with Herod's ethnic identity, it downplays this aspect in ways that Josephus highlights. While there is much to discuss regarding Josephus' overall portrayal of Herod the Great and his lineage, I will concentrate on specific texts that emphasize Herod's ethnic identity and contrast this with the depiction found in the New Testament to gain a better sense of their purposes, making sense of multiple sources.

To better contextualize Josephus' depiction of Herod's lineage and multi-ethnic identity, a few broader characterizations of his life and rule are worth observing. For instance, Herod's reign was marked by oppressive taxing practices and ambitious building projects.³ Although, instances exist where Herod's rule is appraised positively by Josephus, he laments that the corruption inherent within the Herodian administration, brought the nation to "helpless poverty."⁴ However, regarding

¹ Mason, *Josephus*, 156–157, 160–161; see also, Landau, "Power and Pity," in Josephus and Jewish History in Flavian Roman and Beyond, 159–181. For more information about Herod the Great, see Vermes, *The True Herod*; Rocca, *Herod's Judaea*; McCane, "Simply Irresistible," 725–735; Marshak, *The Many Faces of Herod the Great*; Knoblet, *Herod the Great*; Beitzel, "Herod the Great," 309–322; Jacobson, "Herod the Great": 100–104; Pažout, "Roman pietas," 206–217; Zangenberg, "Der letzte Weg des Großen Königes," 59–65; Japp, *Die Baupolitik Herodes' Des Großen*; Kokkinos, *The Herodian Dynasty*; Bloch, "'Di Neglecti'", 123–147.

² Dicken, *Herod as Composite Character in Luke-Acts*.

³ Josephus, *Ant.* 15.266–276, 328–341; 16.136–149. Some of those major building constructions included, the fortresses of Masada, the Herodium, Antonia, the port city of Caesarea, the coastal town of Antipatris, cities in dedication to Augustus, and the Jerusalem temple. Also significant are three temples dedicated to worship of Rome and the emperor: Caesarea Maritima, Sebaste, and Baniyas; for a source on the Herod's taxation, see Rocca, *Herod's Judaea*, 204. Rocca states that during the first part of Herod's reign there was higher tax rates. See also, Regev, "Herod's Jewish Ideology Facing Romanization," 197–222; Sharon, *Judea Under Roman Domination*.

⁴ After a drought in 25–24 BCE brought with it a resultant famine, Herod sold some of his own possessions and with it bought food and Egypt to give to those suffering in Judea and to some beyond his kingdom (*Ant.* 15.299–

his propensity for violence and paranoia, Josephus provides abundant references to Herod's violent actions, much of which was intended to instill fear and consolidate his reign.⁵ All of this comes into play regarding his dubious and multi-ethnic origins, which we will see through these disparate texts.

3.2.1.1 Title “King of the Jews”

Herod's multi-ethnic identity is portrayed through the title that Josephus designates to Herod, which is the “βασιλεὺς τῶν Ἰουδαίων.” But in what sense can Herod be reasonably considered ethnically “Jewish”?⁶ Is this term a technical designation conferred upon him by the Romans, or does it reflect an ethnic identity? Josephus uses this term for Herod and similar ethnic monarch designations for other kings. We see that Josephus subtly deemphasizes the ethnic connotations of the term “king of the Jews” in regard to Herod, by employing different comparisons. In one instance, Josephus places Antony in close proximity to Herod, emphasizing the Roman right to confer status onto Herod. In other place, Josephus juxtaposes Herod to other kings of Israel, by using the ethnic designation for them, but leave it out for Herod.

Two of the aspects of ethnicity that Josephus uses in this instance, reflects the criteria offered by Anthony Smith, “a distinctive shared culture” and “a sense of solidarity”.⁷ In recounting the events at Caesarea in 59–60 CE, Josephus, in *Jewish War*, mentions the Jewish population or “the mixed Jews” (τῶν ἀναμειγμένων Ἰουδαίων) involved in a dispute with the city's Syrians.⁸ Although the term ἀναμείγνυμι is sometimes used to denote the mixing of different peoples, here it likely carries a partitive sense, referring to the Jewish population within the larger city.⁹ These Jews appealed to

316). Ten years later in 14 BCE he remitted one-third of his tributes, to reduce the chances of revolt (*Ant.* 15.365). For the comment on bringing the nation to poverty, see Josephus, *Ant.* 17.307–309.

⁵ Herod had two officials beaten to death (*J.W.* 1.550–551); He had two of his sons strangled and another son executed (*Ant.* 16.394; 17.187, 191; *J.W.* 1.550–1551; 1.664–665; he had one of his wives strangled (*J.W.* 1.443–444); he burned men alive (*Ant.* 17.167–69; *J.W.* 1.655–56); and ordered that nobles throughout the land were murdered at his death (*Ant.* 17.174–179; *J.W.* 1.659–60).

⁶ Herod is only called “the Great” (ὁ μέγας) in context of his family genealogy, Josephus, *Ant.* 18.130–142.

⁷ Smith, *The Ethnic Origins of Nations*, 22.

⁸ Josephus, *J.W.* 2.266.

⁹ Appian, *Bell. civ.* 1.6.53; Herodotus, *Hist.* 1.146; Plutarch, *Per.* 19.2.

their founder, who “had become Jewish” (Ἰουδαῖον γεγονέναι). Josephus immediately qualifies this statement by using the coordinating conjunction δέ, adding, “but he was King Herod” (ἦν δὲ Ἡρώδης ὁ βασιλεύς), implying that Herod’s Jewishness is not certain. Some translators, such as Thackeray, do not interpret this as contrastive, yet a contrast makes sense given the contested origin of Caesarea’s founder. The Syrians acknowledge that Herod was a Jew but argue that the city belongs to the Greeks, reasoning that if Herod had intended it for the Jews, he would not have erected temples and statues there, clearly a reference to Herod’s dual loyalties and enculturation of Hellenistic sensibilities.¹⁰

As Josephus depicts the Jewish detractors using Herod’s building projects as leverage against the Jews in claiming the city was meant for them, there is a sense that Herod does not share the same cultural and religious values as the Jews. Although Josephus’ account of the Syrian response has more to do with the sense of belonging in the city related to ownership, this also has something to do with Herod’s dual loyalties and values, which reflect his own ethnic ambiguity. Josephus might be showing some consternation as he changes this account in *Antiquities*. In this account, he portrays the Syrians as arguing that the earlier city before Caesarea, Strato’s Tower, had no Jewish inhabitants, thus omitting Herod’s building projects.¹¹ In *War*, Josephus highlights the complexity of Herod’s ethnic identity, implying a dual loyalty, while in *Antiquities*, he minimizes this sentiment.

Josephus’ choice of titles for Herod is notable when compared to other kings in his narratives. In *Antiquities* he is called “king of the Jews” just a few times.¹² In other cases, Herod is referred to as “king Herod” or simply as one who possesses kingship, without an explicit ethnic designation.¹³ Although the direct title of “king of the Jews” is not often given to Herod, his reign is strongly connected to Judea, implying that he is ruler over the area. For instance, he is called “king” while

¹⁰ Josephus, *J.W.* 2.266; see also Tacitus, *Hist.* 5.5, where Tacitus mentions how the Jews do not erect any statues at all in their cities.

¹¹ Josephus, *Ant.* 20.173.

¹² Josephus, *Ant.* 15.409 (also in close reference to Antony); *Ant.* 16.292 (in close reference to Caesar), 311.

¹³ Josephus, *Ant.* 15.12, 16.

celebrating the completion of the temple.¹⁴ This stands in contrast to Josephus’s treatment of other kings, whom he sometimes refers to with ethnic titles, such as the “the king of the Arabs,” (ὁ Ἀράβων βασιλεύς) in reference to the Nabataean king Malchus, and other ancient rulers.¹⁵ In another place, for example, Sennacherib is described as the “king of Assyria” (ὁ τῶν Ἀσσυρίων βασιλεὺς).¹⁶ One difference between these disparate references, is that when Herod is mentioned as “king of the Jews,” it is usually in close proximity to Roman authorities.¹⁷ Yet, in another instance, Herod was prophesized to be “king of the Jews” by Manaëmus, an Essene.¹⁸ Josephus seems to include this story to make the point that this is why Herod was favorable toward Essenes.¹⁹ In these cases, Josephus uses similar language to describe the different kings, yet for Herod, often connects him to the Roman authorities.

In *Jewish Wars*, the contrast between Herod and other kings is more apparent. Along with Herod, other kings of Israel are referred to as kings of the Jews, such as Jeconiah, David, and Alexander Jannaeus.²⁰ And in one place, right after Alexander Jannaeus is called the “king of the Jews” Herod is mentioned as “king” without the ethnic-geographical title, creating a contrast between them.²¹ So although Herod is referred to as “king of the Jews” in *Antiquities*, it is often related to his proximity to Roman authorities. In the case of *War*, his title is left out in relationship to the historic kings of Israel. All of this shows that although the “king of the Jews” is an ethnic title, it is used in different ways of Herod to emphasize the role of the Romans or deemphasized in relationship to other kings of Israel.

¹⁴ Josephus, *Ant.* 15.420–423.

¹⁵ Josephus, *Ant.* 15.107, 108, 110; 28.39; see also his description of ancient kings such as the king of Assyria, Egypt, and Israel, *Ant.* 9.277–278; 10.17–20. In another place, Malchus is referred to as the “ruler of the Arabs” (*Ant.* 15.167).

¹⁶ Josephus, *Ant.* 10.17.

¹⁷ Josephus, *Ant.* 15.409; *Ant.* 16.292.

¹⁸ Josephus, *Ant.* 15.374.

¹⁹ Josephus, *Ant.* 15.379.

²⁰ Josephus, *J.W.* 6.104, 439; 7.171. see also in *Antiquities*, Antigonus (*Ant.* 17.92); Alexander “king of the Jews” and Aristobulus, “ruler of the Jews” (*Ant.* 14.37); Saul is called “king of the Hebrews” (Σαοῦλος ὁ τῶν Ἑβραίων βασιλεὺς) (*Ant.* 6.98); David is called “king of the Hebrews” (*Ant.* 7.72, 105).

²¹ Josephus, *J.W.* 7.171.

Josephus also highlights the role of other political agents in Herod's ascension and control of Judea, which explains much of the kingly designation. In *Jewish War*, there is one notable instance in which Herod is described in this way, when Josephus refers to Antony's motivations in placing Herod king over Judea, stating that Antony was "determined to make him king of the Jews."²² Josephus focuses on Antony's influence over the Roman Senate to confer this status onto Herod.²³ Josephus remains somewhat detached here, offering minimal personal commentary. However, he makes Antony's motives clear, showing that Herod's kingship was due to Antony's advocacy in which he had a significant role in Herod's ascension. This reflects the earlier account of Herod and Sossius' capture of Jerusalem, when Antony beheads Antigonus to quell dissent for the advantage of Herod. In these cases, the kingly designation seems to be more of an official title bestowed onto Herod by the Roman Senate and not a regular appellation that is regularly used by Josephus. Much of the titular "king of the Jews" is used of Herod in relation to the advocacy of the Roman powers. This all shows that the title of the "king of the Jews," when used of Herod, is less ethnic and more political. In this sense, much of the context and the close association to Herod's political allies, the Roman, nullifies much of the ethnic undertones of this title.

3.2.1.2 Herod's Lineage

Another aspect of Herod the Great's life and family that relate to ethnic criteria include Smith's "a common myth of descent" and "a shared history".²⁴ Yet, other aspects of Herod's life relate to political/religious allegiances as well as how one's mixed parentage, which pertain to how Josephus identifies him. For instance, according to Josephus, after the death of Antiochus, Hyrcanus captured the Syrian city of Medaba, along with Samega and others. He then launched an expedition into Samaria, seizing the cities of Shechem and Gerizim. Following this, Hyrcanus invaded Idumea, capturing Dora and Marissa, and "submitting all of the Idumeans" (καὶ ἅπαντας τοὺς Ἰδουμαίους ὑποχειρίους).²⁵ If one were to follow ancient authors such as Josephus and Strabo, it would seem that the Idumeans were forcibly converted, yet some modern scholarship pushes

²² Josephus, *J.W.* 1.282.

²³ Josephus, *J.W.* 1.282–285.

²⁴ Smith, *The Ethnic Origins of Nations*, 22.

²⁵ Josephus, *Ant.* 13.257.

back against this portrayal, arguing that it was essentially a peaceful transition between alliances which led to religious realignments.²⁶ David Horrell argues exactly this, when he states we should view this more so terms of political alliance rather than “conversion,” since our categories of identity, such as ethnicity and religion provide a poor understanding of the ancient world.²⁷ In this way, we miss how Herod’s family and their decision to politically realign, has religious, political, and cultural expectations much different than modern concepts of “conversion” entail. Yet, regardless of how we define this religious and political realignment, Herod’s grandfather, the governor of Idumaea during the reign of Hyrcanus I, and his family, decided to become subjects of the Hasmonean kingdom.²⁸ This moment marked a change in these affiliations for Herod’s family, which precipitated his eventually reign.

Although Herod was politically a Jew through the Hasmonean conquest of Idumaea and Iturea, many considered him unfit for the throne because of his mixed identity, with Josephus using terms such as “half-Jew” (ἡμιουδαίω).²⁹ Interestingly, in strict genealogical terms, Herod was not ethnically Jewish at all, even though he was a Judean by virtue of being an Idumean. Shaye Cohen identifies this problem and questions whether Herod can rightly be considered Jewish at all.³⁰ He argues that Herod’s “half-Jewishness” stems from his father’s Idumaeian heritage, which retained its ethnic distinction, much like the term “Galilean,” an ethno-geographical designation.³¹ In one place, when describing Antigonus’ protestations to the Romans against Herod’s kinship, he states

²⁶ For arguments that this political conversion was peaceful, see Kasher, *Jews, Idumaeans, and Ancient Arabs*, 46–78; Following Kasher, is Richardson, *Herod*, 54–62. Ancient sources on the conversion include Strabo, *Geog.* 16.2.34; Josephus, *Ant.* 13.257–258; see also Grabbe, *A History of the Jews, Vol 3*, 220–222.

²⁷ Horrell, *Ethnicity and Inclusion*, 264. Much of this conversation revolves around the distinction between conversion, initiation, and the temporal frame with which one can conceivably be introduced and embedded within a new identity, see Nock, *Conversion*, 1998; see also, Bøgh, *Conversion and Initiation in Antiquity*, 2014; Finn, *From Death to Rebirth*; Dodd and Faraone, *Initiation in Ancient Greek Rituals and Narratives*; Mills and Grafton, *Conversion in Late Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages*; Kling, *A History of Christian*.

²⁸ Josephus, *Ant.* 13.254–258; Some, like Nicolaus of Damascus, in an attempt at flattery, argued that Herod’s family came to Judea from Babylon after the exile, *Ant.* 14.8–10; see also Levin, “The Religion of Idumea and Its Relationship to Early Judaism,” 487; Freyne, “Galileans, Phoenicians, and Itureans,” in *Hellenism in the Land of Israel*, 182–215.

²⁹ Josephus, *Ant.* 14.403. For a chart of Herod’s genealogy, see Hayes and Mandell, *The Jewish People in Classical Antiquity*, 134.

³⁰ Cohen, *The Beginnings of Jewishness*, esp., 13–25. Later Christian and Jewish interpretations locate Herod’s identity as an Ascalonite, insisting that he was a Gentile, see Justin, *Dial.* 52; Eusebius, *Hist. eccl.* 1.7.11 (quoting Julius Africanus); Herod’s heritage being doubted, Bava Batra 3b.16.

³¹ Cohen, *The Beginnings of Jewishness*, 18.

that Herod is both a “commoner” (ιδιώτη) and an “Idumean” (Ιδουμαίω), which to Antigonus, means that Herod is a “half-Jew” (ἡμιουδαίω).³² In this case, Antigonus views Herod’s Idumean background as sufficient grounds to call him Jewish. Or perhaps more accurately, Josephus portrays Antigonus’ concerns of Herod, being a “half-Judean.” This means, for Antigonus, Herod is unfit to rule.

Herod’s mother’s identity also plays a role in how we understand his literary depiction. His mother Kypros is mentioned in a passing comment from Josephus as hailing from a prominent Arab family (τῶν ἐπισήμων ἐξ Ἀραβίας).³³ In this case, Herod’s mother’s identity is framed by her social status as well as her ethno-geographical designation. Without delving deeper into Herod’s mother’s identity, it is worth noting that social status does affect the portrayal of women, like in the case of Aseneth in *Joseph and Aseneth*, as well as Tharbis as depicted in Josephus. These examples are unpacked in chapter four. Although Herod’s mother Kypros does not play a large role in Josephus’ writings, Herod’s identity is framed by his family’s political inclusion into the Hasmonean kingdom, his Idumean/Judean status, as well as his mother’s Arab heritage, all of which complexify our understanding of Herod.

According to Cohen, Herod the Great was Jewish in the sense that he was part of the group that worshiped God through the Jerusalem temple, while also being Idumaeen and “half-Jewish” due to his Arab lineage.³⁴ While Josephus depicts Herod within a spectrum of portrayals, later Christian and Rabbinic literature depicts Herod much more negatively, as both non-Jewish and Gentile.³⁵ Cohen writes,

In sum, depending on whom you ask, Herod was either a *Ioudaios* (that is, a Judaeen and Jew), a blue-blooded Judaeen, an Idumaeen and therefore not a Judaeen, an

³² Josephus, *Ant.* 15.403.

³³ Josephus, *Ant.* 14.121; *J.W.* 1.181.

³⁴ Cohen, *The Beginnings of Jewishness*, 23.

³⁵ Justin Martyr states that Antipater was an Ascalonite (Justin, *Dial.* 52); while Eusebius records that Julius Africanus making a connection to a temple-slave of Apollo at Ascalon, (Eusebius, *Hist. eccl.* 1.7.11); see also Bava Batra 3b.

Idumaeen and therefore also a Judaeen, an Idumaeen and therefore a half-Judaeen, and Ascalonite, a gentile slave, an Arab, or—the Messiah!³⁶

We see that identity, as portrayed in various literature, authors, and perspectives, can significantly influence our understanding of someone's ethnic identity. Similar to today, ancient peoples were perceived and categorized differently depending on the lens through which they were viewed.³⁷

Finally, Josephus' depiction of Herod must also include his general sense of insecurity about his lineage. This sense of insecurity relates to the idea of a shared myth of descent, articulated in different criteria of ethnicity. As Josephus recounts the meteoric rise of Antipater, Herod's father, he notes that the ancient historian Nicolaus of Damascus intentionally fabricated the lineage of Antipater's family by placing their arrival in Jerusalem from Babylon after the exile to "please" (χαρίζομαι) him.³⁸ Here we see the heightened stress along with a shared lineage, on the idea of a "shared history" also relating to a "distinctive shared culture."³⁹ In other words, if he was considered the "King of the Jews" and was ethnically "half-Jew" by virtue of being Judean (that is, Idumean), why would Nicolaus of Damascus feel the need to contrive a myth surrounding Herod's family? It is clear, that one of the functions of this rearrangement of one's lineage relates to establish the right of Herod to rule. Ethnically, this means that his multi-ethnic parentage poses problems for Herod. If his family could narrate how they go back to the exile in Babylon, they could simultaneously show how they are different from the existing mixed and Samaritan populations, as well as substantiate their "purity" along with the other exiles.

Considering all of the varied portraits we see in Josephus' depiction of Herod the Great, we can distill the main features of his depiction. Josephus depicts Herod the Great in juxtaposition to other

³⁶ Cohen, *The Beginnings of Jewishness*, 23.

³⁷ Cohen argues that this amount of opinion about a single individual is unusual (p. 23). Yet, those who are multi-ethnic intuit the possible range of opinions about them depending on the context in which they find themselves. Another example of a people being perceived in ways that are dictated by their context would be Jews living in the diaspora, see Kasher, *The Jews in Hellenistic and Roman Egypt*; Moore, *Jewish Ethnic Identity and Relations in Hellenistic Egypt*; Gruen, *Diaspora*.

³⁸ Josephus, *Ant.* 14.9; see also, Czajkowski and Eckhardt, *Herod in History*; for a short excursus on Nicolaus of Damascus, see Adams, *Greek Genres and Jewish Authors*, 54–55.

³⁹ Smith, *The Ethnic Origins of Nations*, 22.

kings when the ethno-geographic title of “king of the Jews” is used, which deemphasize how the ethnic title is placed upon Herod. Furthermore, much of his kingship is in relationship to Roman hegemony, which was leveraged to place Herod in his position of authority, which emphasizes his political function while simultaneously understating the ethnic designation. Finally, Herod’s mixed family of Idumean and Arab origin should be seen and interpreted considering their inclusion into the Hasmonean kingdom. Yet even though they were subsumed under the Hasmonean empire, Herod’s allegiances as it relates to building projects and the anxiety surrounding his family’s heritage reveal that there is still a division between Herod, his family, and being Jewish. In this case, we see the ethnic criteria of the myth of descent, a shared history, and a distinctive shared culture all being negotiated and adapted in the life of Herod. He is in both senses Jewish, but not completely.

3.2.2 Eusebius’ Portrayal of Herod the Great

Eusebius provides another depiction of Herod and his insecurities, which provides another example of how Herod’s ethnicity is discussed and leveraged.⁴⁰ Overall, the myth of shared descent pervades this story, creating a contrast between Herod the Great and Jesus. In *Ecclesiastical History*, Eusebius engages a discussion about reconciling the genealogical records of Jesus found in the Gospels of Matthew and Luke, drawing on the perspective of Africanus.⁴¹ In this discussion, Eusebius seeks to differentiate between “nature” and “law”, that is, between the biological and legal aspects of the genealogies.⁴² According to Africanus, Matthew presents the physical descent of Jesus, tracing his lineage through Jacob to Solomon, while Luke provides the legal descent through Heli to Nathan. This distinction explains the differing accounts of Joseph’s father: in Matthew’s Gospel, Joseph’s father is Jacob (Matt 1:16), whereas in Luke, it is Heli (Luke 3:23). Heli is understood to be Joseph’s legal father but not his biological father. Jacob and Heli were half-brothers by different fathers, and after Heli died without an heir, Jacob fulfilled the levirate

⁴⁰ For a short introduction to Eusebius, see Corke-Webster, *Eusebius and Empire*, 13–53; for sources on the broader context, see Stevenson and Frend, *A New Eusebius*; Joseph Patrich, “Caesarea in the Time of Eusebius,” in *Reconsidering Eusebius*, 1–24.

⁴¹ Eusebius, *Hist. eccl.* 1.7.

⁴² Eusebius, *Hist. eccl.* 1.7.1–4.

obligation by fathering Joseph in Heli's name.⁴³ Although Jesus possesses different genealogies, there is a reconciliation that helps explain the apparent discrepancies.

In juxtaposition to the lineage of Jesus, Eusebius immediately shifts to the story of Antipater II, Herod's father, which helps to explain how he views Herod. Antipater was reportedly kidnapped during a war near Ascalon, grew up as a slave of deities (ἱεροδουλος) in Idumea, and eventually became friends with Hyrcanus, the high priest of Judea.⁴⁴ At Hyrcanus' request, Antipater embarked on a mission to advocate for the region's freedom before Pompey, ultimately becoming the overseer of Palestine.⁴⁵ Notably, Eusebius also mentions Mark Antony's role in advocating for Herod's rule, drawing attention to the broader network of political support behind Herod's rise to power.⁴⁶

This brings us to Eusebius' story recounting Herod's act of burning the genealogical records due to his insecurities related to his own heritage. Eusebius states,

But since the Hebrew families and those traceable to proselytes, such as Achior the Ammonite, and Ruth the Moabitess, and the mixed families which had come out of Egypt, had until then been enrolled in the archives, Herod, because the family of the Israelites contributed nothing to him, and because he was goaded by his own consciousness of his base birth, burned the records of their families, thinking to appear noble if no one else was able by public documents to trace his family to the patriarchs or proselytes, or to the so-called *gers* of mixed descent (Eusebius, *Hist. eccl.* 1.7.13 [Lake]).

Eusebius then addresses how Jesus' genealogy became public knowledge, attributing it to the preservation of memory by those who maintained private family records.⁴⁷ Eusebius concludes

⁴³ Eusebius, *Hist. eccl.* 1.7.8–10

⁴⁴ Eusebius, *Hist. eccl.* 1.7.11; 1.6.2–3.

⁴⁵ Eusebius, *Hist. eccl.* 1.7.11–12; 1.6.7

⁴⁶ Eusebius, *Hist. eccl.* 1.7.12.

⁴⁷ Eusebius, *Hist. eccl.* 1.7.13.

this section by returning to a discussion of Mary and Joseph, who, according to Africanus, belonged to the same tribe.⁴⁸ For Eusebius, this act of arson of the genealogical records sets the stage for the birth of Jesus and the events following, offering a rationale for his massacre of the infants in Bethlehem.⁴⁹ For Eusebius, all of these factors play a role in his depiction of Herod, such as his paranoia, insecurity at his right to rule, and his anxiety of his lineage. Furthermore, Eusebius argues that because of these crimes, Herod is struck with God's justice.⁵⁰ All of this swirls around the central point for Eusebius, that Jesus was "born in accordance with the prophecies" (γεννηθέντος ταῖς προφητείαις ἀκολούθως).⁵¹ In contrast, Herod the Great was not and the story of the burning of the records highlights this lack of divine approval.

In Eusebius' account, the focus is less on Herod's multi-ethnic identity and more on his legitimacy to rule and lack of divine approval. For instance, Eusebius acknowledges Herod's mixed Idumean and Arab parentage, referring to him as the "first foreigner" (πρῶτος ἀλλόφυλος) entrusted by the Romans to rule over the Jews, and does not regard him as Jewish or Judean in any sense.⁵² Elsewhere, Eusebius suggests that if Herod could trace his lineage back to the "foreigner" (γειώρας), it might have connected his family to the Jewish exile, implying that mixed ancestry would have been acceptable as long as it included ties to the exilic community.⁵³ This lack of connection is explicitly noted by Eusebius. Additionally, Eusebius references Herod's father's connection to Ascalon on two occasions, further underscoring the discontinuity between Herod's family and the proper lineage of the Jews.⁵⁴

In *Ecclesiastical History*, Eusebius' juxtaposition of Herod and Jesus, and Herod's portrayal all emphasize the question of legitimacy, specifically, the legitimacy of Jesus' rule over Herod's, rather than focusing on Herod's multi-ethnic identity. While Herod's mixed ancestry is

⁴⁸ Eusebius, *Hist. eccl.* 1.7.16.

⁴⁹ Eusebius, *Hist. eccl.* 1.8.1.

⁵⁰ Eusebius, *Hist. eccl.* 1.8.2–16.

⁵¹ Eusebius, *Hist. eccl.* 1.8.1.

⁵² Eusebius, *Hist. eccl.* 1.6.2.

⁵³ Eusebius, *Hist. eccl.* 1.7.13.

⁵⁴ Eusebius, *Hist. eccl.* 1.6.2; 1.7.8–10.

acknowledged, it plays a minimal role in shaping his overall depiction in Eusebius' account. Furthermore, Herod's ancestry is commented on to show his insecurities about his right to rule, evidenced by the story of his burning of the temple genealogical records as well as Eusebius' comment that he was the "first foreigner" to rule over the Judeans.⁵⁵ Overall, Jesus' lineage is scrutinized, examined, and reconciled via Africanus. In contrast to Jesus, Herod is insecure about his lineage and orders for the genealogical records to be burned. Jesus was born in accordance with Scripture and prophecy, while Herod was not. All of this emphasizes Jesus' Davidic lineage and his divine approval to rule. Ethnically, the myth of descent pervades this story, creating a contrast between figures who both claim a right to rule.

3.2.3 Matthew's Portrayal of Herod the Great

In comparison to other literary depictions of Herod the Great, such as those in Josephus and Eusebius, Matthew's Gospel offers a distinctive portrayal. This analysis will explore both the similarities and differences between the Gospel writer's depiction of Herod and those found in other sources. While lineage is of importance to Herod in other writings, it is not necessarily emphasized in Matthew's Gospel in the way one might assume. Although Herod's multi-ethnic identity poses some challenges for the Gospel writer, and his ancestry is implicitly scrutinized, the primary focus is on questioning Herod's legitimacy to rule.

Unlike in Josephus, where numerous examples of the term "king of the Jews" is used, in the Gospel of Matthew, the term is only utilized once in reference to Jesus by the magi and is utilized as an ironic term in juxtaposition to Herod (Matt 2:2). Yet, as one reads through the Gospel the kingship language is at the fore of it (Matt 2:2,3,9).⁵⁶ In contrast to Jesus, Herod is ironically called the "king" (Matt 2:3). At the end of the gospel returns through the sign over Jesus at his death, identifying him as the "king of the Jews" (Matt 27:37). In the beginning of Matthew, after the genealogy of Jesus connecting the Messiah to the Davidic line to Abraham (Matt 1:1–17), the magi followed the astronomical sign to Jerusalem and ask where the king of the Jews has been born

⁵⁵ Eusebius, *Hist. eccl.* 1.6.2.

⁵⁶ Bauer, "The Kingship of Jesus," 308. "It is clear that Matthew orients the description of chap. 2 to the issue of kingship."

(ποῦ ἐστὶν ὁ τεχθεὶς βασιλεὺς τῶν Ἰουδαίων) (Matt 2:2). This episode with the magi is ironic because Herod was not born king of the Jews which is an apparent literary subversion of his right to rule. Once Herod and the magi determine that the child Jesus was born in Bethlehem, Herod tells them to come back and inform him (Matt 2:7–8). After being warned in a dream, they went another route back home to avoid Herod (Matt 2:12). So, although the specific term “king of the Jews” is not frequently used, the kingship theme frames the Gospel.

This context leads us to numerous motifs and themes in the infancy narrative, which helps us to identify the authors’ main purpose for juxtaposing Jesus to Herod. For example, there is the chilling act of Herod’s massacre of the infants in Bethlehem (Matt 2:13–18).⁵⁷ One of the literary motifs clearly in this event is the parallel actions to Pharaoh in the book of Exodus 1:15–22, in which he orders all the Hebrew male children to be put to death.⁵⁸ Moses is saved by being placed in the Nile as an infant, while Jesus is saved by going to Egypt (Exod 2:1–3; Matt 2:13). Moses returned with his family back to Egypt after his desert sojourn (Exod 4:20) and Joseph and his family similarly returned to Galilee after their time in Egypt (Matt 2:21). The parallels between Herod and Pharaoh are also established, by connecting Jesus as the “new Moses”.⁵⁹ However, some do not see that parallel in explicit terms.⁶⁰ Even on a large-scale literary arrangement, a possible Pentateuchal arrangement of the Gospel of Matthew, reflects the connection between Jesus and Moses (Matt 3–7; 8–10; 11–13; 14–18; 19–25).⁶¹ Jesus is also depicted as fulfilling the Torah, and

⁵⁷ For discussion over the historical reliability of the infanticide see, France, “Herod and the Children of Bethlehem,” 98–120; Keener, *Matthew*, 111. After reviewing the image of Herod, we have in Josephus, and engaging with some of the scholarly literature, he states, “The event is thus neither historically documented nor historical implausible” (p. 111).

⁵⁸ These parallels are further heightened when contrasting the reigns of Herod and Jesus. Jesus is seen as an insurrectionist to both Herod and Pilate, while Herod is a precursor to the religious leaders, see Kingsbury, *Matthew as Story*, 48–49.

⁵⁹ Bailey, *Jesus Through Middle Eastern Eyes*, 58; Osborne, *Matthew*, 101. Here Osborne states, “At nearly every point of the plot in chs. 1–2, this Moses typology is evident”; Harrington, *Matthew*, 46–50; Keener, *Matthew*, 107; Mitch and Sri, *Matthew*, 56.

⁶⁰ Luz, *Matthew 1–7*, 182. In his commentary on chapter 2 he does not even mention this relationship, emphasizing more of Israel escaping Egypt rather than Jesus being the new Moses. Here he looks at Jesus sitting on the mountain in chapter 5 and resists the idea of Matthew drawing anything more than an association between Jesus and Moses; see also, Allison Jr., *Studies in Matthew*, 122; Bruner, *The Christbook*, 43–57, 132–133. Although Bruner does not mention the relationship to Moses, it is implied with a short reference to Sinai and the giving of the commandments.

⁶¹ Mitch and Sri, *Matthew*, 22–23.

even gives a “new law” on a mountain (Matt 5–7).⁶² These motifs connect Jesus with Moses as the deliverer and Messiah, which help aid, and offer legitimacy to his right to rule in contrast to Herod.

Considering this information, it seems clear that the author of the Gospel intended parallels to be drawn from Herod to pharaoh, thus insisting that his reign is not legitimate since he attempts to kill the male infants in Bethlehem. Ulrich Luz examines this as a major motif in the Gospel, where the judgement cast on Jerusalem later in the text connects the murder of the infants to the judgement of the temple. He states, “Herod cannot be the true king of the Jews if he kills Israel’s children because of Jesus. In persecuting the messianic child, Jesus, the king of the Jews destroys Israel’s children. In a similar way, Matthew will later suggest that Israel’s ‘no’ to Jesus brings a curse on its children (27:24).”⁶³ In this way, the whole book, in its literary arrangement, motifs, and literary connections, brings this idea to bear, that Herod is a pharaonic type of figure.

We must then ask the question of how his lineage plays a role in his characterization in Matthew’s Gospel. It is noticeable that it does not play an explicit role in the infancy narrative, even though Jesus’ genealogy is forefront in the book (Matt 1:1–17). Rather, clearer, is the idea that Jesus possesses the rightful genealogical relationship to David and possesses the rightful pedigree to rule. This conversely means and implies that Herod the Great is not the legitimate ruler and does not possess the appropriate pedigree. The prestige of the family is crucial for the individual in question, shaping the narrative about them and conferring abilities and virtues onto their descendants.⁶⁴ This is evident in the negative appraisal of Herod’s progeny as well.⁶⁵ In all, Matthew’s Gospel portrays Herod in a variety of ways. While his multi-ethnic identity does not occupy a central role, the Gospel does highlight lineage as a justification for one’s right to rule.

⁶² Mitch and Sri, *Matthew*, 87.

⁶³ Luz, *Matthew 1–7*, 121. This could add credence to the denunciation of the religious elite later in the gospel. The religious order is connected to Herod; he represents them (Matt 2:3). Jesus foretells the destruction of the temple (Matt 24:1–2). The temple curtain splits which portend the eventual destruction of it (Matt 27:51). And the judgement of Israel culminates in the destruction of the temple (70 CE). The foundation of God’s judgement is found in a variety of reasons. One of those reasons could lie in the infanticide in Matthew 2.

⁶⁴ Suetonius, *Tib.* 1–3; Plutarch, *Alc.* 1.1; *Brut.* 1.1; *Lyc.* 1; *Publ.* 1 *Sol.* 1; Isocrates, *Archid.* 9; Diogenes Laertius, *Lives* 3.

⁶⁵ Matt 14:1; Luke 3:1; 13:32; Mark 6:14; see also Hoehner, *Herod Antipas*; Jensen, *Herod Antipas*.

3.2.3.1 Summary

To summarize, Josephus reflects two key concerns in his depiction of Herod the Great. The title “king of the Jews,” an ethnic and political term, is fluid and shaped by the specific themes Josephus wishes to emphasize. For instance, when Josephus explicitly applies this designation to Herod, it often occurs in contexts where Roman authorities are present, thereby downplaying its ethnic connotations and emphasizing its political ones. Conversely, when Josephus refers to other historic kings of Israel, he noticeably omits this title in relation to Herod, further minimizing its ethnic implications. Eusebius, by contrast, presents Herod and Jesus as counterparts: Herod is insecure about his familial lineage, while Jesus is firmly connected to a Davidic one. In Eusebius’ portrayal, God ultimately judges Herod but approves of Jesus’ rule. Matthew, on the other hand, portrays Herod as an illegitimate ruler, drawing parallels between him and Pharaoh. Matthew underscores lineage as the foundation for rightful rule, and with kingship language central to the infancy narrative, the Gospel highlights Jesus’ legitimate authority to rule over Herod’s.

Throughout these portrayals, Herod embodies a complex and dual identity. He is both Jewish, in the sense of being Judean, and “king of the Jews.” Yet, he is depicted as ethnically malleable and distinct, particularly when contrasted with Jesus. The myth of descent, along with Herod’s religious and cultural sensibilities, shapes him into a “both/and” figure—simultaneously part Jewish and distinct from it.

3.3 Samaritans

3.3.1 Brief History of the Samaritans

Although the literary depiction of the Samaritans is of greatest importance for this section, we must begin with a brief history to establish a context from which to read their depictions in Josephus and the New Testament. This history allows us to see some of the distinguishing marks between being “Samaritan,” “Samaritan,” and “Jew” as well as how religious and geographical markers affects how the New Testament texts refer to the Samaritans. All of this is helpful in our overall endeavor to see them as a multi-ethnic people group.

There is a difference between those that are “Samaritan” and “Samaritan”. Samaria, located between Judea to the south and Galilee to the north, was inhabited by individuals referred to as Samaritans, who came from various backgrounds and religious orientations.⁶⁶ Essentially, those living in this area, could be referred to as Samaritan. However, the Samaritans, more specifically, constituted an ethno-religious group primarily residing in this region. While I aim to distinguish between “Samaritan” and “Samaritan,” this task is challenging due to the complex history and the scope of available evidence.⁶⁷

The religious identity of the Samaritans was centered around their own version of the Pentateuch, and during the Persian period, they constructed a temple on Mount Gerizim.⁶⁸ Stewart Penwell argues that Mount Gerizim serves as the defining characteristic of Samaritan ethnic identity.⁶⁹ Other scholars similarly contend that the Samaritans emerged as a distinct people precisely when they erected their cultic center—the temple at Gerizim.⁷⁰ This makes sense of how their religio-ethnic identity was established. This is reminiscent of the ways in which Jonathan Hall describes the Olympian games, as a galvanizing unifier in Hellenic identity in the classical period.⁷¹ Institutionally commitments could help to shape and develop identities. In this case, Samaritan ethnic identity centered on the idea of a cultic site.

⁶⁶ For a brief survey of scholarly literature in the 20th century, see Montgomery, *The Samaritans*; Thomson, *The Samaritans*; Gaster, *The Samaritans*; Crown, *The Samaritans*; Schur, *History of the Samaritans*; for a source that evaluates Samaritan identity from antiquity to the present day, see Pummer, *The Samaritans*; and Schur, *History of the Samaritans*; Schreiber, *The Comfort of Kin*; for trends in scholarship, see Pummer, “The Present State of Samaritan Studies,” 39–61; Pummer, “The Present State of Samaritan Studies,” 27–47; for a recent source, see Chalmers, “Samaritans, Biblical Studies, and Ancient Judaism,” 28–64.

⁶⁷ Karveit, *The Origin of the Samaritans*, 10.

⁶⁸ Anderson, *The Samaritan Pentateuch*; Eshel and Eshel, “Dating the Samaritan Pentateuch’s Compilation,” in *Emanuel: Studies in Hebrew Bible, Septuagint, and Dead Sea Scrolls*, 215–240.

⁶⁹ Penwell, *Jesus the Samaritan*, 48; for a work that evaluates the similar attitudes toward Samaria in early sources in Chronicles and Second Zechariah with reference to the rivalry between Mt. Zion and Mt. Gerizim, see Nihan and Gonzalez, “Competing Attitudes toward Samaria,” in *The Bible, Qumran, and the Samaritans*, 93–114; see also, *Ps.-Eup*, where Melchizedek receives Abraham on Gerizim, legitimizing the temple site.

⁷⁰ Karveit, *The Origin of the Samaritans*, 351–70. See also, Josephus *Ant.* 18:85–89, where Gerizim is a holy place. See also, Knoppers, “Mt. Gerizim and Mt. Zion,” 309–609.

⁷¹ Hall, *Hellenicity*, 161.

The Samaritans are mentioned in other ancient literature as well, including texts found at Qumran, some pseudepigraphal works, and rabbinic sources.⁷² In many of these sources, there has also been a history of understanding Samaritans in relation to the historical site of Shechem, connecting them to the land and offering an explanation of their origins.⁷³ In Hebrew Scripture, we see a particular perception of this history, usually described in a few key texts such as 2 Kings 17.⁷⁴

The prevailing assumption in Hebrew Scripture is that the Samaritans descended from a mixture of the remnants of the ten tribes associated with the northern kingdom of Samaria. This kingdom fell in 722 BCE, leading to the deportation of many by Sargon II (2 Kings 17). Those who remained behind are believed to have intermingled with people brought from Babylonia and Media through Assyria's resettlement strategy (2 Kings 17:24–41).⁷⁵ This period saw the importation and repopulation of Samaria (2 Kings 17:24–41), which is later referenced in Ezra (Ezra 4:2). However, it is important to note, that 2 Kings 17 does not explicitly label these new inhabitants as “Samaritans.” In fact, in the text, they do not establish a distinct place of worship but follow the cultic practices of the land's previous inhabitants (2 Kings 17:29).⁷⁶ After the deported populations

⁷² Ben Sira 50:25–26; 4 Bar 8; 2 Macc 5:22–23, 6:1–2; 3Q15; 4Q371, 372; T. Levi 5–8; Jub. 30; Judith 9:2–4; t. Ter. 4:12, 14; b. Hul. 6a; Abod. Zar 2.8; B. Sanh. 57a; p. Ketub 3.1; Ber. 7.1.

⁷³ Josephus, for example, explicitly refers to Shechem as a city of the Samaritans and associates the Sidonians in Shechem with the Samaritans, see Josephus, *Ant.* 11.340–347; 12.257–264. For an analysis of the three origin stories in Josephus, see Penwell, *Jesus the Samaritan*, 67–81; this is recorded earlier in Alon, “The Origin of the Samaritans in the Halakhic Tradition,” in *Jews, Judaism, and the Classical World*, 354–73; the 2nd BCE anti-Samaritan poem written in Homeric style, *Theodotus*, is a text where the Shechemites were described as the pre-Samaritan ancestors. See also, Pummer, “Samaritan Ethnicity in Josephus,” 45–73; for a work on Shechem, see Wright, *Shechem*; See also, Ben Sira 50:25–26; Bourgel, “Brethern or Strangers?: 383–388. Here Bourgel deconstructs the notion that Ben Sira is referring to the Samaritans.

⁷⁴ For an evaluation of how early sources diverge on attitudes toward Samaritans, one cultic, the other more stringently, see Nihan and Gonzalez, “Competing Attitudes toward Samaria in Chronicles and Second Zechariah,” 93–114; see also, Horst, “Anti-Samaritan Propaganda in Early Judaism,” in *Jews and Christians in their Greco-Roman Context*, 134–150; Knoppers, “Cutheans or Children of Jacob?,” in *Reflection and Refraction*, 223–239; Kartveit, “Anti-Samaritan Polemics in the Hebrew Bible?,” in *The Samaritans in Historical, Cultural and Linguistic Perspectives*, 3–18.

⁷⁵ Knoppers, *Jews and Samaritans*, 18–44. Here Knoppers argues that there was both continuity and discontinuity with the original inhabitants of the land, in other words, but the majority of the post-Assyrian population was still Israelite.

⁷⁶ Penwell, *Jesus the Samaritan*, 57. Penwell also cites, Alberts, *A History of Israelite Religious in the Old Testament Period*, 2.524, stating, “The wording of the polemical description in 2 Kings 17:24–41 of conditions in what was formerly the northern kingdom after its conquest by the Assyrians in 722 does not refer to the Samaritans. The term הַשְּׁמֶרִיִּים, ‘the Samaritans’ (v.29), to which an appeal is frequently made, denotes the earlier Israelite population which is the view of Deuteronomist (vv. 6, 23) was deported in its entirety to Assyria”; The terms used to describe the deportees in 2 Kings 17:29 (הַשְּׁמֶרִיִּים), while in the LXX, the term used is (οἱ Σαμαριτῆται).

returned, tensions flare, particularly due to their opposition to the rebuilding of the Temple (Ezra 4:6–24). Although this text is commonly misunderstood to say more than it does, the prevailing assumptions about their origins come from it. Additionally, this directly relates to the myth of descent, which shows how Samaritans are both connected and disconnected from the genealogical and culture heritage of the Jews, who derive much of their identity through the exile and return from Babylon.

From this general timeline, there is much more history that occurs up until the first century CE. It is likely that the post-exilic Samaritans were composed of both the remnant of the Israelites as well as the imported peoples, which were incorporated into the lands over time.⁷⁷ It is also more likely that Jewish and Samaritan relations in the Hasmonean period were far more complex than simply marked by overt antagonism within the groups.⁷⁸ In other words, these peoples were not always in conflict one another and depending on the time and context, the connection between them could be peaceful or irenic. There were even a few attempts to reconcile northern and southern factions (like in the case of Ezra).

One of the major occurrences that occupies much of our imagination about the Jews and Samaritans is the refraction of their relationship through the destruction of the temple at Gerizim, by John Hyrcanus, high priest and ruler of Judea, which exacerbated relations.⁷⁹ This was certainly one of the flashpoints in their relationship to one another, which is supported by the evidence of a garrison at the site of the temple at least until the time of Alexander Jannaeus. Similarly, in Herodian times, the Samaritans were forbidden from reconstructing the site, all in an attempt to assimilate them into southern Yahwistic worship.⁸⁰ This general history supports the notion of how entrenched religious and cultural institutions, such as the Olympian games, in the case of Hellenic identity, or more specifically, mount Gerizim could galvanize geo-ethnic identity in contrast to

⁷⁷ Staples, *Israel*, 62–63.

⁷⁸ Bourgel, “The Samaritans during the Hasmonean Period,” 628; In the post-exilic and Persian periods, there is evidence that these groups were not always in tension, and the degree of separation between them fluctuated depending on the era and circumstances, see Hensel, “On the relationship of Judah and Samaria in post-exilic times”: 19–42; see also Knoppers, *Jews and Samaritans*, 22.

⁷⁹ For a brief history of Samaritans in the land see Staples, *Israel*, 58–67.

⁸⁰ Knoppers, *Jews and Samaritans*, 213.

southern Jewish identity. Here, in Samaritan history, we see how the myth of descent and religious institutions shape identities.

Adding to this complexity, is the fact that some literature identifies Jews and Samaritans as indistinguishable from one another, which further complicates the narrative of an early and clear-cut division between these peoples.⁸¹ In some cases, the same author might have a changing perspective about the Samaritans, like Josephus.⁸² This ambiguity carried into later second century Christian literature, as Justin Martyr identifies both Jews and Samaritans together in contrast to Gentiles, suggesting that there was still, at that time, a degree of shared identity between the two groups.⁸³ This view contrasts with later rabbinic and Christian sources, which portray a much sharper distinction between them.⁸⁴ We see that authors portray them differently, which complexifies our initial readings of them.

This brief overview highlights the complexity and fluidity of the relationship between Samaritans and Jews, showing that they cannot be understood through a simplistic binary. Throughout history, and depending on the context, there is both a similarity and dissimilarity between them. Their identity was always closely related to the Judeans residing in the land and with attempts at reconciliation, the outlook of restoration was not always bleak. In the destruction of the temple at Gerizim being one such flashpoint, later rabbinic and Christian sources continued to push the distinction between them further, making their separation insurmountable. We also see how the myth of descent and religious/cultural institutions shape identities, leading us to see the complexity of ethnicity. Samaritans and Jews lived side by side one another, often much closer in proximity

⁸¹ 1 Macc 5:22–23; 2 Macc 6:1–2. For a reevaluation of 2nd century BCE sources from which the author draws the conclusion that these have been overstated as anti-Samaritan, see Bourgel, “Brethern or Strangers?”, 382–408.

⁸² In Josephus’ writings, their depiction shifts depending on the context and the particular work. In *Antiquities*, he sometimes describes the Samaritans in more neutral or even positive terms, while in other instances, especially when they come into conflict with the Jewish people, his portrayal is more critical, see Cohen, *Josephus in Galilee and Rome*, 149–150. Here Cohen helpfully points out that *Antiquities* and *War* have a different picture of the Samaritans. Here, Josephus points out in *Antiquities* the nefarious motivations of the Samaritans, while *War* does not mention them.

⁸³ Justin, 1 Apol. 53.

⁸⁴ Crown, “Redating the Schism between the Judeans and the Samaritans,” 17–50. Crown reevaluates the schism between Samaritan and Jew and posits a later 2nd century dating; see also, Lehnardt, “The Anti-Samaritan Attitude as Reflect in Rabbinic Midashim”: 584; we also know that through a variety of evidence that the Samaritans were thoroughly Hellenized in antiquity, see Horst, “The Ancient Samaritans and Greek Culture”: 290.

than in our imaginations. This geographical closeness provides invaluable background to our following discussion about how these identities ebb and flow.

3.3.2 Josephus' Portrayal of the Samaritans

In this section, I will analyze how Samaritans are depicted in the works of Josephus.⁸⁵ My main contention is that the Samaritans should be understood as a multi-ethnic people group which is reflected in their ambiguous and fluid description in literature. Furthermore, ebbs and flows exist between the boundaries of what it means to be Samaritan and Jewish, aligning with ethnic concerns such as the myth of descent. Through this evaluation, I aim to demonstrate how recognizing their multi-ethnic characteristics enriches our reading of Josephus, the New Testament, and enhances our understanding of the literary portrayal of the Samaritans.

When we come to Josephus for his depiction of the Samaritans, we must be aware of his unique perspective and agenda.⁸⁶ Josephus traces the origin of the Samaritans to people brought from the region of “Cuthean” (Χουθαῖ), suggesting they were descendants of deported peoples and later calls them “Σαμαρεῖται”.⁸⁷ Josephus’ language regarding the Samaritans was fluid, and could in one place exclude them, while in another include them, affirming their Jewishness.⁸⁸ This aligns with Stewart Penwell’s assertion that Samaritans were perceived as “disruptors from the outside,” particularly due to their history of opposition to Jewish religious and political structures.⁸⁹

⁸⁵Josephus, *Ant.* 7.100–103; 9.288–291; 11.31–74, 75–119, 174–83, 302–303, 304–347; 12.1–10, 237–264; 13.74–79, 125–130, 275–276; 14.468–91; 17.61–82, 317–320; 18.29–30, 85–89, 167; 20.118–136; *B.J.* 1.61–66, 401–430, 562–563, 582–600; 2.80–100, 223–249; 3.35–58, 307–315; 4.440–450; 5.50.

⁸⁶ See Josephus, *Ant.* 9.288–291; also 2 Macc 6:1–2; Pummer, *The Samaritans in Flavius Josephus*; Grabbe, *A History of the Jews, Vol 3*, 217. Here Grabbe states, “The source which seems to give the most information is in many ways also our most problematic one: Josephus. In most passages, if perhaps not in all, he is openly prejudiced against the dwellers of Shechem.”

⁸⁷ Josephus *Ant.* 9.288–291.

⁸⁸ Lim, “Josephus Constructs the Samari(t)ans,” 404–431; see also, Feldman, *Studies in Hellenistic Judaism*, 114–136; furthermore, Josephus’ critiques of the Samaritans are their opportunistic appropriation of Judean identity when it suits them, see *Ant.* 9.291; Josephus also articulates three origin stories for the Samaritans, see *Ant.* 9.277–291; 11.19–334; 12.257–261.

⁸⁹ Kartveit, “Josephus on the Samaritans—his *Tendenz* and purpose” in *Samaria, Samaritans, Samaritans: Studies on Bible, History, and Linguistics*, 109–120; for a source laying out the different models and theories of the origins of the Samaritans, see Kartveit, “Theories of the Origins of the Samaritans—Then and Now”: 661.

Furthermore, Josephus' historical narration of the Samaritans shows how their descent both overlapped and deviated from the Jews.

But as mentioned before, we see that this relationship was not always one-sided or overly and always antagonistic. Josephus accuses them of opportunistically aligning themselves with Jews when it was convenient and distancing themselves when it was not,

The Samaritans who are prone to change, when they see the Jews prospering, they call them related kin, on the basis that they are descended from Joseph from the beginning and are thus related to them. However, when they see the Jews stumble, they say that they have no connection to them, nor do they claim any friendship or kinship, instead they declare themselves to be settlers of another race.⁹⁰

In this passage, Josephus criticizes the fluidity with which the Samaritans align themselves with Jewish identity when beneficial, while distancing themselves when circumstances change. Later, the Samaritans attempted to receive the same benefits as the Jews but could not directly say they were in fact Ἰουδαῖοι but were “Hebrews”.⁹¹ In this way, Josephus displays an implicit acknowledgement of Samaritan identity that is at the very least, closely aligned to Jewish identity, especially when viewed from other contexts.

Although the distinction between “Hebrew” and “Jew” may seem arbitrary, there is a point to be made about how Samaritans relate to these different aspects of identity. Jason Staples argues that Josephus understood Samaritans to not be Ἰουδαῖοι, but could be classified as “Hebrew”.⁹² He further argues that their ambiguity can be encapsulated in the term “Hebrew” which is attested in literature in describing the Samaritans rather than Ἰουδαῖοι.⁹³ Staples also discerns three main usages of Josephus of the term “Hebrews”: (1) ancient ancestors of the Ἰουδαῖος in the Bible, (2) Samaritans, and (3) Ἰουδαῖοι from the “Hebrew nation” or those living in the region of Judea and

⁹⁰ *Ant.* 9.291, see also *Ant.* 11.341; 12.257, 261.

⁹¹ Josephus *Ant.* 11.343–344, 346–347.

⁹² Staples, *Israel*, 67–69.

⁹³ Staples, *Israel*, 71–77.

Syria.⁹⁴ In another place, he states, “But there is in fact no evidence that anyone in this period—whether the Samaritans or others—saw the Samaritans as a variety of Jews.”⁹⁵ This means that they were in fact, perceived as “outsiders” from a Jewish perspective, yet considered themselves to be within the umbrella term of “Israelite.” Staples argues that Josephus acknowledges that Samaritans claimed to be Israelites but denies that they were Jews.⁹⁶ In all, there is a clear distinction between these two groups.

Ingrid Hjelm echoes the larger point, noting that Josephus’ critique of Samaritans is deeply tied to issues of ethnicity, describing it as a “central core” of the tension between Judeans and Samaritans.⁹⁷ Josephus’ claim that this opportunistic shifting is rooted “by nature” (τὴν φύσιν) suggests that he views this fluidity as an intrinsic characteristic of their identity.⁹⁸ He presents this ethnic adaptability as an inherent trait, implying a lack of loyalty or authenticity in their very identity. In this way, their ethnic fluidity is seen as a negative. While others view the Samaritans as either Jews or non-Jews, depending on their protestations, Josephus, on the other hand, acknowledges their fluid identity but nonetheless, does not consider them as Jewish. They are in fact, viewed as multi-ethnic and mixed. Here in Josephus’ depiction of the Samaritans, we see multiple aspects of identity that are negotiated through history, institutions, and cultural/religious values. The ethnic criteria involving the myth of descent as well as commitment to religious institutions all shape the ways in which the Samaritans are portrayed in Josephus, making sense of their unique history.

3.3.3 The Gospel of Luke’s Portrayal of the Samaritans

The New Testament’s portrayal of Samaritans provides a crucial lens for understanding the ethnic and religious tensions between Jews and Samaritans, especially considering their shared history

⁹⁴ Staples, *Israel*, 74.

⁹⁵ Staples, *Israel*, 65–66.

⁹⁶ Staples, *Israel*, 67–71.

⁹⁷ Hjelm, *Samaritans and Jews in History and Tradition*, 51.

⁹⁸ Spilsbury and Seeman, *Flavius Josephus*, 124–125. Citing “(cf. *Ant* 18.47; *Apion* 1.224; *War* 1.255; 2.92; 4.310). But whereas the stereotypes applied to other groups are derived from literary and cultural conventions known outside the Josephan corpus, his assertion that habitual deception is a Samaritan trait finds no parallel in any other ancient source.”

and complex identities. In many instances, Samaritans are depicted as despised figures, but their role as literary foils to the Judeans often serves to challenge conventional beliefs about them, emphasizing their ambiguous status within the broader ethnic and religious framework of the time.⁹⁹ This ethnic ambiguity is crucial to understanding the New Testament's use of Samaritans, especially in key passages like the parable of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10:25–37) and Jesus' encounter with the Samaritan woman at the well (John 4:1–42). These stories suggest that, while Samaritans were generally viewed negatively by Judeans, they could also be used to exemplify positive virtues or behaviors. The overarching point of this section is to problematize the binary construction of Samaritans in Luke's Gospel, showing that they are much more complex than the ways in which they are literarily depicted. They complexify these binaries by evoking ethnic categories that are negotiated throughout the text, such as a sense of solidarity, culture, and history.

By positioning the Samaritans as a multi-ethnic people group, we can better understand how they functioned within the cultural, religious, and ethnic landscape of the time, especially in relation to their Jewish neighbors. Instead of seeing the Samaritans in a strictly antagonistic sense, the references to Samaritans in the Gospel of Luke, can also be seen to highlight their complex identity (Luke 9:51–56; 10:25–37; 17:11–19). Three prominent stories in Luke illustrate this well, showing how Jesus redefines community boundaries and inclusion.

The first story is in Luke 9:51–56, when Jesus and his disciples are travelling to Jerusalem. While travelling, they entered a Samaritan village, and the people of the village did not “receive him” (δέχομαι) because he had determined to go to Jerusalem (ὅτι τὸ πρόσωπον αὐτοῦ ἦν πορευόμενον εἰς Ἱερουσαλήμ) (Luke 9:53). When James and John witnessed this, they asked if they could call fire down from heaven (Luke 9:54). Jesus then “rebukes” them (ἐπιτιμάω) (Luke 9:55). Firstly, messengers precede Jesus' arrival to this village to prepare it ahead of time (Luke 9:52). Secondly, while the Samaritan village did not show hospitality, the disciples are the ones who were “rebuked” for their overt antagonism toward the Samaritans, while the Samaritans were not. Considering these factors, although the disciples were “insiders” and the Samaritans “outsiders,” this paradigm

⁹⁹ Matt 10:5; Luke 9:52–55; 10:30–37; 17:11, 12–19; John 4:4–42; 8:48; Acts 1:8; 8:5–25; see also Pummer, *The Samaritans*, 39–46; Carson, in his commentary on John, explains that after the exile, the Jews viewed Samaria as a region inhabited by those with a “tainted religion” and “racial half-breeds.” Although I am sure this sentiment existed, this is probably a bit too stressed, see Carson, *John*, 216.

is inverted to show how Jesus treats the Samaritans more like “insiders”. This subversion is heightened because they were on their way to Jerusalem, the religious and cultural center. Also, they entered a Samaritan village, an ethnic enclave which relates to the idea that ethnicity is in part defined by “an association with a specific territory.”¹⁰⁰

Perhaps the most famous of these references is the parable of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10:25–37). In this story, a legal expert asks Jesus, “Who is my neighbor?”, a question that implies a desire to define the boundaries of care and responsibility within one’s community. Jesus, however, shifts the focus from identifying who qualifies as a neighbor to how one should *be* a neighbor. The hero of the story is not a priest or a Levite, but a Samaritan—a person from a group *generally* despised by Judeans for their perceived religious impurity and ethnic ambiguity. By making the Samaritan the exemplary neighbor, Jesus challenges conventional boundaries and turns the focus away from a strict ethnic identity as a qualifier for inclusion.

But there is more behind this parable worth considering. Matthew Chalmers argues that the Samaritan should be interpreted not as the despised “other” but as representing a restored Israel, along with the priests and Levites.¹⁰¹ In other words, hostility between Samaritan and Jew is not the best way to understand this parable. Chalmers views the Samaritan as contesting the limits of the identity defined by lineage by the priest and Levite.¹⁰² In other words, he argues, “The parable is not, therefore, simply about how even unexpected people can show mercy, but how mercy is demanded of an “Israel” constructed in Luke-Acts as renewed and ‘restored.’”¹⁰³ This directly relates to the conclusion of Staples, who argues that in the first century, many understood a restored Israel as the hope of the eschaton, including Samaritans.¹⁰⁴ In this way, the Samaritan neighbor not only exemplified who is a neighbor, but expanded the ethnic inclusion to extend beyond what was

¹⁰⁰ Smith, *The Ethnic Origins of Nations*, 22.

¹⁰¹ Chalmers, “Rethinking Luke 10,” 543–566; Chalmers builds on Gourgues, “The Priest, the Levite, and the Samaritan Revisited,” 709–713. Gourgues examines the different identities within a subdivision schema, a much more nuanced approach, relative to much of NT scholarship on this parable; see also, Jervell, “The Lost Sheep of the House of Israel,” in *Luke and the People of God*, 113–132.

¹⁰² Chalmers, “Rethinking Luke 10,” 560–561.

¹⁰³ Chalmers, “Rethinking Luke 10,” 562.

¹⁰⁴ Staples, *Israel*, 339–348.

typically understood to include the lost tribes of Israel. If the parable were attempting to expand the ethnic parameters to the whole world, we can more easily imagine instead of a Samaritan, a Canaanite, Greek, or Roman.

Similarly, in the story of the ten lepers (Luke 17:11–19), Jesus heals a group of men afflicted with leprosy, but only one, a Samaritan, returns to thank him. This story not only demonstrates Jesus' willingness to extend grace and healing across ethnic boundaries but also showcases the Samaritan's gratitude as exemplary. But a few interesting aspects of this story are worth considering. For example, Jesus tells the whole group to show themselves to the priests (Luke 17:14), making it odd if he knew there was a Samaritan in the group. Furthermore, Jesus does refer to the Samaritan as a "foreigner" (ἄλλογενής) (Luke 17:18). There is a complexity that we see in the story that does not allow for an easy classification of ethnic and religious identity.

All of these stories resonate with Luke's broader theological agenda, which emphasizes the inclusivity of God's kingdom and the universality of Jesus' message. Furthermore, instead of viewing the Samaritans as strictly oppositional to Jews, we can see that their ethnicity is complex. Jesus extends beyond their ethnic status to include them, as well as affirming their exemplary faith and commitment to their neighbor. Jesus' framing of the Samaritan village's inhospitality and the disciples' response, and the requirement of all lepers to see a priest reinforce the idea that Samaritans possess a somewhat fluid identity in relation to the Jews.

3.3.4 The Gospel of John Portrayal of the Samaritans

The references to Samaritans in the Gospel of John, highlights their complex identity as both insiders and outsiders as well.¹⁰⁵ In the Gospel, multiple aspects of ethnic identity are at the forefront of the text, such as "a distinctive shared culture" as well as "a common myth of

¹⁰⁵ There is some conversation about Samaritan influence or origins for the Johannine community, see Pamment, "Is there Convincing Evidence of Samaritan Influence on the Fourth Gospel?," 221–230; Hall, "Some Thoughts About Samaritanism and the Johannine Community," in *New Samaritan Studies*, 111–112; Böhm, "Samaritans in the New Testament," 147.

descent”.¹⁰⁶ The Samaritans in John’s Gospel are portrayed in ways that defy binary explanations about their identity.

In the Gospel of John, the encounter between Jesus and the Samaritan woman at the well reveals the complexities of ethnic identity, religious differences, and the concept of descent (John 4:4–42).¹⁰⁷ As Jesus and his disciples travel through Samaria, they stop in Sychar, a Samaritan town (John 4:3). The choice of Jacob’s well as the setting for this encounter is also meaningful as it links the characters to a shared ancestral heritage (John 4:6).¹⁰⁸ Interestingly, the Samaritan woman assumes Jesus is Jewish (John 4:9).¹⁰⁹ Nothing else is mentioned in the text of her awareness of Jesus’ ethnic and cultural identity, but perhaps she knew based on his accent or clothing.¹¹⁰ Jesus then offers “living water” to which the Samaritan woman questions Jesus’ superiority to Jacob (μη σὺ μείζων εἶ τοῦ πατρὸς ἡμῶν Ἰακώβ) (John 4:12). In this question John’s depiction of the woman places her within the genealogical framework of the Jewish people and connects her and Jesus to a shared myth of descent.¹¹¹ It is notable that Jesus does not question her claims of ancestry but tacitly affirms her “insider” self-identification. As the dialogue progresses, the Samaritan woman’s conversation with Jesus shifts from her initial assumptions about ethnic identity to a deeper discussion about worship. She then contrasts the worship practices of Jews and Samaritans (John 4:19–20). Jesus affirms her initial understanding of worship by reinforcing those key religious

¹⁰⁶ Smith, *The Ethnic Origins of Nations*, 22.

¹⁰⁷ One must be careful not to import particular interpretations of the Samaritan woman that are not warranted in the text, see Carman, “The Woman of Samaria,” in *Looking Both Ways*, 59–72. Here, Carman helpfully pushes back against some of the misogynist and biased interpretations of the Samaritan woman.

¹⁰⁸ Coloe, “The Woman of Samaria,” in *Characters and Characterization in the Gospel of John*, 182–196. Here, Coloe argues that one of the major features of this pericope and chapter is a reenactment of Ezekiel, in that Samaria and Judea are brought together as one people, as marital symbolism. Another aspect that ties this together is the well motif; see also Beutler, *John*, 113–115; and Förster, “Die Begegnung am Brunnen (Joh 4.4–42) im Licht der ‚Schrift’”, 201–18. Förster argues that in John 4:4–42, the Samaritan woman’s reference to the lineage of Jacob and the well-known motif of the encounter at the well displays the close kinship ties between Judeans and Samaritans.

¹⁰⁹ Some suggest that when the Samaritan woman called Jesus a Jew, it may have been intended either as a jest or a pejorative. See, Ridderbos, *John*, 317–318; Whitacre, *John*, 228.

¹¹⁰ Cohen, *The Beginnings of Jewishness*, 25–68. Here, Cohen goes over how Jews would have been recognized in antiquity. Specifically, he argues that Jews would not have been recognizable as such in antiquity (p. 67). To be clear, he is speaking about visual clues, not auditory ones.

¹¹¹ John’s Gospel is all about determining what lineage or origins the messiah has (John 9:29); Wróbel, *Who are the Father and His Children in Jn 8:44?*; see also Culpepper, “Inclusivism and Exclusivism in the Fourth Gospel,” in *Word, Theology, and Community in John*, 90–95. The fourth Gospel presents examples of inclusivism of Samaritans and women.

differences and stating that salvation comes from the Jews (ὅτι ἡ σωτηρία ἐκ τῶν Ἰουδαίων ἐστίν) (John 4:21–22). Yet, at the same time, he also expands the parameters of salvation to include those who will worship in spirit and truth (John 4:23). In John 4:23–24, Jesus’ assertion that God seeks true worshipers who worship in “Spirit and truth” represents a redefinition of both worship and identity. Although other features of the conversation between Jesus and the Samaritan woman, such as her marital status also reveals ethnic connotations, the dialogue oscillates between points of similarity and difference between Jew and Samaritan, reminiscent of Josephus’ remarks.

Using a multi-ethnic framework helps us to see how the Samaritans are a mixed ethnic people, with overlapping identities that can be utilized, highlighted, or accentuated in different ways, depending on the context and circumstances. Jason Staples argues that because the woman states that the Jews and Samaritans do not have dealings in common with one another (συγγράομαι) that this implies that if Samaritans were a “subset” of the Ἰουδαῖοι, this would be incomprehensible (John 4:9).¹¹² In other words, Samaritans were not considered Ἰουδαῖοι but were considered “Israelite”. Yet, as mentioned before, Jesus does not respond to the Samaritan woman’s claims of their shared ancestry to Jacob (John 4:12).

To frame our discussion of the Samaritans is an important statement by Fredrick Barth, who argues, “If a group maintains its identity when members interact with others, this entails criteria for determining membership and ways of signaling membership and exclusion.”¹¹³ In other words, Jesus *not* responding to the claim of shared descent is an affirmation of a shared identity marker. It is through this interaction in which identity is realized. Barth unpacks this when he says, “The identification of another person as a fellow member of an ethnic groups implies a sharing of criteria for evaluation and judgment.”¹¹⁴ The interaction between Jesus and the Samaritans reveals this shared criterion and boundary setting. On the one hand, Jesus agrees to the shared lineage while simultaneously affirming their differences. In this way, the Samaritans read more like a minority

¹¹² Staples, *Israel*, 59. Daube, “Jesus and the Samaritan Woman,” 137–47. Recently, see Bourgel, “John 4:4–42,” 39–65.

¹¹³ Barth, “Introduction” in *Ethnic Groups and Boundaries*, 9–38, esp., 15.

¹¹⁴ Barth, “Introduction,” 15.

group within a dominant ethnic social organization, rather than a separate people group.¹¹⁵ Most apparent within this criterion for ethnic identification is when Barth states, “The boundaries of Pariah groups are most strongly maintained by the excluding host population, and they are often forced to make use of easily noticeable diacritica to advertise their identity.”¹¹⁶ Jesus maintains that salvation is from the Jews (John 4:22) and the parenthetical comment that they have no dealings together (John 4:9), are clear indications of this phenomenon. The excluding host population representative, in this case, Jesus, emphasizes salvation is from the Jews, while the Samaritan woman comments on the identification markers of not have dealings together.

3.3.4.1 Summary

To summarize the various depictions of the Samaritans, Josephus depicts them as fluid and adaptable. He also portrays their history to be one where their descent is related but ultimately deviates from the Jewish people. The Samaritan cultic site of Gerizim also occupies a vital role in the development of Samaritan identity, evidenced that it was destroyed by John Hyrcanus, and garrisoned in subsequent history. Luke’s portrayal of Samaritans considers the various dimensions of Samaritan identity, redefining who can exemplify faithfulness as well as reworking Samaritan identity in ways that subtly expand the boundaries of ethnic identity. John’s portrayal of the Samaritans shows a both/and identity structure that makes sense of the multiplicity of depictions in the Gospel account. Samaritans align themselves with the same ancestors of the Jews, while recognizing a distinct cultural and religious difference between them. The Samaritans are also portrayed in ways that are exemplary, showcasing their faith and acceptance of Jesus’ message. In all, John’s portrayal shows the Samaritans as a multi-ethnic people that operate within set parameters of ethnic reasoning.

3.4 Jesus in John’s Gospel: John 8:48

¹¹⁵ Barth, “Introduction,” 30–31.

¹¹⁶ Barth, “Introduction,” 31.

The Gospel of John has been the subject of intense scholarly debate concerning the nature of Jewish identity and is relevant to this discussion.¹¹⁷ One of the key questions is: Who is considered a Jew in the Gospel of John, and how do multi-ethnic identities relate to this issue? For instance, one of the clearest juxtapositions of ethnicity occurs in John 4:9 when the Samaritan woman identifies Jesus as a Ἰουδαῖος, while in John 8:48, the other Ἰουδαῖοι refer to Jesus the Galilean as a Samaritan. In my view, Jesus' position on the ethnic spectrum shifts depending on his interlocutors and the context in which he resides.¹¹⁸

John 8 presents an intriguing scenario in this regard, where although Jesus' Judean ethnicity is affirmed throughout the Gospel of John (John 1:1; 4:9; 18:35), he is also accused of being demon-possessed and is called a Samaritan (John 8:48). Some scholars, when discussing this accusation, emphasize that there is no ambiguity regarding Jesus' Jewish identity—a reasonable reflex given the historical tendency to strip Jesus of his Jewishness.¹¹⁹ Yet, as we will explore, if we refrain from linking the accusation of being a Samaritan directly with being demon-possessed, we begin to see a broader ethnic ambiguity within the Gospel. Additionally, the geographical assumptions surrounding Galilee and Samaria play a significant role in shaping perceptions of identity in the Gospel, which will be an important focus as we move forward.

The episode in John 8 is set within a broader context about identity and ethnicity. Leading up to the accusation that Jesus is a Samaritan, he travels to Jerusalem for the Festival of Tabernacles

¹¹⁷ David Miller's three articles on the topic offers a great overview and summary, see Miller, "The Meaning of *Ioudaios* and its Relationship to Other Group Labels in Ancient 'Judaism'", 98–126; Miller, "Ethnicity Comes of Age": 293–311; Miller, "Ethnicity, Religion and the Meaning of *Ioudaios* in Ancient 'Judaism'", 216–265.

¹¹⁸ This ethnic contingency is also based on geographical concerns. Note Josephus, who in one instance groups the Galileans (Γαλιλαῖοι) with the Idumeans rather than the Judeans, casting them in a negative light (Josephus, *Ant.* 13.257–258; 17.254; 18.23–25; *J.W.* 3.42); Yet, elsewhere, Josephus self identifies as a Galilean (Josephus, *J.W.* 2.2569–578; *Life* 28–30, 62); This fluidity of identity is also evident in John 7:35, where Jews in the Diaspora are more closely associated with the Greeks (Ἕλληνες) rather than with the Judeans. The bias against Galilee further manifests when detractors claim that no prophet can come from that region (John 7:41, 52). Nazareth more specifically, is also connected to this geographical association (John 1:45–46; 18:5, 7; 19:19); For the relationship between names and geography, see also Bauckham, *Jesus and the Eyewitnesses*, 81–82.

¹¹⁹ Keener, *John*, 2 vols, 1.764. Keener states, "The informed reader, however, knows that Jesus is *not* really a Samaritan."; see also, North, "Jesus the Jew in John's Gospel," edited by Craig R. Koester, 31. North states, "By the same token, the reality of Jesus' ethnic identity is also not in question."; for a few sources to encapsulate the nature of this issue, see Grundmann, *Jesus der Galiläer und das Judentum*; Heschel, *The Aryan Jesus*; For a response to Heschel's work, see Head, "Susannah Heschel's *The Aryan Jesus*: A Response," 421–430; McNutt, "A very Damning Truth," 280–301.

(John 7:1–13), teaches in the temple courts (τὸ ἱερόν) (John 7:14–24), later in the treasury (ἐν τῷ γαζοφυλακίῳ) (John 8:20), and has faced other accusations of being demon-possessed (John 7:20). In John 8, Jesus becomes embroiled in yet another debate about his identity. The religious leaders are skeptical of his claims about himself and his relationship to the Father (John 8:12–30). When Jesus speaks of his divine origin, the leaders respond by asserting their physical descent from Abraham (John 8:33). We see here a mixing of spiritual and physical lineage in this conversation. Jesus counters by stating that if they were truly Abraham’s descendants, they would act as Abraham did, and in contrast to their own self-identification, tells them that their true father is the devil (John 8:39–44). Jesus’ repartee counters what the religious leaders believed about true physical descent, by responding to what they *do*, not from whom they *descend*. Although they seem like totally unrelated ideas in John’s Gospel, they are at times, inextricably linked. For example, this provocative statement ignites a strong reaction, and they accuse him of being both a Samaritan and demon-possessed, tying together the spiritual and the physical: “The Jews answered him, ‘Are we not right in saying that you are a Samaritan and have a demon?’” (John 8:48). While accusations of demon possession appear elsewhere in John’s Gospel (John 7:20; 8:52; 10:20), this is the only instance where Jesus is also accused of being a Samaritan. This pericope is set within a broader conversation about identity: what it means to be Jewish and, more importantly, what it means to be a true follower of God.

Several ancient authors expressed concerns about Jesus’ legitimacy in relation to these accusations in John’s Gospel, though not necessarily linking these accusations to his ethnicity.¹²⁰ Later, in the history of interpretation, Thomas Aquinas offered two reasons for why the Jews accused Jesus of being a Samaritan. First, he suggests that they believed Jesus was criticizing them out of hatred, and thus they insulted him in return.¹²¹ Second, he notes that because Jesus appeared to selectively follow certain aspects of the law while disregarding others, they applied the pejorative label of

¹²⁰ Origen, *Cels.* 1.28; see also Acts Pil. 2.3; see also, Brown, *The Gospel According to John*, 1.364, who affirms the idea of Jesus detractors commenting on his supposed legitimacy as a genuine possibility.

¹²¹ Aquinas, *John*, 144 [8.7.1262].

“Samaritan” to him.¹²² Medieval commentator St. Bonaventure refers to this accusation as a “double aspersion,” a term that later interpreters would adopt.¹²³

Later commentators expand on this theme, by viewing the term “Samaritan” negatively, equating it with labels like “heretic,” “gnostic,” or “apostate.”¹²⁴ Some scholars argue that the double accusation in John 8—being a Samaritan and demon-possessed—reflects the Samaritans' reputation, where the terms “demonic” and “Samaritan” are seen as coterminous.¹²⁵ This connection is also evident in scholarship that notes Jesus' response to the accusation of being demon-possessed, but not explicitly addressing the charge of being a Samaritan, suggesting the two accusations were viewed as synonymous.¹²⁶ In other words, to accuse Jesus of being a Samaritan was implicitly to accuse him of being demon-possessed.¹²⁷ However, it is important to exercise caution in interpreting Samaritan strictly as pejorative as the link between the two ideas is not made explicit. Outside of this usage in John 8, the term is not typically used in a disparaging manner.¹²⁸ Furthermore, even though there is the implication that it is negatively associated with one another, I believe there is more going on in the juxtaposition of the terms Samaritan and being demon possessed.

¹²² Aquinas, *John*, 144; See also, Morris, *John*, 848. He states, “. . .but clearly it points to a laxity, as they saw it, in the observance of the tenets of Judaism.”

¹²³ St. Bonaventure, *John*, 493–494.

¹²⁴ Some interpreters equate the term Samaritan with being an apostate, see Bultmann, *John*, 299 n. 4; Lincoln, *John*, 274; the term Samaritan was another way to say heretic, or more specifically, a Samaritan Gnostic, see Bultmann, *John*, 299.

¹²⁵ Michaels, *John*, 843–44; Francis J. Moloney ties this to the widespread belief that Samaritan prophets were possessed by demons, see Moloney, *John*, 286; demonic possession and being a Samaritan are being equated as one and the same, see Barrett, *John*, 290; one explanation about Jesus being demon possessed comes from Origen, who said, “Now, it is also possible that they said, ‘You have a demon,’ because of what they believed about Beelzebub since some of them thought he ‘cast out demons by Beelzebub, the prince of demons, and had Beelzebub in himself, as it were (20.314) 271 Origen and Heine, *John*, 271.”

¹²⁶ Twelftree, “In the Name of Jesus,” 163; Michaels, *John*, 523; Beasley-Murray, *John*, 136; yet others are convinced otherwise. See, Augustine, *Homilies on Gospel of John*, 7.307, who did not see these accusations as one in the same; Sloyan, *John*, 104; Godet, *John's Gospel*, 678; Carson, *John*, 355.

¹²⁷ This is picked up by early Christian interpreters, see Justin *Apol.* 26:1, 4–5; Origen, *Cels.* 6.11; for list of interpretive options about the relationship between the Samaritans and demon possession, see Beasley-Murray, *John*, 136.

¹²⁸ Penwell states, “Yet, we also noted in Chapter One and verified in Chapter Three that, outside of the Gospel of John, there is no known evidence for using ‘Jew’ or ‘Samaritan’ as a term of abuse (i.e., an ethnic slur).” Penwell, *Jesus the Samaritan*, 120. See also, Johnson, “The New Testament’s Anti-Jewish Slander and the Conventions of Ancient Polemic,” 419–441.

Another interesting suggestion worth detailing is Jesus' reticent response to his interlocutors as he intentionally chose not to respond to the claim of his Samaritan identity out of kindness, or in solidarity with their historical mistreatment.¹²⁹ While interpreting Jesus' silence as an act of kindness is appealing, it may not be solely due to the Jews' mistreatment of the Samaritans, especially given how closely the two groups were identified throughout history. Jesus was friendly toward the Samaritans, as seen in his encounter with the Samaritan woman in John 4, and the reports of these interactions likely spread widely.¹³⁰ Furthermore, if there were Samaritans within the Johannine community, this could help explain the double accusation of being both a Samaritan and demon possessed.¹³¹ In this case, Samaritans in the community would have looked at Jesus' reticence favorably. While this is an explanation that may be true, it is a lot to infer that there were Samaritans in the community based on Jesus' silence on this accusation of being a Samaritan. Mirror readings like this may be asking too much of the text.

One final note on this section includes the origins of Jesus in John 8. Gerard Sloyan engages with the long interpretive history surrounding Jesus' dubious origins, noting: "The implication is clear. Davidic origins provided legitimacy, whereas it was evident that no one could vouch for the parentage of Samaritans and Galileans. There may even be an echo in the taunt of birth 'from fornication' (v. 41) of the charge that Jesus had no identifiable father."¹³² This interpretation holds weight, especially within the broader context of John 8, where an ongoing discussion focuses on the lineage of Jesus' interlocutors (John 8:31–47). In this passage, Jesus insists that his opponents

¹²⁹ Bruner, *John*, 1346. Bruner states, "But notice that while Jesus denies being demonic, he does not deny being Samaritan — a kindness to the Samaritans on Jesus' part (Jesus is the authentic "Good Samaritan") and a relief, surely, to all Samaritans and to all those who have been treated like Samaritans through the centuries." One early 20th century commentator interprets this reticence within an eschatological purview, insisting that Jesus was simply not offended, since "He looked to the day when the rivalries between Jews and Samaritans would disappear (4:21)." See Bernard, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel of St. John*, 2.317.

¹³⁰ Keener, *John*, 1.764. Keener states, "Yet they think Jesus challenges their descent from Abraham, and so accuse him of being of Samaritan descent (8:48), perhaps implying his mother's immorality (8:41), more probably extrapolating from reports that Jesus was received in Samaria (4:40)... The informed reader, however, knows that Jesus is *not* really a Samaritan."

¹³¹ Brown, *The Gospel and Epistles of John*, 54. He states, "They repeat the accusation of diabolic possession 'Samaritan'—Samaria was famous for magicians like Simon Magus, but the charge may reflect the presence of Samaritans in the Johannine community." The Johannine community is posited to have existed in the early church, after the death of Jesus.

¹³² Sloyan, *John*, 242.

are not true descendants of Abraham but rather children of the devil (John 8:44). This is significant because it follows their assertion that they are not illegitimate children: “You are doing the works of your own father” (John 8:41). Following this is their assertion that they are not illegitimate children (ὁμοίως ποιεῖτε τὰ ἔργα τοῦ πατρὸς ὑμῶν. Εἶπαν οὖν αὐτῷ· ἡμεῖς ἐκ πορνείας οὐ γεγεννήμεθα, ἓνα πατέρα ἔχομεν τὸν θεόν). They respond, “We are not born of sexual immorality, we have one Father, God himself.” The implication here is that they are defending their own legitimacy while subtly accusing Jesus of being born out of sexual immorality. This aligns with why Jesus’ interlocutors may have questioned his lineage, given the context of the discussion about familial and spiritual descent. Yet the explicit citation of Jesus’ dubious origins does not appear in the text. Illegitimacy can also be reflected in the idea of genealogical descent like in this case, where God metaphorically replaces the idea of a physical or biological father. In these cases, the actions of the followers are said to determine right descent and ancestry.

In light of the complexifying of the ethnic binaries that much scholarship is steeped in, such as viewing Samaritans as the intractable enemies of the Jews, I propose seeing the depiction of Jesus in the Gospel of John, as ethnically fluid. Instead of seeing the term Samaritan as a pejorative, or synonymizing demon-possession with Samaritan, although a negative connotation is there, it is also appropriate to see Jesus’ non-response to this accusation as delicately identifying with Samaritan identity. Or like the framing that Barth articulated earlier, not pushing back against the boundary of an in-group/out-group interaction, is a way that establishes or indicates ethnic identity by sharing a criterion of identification. In this way, Jesus is implicitly expanding the boundaries of ethnic identification to include Samaritans, who were both related to and distant from their Jewish neighbors.

In other words, it is not that Jesus is literally or biologically a Samaritan. Although a cursory reading of Matthew’s genealogy, the ethnic diversity of Galilee and the surrounding regions, and the general complexities of ancestry make it difficult to draw any strictly definitive conclusions about his lineage, the more significant point concerns how ethnic identification and negotiation take shape in literary depictions of characters. In this case, multiple currents undergird the narrative portrayal of Jesus. First, there is the tacit identification with Samaritans through his non-reply, which functions both as a gesture of solidarity with their marginalization and as a way to subvert

the prejudices of others who assume “Samaritan” to be an insult. Second, the questioning of his identity may blend confusion with derision, implicitly challenging or probing whether he truly belongs among Galileans or Judeans. This dynamic itself reflects a degree of ethnic fluidity. Finally, by choosing not to respond directly to the accusation, Jesus implicitly undermines rigid and static notions of ethnic identification and purity. What allows for this flexibility is the socialized nature of ethnicity itself, which looks at the boundaries of discourse and rhetoric more so than the genetic fixture of ancestry.

3.5 Conclusion

As we can see from the present analysis, multi-ethnic identity offers us resources for evaluating ancient texts. I would like to close this chapter with four concluding observations to summarize the contents.

(1) Jewish, Judean, Israelite, and Hebrew identities are complex and interwoven identities. These categories evolve over time and cannot be confined to fixed and immovable classifications, especially when we see the historical development of these terms along with their literary depictions. One way these ethnic formulations exhibit fluidity is through the myth of descent, which serves as a means for groups to align and position themselves within the taxonomy of ethnic identities in antiquity. These rhetorical strategies can either bring someone closer to or distance them from certain identities, depending on how they are employed. Ultimately, such claims of lineage significantly influence how one is defined as a Jew or Judean.

(2) Herod the Great’s identity was complex and multi-faceted. Through the lens of the Infancy Narrative, along with key texts from Josephus and Eusebius, we encounter strategic employment of Herod’s identity. In the literature of Josephus, we find that there is a complex picture painted of Herod, which shows his title of “king of the Jews” is depicted differently depending on the literature. There is also a close association between his kingship and the role that the Romans played in his ascension, typified by Antony. However, there is uncertainty about Herod’s lineage, which is seen explicitly in Nicolaus of Damascus’ rearranging his ancestry to the exile. In Eusebius, Herod’s multi-ethnic identity is of less concern than whether he was the rightful heir to

the throne, which he contrasts to the right of Jesus. Finally, in Matthew's Gospel, Herod the Great is clearly paralleled to Pharaoh drawing conclusions about his tyrannical rule and legitimacy to take the throne of Judea. Matthew's Gospel also stresses the importance of Jesus and his lineage, based on the genealogy, while affirming his right to rule through divine intervention.

(3) The Samaritans are best understood as a multi-ethnic group occupying the liminal space between non-Jewish and Jewish identities. They purportedly emerged from a mixture of peoples dating back to the Assyrian exile and repopulation campaigns. While they could be understood as exhibiting their own ethnic group because of their worship sites, culture, and non-interactions with Jews (John 4:9), Josephus' writings highlight the ambiguity of Samaritan identity. At times, they are described as Israelites, while at other times, they are not. This ambiguity informs our interpretation of New Testament texts. By reevaluating these texts, we begin to recognize the fluidity of Samaritan identity, as illustrated in the parable of the Good Samaritan and particularly in Jesus' encounter with the Samaritan woman at the well in Sychar. The Samaritans in one instance draw upon a shared connection with Jews and appeal to same ancestors, while in another communicate how their cultural and religious values clearly differ.

(4) Finally, in evaluating the accusation of demon possession and the labeling of Jesus as a Samaritan in John 8:48, we can discern the multi-ethnic connotations more clearly. The larger context of the fluidity between Jewish and Samaritan identities significantly influences this passage. While much scholarship has traditionally focused on demon possession as the key interpretive element, I emphasize the implications of being labeled a Samaritan. Throughout the discourse, lineage and descent are forefront.

Chapter 4: Intermarriage in Jewish Literature: Customs, Religious Piety, and Compatibility

4.1 Introduction

Intermarriage between people-groups has occurred throughout history and is detailed in a variety of literature. In this chapter, I examine mixed marriages in antiquity through a wide range of literature. It is through this literary analysis that we gain insights into the idea of what it means to be mixed and possess dual parentage. Fundamentally, those that come from dual parentage possess lineages that are spliced together. It is within this general framework that this chapter fits. As the larger flow of this book depicts multi-ethnic identity, intermarriage connects these identities together and stands as a central feature of what it means to be mixed.

Thus, to better comprehend the concept of multi-ethnic identity in antiquity, we must analyze how literature portrays these marriages and how their contexts shape our understanding. The primary and obvious method of obtaining this picture is by evaluating a wide range of Greco-Roman and Jewish sources. Notable authors include Josephus and Philo, while specific texts such as *Joseph and Aseneth* contribute to the discourse. The purpose of this chapter is to navigate these complexities and contexts, primarily looking at Jewish authors and texts that describe intermarriage. The primary argument of this chapter is that in each of these examples, different aspects of intermarriage are brought into focus, those being customs, religious identity, and stereotypes. The sections of this chapter include (1) Philo and customs, (2) *Joseph and Aseneth* and religious identity, and (3) Moses, Tharbis, Josephus, and stereotypes.

4.1.2 Overview of Intermarriage in Antiquity

Intermarriages occurred in a variety of contexts, including Jewish, non-Jewish, Greek, Roman, and Egyptian. Along with the ethnic components of these marriages are additional layers of complexities that this chapter will simply acknowledge, rather than discuss. For instance, in Rome,

much of the scholarly discussion is predicated on status-based unions rather than ethnic ones.¹ Even Roman soldiers were strictly forbidden from marrying foreign women while on combat duty, which related to issues concerning citizenship and divided loyalties.² While there were prohibitions in the late Roman Empire against marriages between Roman citizens and “barbarians”, as well as between Jews and Christians, it seems that prohibitions like these were not common or widespread before late antiquity.³

It seems that intermarriage and multi-ethnic identities were prevalent in both Greco-Roman and Jewish contexts.⁴ Supporting the notion that Roman contexts were multi-ethnic are the founding myths of Rome.⁵ Population transfers were also a frequent occurrence in the Roman world, leading to the forced migration and intermingling of diverse groups.⁶ All of this is to say, that intermarriage was a prevalent reality in antiquity, and depending on the specific context in which it occurred,

¹ Hersch, “Introduction to the Roman Wedding,” 223–232; Shaw, ““With Whom I Lived””: 195–242; Grubbs, *Women and the Law in the Roman Empire*; Gardner, *Women in Roman Law and Society*; See also, in late antiquity, see Evans–Grubbs, ““Marriage More Shameful Than Adultery,””125–154; some early Christian writers dealing with this include Hippolytus, *Haer.* 9.7; Tertullian, *Ux.* 2.8; McGinn, “Missing Females? Augustus’ Encouragement of Marriage between Freedborn Males and Freedwomen,” 200–208; see also, Silver, *Slave-Wives, Single Women and Bastards in the Ancient Greek World*; Huemoeller, “Freedom in Marriage?”, 123–139; Vallar, “Épouse ou concubine de son patron?”, in *Liber amicorum: Mélanges en l’honneur de Jean-Pierre Coriat*, 993–1008; for marriage prohibitions in Roman contexts, see, Grubbs, *Women and the Law in the Roman Empire*, 136–186. With questions about Roman law, women, and issues of status, see Riggsby, *Roman Law and the Legal World of the Romans*, 77–86, 99–110.

² Alison, “Soldiers’ Families in the Early Roman Empire,” in *A Companion to Families in the Greek and Roman Worlds*, 161–182; for a source evaluating Thracian auxiliary soldiers’ marriages, see Dana, ““Conubium Cum Uxoribus’: Mariages Thraces Dans Les Diplômes Militaires,”” 217–240; Lavan, “The Army and the Spread of Roman Citizenship,” 27–69.

³ Grubbs, *Women and the Law in the Roman Empire*, 184, citing *Cod. Theod.* 3.14.1. Grubb states, “It is likely that this law originated as an imperial response to a revolt by a Moorish chieftain, Firmus, in the North African province of Mauretania in the early 370’s, which was eventually put down by Count Theodosius...” Here we can see this was implemented much later, although Grubb argues that it was not actively enforced.

⁴ Price, Finkelberg, and Shaḥar, eds., *Rome*.

⁵ Dench, *Romulus’ Asylum*; Gardner, Herring, and Lomas, “Introduction,” in *Creating Ethnicities and Identities in the Roman World*.

⁶ Boatwright, “Acceptance and Approval,” 122–146. Boatwright argues that in many cases, they were not enslaved people, but coerced to flee, citing eight population displacements of the Ligurians in 180BCE; For an overview of foreign families in Rome, see Noy, “Foreign Families in Roman Italy,” in *A Companion to Families in the Greek and Roman Worlds*, 145–160; Dommelen, “Colonialism and Migration in the Ancient Mediterranean,” 393–409; Price, “Religious Mobility in the Roman Empire,” 1–19; Boatwright, “Acceptance and Approval,” 122–146.

was perceived and configured differently, in one context it can be seen more favorably, and in another, negatively.⁷

In Jewish contexts, the topic of intermarriage prompts a significant discussion in Second Temple Judaism and whether it was universally prohibited or subject to debate.⁸ Much of this discourse revolves around Second Temple texts such as Ezra and Nehemiah and priestly contexts, such as in Qumran.⁹ Thus, the differing Jewish environments dictated much of what was permissible.¹⁰ For instance, one can note the more exclusionary tendencies in the Jewish diaspora as compared to the tendencies of multicultural Rome, echoing the observation made by Erich Gruen, that Roman identity did not claim a pure and spotless lineage, but was from its beginning, mixed.¹¹ The focus on Jewish contexts where intermarriage was seen as more controversial helps us to see how definite boundaries between peoples were adapted and blurred.

A final key aspect that frames the subsequent analysis of intermarriage through the lens of ethnic identity is to see how stereotypes and customs were described in literature. In some of these contexts, it was common to view relationships through the essentialized features of specific ethnic

⁷ The general ethic of openness to the Other is also demonstrated fervently in Jewish-Christian Scripture, see Knoppers, “Intermarriage, Social Complexity, and Ethnic Diversity in the Genealogy of Judah,” 15–30. Here, Knoppers argues that this tradition in Chronicles opposes those of Ezra-Nehemiah to be more inclusive as opposed to more exclusive; an example of this inclusion is articulated by the appearance of foreign women in the genealogies in Chronicles (1 Chron 1–9), and later in Matthew’s genealogy (Matt 1:1–16).

⁸ Frevel, ed., *Mixed Marriages: Intermarriage and Group Identity in the Second Temple Period*; Heger, *Women in the Bible*; Hayes, *Gentile Impurities and Jewish Identities*.

⁹ Johnson, *The Holy Seed has been Defiled*; Rothenbusch, “The Question of Mixed Marriages between the Poles of Diaspora and Homeland,” in *Mixed Marriages*, 60–7; Hayes, *Gentile Impurities and Jewish Identities*; Southwood, ““And They could not Understand Jewish Speech””: 1–19; Hayes, “Intermarriage and Impurity in Ancient Jewish Sources”: 3–36; this conversation carries into Rabbinic literature, see Porton, *Goyim*; Satlow, *Tasting the Dish*, 83–118. Prohibition between priests and other Israelites are framed in language that compares them to different species of plants (4Q396 4.4–11; Lev 19:19). There are prohibitions demonstrated in the Torah like in Deuteronomy 7:1–4 and Exodus 34:11–16. See also, Cohen, *The Beginnings of Jewishness*, 241–262.

¹⁰ Martha Himmelfarb argues that the Maccabean literature is generally silent on the issue of intermarriage, thus making it quite uncommon, citing literature like Maccabees, see Himmelfarb, “Levi, Phinehas, and the Problem of Intermarriage at the Time of the Maccabean Revolt,” 1–24; Gary Knoppers, in his work in the lineage of Judah in the genealogies of Chronicles, shows the opposite, that intermarriage was prevalent in the context of Persian and early Hellenistic periods, see Knoppers, “Intermarriage, Social Complexity, and Ethnic Diversity in the Genealogy of Judah,” 15–30. Here, he counts six intermarriages in Judah’s genealogy, some of which are expanded and further enumerated. Represented in these genealogies include Canaanites, Ishmaelites, Arameans, Egyptians, and Moabites.

¹¹ Gruen, *Rethinking the Other*, 345.

groups.¹² This means that much like how stereotypes work today, ancient perceptions of the “Other” were also influenced by these caricatures tied to customs, cultural mores, and practices.¹³ All of this provides a brief overview of intermarriage that frame the subsequent sections.

4.2 Philo

Philo of Alexandria is an important figure to consider because he offers us a Hellenistic Jewish viewpoint on intermarriage. Philo is an excellent source regarding intermarriage and the assimilation of Jews in Egypt.¹⁴ In one place, Philo addresses issues related to adultery, unsanctioned sexual and marital relationships, and comments on the prospect of marrying foreign women.¹⁵ Many of these prohibitions in Philo’s commentary are rooted in the context of the original texts in Scripture, which targeted the Canaanites. However, since the Canaanites no longer existed, Philo faced the challenge of recontextualizing these prohibitions for his time.¹⁶ One solution to this recontextualization project is to describe race, customs, and virtues within the framework of allegory, where elements of a literary narrative are used to convey symbolic truths.

For instance, Philo refers to the creation lineages as a mix between hope and despondency, or as some commentators say, rationality and irrationality.¹⁷ Although this characterization does not exist in the biblical account, the early lineages as depicted in Genesis and as understood by Philo,

¹² Isaac, “Proto-Racism in Graeco-Roman Antiquity,” in *Empire and Ideology in the Graeco-Roman World: Selected Papers*. Here Isaac deals outines some of the prevalent assumptions and frameworks one operates from when dealing with other ethnic groups.

¹³ Aeschylus, *Suppl.* 234–294; Herodotus, *Hist.* 1.56–57; 3.16, 27–29, 38; 5.22; 8.144; Euripides, *Andr.* 155–180; *Cycl.* 11–26, 113–128, 275–304, 316–346; Isocrates, *Paneg.* 50; Demosthenes, 3 *Philip.* 30–32; Polybius, *Hist.* 6.47; Cicero, *Acad. Post.* 1.9; Plutarch, *Lyc.* 4.5; 27.3–4; *Alex.* 45; 47.3–4; 50.4–51.3; 71.1–3; 74.1; Xenophon, *Cyr.* 8.8; and although Hippocrates common mentions environmental influences onto people groups, here he mentions inherited traits, see Hippocrates, *Airs.* 14; (cf. *Mos.* 1.295–301; *Spec.* 3.29).

¹⁴ Barclay, *Jewish in the Mediterranean Diaspora*, 103–124, esp., 107–108. Citing, Philo, *Spec. Leg.* 1.54–58; 3.29; *Mos.* 2.193, 195–305; *Virt.* 34–44. Barclay reads Philo as being very pessimistic toward exogamy.

¹⁵ Philo, *Spec.* 3.29.

¹⁶ Pearce, “Rethinking the Other in Antiquity: Philo of Alexandria on Intermarriage,” 140–155.

¹⁷ Birnbaum and Dillon, *Philo of Alexandria*, 158. See also *Praem.* 13.

was that the progenitors were of mixed race (τοὺς μὲν ἀρχηγέτας τοῦ μικτοῦ γένους).¹⁸ This mixture, characterized by competing values, also appears in other literary works.¹⁹ This metaphorical perspective allows the biological traits and ethnic customs to be reconfigured as virtues and arise as relevant in Philo's context. In another place, Isaac is described as inheriting wisdom, akin to a Sage, while Ishmael, because of his Egyptian mother, is associated with sophistry.²⁰ A similar occurrence appears much earlier in the dichotomic portrayal of Love in Plato's *Symposium*, where Love is a blend of Resource and Poverty. Love in this context is not only a lover of wisdom but also described as a sophist.²¹ Lineages are reconfigured in allegorical narrations of virtue and values.

Philo's prohibitions against intermarriage are not only concerned with contrasting customs but also with the potential for religious deviation. Philo's perspective is that intermarriage could lead individuals and their offspring away from God, posing a threat to their religious devotion.²² Much of what Philo communicates regarding these marriages is framed by this looming threat of the "Other". We see this very thing when Philo outlines the story of Joseph and the unwanted advances of Potiphar's wife. Rather than portraying Joseph's protestation as a mere act of resistance, Philo frames this response as a commitment to his ancestral laws and customs (ἔθεσι καὶ νομίμοις).²³ Thus, Joseph's actions are depicted as worthy of his heritage and race (τοῦ γένους).²⁴ He has effectively resisted religious deviation by committing himself to his ancestral customs. Joseph succeeds in pushing away the advances of another woman who is not Hebrew.

¹⁸ Philo, *Abr.*, 9. I am taking this to mean that humanity was mixed between despondency and the hope that enlivens mankind. In other sections, mixture is described in terms of opposing passions and virtues (*Her.* 274).

¹⁹ In Plato's *Symposium*, Socrates recounts the offspring of Resource (Πόρου) and Poverty (Πενίας), which became the blending of these two values into Love (Ἔρωτος) (Plato, *Symp.* 203).

²⁰ *Sobr.* 8–9; See also *Cher.* 8; *Congr.* 20; *Fug.* 209. It seems that at other times, Philo describe the difference between Hagar and Sarah, and Ishmael and Isaac as a difference between inherited and learned traits (*Mut.* 255).

²¹ Plato, *Symp.* 203d.

²² Pearce, "Rethinking the Other in Antiquity," 140–155. Pearce helpful notes, "The apostasy that may result from intermarriage is constructed by Philo in terms of a spiritual migration gone wrong, a journey in which the intermarried partner might get wholly lost, were it not for the road-map—the laws of Moses—taught to Jewish-born children by their parents" (150). Customs are vitally important, see Philo, *Abr.* 181–193; *Ios.* 42–48.

²³ Philo, *Ios.* 42–48.

²⁴ Philo, *Ios.* 42. Other references to customs and race include 59–61, 172, 202, 244.

As an example of religious deviation, Philo offers commentary on the blasphemer mentioned in Leviticus 24:10–11.²⁵ According to the Leviticus account, this blasphemer had an Egyptian father and a Hebrew mother. Philo describes him as “A certain person born of an unequal marriage, a bastard, his father an Egyptian, his mother Jewish” (ἕξ ἀνομοίων τις γενόμενος ἄνθρωπος νόθος, Αἰγυπτίου μὲν πατρός, μητρὸς δὲ Ἰουδαίας).²⁶ Philo’s portrayal of the blasphemer implies that he viewed intermarriage between Hebrews and non-Hebrews as both detrimental and inappropriate. Sarah Pearce observes that Philo takes this story as an opportunity to include the broader topic of “Egyptian atheism”.²⁷ One of the keys to understanding this maneuver is the emphasis on the father’s ethnic designation, rather than his name.²⁸ Philo attributes the blasphemer’s guilt to his deviation from ancestral customs (πατρίων ἔθῶν ἠλόγησε).²⁹ According to Philo, the rule against blasphemy was established as a result of this specific incident.³⁰ Furthermore, this individual is later described as “mixed” (μικτὸς).³¹ For Philo, intermarriage was more than a mix of two people from different people groups and customs, it was a stage in which the dedicated and pious Jew could be lead astray from the “Other”. Couched within this assumption is the idea that customs were inextricably related to ethnicity reflecting the idea of a “distinctive shared culture.”³²

4.2.1 Biology and Customs

The intersection of biology, customs, and virtues are referenced in other places as well. For example, Sarah Pearce shows how Philo utilizes the imagery and symbolism of Egypt to communicate bodily excess, moral corruption, and philosophical inferiority. She observes that

²⁵ Philo, *Mos.* 2.192–204.

²⁶ Philo, *Mos.* 2.193. ἀνομοίων has a sense of unlikeness or dissimilarity, see Aristotle, *Pol.* 1227a5; Plato, *Gorg.* 513b; Pindar, *Nem.* 8.28. This is conjunction with νόθος emphasizes the person’s mixed status.

²⁷ Pearce, *The Land of the Body*, 215–239.

²⁸ Pearce, *The Land of the Body*, 228; “drawing attention to the man’s Egyptian heritage, the text, at the least, suggests the association of Egypt with the loss of self-control and with blasphemy.”

²⁹ Philo, *Mos.* 2.193.

³⁰ Philo, *Mos.* 2.203; Lev 24:15–16; Exod 22:28; Josephus, *Ant.* 4.207. Although at times Philo is keen on mentioning either the shared ancestry of the inhabitants of the land to the Patriarchs or as a shared universal humanity, Philo, *Moses* 1.239–240; 2.65.

³¹ Philo, *Mos.* 2.196.

³² Smith, *The Ethnic Origins of Nations*, 22.

Hagar, for much of Philo's writings, represents the symbol of the *Encyclia* (general education).³³ Pearce takes Hagar's portrayal as the *Encyclia*, to be a more positive picture of her.³⁴ But Hagar should be seen in contrast to Sarah, who is commonly symbolized as philosophy or virtue.³⁵ This means that Hagar is typically described of lower education, the inferior mode of the attainment of wisdom, or as a means of the process of the development of virtue.³⁶ Fundamentally, Hagar, as an Egyptian, is portrayed within this intersection of ideas.

When discussing the relationship between Abraham and Hagar, Philo emphasizes the virtues of Sarah in the narrative while minimizing the significance of Ishmael, portraying him as simply a mixed child resulting from the union between Abraham and Hagar.³⁷ This depiction of the marriage minimizes Hagar herself, who is described as having a conflicted identity, that is, outwardly appearing as a slave while inwardly embodying freedom and nobility. She represents a unique duality that is incredibly important to underscore as she is both Egyptian by birth and Hebrew by her customs.³⁸ In one specific instance, Philo draws a direct connection between Hagar and Sarah's respective race and names (τοῦ τε γένους καὶ τοῦ ὀνόματος), linking their development and virtue to their ethnic background and their monikers.³⁹ Here we see that virtues are comingled with biology and customs.

Subsequently, the literary description of Hagar's mixed identity affects how Ishmael is described. For example, despite being more biologically developed, Ishmael is referred to as a child in the

³³ Pearce, *The Land of the Body*, 170–177.

³⁴ Pearce, *The Land of the Body*, 171.

³⁵ *Cher.* 3–10; *Leg.* 3.244–245; *Sacr.* 43; *Post.* 130–132, 137; *Mut.* 255; *Somn.* 1.240–241; *QG* 3.18–21; *Congr.* On the allegory, see Zurawski, “Mosaic Torah as Encyclical Paideia: Reading Paul's Allegory of Hagar and Sarah in Light of Philo of Alexandria's,” in *Pedagogy in Ancient Judaism and Early Christianity*, 283–308; see also, Kaiser, *Studien Zu Philo Von Alexandrien*, 9–32. Here is a chapter on metaphor and allegory in Philo's work, see, Bos, “Hagar and the *Enkyklios Paideia* in Philo of Alexandria,” 163–175.

³⁶ *Leg.* 3.244; *Cher.* 3, 6; *Sacr.* 43; *Post.* 130, 137; *Fug.* 2, 5, 202; *Somn.* 1.240; *Congr.* 1, 11, 20, 23, 24, 71, 88, 121, 139–141, 180.

³⁷ Philo, *Abr.* 245–254.

³⁸ Philo, *Abr.*, 251.

³⁹ Philo, *Congr.* 20. In the *Book of Jubilees*, Hagar is described in more positive terms, see *Jub.* 14.21–24; 15.17–22; 17.17. Cf. the depiction of Hagar in Genesis, see Greifenhagen, *Egypt on the Pentateuch's Ideological Map*, 31–33; Paul's depiction of Hagar is much more negative, see *Gal.* 4.22–24.

Genesis account, indicating for Philo, the significance of his virtue and moral development.⁴⁰ Therefore, Hagar's connection to Ishmael holds considerable importance within this context, not only biologically but metaphorically as well. This is in contradistinction to Isaac, where his "race" was "self-taught" (αὐτομαθὲς γένος), that is, he received through his nature that which was unmixed and pure and not being confined to instruction.⁴¹ In this way, Philo communicates that Ishmael the bastard (νόθος) was not on the same level as Isaac.⁴² The apparent incongruity of status is clear when Philo makes the point that although Hagar's customs were like Sarah's, she and by extension Ishmael, were not on equal footing with Sarah and Isaac. Thus, the biological connection affects the degree to which virtue is apparent in the lives of Hagar and Ishmael.

In a few places in Philo seemingly important marriages are minimized. In the story of Joseph, Philo does not mention Joseph's wife or his mixed children, despite the significance of these aspects in his life.⁴³ This suppression is also seen in *De vita Mosis*, where race and ethnicity play a significant role in the narrative.⁴⁴ After Moses kills the Egyptian, he flees to Arabia.⁴⁵ Interestingly, Philo swiftly moves past the initial contact of Moses with the Midian priest Jethro and even avoids commenting on his subsequent marriage to Jethro's daughter, Zipporah, as described in Exodus 2:16–3:1. Philo's commentary on this part of the narrative is remarkably succinct, merely stating, "after the marriage" (μετὰ δὲ τὸν γάμον), before moving the narrative along.⁴⁶ Philo's comments on the nature of this marital union are surprisingly sparse, and it seems that Philo actively suppresses positive portrayals of non-Jews that might counter act the relationship between biology, virtue, and customs or that might have a positive depiction in the biblical narrative.

⁴⁰ Philo, *Sobr.* 8–9.

⁴¹ Philo, *Congr.* 36.

⁴² Philo, *Sobr.* 8–9. This is also consonant with how Hagar is referred to in relation to Sarah (*Somn.* 1.240).

⁴³ Josephus elaborates on this story a bit more, Josephus, *Ant.* 2.91–93. Although Manasseh and Ephraim are mentioned elsewhere, see *Leg.* 3.90–94.

⁴⁴ Philo, *Mos.*, 1.5, 7, 34.

⁴⁵ Philo, *Mos.* 1.47–65.

⁴⁶ Philo, *Mos.* 1.60.

4.2.2 Positive Portrayals

Other examples add nuance and complicate the picture of Philo's perspective on intermarriage. During the Exodus from Egypt, Philo refers to the group of migrants leaving Egypt as a "bastard" (νόθον) group.⁴⁷ David Horrell states, "The description 'bastard' ... is sometimes applied to children of unequal unions, specifically where the gentile partner has not converted..."⁴⁸ While although this description is often used in negative contexts, this description acknowledges the mixed nature of the migrants and the unions between Egyptians and Hebrews, including Hebrew fathers with their Egyptian wives and those who converted due to the miraculous signs.⁴⁹ One scholar, Ellen Birnbaum observes that this is an instance, when "outsiders" acknowledge the "divine favor of the Jews."⁵⁰ This mixed group is seen in a positive light, which is much different than how Philo understand intermarriage in general.

Perhaps the most positive portrayal of intermarriage is the depiction of Moses' relationship in *Legum allegoriae*. In this section, Philo reflects on the story of Adam and Eve, who did not feel shame while being naked in the garden.⁵¹ However, in contrast to this Edenic union, Philo mentions Moses, who was honorable in all he did. What is particularly intriguing is Philo's assertion that God himself united Moses with the Ethiopian woman.⁵² Philo then describes Moses' wife, as representing "total resolution and inalterability".⁵³ This esteemed portrayal of Gentile women continues in *De virtutibus*, where Philo offers commentary on the story of Tamar and Judah. Tamar's narrative is particularly noteworthy as she, despite being born and raised in a context that worshiped idols, experiences a transformative realization before her marriage to Er and then Onan, through the Levirate marriage (Gen 38).⁵⁴ In contrast to Tamar's conversion-like experience, other concubines and children of Jacob, despite their inferior status, were able to attain honor within the

⁴⁷ Philo, *Mos.* 1.147.

⁴⁸ Horrell, *Ethnicity and Inclusion*, 125–126.

⁴⁹ Philo, *Mos.* 1.147.

⁵⁰ Birnbaum, *The Place of Judaism in Philo's Thought*, 173.

⁵¹ Philo, *Leg.* 2.65–66.

⁵² Philo, *Leg.* 2.67.

⁵³ Philo, *Leg.* 2.67.

⁵⁴ Philo, *Virt.* 220–222.

family based on their conduct rather than their lineage.⁵⁵ In these two cases, the foreign women are seen positively. In one case, the Ethiopian woman is portrayed as inherently favorable, while Tamar experiences a transformative conversion.

In Philo's writings, we encounter a notable tension. On the one hand, when one expects Philo to address the unions between patriarchs and other women, he often either completely ignores these relationships or provides only brief comments, as seen in the case of Joseph in *De Iosepho*. One is probably correct to assume that the biblical examples of foreign women corrupting the Israelite men in the promised land has something to do with this.⁵⁶ Yet, on the other hand, some foreign women are depicted as elevating their inferior status, exemplified by Tamar and Hagar. In one case, the foreign woman is described in terms of inherent superiority and moral virtue, that being the Ethiopian wife of Moses. So, while various texts appear that portray these unions as negative, several exceptional women defy these typical conventions.

I argue that the resolution of this tension is to see these intermarriages as an interplay between customs, traditions, and ethnicity. Depending on the context, a foreigner can be portrayed favorably, depending on the customs and traditions they exemplify, regardless of their ethnicity. In this way, foreigners can transcend their circumstances through their identification with the ancestral customs of Israel. For example, like in the case of Tamar, the transformational process coincided with the levirate marriage. Philo also describes the migrants leaving Egypt where Hebrew fathers were partnered with Egyptian women in a positive light, since they recognized God's works through Moses's deliverance. On the other hand, negative portrayals, like the young man with an Egyptian father and a Hebrew mother, shows that he did not learn the customs and did not commit himself to the God of Israel. In other words, he did not inherit or act in accordance with the appropriate customs from his mother. In the case of Hagar, even though her customs were correct, her biology played a disproportionate role in determining her virtue and status, relative to other the other women included in this analysis. Hagar in this case is described in mixed terms, which ultimately reveal the tension with which Philo wrestles.

⁵⁵ Philo, *Virt.* 223–227.

⁵⁶ Judg 13–16; 1 Kgs 11:1–14.

4.3 Joseph and Aseneth

Joseph and Aseneth is a text that draws readers into an elaborate unfolding of a passage in Jewish Scripture about Joseph's union with an Egyptian (Gen 41:45).⁵⁷ In this tale, the patriarch Joseph marries Aseneth, the daughter of Potiphera, the priest of On.⁵⁸ While the narrative connects multiple themes and ideas, at its core, it offers an extra-biblical literary account of an intermarriage.⁵⁹ It is believed that this narrative was, in part, composed to provide an explanation for Joseph's marriage to an Egyptian woman.⁶⁰ In addressing whether Joseph and Aseneth should be considered within the genre of "rewritten Bible" Susan Docherty points out that various Jewish traditions sought to address the apparent incongruity of mixed marriages by attributing Israelite descent through Dinah.⁶¹ In any case, this marriage carries importance as an early documented case of a mixed marriage, that produced multi-ethnic offspring Manasseh and Ephraim, who later

⁵⁷ The assumption for the provenance and dating in this chapter will be a Jewish-Egyptian provenance, at the earliest 100BCE and latest at the end of the first century CE. For provenance and dating of *Joseph and Aseneth*, see Hicks-Keeton, *Arguing with Aseneth*, 16–40; Chesnutt, "The Social Setting and Purpose of Joseph and Aseneth," 21–48; Hacham, "Joseph and Aseneth," 53–67; for late dating, 3–4th CE, see Kraemer, *When Aseneth Met Joseph*, 225–239; see also, Vogel, *Einführung in die Schrift*, 3–53; Ahearne-Kroll, *Aseneth of Egypt*; Sheppard, "Aseneth," 75–98; Standhartinger, "Recent Scholarship on Joseph and Aseneth (1988–2013)," 363–67; first to suggest late dating; for a look at the different textual traditions, see Burchard, "The Text of *Joseph and Aseneth* Reconsidered," 83–96; Burchard and Burfeind, "Nachlese zur Überlieferungs—und Wirkungsgeschichte von Joseph und Aseneth," in *Mousopolos Stephanos: Festschrift for Herwig Görgemanns*, 474–497.

⁵⁸ Along with this story, there are other texts which contribute to our understanding of this union as well. For instance, the *Testament of Joseph*, a pseudepigraphal work from the Second Temple period, elaborates on Joseph's farewell discourse (Gen 50: 22–26). In the *Testament of Joseph*, Joseph is on his death bed and recounts his life; in it, he mentions marrying the "daughter of the priest of Heliopolis" yet does not mention Aseneth by name (*T. Jos.* 2.69). See also *Jub.* 34.20; 40.10; *Dem.* 2.12; *Artap.* 2.3.

⁵⁹ The mixed marriage plays a significant role in the narrative. For instance, some commentators have insisted that the inter-marriage is the reason the story was created in the first place. To see the issue of intermarriage in other Jewish texts, see *T. Levi* 14.5–8; *T. Job* 45.4; *Jub.* 30.11–17; Philo. *Spec.* 3.29; Josephus, *Ant.* 8.191–93; see also Cohen, *The Beginnings of Jewishness*, 241–262; Cohen, "The Prohibition of Intermarriage from the Bible to the Talmud," 23–29; Collins, "Joseph and Aseneth: Jewish or Christian?," 97–112; Thiessen, "Aseneth's Eight-Day Transformation as Scriptural Justification for Conversion," 230–32; and more generally, Hayes, *Gentile Impurities and Jewish Identities*; Maier, "Der Diskurs um interkulturelle Ehen in Jehu dals antikes Beispiel von Intersektionalität," in *Doing Gender—Doing Religion*, 129–153; Horrell, *Ethnicity and Inclusion*, 112–123.

⁶⁰ Hicks-Keeton, *Arguing with Aseneth*, 2. Other biblical texts include: Gen 34:8–25; Exod 34:13–16; Num 25; Deut 7:3; 1 Kgs 11:1; Neh 13:23–27. Ralf Rothenbusch argues that there are two views of foreigners in postexilic texts, one of inclusion, like Ruth, which is written from the perspective of those residing in the land, and one of exclusion, like Ezra-Nehemiah, which is written from the perspective of those residing in the Diaspora. Rothenbusch, "The Question of Mixed Marriages between the Poles of Diaspora and Homeland," in *Mixed Marriages*, 60–77; see also Vogel, *Einführung in die Schrift*, in *Joseph and Aseneth*, 27.

⁶¹ See Docherty, "Joseph and Aseneth," 27–48, esp., 32.

become the eponymous half-tribes of Joseph (Gen 41:50; 46:19–20). In some sense, this signifies the inclusive, multi-ethnic nature of the Hebrew people.

Considering these multi-cultural and religious identities, we see a close relationship between ethnicity, customs, and religious commitments. The author of the text adapts identities and gestures at the idea that Hebrew and Egyptian ethnicity are negotiated and can fluctuate depending on the emphasis on religious piety and fidelity. Aseneth, through her transformation, is framed and described in terms that resemble other Jewish women, while some of Joseph's brothers are described in terms that identify them as "Egyptian."

4.3.1 Religious Conversion and Ethnicity

Like any compelling romance novel, *Joseph and Aseneth* revolves around two protagonists. Yet, before Joseph's entrance into the narrative, Pharaoh's eldest son and Aseneth express mutual interest in each other, complicating the plot.⁶² This not only adds another dimension to the story but also emphasizes the ethnic continuity observed in Egyptian marriages. The framing of this relationship as typical, dramatizes the second part of the novel, where Pharaoh's son seeks revenge due to his unrequited love for Aseneth.⁶³ The unlikely marriage subverts the standard plot line, where Egyptians marry other Egyptians.

The fluidity with which ethnic language is used begins when Aseneth is physically described in similar language to the Jewish Matriarchs, yet, even with this positive portrayal, her close association to other deities places her in an unfavorable light.⁶⁴ This idol worship even forces Joseph to initially refrain from greeting Aseneth with a kiss when they first meet.⁶⁵ But it is not just Joseph who harbors reservations, but Aseneth does as well, even as her own father, the Priest of

⁶² *Jos. Asen.* 1.11–14; 4.15.

⁶³ *Jos. Asen.* 23.4.

⁶⁴ *Jos. Asen.* 2.4. For her physical depiction, see (1.8).

⁶⁵ *Jos. Asen.* 9; *Jos. Asen.* 10–13; Burchard, "Küssen in *Joseph und Aseneth*," 316–323.

On, suggests that she marry him. This mutual antinomy between them demonstrates that suspicion of one other is a shared experience.⁶⁶

Fluid ethnic identity most noticeably intersects with notions of religious “conversion”. For instance, Scholars have explored the role of religious identity within the narrative, offering a range of perspectives.⁶⁷ Some scholars argue that Joseph’s aversion to Aseneth does not primarily stem from her being a Gentile but rather from her idolatrous practices.⁶⁸ However, the narrative itself blurs the lines between being a Gentile and an idolater, making a strict demarcation between these categories difficult. Other dynamics within the narrative are intertwined as well, which expand our narrow views of the narrative, such as how Greco-Roman virtues and emotions relate in the narrative.⁶⁹ Moreover, physical appearance is also employed to convey complex ideas such as ethnic identification and religious piety, as mentioned earlier.⁷⁰ All these seemingly disparate elements are interconnected within the narrative.

At the conclusion of the initial section of the novel, Joseph and Aseneth fall in love and get married.⁷¹ This romantic ending is followed by a brief reference to their multi-ethnic sons,

⁶⁶ *Jos. Asen.* 4.12. John Barclay describes this mutual feeling as a reversal in light of the narrative sequencing, see Barclay, *Jews in the Mediterranean Diaspora*, 208. In other sections of the story, Joseph is depicted as avoiding meals with Egyptians as well, see *Jos. Asen.* 5.5; 7.1. Whereas in the Genesis account, it is the reverse that is shown, that is, Egyptians cannot eat with the Hebrews (Gen 43:32).

⁶⁷ Chesnutt, *From Death to Life*; Hicks-Keeton, *Arguing with Aseneth*, she states, “Aseneth’s ultimate inclusion makes possible the inclusion of others originally excluded. *Joseph and Aseneth* thereby inscribes into Israel’s sacred narrative of peoplehood a precedent for gentile inclusion” (p. 4); others see this conversion as a transition from ignorance to wisdom, see Standhartinger, “Weisheit in *Joseph und Aseneth* und den paulinischen Briefen,” 482-501; Kraemer, “Aseneth as Wisdom,” in *Feminist Companion to the Bible*, 218–239; Kraemer, *When Aseneth Met Joseph*, 20; Rand, “Aseneth se Drievoudige Transformasie,” 57–73; see also, Gallagher, “Conversion and Community in Late Antiquity,” 1–15; Hays, “Orphanhood and Parenthood in *Joseph and Aseneth*,” 3–79; there are also some other intriguing suggestions, one of which is that parts of *Joseph and Aseneth* are rooted in a background that depicts the symbolic founding of the Oniad temple of Heliopolis, see Bohak, *Joseph and Aseneth and the Jewish Temple in Heliopolis*. Bohak argues that chapters 14–17 are rooted with this founding in mind.

⁶⁸ See Klawans, “Notions of Gentile Impurity in Ancient Judaism,” 285–312, esp., 295–296.

⁶⁹ See Mermelstein, “Emotion, Gender, and Greco-Roman Virtue in *Joseph and Aseneth*,” 331–362. Mermelstein argues that the conversion of Aseneth is inextricably tied to the Greco-Roman virtue of *philanthropia*; Wills, “Jewish Novellas in a Greek and Roman Age: Fiction and Identity,” 141–165; Stern, “The Captive Woman,” 91–121; Hezser, “‘Joseph and Aseneth’ in the Context of Ancient Greek Erotic Novels,” 1–40; Smith, “Complexes of Emotions in *Joseph and Aseneth*,” 117–171.

⁷⁰ Aseneth’s resemblance to a Hebrew woman in her description foreshadows her eventual inclusion (*Jos. Asen.* 1.7–8). Her name is also written in the “book of life”, see *Jos. Asen.* 15.3.

⁷¹ *Jos. Asen.* 19–20.

Manasseh and Ephraim.⁷² Despite receiving only a single comment in the narrative, these ethnically mixed and ambiguous sons hold great significance. For example, Pharaoh, holding the highest office in Egypt pronounces a blessing over Pentephres, the Egyptian priest, and Aseneth's children, who were mixed.⁷³ Pharaoh then recognizes that Aseneth was chosen by Israel's God and continues to bless their children.⁷⁴

After the marriage of Joseph and Aseneth, the second part of the narrative is replete with backstabbing, conflict, and tension which further offers us a window into the purpose of the writing. The second half of the story has been described as “paradigmatic” of the representation of Jewish-Gentile relations within the Egyptian diaspora.⁷⁵ Some have emphasized the antagonistic stance between Egyptians and Jews by pointing out the competition for the title of the “firstborn son”.⁷⁶ This title is contested between Joseph and Pharaoh's son, symbolizing the competing claims of superiority between these two groups.⁷⁷ Joseph ultimately assumes the position of a new Pharaoh, ruling over all Egyptians and other peoples, which further underscores the existence of this conflict.⁷⁸ Even the conflict in the story possibly reveal attitudes of ethnicity, intermarriage and customs between Egyptian and Jews during this time.

4.3.2 Subverting Ethnic Expectations

⁷² *Jos. Asen.* 21.8. See also Demetrius, *Frag.* 2.12–13.

⁷³ *Jos. Asen.* 1.5, 12; 3.2; 12.7.

⁷⁴ *Jos. Asen.* 21.1–8.

⁷⁵ Hacham, “Joseph and Aseneth: Loyalty, Traitors, Antiquity and Diasporan Identity,” 56–57. Hacham continues and strengthens the thesis of John J. Collins, citing Collins, *Between Athens and Jerusalem*, 109. Hacham's perspective aligns with the insights of John Collins in his work *Between Athens and Jerusalem*, emphasizing the intricate political dynamics inherent to these relationships. John Barclay, in his work *Jews in the Mediterranean Diaspora*, further accentuates the social and ethnic division that characterized the wide relational gap between Jews and Gentiles. See also Barclay, *Jewish in the Mediterranean Diaspora*, 204–216.

⁷⁶ Kim, “The Meaning of the Firstborn Son in Joseph and Aseneth,” 404–416.

⁷⁷ Kim, “The Meaning of the Firstborn Son in Joseph and Aseneth,” 412. Kim states, “So, the title ‘the firstborn son’ in Joseph and Aseneth should be considered in the context of this conflict and also refers to the Jews’ self-perception regarding their pre-eminence over the Gentiles. Therefore, the conflict between Joseph and Pharaoh's firstborn son can be understood as a rivalry between them.”

⁷⁸ *Jos. Asen.* 29.

However, it is also worth considering whether this antagonistic relationship is overstated. In Hellenistic Egypt, ethnic identity was complex, and if intermarriage is the central focus of this story, then it cannot be simplistically reduced to an either/or proposition, of being rare or common.⁷⁹ Contrary to the prevailing view that tends to paint a stark antagonistic picture, while relations may have occasionally been volatile, the celebration of intermarriage suggests significant overlap between different groups. An illustrative example of this is found in the narrative when Aseneth repents and confesses.⁸⁰ Her marriage to Joseph is intricately linked to her salvation, and this decision leads to her name change, transforming her into a “City of Refuge.”⁸¹ The expansive vision of an Egyptian, described in Hebrew language and virtue, opens the prophetic possibilities to be a refuge for others.

Furthermore, the interactions between Pharaoh’s son and the sons of Jacob vividly illustrate these fluid dynamics as well. For instance, Pharaoh’s son seeks to enlist Simeon and Levi, proposing that they could become his brothers if they betray Joseph, attempting to realign the bonds of kinship between them.⁸² He even deceptively conveys to Dan and Gad, the sons of Bilhah and Leah, that Joseph does not consider them to be his true brothers due to their mother’s status.⁸³ This demonstrates that biological connection is not necessarily indicative of genuine kinship, as further illustrated by Pharaoh’s son’s own attempt to harm his father.⁸⁴ Ethnic expectations, of how Egyptians and Hebrews are to act are subverted. In this way, the narrative portrays several Jewish characters betraying Joseph, while several Egyptians are depicted in a positive light, making a firm demarcation between being Jewish and Egyptian difficult.⁸⁵ Instead of antagonism, I think a more

⁷⁹ On complex ethnic identities in Egypt, see Moore, “*With Walls of Iron*”.

⁸⁰ *Jos. Asen.* 9–13; and 15.5.

⁸¹ *Jos. Asen.* 15.6.

⁸² *Jos. Asen.* 23.5.

⁸³ *Jos. Asen.* 24.8.

⁸⁴ *Jos. Asen.* 25.

⁸⁵ Jill Hicks-Keeton argues that the inclusion of Joseph in the Jewish Diaspora in Egypt highlights a profound struggle with how Jews should interact with the surrounding Egyptian Gentile culture, see Hicks-Keeton, *Arguing with Aseneth*, 16–40. See also, Fischer-Bovet, “Social Unrest and Ethnic Coexistence in Ptolemaic Egypt and the Seleucid Empire,” 3–45; Philo presents conflicting views of Joseph, with one portraying him as anti-assimilationist, as seen in *Joseph*, while another depicts Joseph adopting negative attributes from the Egyptians, as seen in *Dreams*, implying some level of assimilation.

appropriate picture of Jewish-Egyptian relations might be more complex, one of both antagonism with occasions to celebrate inclusive marital bonds between different peoples.⁸⁶

The complex and multi-faceted relationship between Egyptian and Jew reveals that perhaps ethnicity and religious identification was more closely connected than we might initially perceive. The boundaries of what typically identifies an Egyptian or Jew is not as clear cut. Thus, the overarching argument of this section is that in this text, ethnic identity is closely aligned with religious identity.

4.4 Zipporah and Tharbis in Josephus

4.4.1 Moses' Virtue

Josephus provides another rich example for our understanding of intermarriage in antiquity, particularly in the context of Jewish-African relationships. In his work *Antiquities*, Josephus extensively documents the life of Moses, an influential figure in ancient Judaism.⁸⁷ From the beginning of his narrative on Moses, Josephus attributes to him the quality of “virtue” (ἀρετή).⁸⁸ This emphasis on virtue is so pronounced that Louis Feldman observes, “Indeed, Josephus’ treatment of Moses is a veritable *aretalogy*, such as would be appreciated especially by a Roman society which admired the portrait of the ideal Stoic sage.”⁸⁹ For example, Moses is painted as a great leader, with a childhood marked by his remarkable stature and intelligence.⁹⁰ As a result, the

⁸⁶ Jane Rowlandson possesses a keen eye toward the nuanced identities of Egyptian, Greek, and Roman persons. See Rowlandson, “Dissing the Egyptians, 213–247. See also, Clarysse and Thompson, *Counting the People in Hellenistic Egypt*, vol. 1–2; Bagnall and Frier, *The Demography of Roman Egypt*; Scheidel, ed., *Debating Roman Demography*, esp., 161–204; Alston and Alston, “Urbanism and the Urban Community in Roman Egypt,” 199–216; Honigman, “‘Politeumata’ and Ethnicity in Ptolemaic and Roman Egypt,” 61–203; Fischer-Bovet, “Official Identity and Ethnicity,” 208–242; Boozer, “Frontiers and Borderlands in Imperial Perspectives,” 275–292.

⁸⁷ Josephus, *Ant.* 2.201–4.331. See also, Feldman, “Josephus’ Portrait of Moses,” 285–328; Feldman, “Josephus’ Portrait of Moses: Part Two,” 7–50; Feldman, “Josephus’ Portrait of Moses: Part Three,” 301–30. For an introduction into the writings of Josephus, see Mason, *Josephus and the New Testament*.

⁸⁸ Josephus, *Ant.* 2.205, 238, 243, 257, 262; 3:12, 65, 67, 69, 74, 97, 187, 188, 192, 317, 322; 4.196, 320, 321, 326, 331.

⁸⁹ Feldman, “Josephus’ Portrait of Moses”, 292.

⁹⁰ Noble birth (Josephus, *Ant.* 2.210); beautiful appearance (2.224, 231); exceptional growth and development as a child (2.230–31 cf., Exod 2:10); see also, Plutarch, *Rom.* 7.3–4; *Alex.* 4.8, which is typically of other Greco-Roman biographies depicting great leaders. Philo does this as well, see, Philo, *Mos.* 1.5.20–21, cf. Plutarch, *Alex.* 1.5; Luke 2:46–47. See also Josephus, *Ant.* 2.229, 279–281; 3.23–24, 98, 193, 310, 317–318; 4.42, 87. He is also shown as

early portrayal of Moses' life is shaped by his virtue and the subsequent legacy. Moses' virtue sets the stage for his subsequent victories and successes. It is difficult to disentangle Moses' piety and moral standing from his military conquests and marriage with an Ethiopian princess. In highlighting the moral virtues of Moses in the narrative, we see how Josephus cleanses him of wrongdoing by marrying a foreign princess. In fact, we see a positive portrayal of this marriage precisely because of some of the assumptions of Africans in the ancient world, depicting them as exceptionally virtuous and pious.

4.4.2 Moses and the Ethiopian Princess

Nestled within Josephus' extensive literary account of Moses' life is his military campaign against the Ethiopians, which serves to further exemplify Moses' virtues, leadership, and status.⁹¹ In Josephus' narrative, the Ethiopians launch an attack on Egypt, plundering its resources.⁹² As they are confronted by their dire situation, they resort to oracles (χρησμοὺς) and divination (μαντεία) for guidance.⁹³ Subsequently, they turn to Moses for assistance who then takes charge, leading the Egyptian army toward Saba, the capital of the Ethiopian territory.⁹⁴ As the Egyptian army, under Moses's leadership, assaults Saba, the Ethiopian princess, Tharbis, falls in love with him and extends a marriage proposal.⁹⁵ Moses shrewdly accepts the proposal with the sole condition that she surrenders the city to him.⁹⁶ In a decisive turn of events, Moses is portrayed as military savant, leader, and romantic.

intellectually superior, *Ant.* 2.229; 2.244–45, showing foresight in dealing with oppositions, *Ant.* 3.13–58, and never taking advantage of his positions, *Ap.* 2.158–59.

⁹¹ Josephus, *Ant.* 2.238–53.

⁹² Josephus, *Ant.* 2.238–240.

⁹³ Josephus, *Ant.* 2.241. As an infant Moses is perceived as a threat to the Egyptian hierarchy by diviners, 2.233–237.

⁹⁴ Josephus, *Ant.* 2.241. It is said to be an Egyptian army 2.249, 253.

⁹⁵ Josephus, *Ant.* 2.250–253.

⁹⁶ Josephus, *Ant.* 2.253. Amongst his other virtuous qualities, this campaign shows Moses as a military genius. Moses is referenced as στρατηγός 15x (2.241, 268; 3.2, 11, 12, 28, 47, 65, 67, 78, 102, 105; 4.82, 194, 329). Furthermore, other literature depicts campaigns against Ethiopia which ultimately add credence to the notion that Moses was a great military leader (Cambyses in Herodotus, *Hist.* 3.17–25; Sesostrius in Diodorus 1.55.1; and Semiramis in Diodorus 2.14.4).

The intermarriage between Moses and the Ethiopian princess constitutes a pivotal aspect of this narrative, offering multiple resolutions to the conflicts portrayed in the story. Notably, this union leads to the conquest of the city of Saba and the salvation of the Egyptians through the intermarriage between an Ethiopian and Hebrew.⁹⁷ This marriage is also located within a story that circulates around three different people groups, the Ethiopians, Hebrews, and Egyptians. This reveals at the very least, that ethnic identification plays a large role in shaping this narrative. Furthermore, Moses' ethnic identity, occupies a major component of this narrative, especially as he is perceived by the Egyptians, since he leads the Egyptian army and becomes their savior.⁹⁸ Thus, Moses occupies simultaneous roles of savior, protagonist, and groom, that transcend typical conventions throughout the narrative, further emphasizing ethnic aspects of identity in the ancient world.

An important question that merits an explanation is the identity of Tharbis, the Ethiopian princess. It appears that Josephus distinguishes the Ethiopian princess from Moses' Midianite wife, who is described in the biblical account.⁹⁹ In the biblical text, Moses' wife is identified as Zipporah (Exod 1:15; 2:21; 4:25; 18:2), and this name is also used in other literature as well.¹⁰⁰ Notably, Josephus explicitly mentions Zipporah by name, which differentiates her from Tharbis.¹⁰¹ So it is clear that this story is not based on Zipporah, but the Cushite woman mentioned in Numbers 12:1.¹⁰² This is important because of the excessive amount of elaboration that occurs in Josephus' account, which suggests that an underlying purpose emerges to explain this marriage in ways that is not done to explain Moses' marriage with Zipporah.

⁹⁷ Josephus, *Ant.* 2.254–255.

⁹⁸ Moses is portrayed as living in that tension of being an eventual savior of the Hebrews while simultaneously being an omen of antagonism for the Egyptians. Josephus, *Ant.* 2.236–237. “ἐτρέφετο οὖν πολλῆς ἐπιμελείας τυγχάνων, καὶ τοῖς μὲν Ἑβραίοις ἐπ’ αὐτῷ παρῆν ἐλπίς περὶ τῶν ὅλων, δι’ ὑποψίας δ’ εἶχον Αἰγύπτιοι τὴν ἀνατροφὴν αὐτοῦ.”

⁹⁹ Josephus, *Ant.* 2.263.

¹⁰⁰ (Σεπφορα)Philo, *Post.* 22.77; *Cher.* 41, 47; *Her.* 128; *Mut.* 120; *Ezek. Trag.* 60, 66, 67; *Dem.* 3.1, 2, 3.

¹⁰¹ Josephus has an alternative spelling, see *Ant.* 2.277; 3.63; 14.91.

¹⁰² Therefore, it seems that the narrative of the Ethiopian conquest is primarily based on a single verse, Numbers 12:1, which reads, “Miriam and Aaron spoke against Moses because of the Cushite woman whom he had married, for he had married a Cushite woman.”

4.4.3 What was Josephus Thinking?

So why did Josephus include this story in the first place if the biblical basis for it is minimal? By discerning the potential reason for its inclusion, we can further analyze its literary quality and purpose. Several proposals have been made to explain Josephus's inclusion of this narrative.¹⁰³ Louis Feldman suggests that the reasons for Josephus' addition of this story was to appeal to Roman and Greek readers where Ethiopians occupied their imaginative senses and to place Moses as the antithesis to the Greco-Roman heroes where they ultimately betray their partners.¹⁰⁴ Feldman's suggestion is hinting at something significant, which is that Ethiopians occupied particular assumptions and connotations in the minds of Greco-Roman readers. But there is another reason why Josephus included this story, which was to retrospectively provide a justification for mixed marriages among Jews, much like what was seen in *Joseph and Aseneth*. Perhaps the intersecting characters and contexts of Egyptians, Hebrews, and Ethiopians in the story reveals the intention of the author to underscore how ethnically mixed these societies were.

What we can say for sure is that Ethiopia's inclusion in this narrative is not accidental. It is also important to emphasize that, in antiquity, the term "Ethiopia" does not refer to the modern geopolitical state of Ethiopia but colloquially denoted the region south of Egypt, typically known as Cush or Nubia.¹⁰⁵ Josephus' motivations for using the term are multifaceted, but one thing is clear—he is drawing upon the assumptions prevalent in the first century. Particularly, Africa held specific literary and cultural connotations in the minds of the Greeks and Romans of that era.¹⁰⁶

¹⁰³ Runnalls, "Moses' Ethiopian Campaign," 135–156. See also, Feldman, "Josephus' Portrait of Moses: Part Two," 16–20. Surprisingly, both Runnalls and Feldman do not include Tharbis in their reasoning.

¹⁰⁴ Feldman, "Josephus' Portrait of Moses: Part Two," 19–20. Furthermore, most contend that Josephus is one way, or another is taken from Artapanus' version of the story, see Artapanus (3rd–2nd BCE), Eusebius, *Praep. ev.* 9.27.1–37. Other sections of Artapanus' preserved work include Eusebius *Praep. ev.* 9.18.1; 9.23.1–4. But unfortunately, his version only exists through Eusebius.

¹⁰⁵ For an article that traces how other kingdoms like the Aksumites appropriated the Greek term Aithiopia for their own geo-political purposes, see Selden, "How the Ethiopian Changes His Skin," 322–371; Aksum and Nubia did have extensive interaction with one another, see Hatke, *Aksum and Nubia: Warfare, Commerce, and Political Fictions in Ancient Northeast Africa*; See also Bekerie, "Ethiopia: Some Historical Reflections on the Origin of the Word *Ethiopia*," 110–121.

¹⁰⁶ For works on afro-centric classical history, see Bernal, *Black Athena*, 2 vols.; Lefkowitz and Rogers eds., *Black Athena Revisited*; Binsbergen, ed., *Black Athena: Ten Years After*; Bernal, *Black Athena Writes Back: Martin Bernal Responds to His Critics*; Bernal's work has been controversial for several reasons. For a succinct critique and appraisal of the work, see Burstein, "Reviewed Works(s): Black Athena. Volume 2: The Archaeological and Documentary Evidence by Martin Bernal," 157–162; Snowden Jr., "Bernal's 'Blacks,' Herodotus, and other Classical

These assumptions and connotations help us to see how Josephus meant to portray this intermarriage between Moses and Tharbis.¹⁰⁷

4.4.4 Africans in the Ancient World

In various ancient texts, Ethiopians are described and portrayed in different ways.¹⁰⁸ It is important to note that they are not always portrayed positively.¹⁰⁹ But there is a literary fascination with Ethiopians date back to early works such as Homeric literature, where the gods were depicted as visiting or feasting with the Ethiopians.¹¹⁰ In some texts, Ethiopians are depicted as tall and beautiful.¹¹¹ They are renowned for their longevity.¹¹² Ethiopians are often described as autochthones, indicating that they are indigenous to their land.¹¹³ They were believed to be favored by deities and were known for their religious piety.¹¹⁴ In certain texts, Ethiopians were regarded as morally blameless.¹¹⁵ Ethiopians that lived in Meroe and on the Ethiopian plain were

Evidence,” 83–95. Here Snowden compares Bernal’s argument of equating those that are “black” as designated by Herodotus with those described as Ethiopians, such as Egyptians, with the classical and visual sources; for works looking at Africans in the classical world in general, see Thompson, *Romans and Blacks*; Snowden Jr., *Blacks in Antiquity*; Snowden Jr. *Before Color Prejudice*.

¹⁰⁷ Certain theories about Ethiopians persisted and were used to help other people groups understand their differences. For example, some sources attribute their dark skin to the intensity of the sun’s heat, indicating one of the environmental theories of their skin tone, see Herodotus, *Hist.* 2.22.3; Aristotle, [*probl.*] 10.66.898b; Lucretius 6.721–723, 1109; Vitruvius, *Arch.* 6.1.3–4; Hyginus, *Astro.* 1.8; Strabo, *Geogr.* 15.1.24; Ovid, *Metam.* 2.235–236; Pliny, *Nat.* 2.80.189; Aeschylus, *Prom.* 808–810; Euripides, *Phae.* 1–5; this is also said of other people groups as well, see Diodorus Siculus, *Lib.* 17.105.5; they were also known for being stubborn fighters, Strabo, *Geogr.* 17.2.3; Pliny, *Nat.* 6.35.81; Josephus, *Ant.* 2.253–254.

¹⁰⁸ Hanno of Carthage, *Periplous*; Herodotus, *Hist.* 3.20, 22; Diodorus Siculus, *Lib.* 2.55–60; 3.1–10; Strabo *Geogr.* 1.2.25–28; 17.2.1–3; Pomponius Mela, *World* 3.85–88; Pliny, *Nat.* 5.43–46; 6.182–183, 187–195, 198–205; Achilles Tatius, *Leuc. Clit.* 3.25; Heliodorus, *Aeth.* 14.3–16.2.

¹⁰⁹ Strabo, *Geogr.* 1.2.25, 32; 17.2.3; Pliny, *Nat.* 2.80; 6.181, cf. 6.35, 182.

¹¹⁰ Scodel, “The Gods’ Visit to the Ethiopians in ‘Iliad’ 1,” 83–98. Here, Scodel explores the god’s journey to the Ethiopians as well as the subsequent delay in Thetis’ request to Zeus; MacLachlan, “Feastings with Ethiopians: Life on the Fringe,” 15–33. Homer, *Il.* 1.423–424; 23.205–207; *Ody.* 1.22–27; Diodorus Siculus, *Lib.* 1.97.8–9; 3.2.2–3.3.1; Statius, *Theb.* 5.426–428; Lucian, *Jupp. trag.* 37; *Prom.* 17; *Sacr.* 2.

¹¹¹ Herodotus, *Hist.* 3.20; Pseudo-Scylax, *Periplous* 112.8–12; Diodorus Siculus, *Lib.* 2.56.

¹¹² Herodotus, *Hist.* 3.23; other peoples are described in this way too, see Strabo, *Geogr.* 15.1.57.

¹¹³ Herodotus, *Hist.* 3.2; Diodorus Siculus, *Lib.* 3.2.1.

¹¹⁴ Herodotus, *Hist.* 3.2. The gods were also known to rest and even bathe in Ethiopia, see Aelian *Nat. an.* 2.21; Virgil, *Aen.* 4.206–208; Statius, *Theb.* 5.427–428; Lucian, *Prom.* 17.

¹¹⁵ Homer, *Il.* 1.423–425; 23.205–207; *Ody.* 1.22–26. In other texts, they are morally blameless as well, see Gardner, “Blameless Ethiopians and Others,” 185–193.

characterized more positively than others, showing that there were gradients to how they were understood in Greco-Roman minds.¹¹⁶ Thus, we can see that for other people groups, particularly Greco-Roman, attaching specific characteristics to Africans was typical and helped them understand the other, regardless of their accuracy.

Furthermore, common myths and motifs associated with Africans existed as well. For example, the motif of campaigns or journeys into Ethiopia to rescue African women is a recurring theme in various ancient stories. In Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, a famous romance revolves around Perseus rescuing the Ethiopian princess Andromeda.¹¹⁷ It is worth noting that several ancient heroes and demigods attempted campaigns into Ethiopia but failed, including figures like Cambyses, Semiramis, Heracles, and Dionysus.¹¹⁸ Moses, in contrast, succeeded where these other heroes failed, emphasizing his unique status and achievements.

Some take the references to Ethiopians in ancient Greco-Roman literature to reflect sensationalized attitudes and mythological assumptions about Ethiopians based on their proximity to the Greco-Roman world.¹¹⁹ Benjamin Isaac in his work, *The Invention of Racism in Classical Antiquity*, curiously leaves out Ethiopians in his analysis. Isaac writes,

An omission that will strike many readers as eccentric is systematic discussion of the attitudes toward black Africans. Ancient ideas about Africans are highly interesting. Much has been said, and may be said about Blacks in the ancient world, but the present study is not the proper place for it, because they did not form much

¹¹⁶ Pausanias, *Descr.* 1.33.4.

¹¹⁷ Ovid, *Metam.* 4.604–803; Euripides, *Andromeda*. Most Greek tragedies are not set in foreign lands, cf. Aeschylus, *Prometheus Bound* and *Suppliants*; Euripides, *Phaethon*. See also, Wright, *Euripides' Escape-Tragedies*, 128–129.

¹¹⁸ Herodotus, *Hist.* 3.3, 25; Seneca, *Ira.* 3.20.2; Diodorus Siculus, *Lib.* 10.14; although Cambyses is also said to have conquered that region and named Meroe, see Diodorus Siculus, *Lib.* 1.33.1; 1.34.7; For Greek and Roman encounters with Ethiopian warriors, see Snowden Jr., *Blacks in Antiquity*, 121–143.

¹¹⁹ There is something to be said about the multiplicity of ancient views about the location of the Ethiopians, suggested that they were obscured in myth rather than accurate geographical data. See, Virgil, *Aen.* 4.206–208, 480–482; *Georg.* 4.287–293; Statius, *Theb.* 2.134–137; 5.426–428, 476–477; 6.261–262; Strabo, *Georg.* 1.2.25–28.

of an actual presence in the Greek and Roman worlds. Blacks were considered remarkable, but few of them lived among the Greeks and Romans.¹²⁰

But were Ethiopians or Africans residing south of Egypt not dealt with accurately in Greco-Roman literature or were just described via mythological creativity? We know that Greek culture influenced ancient Nubia.¹²¹ Herodotus takes pains to differentiate Ethiopians from other Africans, like Libyans.¹²² And in another place Herodotus speaks of Ethiopians intermixing with Egyptians and learning their customs which have altered their temperament to be more mild (τούτων δὲ ἐσοικισθέντων ἐς τοὺς Αἰθίοπας ἡμερώτεροι γέγονασι Αἰθίοπες, ἥθεα μαθόντες Αἰγύπτια).¹²³ The Romans were invested in Egypt, through alliances, marriages, and intrigue.¹²⁴ All of which suggest that knowledge of Ethiopians was not just mythological. And although in a different context, Ethiopia or Cush features quite heavily in Jewish and Christian Scripture as well.¹²⁵

This intermarriage serves as a noteworthy example of a Jewish and Ethiopian relationship in antiquity. The overwhelmingly positive literary portrayal of Ethiopians showcases that Jews that entered these marriages, were not at the risk of apostasy or betrayal that might be commonly assumed, like their marriage with other people groups. The reason is that typically, Ethiopians were portrayed as virtuous, pious, and morally blameless. This portrayal of Ethiopians is also consonant with other authors that have been discussed, like Philo.¹²⁶

4.5 Conclusion

¹²⁰ Isaac, *The Invention of Racism in Classical Antiquity*, 49–50. Also handled critically by Samuels, “Herodotus and the Black Body,” 730.

¹²¹ Burstein, “When Greek Was an African Language,” 41–61; see also Emberling and Williams, *The Oxford Handbook of Ancient Nubia*. Also, Roman culture was not forced but it was still very influential (Tacitus, *Agr.* 21).

¹²² Herodotus, *Hist.* 7.70.

¹²³ Herodotus, *Hist.* 2.30.

¹²⁴ Plutarch, *Ant.* 26–29; Goldsworthy, *Antony and Cleopatra*,

¹²⁵ Lavik, “The Literary Motif of Cush in the Old Testament,” 460–473. Gen 2:10–13; Num 12:11–16; 2 Sam 18:19–32; 1 Kgs 9:16, 24; 10:1–13; 14:25–28; 2 Chron 8:11; 9:1–2; 12:2–3; 14:9–15; Acts 8:26–39; 13:1–2.

¹²⁶ Philo, *Leg.* 2.67.

In antiquity, diverse perspectives on intermarriage existed and depending on the historical context and era, these viewpoints exhibited significant variations from one another. The accounts presented by three distinct authors underscore the multifaceted nature of intermarriage, emphasizing its different facets across various literary narratives. Ethnicity are related to different aspects such as customs, religious conversion, and stereotypes.

(1) Philo's perspective on intermarriage is intriguing due to its diverse nature. Within his work, he reveals a spectrum of viewpoints on intermarriage, influenced by factors such as specific biblical passages, the ethnic backgrounds of the partners, and the circumstances of the marriage. Despite this diversity, a common thread in Philo's writings is the close connection he establishes between customs and traditions, ethnic identity, and religious fidelity. From Philo's perspective, the prohibition of intermarriage often stems from the perceived challenge of reconciling divergent and sometimes conflicting customs, potentially leading the Jewish partner towards idolatry. Notably, the ethnic aspect of marriage is not universally negative, as seen in specific instances like Moses' marriage to an Ethiopian woman and the mixed group leaving Egypt. In both cases, foreigners are portrayed positively. Therefore, Philo's analysis of race, ethnicity, and intermarriage primarily centers around the customs and traditions brought into the relationship, often predicated on the recognition of Israel's God. In other words, the deviation from the ancestral traditions is an overarching concern but is not an insurmountable obstacle in marriage.

(2) The other central focus of this chapter explores the narrative of *Joseph and Aseneth*. In parallel with the emphasis on customs in Philo's work, the account of *Joseph and Aseneth* portrays a Jewish and Egyptian marriage that weaves together religious identification ethnic elements of their relationship. The narrative highlights the perceived incompatibility of Aseneth with Joseph, emphasizing this through the language of idolatry, which takes precedence over their distinct ethnic backgrounds. Bolstering this analysis, the latter part of the story reinforces the idea that customs play a pivotal role in shaping relationship dynamics, surpassing the influence of biological factors. This narrative, interestingly, casts some Jews in a negative light while presenting certain Egyptians positively, thereby reshaping and reorienting the concept of ethnicity within the context of religious piety and identification.

(3) In the marriage of Moses and Tharbis, Josephus engages in a meticulous evaluation of Moses within the framework of Greco-Roman ideals encompassing virtue, courage, and romance. Throughout the story, Moses is deliberately portrayed in idealized terms, with a focus on emphasizing his exemplary character and attributes. Notably, the narrative introduces an intriguing contrast and comparison between Egyptian, Jewish, and Ethiopian ethnic assumptions. Moses emerges as the savior of the Egyptians and the conqueror of the Ethiopians, achieved through his marriage to a princess. The favorable assessment of Ethiopians can be traced back to entrenched ethnic stereotypes. In the Greco-Roman imagination, Ethiopians were perceived as a formidable challenge to conquer, renowned for their unmatched military prowess. Many legendary heroes, akin to Moses, attempted feats similar to those accomplished by the revered figure. Beyond their military reputation, Ethiopians were celebrated for their beauty and believed to enjoy long lives, being seen as a pious people favored by the gods. These prevailing assumptions significantly shaped the literary depiction of Moses and his military campaign into Ethiopia. In this narrative context, the intermarriage between Moses and Tharbis reflects these values and stereotypes. Tharbis is presented in overwhelmingly positive terms, aligning with the idealized portrayal of Moses. This dynamic contributes to the overall positive appraisal of their marriage.

Chapter 5: Lists, Catalogues, Genealogies, and Kinship in the Ancient World

5.1 Introduction

Greco-Roman, Western Asian, and biblical genealogies are deeply connected to lineage and ethnicity, with lists, catalogues, and other forms of categorization serving as key markers of identity and social classification. These literary forms provide a window into the cultural, historical, and social contexts in which they were created, offering insights into both societal structures and specific individuals to whom they refer. For instance, a ruler's ancestry that includes a mythic hero or deity carries political connotations that bolsters their authority. The construction and presentation of lineage often has ethnic implications as well, shaping perceptions of identity and belonging. Genealogies, as tools of kinship and boundary-making, can unite or divide people groups, influencing how communities understand themselves and their histories. More broadly, these literary forms reveal social, political, and theological dynamics, depending on the circumstances and purposes for which they are employed. Through evaluating these literary mechanisms, we gain a richer understanding of how ancient societies viewed their past, their identities, and their relationships with others.

The purpose of this chapter is to examine the relationship between ancient literary forms and their rhetorical functions, with a particular focus on how these forms are connected to ethnicity. While the chapter considers a variety of literary forms across different genres, languages, and time periods, its structure is organized around distinct sections devoted to specific literary forms. Accordingly, the chapter is outlined as follows: (1) lists and catalogues, (2) genealogies, and (3) claims of ancestry or kinship.

5.2 Lists and Catalogues

Greek and Latin poetry features various types of lists and catalogues, including inventories, registers, and lists of virtues and vices. Prominent catalogues are found in epic works such as Homer's *Iliad* and Vergil's *Aeneid*. The *Iliad*, though composed long before the first century, is

significant because it reflects a period when a unified Hellenic identity had not yet fully formed. As such, the poem served as a cultural relic, shaping how ancient Hellenes understood their identity, history, and collective consciousness. The *Aeneid*, by contrast, holds particular importance as the national epic of Rome. Esteemed throughout the Roman Empire, it provides insight into how the Roman people viewed their past and conceptualized the ethnicities within their empire. Moreover, its composition is chronologically close to the New Testament, making it a valuable resource for understanding the broader cultural and literary context of the period. These various lists offer a rich network of literature from which to understand how they shape and adapt ethnicity in the ancient world.

5.2.1 The Catalogue of Ships

The *Catalogue of Ships* in the *Iliad* is divided into two lists: the Hellenes who sailed to Troy and the Trojans tasked with defending the city.¹ This catalogue details the leaders and heroes of each group, along with the regions and cities they represent. Its composition demonstrates how a collective people can be organized geographically, either by regions or cities, and how these geographic markers are intrinsically tied to ethnic constructions of identity.

Robert Belknap argues that the *Catalogue* evokes a sense of magnitude as the names are read aloud, while also serving as a form of historical and geographical pedagogy for those without prior access to such material. He writes, “The past evoked is both collective, because of the unified undertaking of the war, and individual, appealing to listeners to recognize the membership of their homelands in the efforts.”² This type of evocation fosters a sense of connection within the audience, particularly if their city or region was mentioned. It is reasonable to conclude that literature like this contributed to the formation of “Hellenic” pride and identity.

¹ For a list of the Hellenes, see Homer, *Il.* 2.494–759). For another list of the Hellenic army gathered against Troy, see Apollodorus, *Lib. Epit.* 3.9–15. For other lists, see Herodotus, *Hist.* 7.89–99, where there is a catalogue of ships and the captains are described genealogically, i.e., from whom they descend. For a list of the Trojans, which is much shorter, only 61 lines compared to the Hellenic list which consists of 265, see Homer, *Il.* 2.816–867); For another list of the Trojan forces, see Apollodorus, *Lib. Epit.* 3.34.

² Belknap. *The List*, 10.

In the *Catalogue of Ships*, the geographical groupings of warriors are predominantly divided by compass directions, with the eastern cohort representing Trojan-aligned peoples and the western cohort consisting overwhelmingly of Hellenic forces.³ This organization reflects inherent assumptions about the participants in the conflict, where geography intersects with kinship, lineage, treaties, and identity. At this point in time, the pre-Hellenic peoples are depicted primarily in terms of separate city-states. However, these groupings also reveal the emergence of a nascent ethnic identity. While a unified Hellenic identity had not yet formed, these groupings provide early representations of distinct “ethnicities”. Instead of a single Hellenic people, the *Catalogue* identifies Argives, Ionians, Dorians, Achaeans, and others.⁴ A similar pattern can be observed in the early history of Latin ethnicity in other literature, where groups such as the Sabines, Etruscans, Romans, and Samnites were distinct before coalescing into a broader Roman identity.⁵ Thus, literary catalogues of peoples, like the one in the *Iliad*, reveal how concepts of race and ethnicity are embedded in and shaped by these early organizational frameworks. Catalogues like this precipitated and helped to shape ethnic consciousness.

For the Hellenic people, the unifying thread of their genealogical structure was a purported descent from the eponymous ancestor Hellen, the king of Pythia and son of Deucalion and Pyrrha. Hellen was also said to be the grandson of Prometheus, a Titan from Greek mythology. Traditionally, the Hellenes traced their lineage through Hellen’s sons, Aeolus, Xuthus, and Dorus, and his grandsons, Ion and Achaeus.⁶ These familial connections gave rise to the Hellenic groups: Aeolians, Dorians, Ionians, and Achaeans, each reflecting their own eponymous progenitor. The fluidity of these relationships between people groups and their mythical ancestors highlights the adaptability of

³ Outside of the Paeonians on the Trojan side Homer, *Il.* 2.848–50. Those from Rhodes, Syme, and those led by Pheidippus and Antiphus on the Hellenic side, Homer, *Il.* 2.653–80.

⁴ Hall argues that the historical reality is more aggregative, see Hall, *Ethnic Identity in Greek Antiquity*, 48. The eponymous ancestors are shown in other literature as well, like in Genesis, where the sons of Noah’s are Shem, Ham, and Japheth (Gen. 10).

⁵ Strabo, *Geogr.* 5–6. In these books Strabo mentions around 30 different ethnic groups. They are synchronically outlined, as they did not all exist at the same time. In evaluating Strabo’s discussion, Duane Roller states, “It should be remembered that Strabo’s discussion of Italian ethnic groups is situated in the context of his larger examination of world geography, and that the consideration of the Italian peoples is incomplete and chronologically inconsistent.” See Roller, *Strabo and Italian Ethnic Groups*, in *The Peoples of Ancient Italy*, 29; Lomas, “Language, Identity, and Culture in Ancient Italy,” in *Creating Ethnicities & Identities in the Roman World*, 71–92. Here, Kathryn Lomas looks at how non-Latin local languages shifted during Roman expansion and became a part of ethnic discourse.

⁶ Hesiod, *Cat. Wom.* 9. This is the earliest reference to the sons of Hellen, being Dorus, Xuthus, Aeolus.

lineage, allowing it to be reshaped to suit evolving cultural and social circumstances. Connecting to a purported mythical progenitor established one within a hierarchical framework and linked different peoples through a lineage.

5.2.2 Lists in the *Aeneid*

Vergil's *Aeneid* is another text rich in lists, catalogues, and genealogies.⁷ As a national epic, the *Aeneid* situates Romanness within the broader scope of classical history by linking Roman lineage to notable figures of the past. These genealogical elements are set in a mythic past and retrospectively assigned to create a narrative trajectory that points the audience forward, envisioning a future of Roman excellence and imperial destiny.

In the *Aeneid*, Aeneas meets his father, Anchises, in Elysium, where they witness a procession of their descendants and notable figures yet to be born.⁸ Anchises names the Roman kings and generals, expanding the Roman lineage to encompass a broader vision of history.⁹ Anchises reveals their progeny to inspire Aeneas, encouraging him to embrace the journey ahead and to take heart in the knowledge of Rome's destined greatness. Nicholas Horsfall describes this moment as intended to inspire joy in Italy's discovery, become Roman heroes, and spread Trojan valor for

⁷ Murrans boasts of his ancestry and the lineage through the Latin kings 12.529–31; Latinus is said to descend from Faunus, Picus, and Saturn being his great-grandfather. All of whom are mythological while Faunus and Saturn are explicitly divine figures 7.45–49, with an emphasis on this relationship to Faunus, 7.81–82, 97, 102 *patris Fauni*; Aeneas meets his father Anchises in the underworld, and he lists Aeneas' progeny, Silvius, Procas, Capys, Numitor, and Augustus 6.752–807; Anchises further lists important Roman kings and generals such as Numa, Tullus, Ancus, Brutus, Torquatus, Camillus, Lucius Mummius, Lucius Aemilius Paullus, Cato the Elder, Cossus, Scipios, Fabricius, Serranus, Fabii, and Marcellus 6.808–86. There is also the catalogue of Latins 7.641–782; and the catalogue of the Etruscans 10.163–214.

⁸ Within this discourse there appears a procession of Alban kings—yet to be born— such as Silvius, Procas, Capys, Numitor, and Augustus Vergil, *Aen.* 6.752–807. There are disagreements within the *Aeneid* about whether Silvius or Ascanius will found Alba Longa and be the progenitor of the Alban kings and the Julian lineage. See, O'Hara, *Inconsistency in Roman Epic*, 85–95 for inconsistencies more broadly, but esp., 88. For those texts that refer to Ascanius, he cites 1.167–71, 288; 4.274–6, 233–6; 6.789–90; and 8.628–9. Even Livy is unsure of Ascanius' origins Livy *Hist.* 1.3.2. For those that refer to Silvius, he cites 6.763. O'Hara muses later, "And of course if we still believed as earlier ages did in Vergil's miraculous prescience we might even imagine him looking forward to the problem of Julio-Claudian imperial succession" (p. 90). See also, Farron, *Aeneid VI, 826–835*, 60–61.

⁹ Vergil, *Aen.* 6.808–86. These include, Numa, Tullus, Ancus, Brutus, Torquatus, Camillus, Lucius Mummius, Lucius Aemilius Paullus, Cato the Elder, Cossus, Scipios, Fabricius, Serranus, Fabii, and Marcellus. For other literature about the parade of heroes, See also O'Hara, *Death and the Optimistic Prophecy in Vergil's Aeneid*, 163–70. Parallels include Homer, *Il.* 3; *Ody.* 11.

future glory.¹⁰ This revelation ties Aeneas' mission to Rome's destiny, forging a shared identity through a myth of descent and historical continuity that unites Romans with their past and future.¹¹ The *Parade of Heroes* in the *Aeneid* holds significant relevance for its contemporary readers. One scholar suggests that the specific reference to Caesar and Pompey, advising against civil discord, reflects the political crisis of 23 BCE, including the death of Marcus Claudius Marcellus and the unresolved question of Augustus' heir.¹² Beyond these specific contemporary allusions, the parade also functions as a proleptic genealogy, instilling a sense of pride in Roman readers by connecting the story of Aeneas to their own historical narrative, which they already knew had unfolded. This inverted genealogy, projecting backward from the Roman present to Aeneas' mythical past, serves to encourage readers by reinforcing their cultural identity and destiny. As the procession of Roman heroes and generals unfolds, presenting figures already deceased by contemporary standards, it mirrors a funeral procession that unifies the audience through a shared narrative, Aeneas' future as the foundation of their past.¹³ Some scholars describe the parade as a "genealogical protreptic," emphasizing its rhetorical purpose: to persuade Aeneas and by extension, the Roman audience, to rule with virtue, inspired by the heroic examples of their forebears.¹⁴

The second example in the *Aeneid* appears in Book 8, during the scene with Vulcan's shield. This shield is significant because Vulcan, the Roman god of fire, forges and gifts it to Aeneas. On the shield is another prophetic depiction of Aeneas' lineage, the successes of his descendants, and the future of Rome.¹⁵ Much like the *Parade of Heroes*, this scene unfolds in a proleptic fashion, revealing future generations and their triumphs to the characters.

¹⁰ Horsfall, "'Exempla' in Virgil's Underworld," 66.

¹¹ Smith, *The Ethnic Origins of Nations*, 22.

¹² Horsfall, "The structure and purpose of Virgil's parade of heroes," in *Fifty Years at the Sibyl's Heels*, 164–170.

¹³ Burke, Jr., "Roman Rites for the Dead and 'Aeneid 6'," 220–28..

¹⁴ As cited by Freudenburg, "Seeing Marcellus in Aeneid 6," 122, fn22. He cites Feeny, Horsfall, von Albrecht, and Oppenheimer within this long tradition of history. See Feeny, "History and revelation in Vergil's underworld," 1–24; see also Horsfall, "Virgil, history, and the Roman tradition," in *Fifty Years at the Sibyl's Heels*, 72–73; Also, see Bettini, *Anthropology and Roman Culture*, 164. Bettini, critiques many of the proposals by scholars, especially the parallels to the Roman funerary rites, but does not outright reject it.

¹⁵ In particular, the beginning and last sections of this scene describe the future success of these generations. Vergil, *Aen.* 8.626–30; 8.729–31. In describing the shield that Vulcan created for Aeneas, every generation from Ascanius and their wars were a part of the story (Vergil, *Aen.* 8.626–30). Romulus and Remus (8.630–34); capture of the Sabine women (8.635–41); death of Mettius Fufetius (8.642–45); siege of Rome by Porsenna (8.646–54); Gaul's

However, these scenes offer more than just encouragement. The context of the shield and the *Parade of Heroes* also holds significance for ethnicity. The conflict between the Trojans and the Rutulians reaches its climax in the death match between Aeneas and the Rutulian king, Turnus. Before this battle, Aeneas prays and makes a vow, that if the Trojans lose, they will permanently withdraw to Evander's city and never return for war.¹⁶ But if they win, they vow not to oppress the Latins, promising to co-exist peacefully with them.¹⁷ In many ways, the collective futures of the Trojans and Latins are already foretold and intertwined. Aeneas marries Latinus' daughter, Lavinia, and it is established that Aeneas and Evander are kin.¹⁸ These developments support the idea that the Trojans and Latins will eventually merge into one people. In this sense, the distinct peoples are retroactively united, their fates intertwined in a shared future that reflects the blending of their lineages and identities.

Toward the end of the battle, Jove (Jupiter) tells Juno that the outcome of the war is inevitable, and she agrees to abandon her schemes. However, she requests that the native Latins not change their customs, names, language, or clothing.¹⁹ Jove responds,

Ausonia's sons shall keep their fathers' speech and ways, and as it is now, so shall their name be: the Teucrians shall but sink down, merged in the mass. I will give them their sacred laws and rites and make them all Latins of one tongue. From them shall arise a race, blended with Ausonian blood (Fairclough, LCL).²⁰

attack Rome (8.655–62); battle of Actium (8.671–713); Rome and Augustus Caesar (8.714–28); Aeneas celebrates the future achievements of his children's children (8.729–31); cf Homer, *Il.* 18.

¹⁶ Vergil, *Aen.*, 12.182–86.

¹⁷ Vergil, *Aen.*, 12.187–95. Aeneas and Latinus (king of the Latins) make the promise, Vergil, *Aen.*, 12.195–215.

¹⁸ Vergil, *Aen.*, 8.125ff.

¹⁹ Vergil, *Aen.*, 2.806–28.

²⁰ Vergil, *Aen.*, 12.835–39, *sermonem Ausonii patrium moresque tenebunt, utque est nomen erit; commixti corpore tantum subsident Teucri. morem ritusque sacrorum adiciamque faciamque omnis uno ore Latinos. hinc genus Ausonio mixtum quod sanguine surget.*

This quote is striking, as it envisions a future where a unified people emerge from a collection of diverse identities, speaking a single language. The pacification of enemies signifies the unification of the peoples of the peninsula. This new people will be a blend, an amalgamation of Trojans, Ausonians, Teucrians, and others. The glory of Rome, as readers understood it, was inextricably tied to the past mythos of a divided, fragmented, and ethnically diverse people.

In these instances, lists and catalogues are deeply intertwined with concepts of ethnicity, particularly the idea of being mixed. Catalogues that group peoples together offer evidence of emerging identities, as seen with the Hellenes in the *Iliad*. Later audiences reading such texts were further galvanized in their collective identity, especially based on how their region was represented in Homer's work. Similarly, the lists in the *Aeneid*, including those of Roman kings and generals, serve to strengthen this sense of unity and identity for the readers. For instance, not all of the heroes in the *Parade of Heroes* were connected to the Julio-Claudian line, which may suggest an inclusive paradigm that honors all Roman heroes, regardless of lineage.²¹ The blending of peoples such as the Trojans and Latins reinforces the idea that the Romans, as they saw themselves, were not ethnically pure but rather a mixed people. Moreover, both the *Parade of Heroes* and Vulcan's shield demonstrate that collective identities can unite and give rise to remarkable heroes, with the proleptic depiction of Rome's future greatness serving as evidence of this process.

5.3 Genealogies

5.3.1 Greek Mythography

²¹ Burke, "Roman Rites for the Dead and 'Aeneid 6,'" 223.

Genealogies were widely incorporated into literature across various genres.²² One genre in particular that features a wealth of genealogies is Greek mythography.²³ Hesiod's *Theogony*, for example, is a poem that details the genealogies of the deities and their succession stories.²⁴ Another significant work, the *Catalogue of Women* by Hesiod, traces the lineages of deities and the mortal women with whom they had offspring. Unfortunately, the *Catalogue of Women* survives only in fragments, but it remains an important text in the history of genealogies.²⁵ Richard Hunter evaluates the form of the *Catalogue* and observes that it constructed "a map of the Hellenic world in genealogical terms; the organizing principle within the great families was the offspring of mortal women and gods."²⁶ In this way, the offspring functioned as framing devices for the text, allowing different people groups to map their identities onto the narrative. Moreover, as other scholars have noted, the social and political realities of the time were embedded in the interactions between

²² Other literature also features genealogies and genealogical statements. For example, Greco-Roman geographical literature: Strabo, *Geogr.* 7.7.2; 7.7.8; 8.3.19; 8.5; 8.6.22; 8.7.1; 9.1.18; 9.5.23; 10.4.10; 10.21; 13.1.50; 13.1.53; 13.4.2; 13.4.3; 14.1.2; 14.2.17; 14.3.10; 15.3.24; 17.1.43; Pausanias, *Descr.* 1.5.3; 1.11.1; 2.4.3–4; 2.6.2–4; 2.11.6; 2.18.4–7; 2.19.1; 2.20.4; 3.15.6–8; 3.16.6, 10; 4.3.4; 4.4.2–4; 5.1.4–11; 5.3.6–7; 5.29.4–5; 7.18.4; 8.4.1; 8.5.7; 9.37.1–2. See also, the Lydian and Herculean genealogy through Candaules, (Herodotus, *Hist.* 1.7); Gyges (1.8); Ardys to Sadyattes (1.16); Alyattes (1.74–75); Pantaleon (1.92); Deioces (1.96); Phraortes I to Cyaxares (1.102–3); Egyptian monarchs and it is situated within succession stories; it is not quite a strict genealogical list (2.100–182); Aristodemus (6.52), although there is a dispute about that lineage (6.53–54); The Alceonidae family from Athens (6.125); Cleisthenes the despot of Sicyon (6.126); the suitors for Cleisthenes daughter, which is more of a list but they are genealogically situated (6.127); Darius (7.2); list of groups, commanders, and generals and from whom they descend (7.61–83); story about Gelon and Terillus (7.165); Leutychides back to Hercules (8.131). Jewish literature also contains genealogies and genealogical references, Sib. Or. 1:65–124, 3:281–87; Tob 1:1; Jdt 8:1; Bar 1:1; 1 Macc 1:1, 2:1–5; Jub. 4:1–33, 7:18–19; 8:1–8; 11:7–8, 14; 33:21–23; 44:11–34; Ps.-Philo 1–2; 4–5; 42:1; Philo, *Prob.* 10 (446); Josephus, *Ag. Ap.* 1:7, Josephus, *Life* 1.

²³ For another theogony, see Hyginus' *Theog.* 1–41. In Hesiod's *Works and Days*, the author defines different ages of humanity by types of metal composition. Although this work is not a strict lineal genealogy, it does outline epochs of history. In this sense, it is more like a macro-genealogy. See also, Babrius, *Fab.* 1–19; Ovid *Metam.* 1.89–150. In this way, it is more of a larger outline of humanity like the transition from pre-Noahic to post-Noahic humanity. In the biblical text, something like Genesis 5–10.

²⁴ It begins with a list of the Olympian and some pre-Olympian deities, Hesiod, *Theog.* 11–19 and in v 20–21 the other immortals are called the ἱερὸν γένος or the "holy race"; Zeus and Mnemosyne bore the nine Muses (53–92; 915ff; see also, Homeric Hymns, *Herm.* 4.428–62; Pindar, *Paeon.* 6.54, 181; 12.3); There also includes a list of the pre-Olympian deities (116–53; 211–432). Within this long list of divine beings, there are offshoots of lineages, such as Tethys and Oceanus' Rivers and Nymphs (337–62); The children of Doris (featured one of Oceanus' Nymphs), and Nereus are also enumerated (242–63); As well as the children of Rhea and Kronos (453–58); There is also a list of Olympian gods (881–961); demi-gods (962–1020).

²⁵ For comparisons between Hesiod's *Catalogue of Women* and the Genesis genealogies, see Hess, *The Genealogies of Genesis* 1–11, 251–53; West, *The Hesiodic Catalogue of Women*, esp. 13; Seters, "The Primeval Histories of Greece and Israel Compared," 1–22.

²⁶ Hunter, "Introduction," in *The Hesiodic Catalogue of Women: Constructions and Reconstructions*, 1.

deities and humanity, reflecting the complex layers of identity and power.²⁷ This is reminiscent of the claim made by Athena Kirk, that lists can express cultural value rather than merely serving as a recording mechanism.²⁸

As mentioned earlier, the function of genealogies is crucial to understanding their significance.²⁹ Genealogies operate in specific ways within their contexts, often serving interrelated purposes. Jonathan Hall, in his evaluation of the *Catalogue of Women*, states, “The fact is that genealogies performed multiple purposes for the ancient Greeks. On the one hand, a genealogy might seek to elevate the claims to status and authority of one particular family over ethnically related peers.”³⁰ These genealogies also express the local interrelationships between peoples.³¹ Essentially, they illustrate the connections between different people groups, showing the degree to which they share a collective identity through Hellen (the eponymous founder), and highlight social positions based on the specific progenitor from whom they descend.³² In this way, genealogies both frame social status and outline purported or actual biological ties to particular ancestors.

The *Catalogue of Women* is also one of the earliest references to distinct ethnic groups.³³ Jonathan Hall argues that the function of Hellenic genealogies was to establish the relationships between these groups. Depending on the ancestor to whom a group was tied, they could relate more concretely to some peoples than to others.³⁴ Another way to understand these lineages is as a means of navigating the growing diversity within the region.³⁵ By anchoring people to the Hellenic genealogical tree, these genealogies united kin across geographical contexts while also

²⁷ Irwin, “Gods among men?” in *The Hesiodic Catalogue of Women*, 36–84; Fowler, “Genealogical thinkings,” 1–19.

²⁸ Kirk, *Ancient Greek Lists*, 8.

²⁹ Wilson, *Genealogy and History in the Biblical World*, 46–54.

³⁰ Hall, *Hellenicity*, 26.

³¹ Hall, *Hellenicity*, 26, citing Pausanias *Descr.* 3.1.2–3.

³² Hall, *Hellenicity*, 27.

³³ Hall, *Ethnic Identity in Greek Antiquity*, 42–43.

³⁴ Hall, *Ethnic Identity in Greek Antiquity*, 48.

³⁵ Hall, *Ethnic Identity in Greek Antiquity*, 48.

establishing an implicit hierarchy within these networks of relationships, thus ordering society through genealogical kinship.

Additionally, other mythographies incorporate lineages into their narratives.³⁶ Apollodorus' *Library* is a concise compendium of Greek mythology that is rich in genealogies.³⁷ The lineages in the *Library* serve to illustrate the origins of the universe and frame the created order as the Greeks understood it. One example is the Deucalionids—the descendants of Deucalion, the son of Prometheus—who are considered the first humans after the Hellenic flood narrative. These genealogies connect humanity to the divine lineages of the previous cosmic order. After the chaotic origins of the universe and the conflicts that ended with the reconfiguration of the pantheons, it can be difficult to make sense of humanity's role in such turmoil. However, the genealogies provide order by linking humanity to this divine yet tumultuous past. The *Library* has also been shown to establish kinship across the Mediterranean, rooting humanity in a cosmological past that offers readers both meaning and a framework to understand their own existence.³⁸

5.3.2 Biographies

Biographies are another literary genre that frequently employ lineages. While they do not always present lineages in a strict, successive manner, Greco-Roman biographies often mention a person's origins to situate them within the context of their family's prestige. For example, some biographies highlight connections to founders, legendary figures, or individuals held in high regard.³⁹ Other

³⁶ Asius's, *Antiquarian Epics*.

³⁷ Apollodorus *Lib.* 1.1.1; 1.1.4; 1.2–5; 1.6–7; 1.3.1–4; 1.3.5–6; 1.4.1–6; 1.4.6; 1.7.1–2; 1.7.2–3; 1.7.3b–5; 1.7.6; 1.7.8; 1.8.1; 1.8.2; 1.8.4–6; 1.9.1–2; 1.9.3–7; 1.9.8–10; 1.9.11–13; 1.9.14–15; 1.9.16; 1.9.17; 1.9.28; 2.1.1; 2.1.3; 2.1.4; 2.2.1; 2.2.2; 2.4.5; 2.4.8–12; 2.7.8; 3.1.1; 3.1.2; 3.2.1–2; 3.3.1; 3.4.1–2; 3.4.3; 3.5.6; 3.5.7–9; 3.8.1; 3.8.1–9.1; 3.9.2; 3.10.1; 3.10.2; 3.10.3–4; 3.10.4–7; 3.10.7–11.1; 3.11.2; 3.12.1–4; 3.12.5–6; 3.12.6; 3.12.7; 13.4–8; 3.14.1–4; 3.14.5–6; 3.14.7–3.15.1; 3.15.1–2; 3.15. 6–7); Apollodorus, *Lib. Epit.* 1.7; 3.15–16. These “genealogies” are diverse. Some only mention two or three generations, some much more. Others heavily feature women or are traced through their lineage. Some genealogies are embedded within larger stories, while others bookend the stories with references to particular lineages.

³⁸ Fletcher, “Systematic Genealogies in Apollodorus' *Bibliotheca*,” 59–91. This claim is substantiated not by Apollodorus' explicit admission or statement of purpose, but because the system of genealogies do not include Rome, but other parts of the Mediterranean world.

³⁹ Philostratus, *Vit. Apoll.* 1.4; *Vit. soph.* 480; 1.10; 1.21; 1.22; 1.24; 2.1; 2.3; 2.4; 2.6; 2.14; 2.16; 2.17; 2.23; 2.25; 2.26; 2.27; Plutarch, *Sol.* 1; *Publ.* 1.1–2; *Arist.* 1.1–2; *Cat. Min.* 1.1; *Fab.* 1.1–2; *Cor.* 1.1; *Sul.* 1.1; *Ages.* 1.1; *Pel.* 3.1–2; *Marc.* 1.1; *Brut.* 1.1; *Aem.* 1–4; *Dem.* 4.1; *Cic.* 1.1; *Alex.* 2; *Caes.* 62.1–2; *Sert.* 2.1; *Ti. C. Gracch.* 1.1;

biographies emphasize the obscurity of a person's lineage, while some frame their identity in terms of mixed parentage, suggesting a more complex or diverse heritage.⁴⁰

In some biographies, like Diogenes Laertius' *Lives* or Philostratus' *Lives of the Sophists*, genealogies are entirely absent. However, when genealogies are excluded, biographers sometimes explain the absence, often citing that the different accounts are either too convoluted or conflicting.⁴¹ In Suetonius' *The Twelve Caesars*, for example, the biography of Galba begins only after a section dedicated to Nero's death and his lineage.⁴² It is only then that Suetonius mentions Galba's ancestry, noting that while Galba came from a noble family, he was not related to the "house of the Caesars."⁴³ Suetonius also highlights that Galba displayed his family lineage in the atrium of the palace, which connected his heritage to Jupiter and Pasiphae.⁴⁴ He then remarks, "It would be a long story to give in detail his illustrious ancestors and the honorary inscriptions of the entire race, but I shall give a brief account of his immediate family" (LCL, Rolfe).⁴⁵ This passage suggests that Suetonius is emphasizing Galba's insecurity regarding his lack of connection to the Julio-Claudian line, prompting him to claim a divine ancestry. Marleen Flory notes this exact idea,

Suetonius, *Aug.* 1–2; *Tib.* 1–3; *Galb.* 2; *Otho* 1.1–3; Diogenes Laertius, *Lives* Prologue; 1.1 Thales; 1.6 Cleobulus 1.7; Periander; 2.9 Phaedo; 5 Aristotle; 5.4 Lyco; 6.5 Crates; 8.1 Pythagoras; 8.2 Empedocles; 10 Epicurus; Eunapius, *Lives* 455–56, 457–58, 461, 467, 475, 479, 495, 499; Lucian, *Demon.* 3; *Scyth.* 1; Isocrates, *Evag.* 12–21; *Aeginet.* 8; *Archid.* 3–4; Tacitus, *Agr.* 4.

⁴⁰ Plutarch, *Them.* 1; *Luc.* 1; *Cor.* 1.1–2 in this case the loss of a father; *Lys.* 1.1, 4; *Mar.* 3.1; *Eum.* 1.1; Suetonius, *Poet. Hor.*; *Poet. Teren.* 1; *Poet. Vir.* 1–2; *Vesp.* 8.6; Diogenes Laertius, *Lives* 2.7 Aeschines; 4.7 Bion; 6.8 Menippus; Lucian, *Alex.* 11; Philostratus, *Vit. soph.* 480, here only the names of the fathers were added if they were prestigious men and therefore implies that those without references to their ancestry were from common or lowly backgrounds. Although in some cases, he mentions their common or obscure ancestry, 1.25; 2.29; see also, Plutarch, *Them.* 1; *Cim.* 4; Diogenes Laertius, *Lives* 1.4 Pittacus; 1.8 Anacharsis; 6.1 Antisthenes.

⁴¹ Plutarch, *Lyc.* 1.3; *Num.* 21.1; *Rom.* 2; *Them.* 1; Suetonius, *Vit.* 1.1; *Aug.* 2.3, Suetonius comments that what he had written was all he could ascertain about Augustus' paternal ancestors; Diogenes Laertius, *Lives* 1.5 Bias; 1.10 Epimenides; 2.17 Menedemus; 8.1 Pythagoras; 8.2 Empedocles; 9.7 Democritus; Philostratus, *Vit. soph.* 1.22. Some, for several reasons might mention a lineage but will not outline them, Plutarch, *Num.* 1. There are some genealogies that are still short but not as terse as most, Plutarch, *Pyrrh.* 1.4; *Art.* 1.1–2.

⁴² Suetonius, *Galb.* 1. Scholars have assumed that this section was meant to be the ending of Nero's work and not the beginning of Nero's, see Syme

⁴³ Suetonius, *Galb.* 2.

⁴⁴ Suetonius, *Galb.* 2. Hekster, "Descendants of Gods" in *The Impact of Imperial Rome on Religious, Ritual, and Religious Life in the Roman Empire*, 24–35, esp., 31–33. Hekster mentions the inability of Galba to win over the Roman public by his appeals to divine ancestry. This chapter is especially helpful in identifying the developing nature of appeals of divine ancestry, making the claim that by the Principate, it was no longer as politically expedient as it once was.

⁴⁵ Suetonius, *Galb.* 3.1.

“He created, in other words, a divine family line to rival that of his predecessors.”⁴⁶ If this is the case, it further supports the idea that divine lineage plays a crucial role in claims to political power. The arrangement of Suetonius’ narrative seems purposeful in highlighting the importance of such genealogical claims.⁴⁷

Additionally, other examples of genealogies are extensive and detailed.⁴⁸ Diogenes Laertius’ biography of Plato, for instance, records six generations from Plato to Solon and traces Solon’s descent all the way back to Poseidon.⁴⁹ In many of these biographical works, such genealogies serve to connect an individual to an ancient or divine lineage, conferring prestige on both the family and the individual.⁵⁰ This practice highlights the genealogical and ancestral importance in establishing the individual and family within the narrative context.

In the case of Tiberius, his prestige and honor were largely derived from his adoption into the imperial family.⁵¹ Adoption practices like this allowed individuals to be connected to a new lineage, conferring status and authority. One of the most famous examples of this practice is Augustus’ selection as Julius Caesar’s heir.⁵² However, relying too heavily on the accomplishments

⁴⁶ Flory, “Octavian and the Omen of the Gallina Alba,” 347.

⁴⁷ For scholars arguing for continuity between this section and the rest of Galba, see Power, “Suetonius Galba 1: Beginning or Ending?,” 216–20. Power’s argues that Galba, Otho, and Vitellius constitute a single book because this section represents the connecting structure between these separate biographies. For intentionality behind Suetonius’ composition in terms of “ring composition,” see Benediktson, “Structure and Fate in Suetonius’ Life of Galba”: 167–73.

⁴⁸ Plutarch, *Lyc.* 1.4. Some of the language in other genealogies mimics the ones in the genealogies. Like for example, uses similar syntactical structures with similar verbs, “Argus begat (γίνομαι) Peirasus and Phorbas, Phorbas begat Triopas, and Triopas begat Iasus and Agenor.” In this lineage, Argus to Agenor is an interesting genealogy for several reasons. It possesses segmentation, Argus fathering Peirasus and Phorbas, as well as depth, going through four generations (Pausanias, *Descr.* 2.16.1).

⁴⁹ Diogenes Laertius, *Lives* 3 Plato.

⁵⁰ In Alexander the Great’s case, his father’s side was a descendent of Hercules while his mother was a descendent of Aeacus, son of Zeus (Suetonius, *Tib.* 1–3); Lycurgus ancient lawgiver of Sparta, a legendary figure in his own right, was purported to descent from Hercules (Plutarch, *Lyc.* 1). Others are descended from Hercules and Zeus as well which confers nobility (Isocrates, *Archid.* 9); Solon was said to have descended from Codrus, ancient king of Athens (Plutarch, *Sol.* 1); In the case of Alcibiades, his lineage went back to notable men such as Aias and Megacles (Plutarch, *Alc.* 1.1); Other were connected to ancestry who demonstrated great deeds, such as Publicola, who was purported to be a descendant of Valerius, who reconciled the Romans and Sabines (Plutarch, *Publ.* 1); Brutus was a descendent of Junius Brutus, who was instrumental in the establishment of the Roman Republic, (Plutarch, *Brut.* 1.1); And Plato was a descendent of Poseidon (Diogenes Laertius, *Lives* 3).

⁵¹ Suetonius, *Tib.* 3; see also Diogenes Laertius, *Lives* 9.5 Zeno of Elea.

⁵² This was also exemplified throughout the Julio-Claudian dynasty.

of one's ancestors could imply a lack of personal virtue.⁵³ Isocrates, for example, wrote to King Philip II of Macedon, emphasizing that the Lacedaemonians had conferred enduring kingship upon Philip's descendants based on their noble lineage, suggesting that lineage alone could play a decisive role in political legitimacy.⁵⁴

5.3.3 Ancient Western Asian King Lists

The Ancient Western Asian king lists are also instructive in the ways we know they functioned.⁵⁵ For instance, here is some text from the *Behistun Inscription* of King Darius,

I (am) Darius, the great king, the king of kings, the king of Persia, the king of countries, the son of Hystaspes, the grandson of Arsames, the Achaemenide. Says Darius the king: My father (is) Hystaspes, the father of Hystaspes (is) Arsames, the father of Arsames (is) Ariaramnes, the father of Ariaramnes (is) Teispes), the father of Teispes (is) Achaemenes. Says Darius the king: Therefore we are called the Achaemenides; from long ago we have extended; from long ago our family have been kings. Says Darius the king: 8 of my family (there were) who were formerly kings; I am the ninth (9); long aforetime we were (lit. are) kings. Says Darius the king: By the grace of Auramazda I am king; Auramazda gave me the kingdom (1–5).⁵⁶

⁵³ Plutarch, *Arat.* 1; Philostratus, *Vit. soph.* 1.22. But in other cases, by virtue of one's ancestors, one could be a prominent person, Philostratus, *Vit. soph.* 2.14; 2.23.

⁵⁴ Isocrates, *Phil.* 5.33; Sometimes, brief genealogical accounting helps situate a link between successors to the throne, see Plutarch, *Ag. Cleom.* 3. Lineages and ancestry were also important for biographers as they pointed out the passing along of physical traits, see Suetonius, *Nero* 1, family characteristics could be passed down; Plutarch, *Mar.* 46, behavior can affect how someone is understood in relation to their ancestors.

⁵⁵ For example, the Persian king Darius supported his kingship by emphasizing his lineage through the kingly line on the Behistun inscription of Darius I. See Wilson, "Between 'Azel' and 'Azel'", 13–14; Accounting for the differences in their genealogical claims. See, Water, "Cyrus and the Achaemenids," 91–102.

⁵⁶ *The Behistan Inscription of King Darius*. Translation by Herbert Cushing Tolman (Nashville, TN: Vanderbilt University, 1908); Wilson, *Genealogy and History in the Biblical World*, 56–136; Valk "The Origins of the Assyrian King List," 1–17; Hartman, "Some Thoughts on the Sumerian King List and Genesis 11B," 25–32; Malamat, "King Lists of the Old Babylonian Period and Biblical Genealogies," 163–73. See also, Wilson, *Genealogy and History in the Biblical World*, 56–136; Granerød, "By the Favour of Ahuramazda I am King," 455–480; Finn, "God's, Kings, Men," 219–275.

This king list and lineage are arranged in ascending order, starting with the individual in question and tracing back to the ancestor, rather than descending from the ancestor to the individual. Interestingly, this genealogy moves backwards from the person in question to Achaemenes, the eponymous ancestor of the Achaemenid dynasty.⁵⁷ Darius, as the central figure of the genealogy, connects his lineage all the way back to Achaemenes. According to Darius, the Zoroastrian god Ahura Mazda granted him the kingdom, signifying divine ordination from the supreme deity. This divine lineage strengthens Darius' claim to power, emphasizing that his authority is sanctioned by the gods.

When evaluating the Assyrian king list, Robert Wilson focuses on the genealogical fluidity of Enlil-Nasir II. In doing so, he makes the case that the king list rearranges the genealogy to reflect the actual royal succession, serving a political function in portraying the progression of Assyrian kingship rather than an accurate biological record.⁵⁸ Continuing his analysis of genealogical fluidity, he evaluates Amorite lineages and asserts, "Conflicting genealogies may all be recognized as accurate when their individual functions are understood."⁵⁹ This means that the purpose of the genealogies, such as supporting claims of rulership were held as primary indicators of function. Genealogical accuracy could be adjusted for the greater purposes of kingly succession, like in these cases. Wilson then examines genealogies in the Hebrew Bible and makes the claim that these were used to support monarchical claims, but after Solomon, this function waned as kingly rule appealed to divine appointment.⁶⁰ The overarching purpose of these ancient Western Asian king lists is to justify the ruler's authority, with the ascending order of the genealogy designed to place emphasis on the first individual in the line.

5.3.3.4 Summary

⁵⁷ Other texts have this feature, such as Manetho's *Aegyptiaca*; Luke's genealogy; 2 Esdras 1.

⁵⁸ Wilson, "Between 'Azal' and 'Azal'" 14.

⁵⁹ Wilson, "Between 'Azal' and 'Azal'" 17.

⁶⁰ Wilson, "Between 'Azal' and 'Azal'" 18.

Genealogies appear across various genres of literature. In mythographies, they serve as connections between the present and the mythic past, with divine lineages framing relationships to the current order. These genealogies also provide meaning and explanations for human existence. In biographies, genealogical lines help establish an individual's prestige and virtue, often supporting their right to rule or helping to explain their mythic or notable accomplishments. In ancient Western Asian king lists, genealogies predominantly link kings to deities, reinforcing their claim to authority and legitimacy. All of these lists have in common the idea that they are related to the idea of shared descent and a common history. Genealogies have the power to unite people groups and offer a communal sense of identity.

5.4 Claims of Ancestry or Shared Kinship

5.4.1 Herodotus

Claims to shared ancestry occur when an individual, family, or ethno-political entity asserts a connection to a common ancestor, whether real or purported, with another individual or family. This phenomenon is frequently discussed in historiography, where in one notable story in Herodotus, Xerxes sent a messenger to Argos saying,

Men of Argos, this is the message to you of king Xerxes. Perses our forefather had, as we believe, Perseus son of Danaë for his father, and Andromeda daughter of Cepheus or his mother; if that be so, then we are descended from your nation. Wherefore in all right and reason neither should we march against the land of our forefathers, nor should you become our enemies by aiding others, nor do aught but abide by yourselves in peace (Godley, LCL).⁶¹

Xerxes seeks to leverage a shared kinship between the Persians and the Argives to convince the latter to remain neutral in his conquest of Hellenic lands and cites a purported ancestral connection

⁶¹ Herodotus, *Hist.* 7.150. for other examples, see Thucydides, *Hist.* 1.26.3–4; 1.95.1; 4.61.2; 5.104; 6.6.1–2; 6.16.5; 6.20.3; 6.50.4; 6.76.2; 6.88.8; 7.57.1; 7.58.3–4; 8.101.3. Dio Cassius, *Hist.* 1.5.6; 9.40.11; 36.9.2; 38.9.1; 41.8.3; 41.53.1; 41.58.3; 46.52.2; 46.56.3; 48.5.2–3.

between the two groups.⁶² What is particularly fascinating about this is how a geo-political entity could strategically use claims of shared ancestry to forge alliances.⁶³

Another interesting instance in Herodotus involves Croesus, the son of Alyattes and king of the Lydians, who decided to attack the Persians based on the famous Delphi Oracle that predicted he would destroy a great empire.⁶⁴ After receiving the oracle, Croesus pondered which Hellenic peoples would make the best allies. His choices were the Lacedaemonians (Spartans) of the Dorians and the Athenians of the Ionians, who were considered the “foremost/preeminent” (προκεκριμένα) peoples of ancient times.⁶⁵ What is particularly noteworthy here is that Herodotus regarded the Ionians as Pelasgian, or autochthonous, meaning they were “from the land” and not migrants from other regions.⁶⁶ Thus, Croesus’ rationale for choosing these allies was rooted in their ancestral backgrounds, which conveyed ideas of trustworthiness, reliability, and strength.

As seen in some of the examples above, appeals to lineage can also confer status, as evidenced by the Cappadocian kings in Diodorus Siculus’ *The Library of History*, who were purportedly related to Cyrus.⁶⁷ However, beyond these specific geo-political relationships, Cyrus’ upbringing offers another intriguing perspective on ancestry. Raised outside the royal family due to threats on his life by the reigning king, Cyrus’ childhood was marked by obscurity. Despite this, he could not help but embody his noble lineage through his actions.⁶⁸ What is fascinating about this story is that

⁶² Herodotus, *Hist.* 7.150.

⁶³ Mixed marriages could be forms of bonds and agreements (Herodotus, *Hist.* 1.74, 75). See also Anhalt, “Polycrates and His Brothers” :139–52. This article highlights the disposition of Herodotus who describes Greek fraternal relationships positively, and non-Greek as negatively (violently), outside of a couple examples, particularly, Polycrates.

⁶⁴ Herodotus, *Hist.* 1.53. Ironically, this was his empire.

⁶⁵ Herodotus, *Hist.* 1.56.

⁶⁶ Herodotus, *Hist.* 1.56. In describing how there were distinctions between peoples and attempting to understand how people migrated to where they lived, Greeks attempts to explain some by mythological origins. If a people are rooted and went back far enough, the idea was that they were autochthonous—or in their parlance—they were from the soil. See Pindar, *Ol.* 9.40–46; Apollodorus, *Lib.* 1.7.2; 3.4.1; 3.8.1; Herodotus, *Hist.* 1.56; Ovid, *Metam.* 1.75–88; Pausanias, *Descr.* 10.4.4; Plato, *Menex.* 237b–239a; Euripides, *Bacch.* 263–65, 538–44, 1015; Ovid *Metam.* 1.30–38; Josephus, *Ant.* 2.67; Philo, *Virt.* 37; Strabo *Geogr.* 7.7.2.

⁶⁷ Diodorus Siculus, *Lib.* 31.19. This ties Cyrus to one of the seven Persians who assassinated Magus, the usurper (Herodotus, *Hist.* 3.61ff). It is also notable, that Diodorus Siculus writes that the last of these kings, tied to Cyrus, renewed a treaty of friendship with Rome, Diodorus Siculus, *Lib.* 3.20.8.

⁶⁸ Herodotus, *Hist.* 1.107–114. Astygates gives his daughter Mandane to Cambyses I because of a dream warning of her offspring. The child was Cyrus, and was surreptitiously given to Mitridates, a shepherd and his wife since

it implies an inherent belief in the inescapable influence of one's lineage, suggesting that people cannot act beyond what their ancestry dictates.

5.4.2 1 Maccabees, the Jews, and Spartans

1 Maccabees provides a fascinating case study for examining claims of shared ancestry and the adaptability of these claims. In one scene, Jonathan, the brother of Judah Maccabee and his successor, sends letters through emissaries to both Rome and Sparta in an effort to strengthen their ties, specifically “to confirm and renew friendship” (1 Macc 12:2, 10).⁶⁹ In his letter, Jonathan references and attaches a copy of an earlier communication sent by King Areus (1 Macc 12:5–18, 19–23).⁷⁰ In this copied letter, King Areus mentions a document that asserts their shared descent from Abraham (1 Macc 12:21). The implication of this claim, at least in this initial discourse, is the desire for mutual exchange, such as sharing possessions like cattle and property between the two kingdoms (1 Macc 12:23).

After Jonathan's death, both Rome and Sparta reportedly send their regards. When Sparta responds, they mention the earlier ambassadors from the Judean kingdom, noting that they have officially documented and stored this information (1 Macc 14:20–23).⁷¹ In turn, Rome sends their official support and instructs the surrounding kings and territories not to act aggressively toward the Judean kingdom.⁷² This is significant because it outlines the type of support a kingdom might receive from powerful alliances.⁷³ While Sparta shows a willingness to share resources, Rome

Harpagus, Astyages' general, could not kill the infant. When Cyrus was ten years old and playing with the other children, he started ordering them around, when a boy of a noblemen refused, he ordered the other boys to punish him. In his way, Cyrus was said to reveal who he was.

⁶⁹ The principal letters come via Maccabees, but Josephus has also reproduced this, Josephus, *Ant.* 13.163–70 Jonathan renewing the treaty with Rome and the letter to the Spartans. This occurred in or around 143BCE. 1 Macc 12:7–8. The Areus in question is Areus I who reigned in the mid third century BCE. The priest, Onias is most likely Onias I. Thus, this letter came in the early third century. See, *Ant.* 11.347.

⁷⁰ Cf. Josephus *Ant.* 12.225–227.

⁷¹ 2 Macc 5:9 references these overtures. See, Josephus, *Ant.* 12.225–27. Letter of Areus to Onias I.

⁷² 1 Macc 15:15–24.

⁷³ Note that both Sparta and Rome are typically associated together in 1 Maccabees as if they were power benefactors to the Judean kingdom.

offers a form of defense against potentially hostile forces in the region, providing both political and military backing.

This is a fascinating example of geopolitical powers asserting a shared ancestry. But what would motivate such an overture? Several explanations have been proposed for these passages in *Maccabees*. This correspondence likely arose from shared experiences between Judeans and Spartans, as Hellenistic education replaced both Lycurgus' laws in Sparta and traditional learning in Jerusalem.⁷⁴ Another scholar suggests that the Spartan resistance to foreign enemies in defense of their independence appealed to the conservative and patriotic members of the Judean elite.⁷⁵ Another theory posits that the correspondence was meant to emphasize Jewish political identity in the Hellenistic world.⁷⁶ An earlier interpretation argued that the Spartan king sought to reestablish Sparta's international prestige by forging this connection.⁷⁷ Alternatively, one posits the context of this correspondence may be related to the First Syrian War and the situation in Cyrene.⁷⁸ Some scholars argue that the connection is purely fictional.⁷⁹ Another scholar argues that the fictional Spartan-Jewish affiliation, like the claim linking Herakles to Abraham's lineage, serves to showcase Jewish prestige.⁸⁰ Regardless of the veracity of such claims, the rationale for such genealogical maneuvering lies in the relational reciprocity between the people.

⁷⁴ Katzoff, "Jonathan and Late Sparta," 485–89. He states, "Jonathan's assertion of kinship with Sparta, I suggest, was motivated, at least in part, by the desire to identify one feature common to the educational system of each—their non-Hellenic character" (488).

⁷⁵ Katell Berthelot, "A New Perspective on the Kinship between Jews and Spartans: The Issue of Ancestral Territory," in *A Vision of the Days: Studies in Early Jewish History and Historiography: in Honor of Daniel R. Schwartz*. Supplements to the Journal for the Study of Judaism 213 (Leiden: Brill, 2024), 359–375.

⁷⁶ Gruen, "The Purported Jewish-Spartan Affiliation," in *Transitions to Empire*, 254–69.

⁷⁷ Ginsburg, "Sparta and Judea," 119.

⁷⁸ Amitay, "The Correspondence in *I Maccabees* and the Possible Origins of the Judeo-Spartan Connection," 79–105.

⁷⁹ See, Gruen, *The Construct of Identity in Hellenistic Judaism*, 153–66. For a similar perspective, see also Cardauns, "Juden und Spartaner": 317–324. Here he expresses much doubt about the three letters with the first being authentic, but does not rule out actual diplomatic relations between Sparta and Jonathan; Bremmer, "Spartans and Jews: Abraham's Cousins?" In *Abraham, the Nations, and the Hagarites; Amitay, The Correspondence in I Maccabees and the Possible Origins of the Judeo-Spartan Connection*, 79–105. Amitay argues for complete authenticity.

⁸⁰ Gruen, *The Construct of Identity in Hellenistic Judaism*, 164. What is worthy to note is that Eric Gruen proposes that the objective of such claims by the Jews amounts to reductionism, which limits their potential motivations to one facet. So it is appropriate to have a more nuanced and broader scope of possibilities for their motivations in place.

It is indeed remarkable that the Spartans, with their storied and prestigious history, would affirm this kind of relationship. It seems unlikely that Sparta, a powerful and self-reliant city-state, would seek assistance from a distant and relatively obscure principality under Ptolemaic rule. Moreover, if they needed military aid, they could have pursued more direct means without resorting to the claim of shared ancestry.⁸¹ Gruen states,

Little practical advantage would accrue from connection with a relatively weak Hellenic state that might embroil the Jews in distant affairs. Certainly they could expect no Spartan assistance in the Near East! Efforts to find political motives underlying the putative συγγένεια seem doomed to failure.⁸²

Moreover, when Rome sent a letter to the surrounding kingdoms and territories, Sparta was included (1 Macc 15:22). As Gruen points out, this supports the idea that the correspondence with Sparta may have been fictive, as it suggests that Sparta was not in communication with the Judean kingdom.⁸³ However, regardless of whether the correspondence was genuine or fabricated, it clearly shows how geopolitical entities might use such claims of shared ancestry to establish an alliance, like in other examples.

Regardless of its accuracy, the claim of Spartan-Jewish kinship serves a clear purpose, particularly in genealogy and kinship ties. While Sparta offers no military aid, the Judeans explicitly avoid requesting it, instead seeking support from Rome (1 Macc 12:14–16). This suggests that Rome was valued for military power, while Sparta's connection provided social or economic benefits, reflecting Rome's rising dominance and Sparta's lingering prestige.⁸⁴ The correspondence between Judeans and Spartans centers on reciprocity, with Sparta affirming shared kinship, offering

⁸¹ Gruen, *The Purported Jewish-Spartan Affiliation*, 257.

⁸² Gruen, *The Purported Jewish-Spartan Affiliation*, 258.

⁸³ Gruen, *The Purported Jewish-Spartan Affiliation*, 258.

⁸⁴ Gruen, *The Purported Jewish-Spartan Affiliation*, 259. He states this about the willingness to offer shared resources, “No Spartan would have expressed himself in that manner. More telling still is the tone of Jonathan’s missive, which has not received adequate emphasis in modern scholarship. Far from petitioning for Spartan aid, the letter underscores Jewish primacy.” This is because of offering regular sacrifices to them, acting as benefactors.

resources (but not military aid), and Rome providing support. This kinship, linked to Abraham, was expressed through sacrifices, prayers, and resource-sharing (though unverified). Gruen argues that Jewish sacrifices signified benefaction and primacy over Sparta, but under Roman rule, enforced Jewish sacrifices suggests fealty rather than dominance.⁸⁵

5.4.3 Josephus

Josephus frequently references genealogies, using them to frame narratives, provide moral instruction, and negotiate identity.⁸⁶ He presents Herod's lineage to highlight God's greatness and illustrate moral lessons.⁸⁷ Similarly, in *Life*, he asserts his own prestigious ancestry, linking himself to both priestly and royal heritage.⁸⁸ He begins his autobiography by asserting, "My family is not insignificant," and claims that linking his lineage to the priesthood signifies "prestige" (λαμπρότης).⁸⁹ To further elevate this distinction, he also states that his mother's side of the family has royal ancestry.⁹⁰ He supports this claim with public records, using genealogy to defend his status and counter critics.⁹¹

⁸⁵ Gruen, *The Purported Jewish-Spartan Affiliation*, 259.

⁸⁶ Josephus also has numerous genealogies or genealogical centric lists. It is also the case that many people are referred to as the "son of" then listing their immediate relative. Those listed are those that are actual genealogies or lists that are genealogically centric, with some references to those as the "son of" in the case where they are deemed relevant in some way, though not exactly in the same way as the former two. Josephus names his own priestly progenitors, *Life* 1.3–6; *Ant.* 1.60–66; 1.83–87; 1.109, 122–153; 1.205–6; 1.252–54; 2.228–231; 3:105–6; *Eli* 5.361–62; 7.205–6; 7.243–44; 7.307–317; 8.11–13; 8.287–89; 10.100–4; 11.68–74; 11.277; 13.259–266; 14.144–147; 14.148–153; 14.222; 14.238–41; 17.12–18; 17.19–22; 18:130–142.

⁸⁷ Josephus, *Ant.* 18.127ff.

⁸⁸ Josephus, *Life*, 1.3–6. Josephus calls his genealogy γένους διαδοχήν, or strictly, "the succession of our genealogy." Compare this with Matthew and Luke's account, Matthew 1:1, Βίβλος γενέσεως Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ υἱοῦ Δαυὶδ υἱοῦ Ἀβραάμ. Or "The book/record of the genealogy of Jesus Christ, the son of David, son of Abraham." Luke does not label his genealogy, but transitions after the baptism and right before his ministry (Luke 3:23).

⁸⁹ Josephus, *Life*, 1.1.

⁹⁰ Josephus, *Life*, 1.1. In other literature, if both parents were connected to deities or famous ancestry it added even more weight on ones' claims, see Suetonius, *Jul.* 6.1.

⁹¹ Josephus, *Life*, 1.6. Cf. *War* 6.281–82, where the temple is razed to the ground. Pnina Stern argues that this is not to be taken literally, but rhetorically. See Pnina Stern, "'Life of Josephus': The Autobiography of Flavius Josephus," *JSJ* 41 (2010): 63–93.

As Josephus highlights his unique dual ancestry to his detractors, this lineage forms the foundation for several claims he makes. In *Against Apion*, Josephus argues that he is a faithful recorder of history, based on a variety of criteria. He begins his defense at a macro level, casting doubt on the Greeks' ability to accurately preserve history, given that other cultures and civilizations predate Greek civilization.⁹² He then reinforces his argument about the inferiority of Greek historiography, although he acknowledges that Greeks excel in language and composition.⁹³

Josephus further argues that Jewish priests, along with the priestly class, were responsible for recording history, and that the Jewish Scriptures attest to their historical veracity. To substantiate his trustworthiness as a historian, Josephus appeals to his own pure and priestly lineage.⁹⁴ In this way, the purity of his religious ancestry serves as a foundation for the credibility of his literary endeavors.⁹⁵ A further subtle yet significant point in Josephus' defense of his lineage is his distinction between Jewish and Greek culture. He argues that Greek culture has mixed with other peoples throughout history, such as the Egyptians and Phoenicians, while Jewish culture and ethnicity have remained pure.⁹⁶ This appeal to purity implicitly casts doubt on the Greeks' ability to accurately record history, which is further reinforced by Josephus' ongoing criticism of Greek historical writing.

Although Greek biographies did not generally focus on defending the lineage of individuals or addressing succession, Roman biographies did so when necessary.⁹⁷ Pnina Stern argues that much

⁹² Josephus, *Ag. Ap.* 1.2. Josephus also attacks the oral tradition of Homer's work as later than the events of Troy to substantiate this idea.

⁹³ Josephus, *Ag. Ap.* 1.5. When Josephus argues that he is a trustworthy historian, he explicitly mentions how he learned Greek (Josephus, *Ag. Ap.* 1.9). He also holds the same criteria of Mantheo. Mantheo both learned Greek and criticized Herodotus which are key reasons why he should be trusted (Josephus, *Ag. Ap.* 1.12 cf. Mantheo, *Egy.* 2.73–74).

⁹⁴ Josephus, *Ag. Ap.* 1.7. Other criteria for trustworthiness include eyewitness verification and especially eyewitness individuals of high status (Josephus, *Ag. Ap.* 1.9).

⁹⁵ Like Josephus, the Jewish Scriptures also possess genealogies linking people to specific jobs and offices based on their ancestry, 1 Chron 9:23.

⁹⁶ Josephus, *Ag. Ap.* 1.12.

⁹⁷ Shaye J.D. Cohen, *Josephus in Galilee and Rome: His Vita and Development as a Historian* (Leiden: Brill, 2002), 107.

of Josephus' actions can be explained by his non-Jewish audience.⁹⁸ She writes, "The reason for Josephus' mention of his mother can be found in Roman culture, where the mother's origins and ancestry are cited with respect."⁹⁹ When Josephus highlights his father's character and birth, he is appealing to the commonly held expectation that characteristics and virtues were passed down through ancestry. Stern also suggests that Jewish audiences would not need to know Josephus' priestly lineage, while Roman audiences would ascribe importance to such figures.¹⁰⁰ Similarly, Shaye Cohen argues that he intended to communicate to his Jewish audience that he was a Pharisee and a strict observer of Torah.¹⁰¹ However, these perspectives seem overstated, as it assumes a strict dichotomy between Jewish and Roman expectations, as if Josephus could only be signaling to one audience or the other and seems more likely that he had both audiences in mind.

In any case, Josephus is using common cultural and religious signifiers to convey several key insights about himself to his audience(s). Regarding his priestly lineage, he traces it back to his great-grandfather Simon, who was a contemporary of Simon the high priest. This recording does not seem haphazard. Reaching back to the context of national pride during the Maccabean resistance through his bloodline may have been purposeful for his Jewish audience. It could implicitly suggest that just as the spirit of resistance prevailed in the face of Seleucid occupation, it could also prevail against Roman hegemony. Alternatively, in a more convoluted manner, Josephus may have been signaling to his Roman audience that although his lineage is tied to the Maccabean revolt, his endeavors are now aligned with the Romans. Or by defending his lineage and pedigree, he may have been attempting to placate his Roman audience, positioning himself as a representative of the Jewish cause.

5.4.4 The *Aeneid*

⁹⁸ Stern, "Life of Josephus," 70–73.

⁹⁹ Stern, "Life of Josephus," 72.

¹⁰⁰ Stern, "Life of Josephus," 70–73.

¹⁰¹ Cohen, *Josephus in Galilee and Rome*, 144–51, esp. 147.

Vergil's *Aeneid* contains other ways in which ancestry and ethnicity are employed and negotiated.¹⁰² Aeneas' destiny as the son of Anchises and Aphrodite ties Rome to a broader mythological framework, providing readers with a stabilizing origin story amid a volatile world. Furthermore, like the correlation of building projects between the *Aeneid* and Augustus' endeavors mentioned above, Vergil prepares the readers for a direct comparison between Augustus and Aeneas.¹⁰³ In the *Aeneid*, the genealogical connection between them is consistently outlined.¹⁰⁴

Vergil reinforces the link between Aeneas and Romulus by renaming Rhea Silvia as Ilia, evoking "Ilium" (Troy) and the Trojan heroes Ilus and Ascanius. As Kimberly Bell notes, this transformation unites Aeneas and Romulus as Troy's founders while tying Romulus more directly to Trojan lineage.¹⁰⁵ This fluid genealogy adapts lineages to the literary narrative, linking Romulus more directly to Trojan heroes and aligning Augustus' Roman lineage with Aeneas. The Julian connection to Iulus is made explicit: "From this noble line shall be born the Trojan Caesar... a Julius, name descended from great Iulus!" (Fairclough, LCL).¹⁰⁶ Tacitus later reinforces this by tracing Nero's ancestry back to Aeneas.¹⁰⁷

Vergil alters the origins of Dardanus and Iasius from Arcadia to Italy, merging traditions to establish Aeneas as the ancestor of the Roman people.¹⁰⁸ This overarching narrative weaves together themes

¹⁰² Vergil, *Aen.* 6.28; 7.55–58; 8.36–37; 8.115; 8.510–15; 10.145–50; 10.198–202. For example, Dido, in response to Aeneas' decision to leave and insults him by saying "False one, no goddess was your mother, nor was Dardanus founder of your line..." Vergil, *Aen.* 4.365–6 (Fairclough, LCL). It is astonishing that her insult was meant to cast doubt on his genealogical claims.

¹⁰³ Vergil, *Aen.* 6.788–97.

¹⁰⁴ Vergil, *Aen.* 6.648–50; 6.778. Cf. Livy *Hist.* 1.3.10; Bell, "Translatio and the Constructs of a Roman Nation in Virgil's *Aeneid*," 18.

¹⁰⁵ Bell, "Translatio and the Constructs of a Roman Nation in Virgil's *Aeneid*," 18. The shifting genealogies are further exemplified as Ascanius's surname changes from Ilus to Iulus. She cites citing *Aen.* 1.267–8. See also, 12.110, 185. Ascanius 1.645, 659; 9.636, 646; 12.165–67.

¹⁰⁶ Vergil, *Aen.* 1.286–88, *nascetur pulchra Troianus origine Caesar, imperium Oceano, famam qui terminet astris, Iulius, a magno demissum nomen Iulo.*

¹⁰⁷ Tacitus, *Ann.* 12.58.

¹⁰⁸ Vergil, *Aen.* 3.90–100; 3.102–5; 3.105–10; 3.147–70. See also Diodorus Siculus, *Lib.* 4.75. cf. Dionysius of Halicarnassus, *Ant. rom.* 1.61–62. What is interesting is that the *Aeneid* changes the origins of Dardanus and Iasius, which in essence makes Aeneas return to their homeland, as well as makes them the progenitors of the Trojan/Italians.

of propaganda,¹⁰⁹ Augustus' building projects,¹¹⁰ and Rome's transition from Republic to Empire.¹¹¹ Drawing from earlier Hellenic literature, Vergil strategically portrays Aeneas as returning to his ancestral homeland through Iasius.¹¹² References to various Roman rulers further reinforce their descent from Aeneas or Iulus, ultimately linking the Julian line to a mythic past of deities and heroes like Anchises, Evander, and Aeneas.

This genealogical fluidity is important beyond its utilization in the *Aeneid*, for example, Suetonius records Julius Caesar's funeral oration for his aunt Julia and wife Cornelia, highlighting lineage as a justification for rule.¹¹³ Julia's paternal line descends from deities, while her maternal line traces back to kings, a lineage Caesar claims grants them power over both commoners and rulers.¹¹⁴ This

¹⁰⁹ The political context of Rome's transition from Republic to Empire (27 BCE) raises questions about whether Vergil's *Aeneid* engages with political issues or serves as propaganda. Propaganda, often misunderstood, encompasses various forms of persuasion. See, Jowett and O'Donnell, *Propaganda & Persuasion*; Farron, "Aeneid VI, 826–835 (The Vision of Julius Caesar and Pompey) As an Attack on Augustan Propaganda": 53–68. Farron argues that this section is undermining Augustan propaganda. Relevant are the many sections attacking Julius Caesar, who as Augustus' great-uncle and adoptive father, undermines his claims. This is not to say that it is uniformly negative, there are still positive depictions of Augustus and Rome (p.55). For other literature and Augustan propaganda, cf. Ovid's *Fasti* and *Metamorphoses*.

¹¹⁰ Patavium (Vergil, *Aen.* 1.247–49); Rome (1.275–78; 8.313); Carthage (1.418–449); Aeneadae in Thrace (3.13–69), Pergamum in Crete (3.132–39), and Acesta in Sicily (5.746–61); Pergamus (3.333–51); Procas, Capys, Numitor, and Silvius Aeneas will eventually build Nomentum, Gabii, Fidenae, Collatia, Pometii, Fort Inuus, Bola, and Cora (6.760–76); Evander builds Pallanteum (8.355–58). See also, Morwood, "Aeneas, Augustus, and the Theme of the City": 212–23; see also, Pandey, "Reading Rome from the Farther Shoe," 85–116. Pandey explores this Augustan ideological expression through the building references in chapter 6. Additionally, we know that Vergil said this about Augustus "Yet anon I will gird me to sing Caesar's fiery fights and bear his name in story" (Vergil, *Georg.* 3.47. See also 2.170; 3.16, 40–49).

¹¹¹ After Julius Caesar's assassination (44BCE), and the subsequent civil war and battle of Actium (31BCE), heavy taxes, destroyed countryside, Augustus's rise to power as *Princeps*, and the overall weight of war, were such that Leendert Weeda states, "These events caused many leading families in the Republic to feel deep resentment towards Augustus and to resist the changes fiercely." See, Weeda, *Vergil's Political Commentary*, 1. Weeda cites, Tacitus, *Ann.* 1.9–1.10; and Suetonius *Aug.* 14–18 as evidence for those that openly resisted Augustus. But Weeda continues, "In general, however, the rule of Augustus was received favourably" (p. 3). For larger section on the context from which Vergil was writing, see Weeda, *Vergil's Political Commentary*, 22–53.

¹¹² Homer, *Il.* 2.819–23. Even the form and structure of the *Aeneid* mimics some of the earlier Hellenic literature as well. Solmsen, "The World of the Dead in Book 6 of the Aeneid," 31–41. Solmsen interrogates the claim of its connection to Homeric literature; for the development of the Aeneas tradition considering the historical and textual difficulties, see Horsfall, "The Aeneas-Legend and the 'Aeneid,'" 8–17. For other literature that references the events in the *Aeneid*, see Livy, *Hist.* 1.1; for comparisons between the Vulcan shield, see the shield of Achilles, Homer, *Il.* 18; Suetonius, *Galb.* 2. Following Nero, Galba displayed a family tree in his hall which showed his lineage going all the way back to Jupiter.

¹¹³ Suetonius, *Jul.* 6.1.

¹¹⁴ The justification to rule is closely aligned with one's purported ancestry. This is also common among wealthy Roman families. Vergil among others also connects families in his time with Trojan descent (Vergil, *Aen.* 5.116–23). The Memmii, Sergii, and Cluentius. Some families connected themselves to the story of Hercules visiting

genealogical framing aligns with broader myth-making, where epic literature situates Rome's present within a historical and mythic past. Genealogy here is fluid, what matters is not Augustus' literal descent from Aeneas but the perception of his connection to a heroic and divine lineage.

5.4.4.1 Summary

Numerous claims to shared ancestry occurs when an individual, family, or ethno-political entity asserts a connection to a common ancestor, whether real or purported, with another group. For example, in Herodotus, Xerxes sought to leverage a shared kinship between the Persians and the Argives for them to stay neutral in his attempted conquest of Hellenic lands. In 1 Maccabees, the Jews propose that they are related to the Spartans for geo-political leverage and reciprocity. In Josephus, he comments on his genealogy to placate his Roman audience while simultaneously appealing to his Jewish audience. In the *Aeneid*, we see the rooting of people back into a mythic past where they can make sense of their current circumstances through the lens of a national epic. In all, claims of ancestry can be fluid and utilized for a wide variety of purposes.

5.5 Conclusion

(1) Like in the case of the Hellenic and Roman catalogues and lists, they shed light on the mixedness of ethnic people groups. In the *Aeneid*, lineages, catalogues, and lists make the case that the contemporary peoples are made of different people groups. Retrospectively, they can see the congealing of how a people came to exist while simultaneously offering an explanation as to the diversity within their own contexts. These lists can be instantiations of a burgeoning construction of a people or people groups, like in the case of Homer's *Catalogue of Ships*.

the site of Rome, see Wiseman, "Legendary Genealogies in Late-Republican Rome,"¹⁵⁴; Vergil, *Aen.* 1.1–5. Fairclough notes, "Many of the great senatorial families of Rome, including the Julii, claimed descent from the families of Alba Longa" (n1). These rulers and families are connected to these important lineages, but it is also the case that the other Latins in the story have distinguished lineages. Even Turnus, the enemy of Aeneas is described as having a long and lofty ancestry (Vergil, *Aen.* 7.55–58).

(2) Lists and genealogies define relationships between people groups, either uniting or distinguishing them. In Genesis, kinship ties trace common ancestry, while Hellenic genealogies link identities to Hellen. Similarly, in the *Aeneid*, Aeneas unites the Romans as their shared ancestor, just as the Julian line is linked to Iasius. Many rulers trace lineage to divine ancestors like Auramazda, Zeus, or Apollo. Genealogies shape ethnic discourse by establishing boundaries and adapting to social shifts. As Jonathan Hall argues, their flexibility allows for evolving identities, demonstrating the fluidity of kinship and ethnicity.¹¹⁵ Like in the case of the early Hellenic genealogies, genealogical references in the *Aeneid*, or historiographical texts, references to shared kinship can adjust or readjust aspects of ethnicity vis-à-vis other groups. The malleability of these lineages reveals the pliable nature of kinship identification, and therefore of race/ethnicity.

(3) Genealogies and kinship ties often serve geopolitical purposes, as seen in appeals for military aid or political support across Greek, Roman, and Jewish contexts. In 1 Maccabees, shared ancestry through Abraham underpins alliances with Rome and Sparta, while Xerxes' failed appeal to Argos relied on a common lineage from Perseus. Such connections, whether acknowledged or rejected, function primarily as diplomatic tools rather than literal biological claims, emphasizing shared identity as a basis for political advantage.

(4) Genealogies often serve to legitimize rulers by linking them to esteemed ancestors or deities. Augustus' descent from Aeneas in the *Aeneid* reinforced his authority, just as Darius traced his lineage to Auramazda to justify his throne. Such records, whether in Persian inscriptions, Assyrian king lists, or Galba's display of his ancestry to Jupiter, highlight the importance of lineage in securing social status and political legitimacy. This practice, whether subtle or explicit, underscores the broader function of genealogy in reinforcing power and authority.

(5) Lists, catalogues, and genealogies help structure the created order, linking humanity to the divine and shaping religious and cultural worldviews. Mythographies like Apollodorus' *Library* present creation through genealogical succession, where divine lineages frame the universe's origins. This framework provides stability in an uncertain world and

¹¹⁵ Hall, *Hellenicity*, 27.

reinforces identity by rooting individuals in a distant past. Just as Croesus valued Hellenic autochthony in forming alliances, tracing ancestry to the divine pantheon conferred legitimacy and primacy, shaping perceptions of people groups beyond mere migration histories.

(6) Lineage serves as a form of communication, as seen in Josephus' *Life* and other biographical accounts. Josephus emphasizes his dual ancestry to assert credibility, while others use noble lineage to enhance status or a humble background to highlight personal achievement. Genealogies frequently appear in biographies, underscoring their importance in shaping a person's narrative. By framing one's life within a family history, genealogies provide context for accomplishments and challenges, offering insight into how heritage influences identity and success.

Chapter 6: Genealogies in the Gospels

6.1 Introduction

In the biblical text, lineages, genealogies, registries, and catalogues serve various purposes, including connecting individuals to specific places, counting populations, and providing metrics for categorizing peoples.¹¹⁶ New Testament genealogies are deeply connected to Jewish Scripture, with many of lineages going back to these texts.¹¹⁷ It is essential that genealogies and other literary forms be understood within their historical and cultural context. Even something as simple as recognizing a name in the genealogies evokes a vast archive of stories and events from Jewish Scripture, offering a biblical history through which to interpret these lineages.

Although New Testament genealogies shared considerable overlap with Jewish Scripture, other notable connections to Greco-Roman genealogies also existed. The scholarly effort to compare biblical genealogies with those in other literary traditions has been relatively sparse. One significant early attempt to address this was Rodney T. Hood's chapter, "The Genealogies of Jesus."¹¹⁸ While Hood's work remains important, it was published over fifty years ago and contains some categories that are outdated.¹¹⁹ While there have been significant studies on biblical

¹¹⁶ Gen 4:1–2, 17–26. The latter is considered by one scholar to be an "anti-genealogy," since it ironically connects Cain to Lamech, see R. B. Robinson, "Literary Functions of the Genealogies of Genesis," 600 n8; Gen 5:1 MT, and the "written record of Adam" (סֵפֶר הַיְלֵדָה אָדָם) specifically 5:1–32, which outlines the genealogy of Adam to Noah; 6:9–10; 9:17–29; see also, 10:1–32; 11:10–32; 19:36–38; 22:20–24; 25:1–6; 25:12–26; 25:19–20; 29:31–30:24; 35:23–26; 36:1–43; 46:8–27; Exod 6:14–25; Joshua 7:1; Ruth 4:18–22; Zeph 1:1; 1 Chron 1–9; 2 Chron 11:18–21; Ezra 7:1–5; Esth 2:5. There are other lists that are connected to genealogical records like registries: Num 1:1–4:49 the census in Numbers is a derivation of a genealogy; here in the following texts, these census lists are arranged by ancestor; 26; 27:1, Zelophehad's daughters; 3:14–39, 26:1–65; 13:4–15; 1 Chron 9:1–34; 15:3–23; 2 Chron 12:15–16; 17:14–18; 29:12–14; 31:12–17; Ezra 2:1–67; 7:1–6; 8:1–14; 10:18–44; Neh. 7:4–73; Neh 10:1–28; 11:1–12:26. In the NT: 1 Timothy 1:4; Titus 3:9, here they both use the term *γενεαλογία*.

¹¹⁷ I appreciate Raymond Brown's attempt to situate the NT genealogies in context in the ways they resemble genealogies in Hebrew Scripture. It is not his primary purpose in reconciling these genealogies, but I find it to be an especially insightful endeavor. See, Brown, *The Birth of the Messiah*, 66. For other scholarship on genealogies in the OT, see Wilson, *Genealogy and History in the Biblical World*; Wilson, "The Old Testament Genealogies in Recent Research," 169–89. Although at this point it may need updating; Hess, "The Genealogies of Genesis 1–11," 241–254. Hess argues that the OT genealogies are distinctly different than the ANE and Greek genealogies through comparing them.

¹¹⁸ Hood, "The Genealogies of Jesus," in *Early Christian Origins*, 1–15. One earlier 20th century attempt to compare the three periods of fourteen generations to Greco-Roman history counting was, Moore, "Fourteen Generations: 490 Years: An Explanation of the Genealogy of Jesus," 97–103.

¹¹⁹ The categories include: 1) identification; 2) organization; 3) magnification; 4) characterization; 5) qualification; and 6) motivation and inspiration. These categories underscore the overarching relationship that the

genealogies and a wealth of recent research, there remains a noticeable gap in studies comparing biblical genealogies with Greco-Roman ones.¹²⁰

The central presupposition guiding this study is that the function of a genealogy is inseparable from its literary construction and form.¹²¹ Engaging and expanding the work of Robert Belknap, Athena Kirk, Robert Wilson, and Robert Fowler, this guiding principle shapes the conclusions drawn in this study and highlights the idea that genealogies cannot be reduced to a single interpretation. Instead, the varied conclusions aim to demonstrate that genealogies are complex literary constructs, shaped by the concerns and intentions of the authors for distinct purposes. Therefore, the major functions of the genealogies in the Gospels are to: (1) emphasize ethnic identities; (2) explore questions surrounding the inclusion of women, especially Mary, in Matthew's genealogy; (3) highlight adoption and baptism through the inverted structure in Luke's genealogy; and (4) reorganize the concept of universal kinship.

6.2 Ethnic Implications to Matthew's Genealogy

This section evaluates the women in Matthew's genealogy, exploring their inclusion and significance of their ethnic identity. Before delving into the content of the genealogy, however, it is important to address its form. The structure of the genealogy matters because it is embedded within a larger infancy narrative, which in turn is part of the broader Gospel narrative. Scholars have debated the structure of Matthew 1–2 and how it functions in relation to the rest of the Gospel, with some noting the symmetry between the genealogy and the infancy narrative.¹²² While the

genealogies in the Gospels and other literature share, but are ultimately quite general and vague, requiring a fair amount of elaboration.

¹²⁰ Johnson, *The Purpose of the Biblical Genealogies*; Wilson, *Genealogy and History in the Biblical World*. For a very brief list of recent works, see Kennedy, *The Recapitulation of Israel*; Weren, "The Five Women in Matthew's Genealogy," in *Studies in Matthew's Gospel*, 288–305; Doane, "Experiencing a Biblical Self-Consuming Artifact," 115–146; McEntire and Park, "Ethnic Fission and Fusion," 31–47; Clements, *Mothers on the Margin*; Loubser, "Invoking the Ancestors: Some Socio-Rhetorical Aspects of the Genealogies in the Gospels of Matthew and Luke," 127–140.

¹²¹ Wilson, *Genealogy and History in the Biblical World*, 18; Johnson, *The Purpose of the Biblical Genealogies*, ix; Fowler, *Genealogical thinking, Hesiod's Catalogue, and the creation of the Hellenes*, 3.

¹²² Stendahl, "Quis et Unde? An Analysis of Mt 1–2," in *Judentum, Urchristentum, Kirche: Festschrift Für Joachim Jeremias*, 94–105. Or Stendahl, "Quis et Unde? An Analysis of Matthew 1-2," in *The Interpretation of Matthew*, 69–80; Cf. Kingsbury, *Matthew: Structure Christology, Kingdom*; Tatum, "The Origin of Jesus Messiah"

genealogy and infancy narrative are symmetrical, in terms of style, structure, and thematic elements, the inclusion of women in the genealogy is seen by some as a linguistic anomaly.¹²³ Others, however, highlight the congruence between the women. For example, John Heil observes, “The surprising and climactic way that Mary is introduced indicates how she complements the four previous women.”¹²⁴ By emphasizing the congruence among the women, Matthew’s genealogy appears to be symmetrically organized, purposeful, and intentional. This brief structural analysis sets the stage for examining the women in the genealogy.

6.2.1 Women in the Genealogy

Why were Sarah, Rebecca, Rachel, and Leah not included in the genealogy, while Tamar (Matt 1:3), Rahab (Matt 1:5), Ruth (Matt 1:5), and the “wife of Uriah” (Matt 1:6) were?¹²⁵ One scholar suggests that the inclusion of these women highlights their moral dubiousness in order to emphasize Jesus’ role as the Savior from sin.¹²⁶ Another theory posits that these women serve as disruptions in the genealogy, meant to demonstrate that God’s purposes can be fulfilled through

523–35. Tatum’s interlocutors are both Stendahl and Kingsbury; Pizzuto, “The Structural Elegance of Matthew 1–2: A Chiastic Proposal,” 722; For a discussion and new proposal for structuring Matthew’s Gospel, see Weren, *Studies in Matthew’s Gospel*, 13–41; some point out the genealogy and the surrounding narrative serves to establish Jesus as messianic Davidic type, which rewrites Jewish history, see Jones, “Subverting the Textuality of Davidic Messianism: Matthew’s Presentation and the Davidic Title,” 256–272; see also Eloff, “Exile, Restoration and Matthew’s Genealogy of Jesus Ο ΧΡΙΣΤΟΣ,” 75–87. Other scholars examine the structure of the generations within the genealogy, see Carlson, “The Davidic Key for Counting the Generations in Matthew 1:17,” 665–683; Davis, “The Fulfillment of Creation: A Study of Matthew’s Genealogy,” 520–535.

¹²³ Pizzuto, “The Structural Elegance of Matthew 1–2” 729.

¹²⁴ Heil, “The Narrative Role of the Women in Matthew’s Genealogy,” 542–543.

¹²⁵ Quesada “Rebekah: Model matriarch,” 559–564; Teugels, “‘A Strong Woman, Who Can Find?’ 89–104; Daniely, “‘And Sarah Heard it in the Tent Door’ (Genesis 18:10),” 26–42; Jeansonne, *The Women of Genesis: from Sarah to Potiphar’s Wife*. There was also much Rabbinic literature focused on the Matriarchs, see Crane, “Who’s Your Mama Now?” 92–117; Ramon, “The Matriarchs and the Torah of Hesed (Loving-Kindness),” 154–77; Bar-Ilan, “Prayers by Women,” in *Some Jewish Women in Antiquity*, 78–113; Schwartz, “The Virgin Mother Sarah: The Characterization of the Matriarch in Genesis Rabbah,” 63–103. Texts on Tamar, see Philo, *Virtue* 219–222; *Unchangeable* 136–137; *Prelim. Studies* 124–126; *Alleg. Interp.* 3.74; *Flight* 149–50, 154; *Names* 132–136; for texts on Rahab, see Heb 13:1; James 2:25; I Clement 12:1–8; b. Meg 14b–15a; Ruth Rab 2.1. See also, Lyke, “What Does Ruth Have to Do with Rahab?” 262–284.; Rahab and Ruth are shown to be righteous Eccles. Rab. 5.11.1.

¹²⁶ Tamar in Genesis 38; Rahab in Joshua 2 and 6; Ruth in Ruth 3; Bathsheba’s relationship to David (Sam 11–12; and Mary’s unexpected pregnancy in Matthew 1:16–25). Morris, *The Gospel According to Matthew* 23; Weren, *Studies in Matthew’s Gospel*, 107. See also, St. Jerome, *Commentary on Matthew*, 59–60. This interpretation existed as far back as Jerome. The hypothesis that the common feature of the women is their dubious or awkward relationships is critiqued by Ulrich Luz in *Matthaus* 1, 133–34.

outsiders.¹²⁷ Alternatively, their inclusion could be seen as a way to show that they were instrumental in the longevity and existence of Israel.¹²⁸ Some argue that the women represent prototypes for future Gentiles, illustrating God’s plan for inclusivity.¹²⁹ Yet another perspective is that their inclusion was intended to preempt potential Jewish criticisms regarding the birth of Jesus.¹³⁰

While the previous observations are important, what is often overlooked is an analysis of the ethnic dimensions of the women in the genealogy and the structure in which they appear. Structurally, it is significant that the women are never substitutes for the men in the lineage; rather, they are inserted alongside their male counterparts. This side-by-side inclusion suggests that the author of the Gospel sought to minimize the disruption to the traditional male-centered structure of the genealogy.¹³¹ Additionally, the women are grouped together between Judah (Matt 1:3) and David (Matt 1:6), which constitutes a relatively small segment of the lineage. Robert Wilson conveys the significance of segmentation in genealogies, in which members of a genealogy are shown to be related, usually near each other on the lineage.¹³² Although these women are not genealogically related, they are grouped together, which makes their inclusion at the very least purposeful. Notably, no foreign women are included after the early monarchy, particularly following the Babylonian exile, even though mixed marriages did occur during the monarchic period.¹³³

¹²⁷ Senior, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 89. See also, Brown, *The Birth of the Messiah*, 71–74. Brown combines a few couple of these proposals after his insightful summary of the major positions. He states, “The *third proposal*, which has considerable following, finds two common elements in the four OT women, elements that they share with Mary: (a) there is something extraordinary or irregular in their union with the partners—a union which, though it may have been scandalous to outsiders, continued the blessed lineage of the Messiah; (b) the women showed initiative or played an important role in God’s plan and so came to be considered the instrument of God’s providence or of His Holy Spirit”; Luz, *Matthew 1–7*, 85. Another interpretation closely related asserts that the women were included because they are all either non-Jews or possibly so.

¹²⁸ Weren, *Studies in Matthew’s Gospel*, 107–24, more specifically 121–24. For helpful comparisons between the five women, see Weren, “The Five Women in Matthew’s Genealogy”, 288–305.

¹²⁹ Gundry, *Matthew*, 14–19; Um, “Observation of Celestial Phenomena in the Gospel of Matthew”, 151.

¹³⁰ Box, “The Gospel Narratives of the Nativity and the Alleged Influences of Heathen Ideas,” 85–87.

¹³¹ Wilson, *Genealogy and History in the Biblical World*, 18–21.

¹³² Wilson, *Genealogy and History*, 18–21.

¹³³ For example, Solomon married foreign women (1 Kings 11:1–5), Rehoboam, Solomon’s son’s mother was Ammonite (14:21, 31; 2 Chron 12:13), Athaliah, the mother of Ahaziah, was the daughter of Ahab and Jezebel, who was herself descendent from the Sidionites (2 Kings 8:26; 1 Kings 16:31); she was also the mother of Ahaziah (2 Kings 8:25–26). Mixed marriages were also prevalent in exilic and post-exilic times (Ezra 9–10; Neh 13).

Robert Fowler argues that the inclusion of women in patrilineal genealogies within Greco-Roman traditions represents a way to graft different groups onto one another. These women are often positioned at what he terms “fracture points,” which serve to reveal the underlying logic of the genealogical structure.¹³⁴ The process of inclusion within genealogies allows for the blending of lineages, enabling an individual to be associated with a particular lineage that otherwise would not be.¹³⁵ For example, Hercules’ mother, Alkemene, was traditionally more closely linked to Thebes than the Argolid. However, by connecting her to Perseus through her father, Hercules became a Perseid through his mother.¹³⁶ Furthermore, Alkemene’s mother was the daughter of Pelops, and Hercules’ human grandfather, Alkaios, married another daughter of Pelops, making Hercules a Pelopid through maternal descent.¹³⁷ These detours within genealogies illustrate the wide scope of inclusion into ethnic claims and the way people groups can be linked. For instance, Spartans could claim multiple ethnic identities, including Achaean, Pelopid, Tyndarid, Laconian, Heraclid, Perseid, Dorian, and Hellenic.¹³⁸

Mark McEntire and Wongi Park, in their article “Ethnic Fission and Fusion in Biblical Genealogies,” explore the dynamics of identity in genealogies.¹³⁹ They critique the common assumption that ethnicity is solely biological and patrilineal, rooted in birth and descent.¹⁴⁰ This view often anchors ethnicity as innate. Alternatively, they propose focusing on the boundaries that distinguish ethnic groups, such as language, customs, and culture.¹⁴¹ Their work highlights the fluid interplay between these two poles of identity in response to shifting circumstances. Fission in the genealogies of the Hebrew Bible demonstrates the separation of people groups. In contrast, fusion is evident in Matthew’s genealogy, which they argue reflects ethnic inclusivity. They write,

¹³⁴ Fowler, “Genealogical thinking,” 5. Fowler borrows this term from Hall. See Hall, *Ethnic identity in Greek antiquity*, 42.

¹³⁵ Fowler, “Genealogical thinking,” 6.

¹³⁶ Fowler, “Genealogical thinking,” 6.

¹³⁷ Fowler, “Genealogical thinking,” 6.

¹³⁸ Fowler, “Genealogical thinking,” 7.

¹³⁹ McEntire and Park, “Ethnic Fission and Fusion,” 31–47.

¹⁴⁰ McEntire and Park, “Ethnic Fission and Fusion,” 33.

¹⁴¹ McEntire and Park, “Ethnic Fission and Fusion,” 33–34.

“More importantly, Jesus’s ethnic lineage becomes mixed: Jesus is not only part Judean but also part Canaanite, part Hittite, and part Moabite.”¹⁴² This, they suggest, foreshadows the inclusion of Gentiles within Jesus’s lineage and the broader narrative.¹⁴³ Importantly, these scholars show that when an author includes someone deemed to be an “outsider” this indicates a purposeful decision by the author.

The hinge points defined by the inclusion of non-Israelite women in Matthew’s genealogy highlight the mixedness of Jesus’ lineage and resists the notion that there are “pure” genealogies. Tamar, the mother of Zerah and Perez (Matt 1:3), is identified as the daughter of a Canaanite man named Shua, making her Canaanite (Gen 38:2).¹⁴⁴ Consequently, both Zerah and Perez, along with their descendants, were of mixed heritage. Similarly, Rahab, also a Canaanite, is listed as the mother of Boaz (Matt 1:5). This means Boaz was half Canaanite, and he married Ruth, a Moabite. Ruth, as the mother of Obed (Matt 1:5), further emphasizes the mixed nature of this lineage. Obed, as one part of the ancestral line of Jesus, had predominantly non-Israelite parentage. This does not negate his Israelite identity but reveals the biological diversity in ancestry. Obed, of course, became the father of Jesse and the grandfather of David (Ruth 4:22). Although the non-Israelite identities of the women are not explicitly mentioned in the genealogies, from the examination of external sources, it would have been assumed that they are not strictly speaking Israelite.

Bathsheba, or the “wife of Uriah,” the mother of Solomon (Matt 1:6), introduces an additional layer of complexity to the genealogy. Her inclusion is intriguing, as her ethnicity has been the subject of much debate and remains an area of scholarly discussion. Some explicitly identify Bathsheba as a Hittite, which, if accurate, would mean that all the women included in the genealogy besides Mary are Gentiles.¹⁴⁵ This interpretation would further highlight the mixed

¹⁴² McEntire and Park, “Ethnic Fission and Fusion,” 41. They further the ethnic ambiguity by mentioning his conception by the Holy Spirit.

¹⁴³ McEntire and Park, “Ethnic Fission and Fusion”, 41.

¹⁴⁴ There are other traditions that describe her as the daughter of Aram, son of Kemuel (Gen 22:21) from the family of Terach (Jub 41.1; Test. Jud. 10.1.6). For other explanations of her heritage and origin, such as being Jewish or a Gentile from Syria Palestine, see Philo, *Virtues* 220–222; Ps.-Philo, *LAB* 9.5; See Reiss and Zucker, “Righting and Rewriting Genesis 38,” 195–201. Continuing this theme by the same authors, see Reiss and Zucker, “Co-opting the Secondary Matriarchs,” 307–324.

¹⁴⁵ McEntire and Park, “Ethnic Fission and Fusion,” 41.

nature of the Messiah, who did not come from a “pure” lineage but as one who emerges from the “nations”. Such a genealogy would also foreshadow the eventual inclusion of Gentiles into the Christ-believing community. To be fair, one might still arrive at this conclusion even if only most of the women are Gentiles, since Bathsheba’s ethnic identity remains ambiguous.¹⁴⁶ Regardless, the diversity within the genealogy highlights the intricate interplay of ethnic and cultural identities in Jesus’s lineage. In my estimation, most of the women are Gentiles, with Bathsheba’s ethnicity being uncertain, which foreshadows the inclusion of the Gentiles, resists the idea that there is such a thing as a “pure” lineage, and makes the claim that the Messiah himself, is technically mixed. Furthermore, the Gospel writer groups these women together between Judah (Matt 1:3) and David (Matt 1:6), which strategically places them to show that the Davidic line is a mixed lineage, from which the Messiah emerges.

6.2.2 Abraham and Jesus

Further complicating this puzzle is the fusion of women in the genealogy alongside Abraham and David’s own ethnically intriguing backgrounds. Abraham is not technically Jewish or Israelite, as those identities would be anachronistic for his time. Ethnic identification evolves over time due to shifting cultural, political, and linguistic boundaries, and Abraham’s origins reflect this fluidity. Genesis describes Abraham’s family as being from Ur of the Chaldeans (Gen 11:27–32).¹⁴⁷ Additionally, Sarah, his half-sister, and Rachel both come from the same extended family lineage (Gen 20:12; 29:10). By the era of David’s reign, ethnic identity had settled in certain ways, yet David’s ancestry remains ethnically significant. David descended from Obed and Jesse, whose lineage highlights notable intermarriages. The inclusion of Rahab and Ruth in particular underscores the mixed heritage of David, emphasizing the multi-ethnic reality embedded within the genealogy. This clustering of the women serves to accentuate David’s diverse background,

¹⁴⁶ Heckl, “Der Biblische Begründungsrahmen Für Die Jungfrauengeburt Bei Matthäus: Zur Rezeption Von Gen 5,1–6,4 in Mt 1,” 167. Heckle argues that Bathsheba is meant to be read as an Israelite citing 2 Sam 11:3–4. There is also the reference to Ammiel, potentially Bathsheba’s father, in 1 Chron 3:5. This could be a reference to the same man or someone different.

¹⁴⁷ Even Abraham being of the “Chaldeans” might be anachronistic. The chronology of Abraham’s journey to Canaan has an interesting history of interpretation, see Kato, “Ancient Chronology on Abraham’s Departure from Haran,” 178–196; for a very skeptical view of the historicity of the patriarchs, see Thompson, *The Historicity of the Patriarchal Narratives*.

further illuminating the intentionality of the Gospel writer in presenting Jesus as emerging from a lineage that is fundamentally multi-ethnic.

Matthew's genealogy presents Jesus as the culmination of a lineage that traces through Abraham and David, subtly asserting implicit ethnic claims about his identity. While this genealogy could suggest a pure ancestral line linking Jesus to Israel's past, the inclusion of non-Israelite and non-Jewish women complicates that perspective. Their presence highlights the ethnic diversity embedded in Jesus' ancestry, reflecting a broader pattern of inclusion that predates him. Figures like Abraham, who was not technically Jewish, and David, who had mixed ancestry, further reinforce this theme. By incorporating Gentile women, the genealogy signals an ethnic fluidity that anticipates Jesus' universal mission, foreshadowing the inclusion of all nations. Rather than presenting an unbroken lineage of ethnic purity, Matthew's genealogy underscores a heritage that is inherently diverse, shaping a broader understanding of Jesus' identity and the scope of his message.

6.3 What about Mary?

6.3.1 Modern Scholarship

The multi-ethnic implications of Matthew's genealogy invite deeper reflection, especially when considering why every woman in the genealogy, except Mary, is either explicitly Gentile or closely associated with Gentiles.¹⁴⁸ This recurring theme of ethnic diversity raises an intriguing question about Mary's identity. If one were to approach the genealogies with knowledge of the Hebrew Scripture, without presuppositions about Mary's ethnicity, the pattern established by the literary inclusion of gentile women would suggest that Mary's ethnicity is ambiguous within this narrative framework. A few variations in the Greek text highlight the virginal conception,

¹⁴⁸ Bruner, *Matthew: The Christbook: Matthew 1–12*. Vol 1, 121–28; Heil, "The Narrative Role of the Women in Matthew's Genealogy," 538–545; see also Nowell, "Jesus' Great-Grandmothers," 1–15; Weren, "The Five Women in Matthew's Genealogy," 288–305; Luz, *Matthew 1–7: A Commentary*, 83–85; Smit, "Something about Mary?," 191–207; Schaberg, "Feminist Interpretations of the Infancy Narrative of Matthew," 35–62; Schaberg, *The Illegitimacy of Jesus: A Feminist Theological Interpretation of the Infancy Narratives*.

indicating that there might have been an apologetic scribal intention.¹⁴⁹ Other texts such as the *Protoevangelium of James*, emphasize Mary's virginal conception, perhaps in response to detractors as well.¹⁵⁰

While no text exists in a vacuum, this hypothetical reading is useful in setting the stage for a closer examination of Mary's identity. Her position at the culmination of this genealogy, following the inclusion of non-Israelite women, warrants consideration of whether her role aligns with or diverges from this established pattern of ethnic inclusion and fusion. The purpose of this section, therefore, will be to explore how Mary's identity functions within the genealogy, particularly in relation to the mixed-race lineage that precedes her.

The scholarly discourse around Matthew's genealogy reveals a persistent tension in interpreting the inclusion of the four Gentile-associated women, Tamar, Rahab, Ruth, and Bathsheba, in relation to Mary. Wim J.C. Weren's observation that many interpretations overlook Mary's role due to her presumed Jewishness underscores the challenge of reconciling her identity with the genealogy's broader themes.¹⁵¹ Scholars like Rodney Hood acknowledge this ambiguity, suggesting that while the parallels between the Gentile women and Mary may imply a connection, any assertion of a non-Jewish origin for Mary remains unprovable.¹⁵² Elaine Wainwright critiques

¹⁴⁹ NA28 apparatus: ω μηστευθεισα παρθενος (- q), Μαριαμ εγεννησεν Ιησουν τον λεγομενον Χριστον Θ f¹³ it (sy^s) † ω μηστευθεισα ην Μαριαμ παρθενος, η ετεκεν Ιησουν Χριστον sy^c † txt ℱ¹ & B C K L P W Γ 33. 565. 579. 700. 892. 1241. 1424. ℓ 844. ℓ 2211. (- τον Δ, - Ιησους f¹) ℘ aur f ff^l vg sy^{p,h} co.

¹⁵⁰ There is also a discussion about anti-Christian polemicist suggesting that Jesus' father was a Roman soldier, named Tiberius Julius Abdes Pantera, see Zeichmann, "Jesus 'ben Pantera'". See also, Meerson and Schäfer, *Toledot Yeshu*, 1.286–287; Schäfer, Meerson, and Deutsch, *Toledot Yeshu: ("The Life Story of Jesus") Revisted*.

¹⁵¹ Weren, "The Five Women in Matthew's Genealogy," 289. See also, Kessler, "Mary—The Jewish Mother," 211–223. Kessler's work looks at the much-neglected Jewish identity of Mary in comparison to Jesus. For example, early 20th century interpretation focuses on the four women and not Mary, see Heffern, "The Four Women in St. Matthew's Genealogy of Christ," 69–81.

¹⁵² Hood, "The Genealogies of Jesus," 10. This statement appears in footnote 30. Regarding Bathsheba, she was the wife of Uriah (Matt 1:6); Davies, *The Gospel According to Saint Matthew*, 172. He states this about Bathsheba, that she "...was a Hittite (2 Sam 12.9, etc), so the expression, 'wife of Uriah', is better suited than the simple 'Bathsheba' for calling attention to Gentiles in Jesus' family tree; but it could also evoke the sin of David..." Gundry echoes this point, Gundry, *Matthew*, 15. But the biblical evidence is not so clear. Bathsheba is mentioned as the "wife of Uriah" as well as the "daughter of Eliam" (2 Sam 11:3). The only other place Eliam is mentioned is in 2 Samuel 23:34 as one of David's men enlisted in the Thirty as the son of Ahitophel the Gilonite. It is not entirely clear that this Eliam is the same as the father of Bathsheba. Furthermore, Uriah is also listed there in 23:39 possibly signifying them as peers rather than relatives through marriage. If Ahithophel as recorded in these instances was Bathsheba's grandfather, then he was a Gilonite and was David's advisor (2 Sam 15:12; 1 Chron 27:33). Interestingly, Ahitophel followed Absalom in his defection (2 Sam 15–17), he convinced Absalom to take his father's concubines (2 Sam 16:21–22). He also suggested to pursue king David with twelve thousand men (2 Sam 17:1–4), which was initially liked but eventually rejected for Hushai the Arkite's advice to accumulate warriors for one large attack (2 Sam 17:7–14). Ahithophel, knowing that that was ultimately in favour of king David and there would be no victory, took his

the emphasis on foreignness as the unifying factor among the women, arguing that such a framework excludes Mary from the pattern entirely.¹⁵³

Yet, the deliberate inclusion of these women, rather than the more traditional Matriarchs like Sarah, Rebecca, Rachel, and Leah, signals an intentional narrative decision by the Gospel writer. This choice seems designed to highlight themes of ethnic diversity, inclusion, and the disruption of conventional genealogical norms. The ambiguity surrounding Mary's identity may then serve to echo the larger narrative arc of reordering ethnic and cultural boundaries within the genealogy. If we take seriously the ethnic parallels between these women and consider the deliberate omission of the Matriarchs, it raises important questions about how Mary fits into this framework. Could the ambiguity of her identity, when viewed considering the preceding Gentile women, function as a narrative gesture toward inclusivity and the redefinition of purity?

Some readers may find the question of Mary's identity preposterous. In a footnote, Raymond Brown makes the comment that Mary was not a foreigner stating, "The implausible thesis that Mary was a Gentile has been proposed" and "For obvious reasons it had a certain following in the Third Reich."¹⁵⁴ Of course, this ideological argument is not being proposed here. But as this study has unfolded, ethnicity is multi-faceted, varied, and the borders of identification expand and narrow depending on the circumstances. Rather, what is being explored here, is Mary's ethnic identity within a mixed paradigm. This exploration is not to disregard Mary's *Jewishness*, but to expand our static notions of ethnicity and to take seriously the textual evidence. Along with both Gospels, other texts state that Mary was or is implied to be Jewish.¹⁵⁵

Another way to avoid some of these difficulties, is to follow scholars like Peter-Ben Smit, who deemphasize the ethnic components of the women in the genealogy, instead focusing on the women as a gendered collection. He states, "...the (unexpected) presence of women in the

own life (2 Sam 17:23). All of this to say, if this Ahitophel is the same one as Bathsheba's grandfather, this might be evidence of some motivation for his betrayal for David, and the specific advice to take David's concubines. If this is one and the same Ahitophel then he hailed from Giloh (Josh 15:51). In another place, Bathsheba is named as the daughter of Ammiel (1 Chron 3:5).

¹⁵³ Wainwright, *Towards a Feminist Critical Reading of the Gospel According to Matthew*, 65, see also 61–69, 156–71. Wainwright does an excellence job situating the women within their patriarchal context, thus accentuating their shared characteristics.

¹⁵⁴ Brown, *The Birth of the Messiah*, 73. This is footnote #29. He cites, 'R. Seeberg, "Die Herkunft der Mutter Jesu," *Theologische Festschrift für G. N. Borrwetsch* (Leipzig: Deichert, 1918), 13-24.'

¹⁵⁵ Prot. Jas. 10.

genealogy is much more striking than their ethnicity.”¹⁵⁶ While Smit’s work is helpful, it misses the central question of Mary’s identity.¹⁵⁷ Nevertheless, his work is still illuminating, as he recognizes the irregular pattern of women in the genealogy and notes that ethnic inclusiveness is accentuated in the person of David, through Rahab and Ruth.¹⁵⁸ He continues to argue that ethnic inclusiveness would have been perceived in Jesus because of his connection to David and because of Mary’s association with being female, but not necessarily through any link to the other women and their foreignness.¹⁵⁹

Smit often positions his analysis within a strict gendered framework, but he also offers critically important insights, such as recognizing David’s ethnic mixture through Rahab and Ruth’s inclusion, which informs our reading of the Messiah. I want to push this insight further. The ethnically inclusive nature of David is not only mirrored in the gendered association of Mary, but also in her ethnic ambiguity. At the very least, the purposeful concealment of Mary’s identity along with the lineage traced through Joseph rather than Mary, supports this conclusion.

6.3.2 Jerome’s Position

An early engagement with the question of the nature and sequence of the genealogy comes from Jerome, who states in his commentary on Matthew,

An attentive reader might pose this question: Since Joseph is not the father of the Lord and Savior, how does the sequence of the genealogy descending to Joseph pertain to the Lord? Our first response to this is that it is not the custom of Scripture to trace out the genealogies of women; secondly, *Joseph and Mary came from the same tribe* (italics mine). This is why he was compelled by the law to take her, since

¹⁵⁶ Smit, “Something about Mary?” 191–207, esp., 193.

¹⁵⁷ Smit, “Something about Mary?”, 194–95. Smit’s rationale for the advantages of a “gender-sensitive approach” to the genealogy in Matthew is compelling. These reasons include the striking appearance of the women as a group within a patriarchal structure, the inclusion of Mary, and the irregular relationship they possessed.

¹⁵⁸ Smit, “Something about Mary?”, 203–205

¹⁵⁹ Smit, “Something about Mary?”, 207.

she was a close relative. Also, the fact that they are counted together [in the census] in Bethlehem clearly shows that they were descended from a single stock.¹⁶⁰

Jerome points out that Joseph's lineage does not directly relate to Jesus, and he attempts to address this genealogical dislocation by proposing a biological relationship between Mary and Joseph. Jerome makes two key points that warrant unpacking: (1) Joseph and Mary were from the same tribe and close relatives; and (2) since they were brought together in their engagement and counted together in Bethlehem, this suggests they were related. Other ancient authors, such as Eusebius, make similar claims.¹⁶¹ To clarify the logical underpinnings of Jerome's argument, we must note that it contains several assumptions, such as the idea that Joseph was compelled by law to take Mary.

Jerome also assumes that since Joseph and Mary were counted together in the census, they *must* be closely related. However, in Luke's account, Joseph travels to Bethlehem from Nazareth because he is from the house and lineage of David (Luke 1:27; 2:4). But in the following verse, when Mary is mentioned, there is no reference to her family or lineage (Luke 2:5). The text does not suggest they are from the same tribe; rather, they go together to be registered because they were "betrothed" (μνηστεύω) (Luke 2:4). Contrary to Jerome's second point, there is no mention of them being registered together due to a familial relationship. There is no explicit textual evidence for their familial connection, and there is no single, clear explanation for why they are counted together. In fact, Jerome insists on their biological connection and retroactively justifies this assumption.

¹⁶⁰ St. Jerome, *Commentary on Matthew*, 62.

¹⁶¹ Eusebius argues that at the time of the Evangelists, they could not write a genealogy through the mother of Jesus, but only through the male ancestor—Joseph. Without a father in the genealogy of Jesus, his birth would seem discreditable. Furthermore, Mary's identity as from the line of David is also established, because Joseph would not have married anyone outside of his tribal or kin group according to the law of Moses. So, if Joseph is from the tribe of Judah, so is Mary (Eusebius to Stephanus 1.10). He then argues that since Mary went to stay with Elizabeth in the territory of Judah and since the law of Moses does not allow for a territory to be owned by the Levites, they had to live in other tribes, and thus, Zachariah and Elizabeth's home was in Judah (1.11). There are a few observations about Mary's identity and Eusebius' argument that warrant further discussion. Here are his arguments: 1) the Evangelists could not have written a matriarchal genealogy; 2) Joseph could only have married within the tribe of Judah; 3) the Levitical and Judahite connection between Elizabeth and Zachariah is demonstrated by the fact that Levites did not have any land of their own so they lived amongst the other tribes; 4) the kinship language between Mary and Elizabeth can be explained in two further ways, a shared Jewish identity, not necessarily tied to tribe, and to being faithful servants of God, in which, they both share a common kinship.

While Jerome’s reasoning may not be airtight, there is a relationship that could shed light on Mary’s identity as described in Luke’s Gospel—her relationship with Elizabeth (Luke 1:36). When Mary visits Elizabeth, she breaks into song, referring to the servant of the Lord as Israel (Luke 1:54). She also speaks of the promises made to their “ancestors” (πατέρας) and to Abraham and his “descendants” (σπέρματι) (Luke 1:55). These references in Mary’s song indicate that she identifies with the larger kin group of the Jewish people.

6.3.3 Elizabeth as Kinswoman

Elizabeth, as we are told, was a descendant of Aaron, placing her in a priestly lineage (Luke 1:5). While Mary is related to Elizabeth, the exact nature of their relationship is unclear. It seems at the very least that their relationship was close enough for Mary to visit her (Luke 1:39), but the language suggests that they may not have been immediate or direct relatives, as this is not explicitly stated. In other passages where close relatives are mentioned, such as Paul’s nephew, the relationship is clarified with specific terms like “the son of Paul’s sister” (ὁ υἱὸς τῆς ἀδελφῆς Παύλου) (Acts 23:16). Similarly, siblings are explicitly referenced in several texts as well (Matt 12:46–50; 13:56; Luke 8:19–21; and Acts 1:14).

The term used in Luke’s Gospel for Mary’s relationship with Elizabeth is “kinswoman” (συγγενίς) (Luke 1:36). In other literature, συγγενίς is used more generally in contrast to more specific terms like ἀδελφή, meaning “sister.”¹⁶² For instance, in Synesius’ *Letters*, Synesius asks Domitian, a jurist, to assist a woman who has become a widow, stating, “She is a *kinswoman* of mine, and brought up virtuously under an honorable mother in our midst” (*italics mine*).¹⁶³ In both instances, συγγενίς does not indicate an immediate relative but is used to broadly categorize the relationship. Eusebius also comments that συγγενίς was used to describe their relationship, noting that all the tribes were mixed, which could signify anyone who was part of the Jewish people.¹⁶⁴

¹⁶² Chariton, *Chaer.* 5.3.5–7.

¹⁶³ Synesius, *Letter* 155.3.

¹⁶⁴ Eusebius, *Eusebius to Stephanus* 1.11. Eusebius argues, “Do not be surprised, however, at Mary’s being called a kinswoman (συγγενίς) of Elizabeth’s, when Mary is a member of the tribe of Judah, while Elizabeth is a Levite. The explanation is that the Jewish race as a whole shares a single descent, and all the tribes are interrelated. Hence the divine apostle calls all Jews his kinsmen... and that is the sense in which the angel, to Mary, called Elizabeth her kinswoman, because of their both being Israelites.”

While Eusebius' usage is broad, it remains a distinct possibility for interpreting the relationship between Mary and Elizabeth. They were possibly distant relatives.

It is also curious that συγγενίς appears only here (Luke 1:36). However, a few references to closely related cognates, such as συγγενής, appears in the New Testament and other literature.¹⁶⁵ For example, Mark 6:4 distinguishes between how a prophet is not without honor except in his “hometown” (πατρίς) to his “relatives” (συγγενεῦσιν) and “his own house” (τῆ οἰκίᾳ αὐτοῦ). In this way, kinship is given increasing focus, with συγγενής meaning something more specific than those from the hometown but broader than one's immediate relatives within the household. This makes sense, as kinfolk are often paired with other relationship categories such as friends, neighbors, and siblings, thus differentiating them.¹⁶⁶ For example, Luke differentiates between “neighbors” (περίουκος) and “relatives” (συγγενής) in Luke 1:58. While συγγενής can be more specific, it is also used in broader terms. In Jesus' eschatological discourse in Luke's Gospel, those who will betray Jesus' disciples include “parents” (γονεύς), “siblings” (ἀδελφός), “relatives” (συγγενής), and “friends” (φίλος) (Luke 21:16). Here, συγγενής seems to refer to a broader category of kin that fits between siblings and friends. This classification could be likened to primary, secondary, and tertiary cousins. In other parts of the New Testament, συγγενής is used to describe people from a broader group, such as those who belong to the same people.¹⁶⁷ In these instances, it signifies a wider kinship. Interestingly, in other literature, when Jews during the Hasmonean period referred to the Spartans, they used the term “brothers of ours” (ἀδελφοὶ ἡμῶν) rather than συγγενίς (1 Macc 12:7), which suggests συγγενίς might include a more expansive idea of kinship.

Plutarch asks the question, “Why do women kiss their kinswomen on the lips/mouth?” (Διὰ τί τοὺς συγγενεῖς τῷ στόματι φιλοῦσιν αἱ γυναῖκες).¹⁶⁸ This habit may have originated as a way for men to assess whether the women in their household had been drinking wine before they arrived. Alternatively, it might have developed from the customs of Trojan women greeting their kinsmen when they landed on shore. Plutarch then observes that it is not typical for men to marry their

¹⁶⁵ Mark 6:4; Luke 1:58; 2:44; 14:12; 21:16; John 18:26; Acts 10:24; Rom 9:3; 16:7, 11, 21; Eunapius, *Lives* 463.

¹⁶⁶ Luke 1:58; 2:44; 14:12; 21:16.

¹⁶⁷ Rom 9:3; 16:7; 11, 21. Although this also leaves open the possibility that any one of these referents could be a closer relative to Paul.

¹⁶⁸ Plutarch, *Quaest. rom.* 6.

“συγγενίδας” (blood relatives).¹⁶⁹ He further explains, “For formerly, they did not marry women related to them by blood, and just as even now, they do not marry their aunts (τηθίδας) or sisters (ἀδελφάς).”¹⁷⁰

It seems that when Plutarch uses συγγενίς, he is referring to a discernible relative. However, when he further clarifies the types of relationships, he opts for more specific terms, such as “cousin” (ἀνεπιῶν). Therefore, συγγενίς is a broad term with many different applications. The New Testament also seems to provide further specificity when discussing the relationships between relatives. It is curious, then, that Elizabeth’s relationship to Mary is not described in detail, which suggests that the author of the Gospel intends that her relationship to Mary fits into a broader classification of “relative”—perhaps a distant cousin rather than a first cousin or aunt, since it is not specified. A further consideration is the way kinship in literature works in these contexts: one could be related to many people in a village through broader kinship ties, in the way Eusebius suggests.¹⁷¹ In this way, Mary could conceivably be related to multiple people and lineages such as the Davidic and Levitical lines, depending on which ancestry is being highlighted.

Through this rationale, συγγενίς seems to be used in the New Testament, as well as in comparable literature, to refer to someone’s “kin” rather than a specific relative, such as a cousin, aunt, or sister. These more specific relationships are clearly defined in concrete terms. Furthermore, considering how ancient networks of kinship ties functioned, we cannot completely dismiss one of Jerome’s premises—that both Mary and Joseph are related to some degree.¹⁷² All this to say, Mary is embedded within the larger Jewish kinship structure, and while nothing definitive can be said about her association with the other women in Matthew’s genealogy, there is a suggestion of a kinship relationship with Elizabeth, most likely a distant cousin.

6.3.3.1 Summary

¹⁶⁹ Plutarch, *Quaest. rom.* 6.

¹⁷⁰ Plutarch, *Quaest. rom.* 6.

¹⁷¹ Eusebius, *Eusebius to Stephanus* 1.11.

¹⁷² St. Jerome, *Commentary on Matthew*, 62.

Mary occupies a unique position in the genealogy, especially when viewed in relation to the other women and her “kinship” to Elizabeth. On one hand, modern scholarship has largely distanced itself from evaluating Mary’s ethnic identity while affirming the multiplicity of identities present with the inclusion of the other women. This distancing, however, is not exclusive to modern scholars. Jerome, a much earlier exegete, also refrains from analyzing Mary’s ethnicity, instead assuming she had strong kinship ties to both Elizabeth and Joseph. Through an examination of the terms συγγενίς and συγγενής, it becomes clear that Mary was related to Elizabeth, likely as a distant cousin.

6.4 Luke’s Inverted Genealogy

6.4.1 Parallel Genealogical Structures

One of the most distinct aspects of Luke’s genealogy is its inverted structure, beginning with Jesus and ending with the progenitor, Adam and ultimately God (Luke 3:38). This is of interest, because typically, genealogies begin the lineage with the progenitor and end with the subject of the genealogy. By reversing this structure, Luke is communicating something significant to his readers, which I argue, can be understood in relation to sonship, adoption, and baptism. The structure of the inverted genealogy recalls Athena Kirk’s observation that lists themselves reveal cultural value instead of just recording items.¹⁷³ In other words, they are not constructed haphazardly and can convey details about the ideas of kinship and ethnicity. The genealogy emphasizes Jesus’ sonship and adoption, while the baptism narrative (Luke 3:21–22) clarifies the reasoning behind its inverted structure.

The inverted structure of Luke’s genealogy has puzzled scholars, encapsulated by this observation made by Marshall Johnson, “The fact that the Lukan genealogy proceeds backwards from Jesus to God is significant since there is no known parallel in the Old Testament or in Rabbinic texts for a genealogy that begins with or culminates with the name of God.”¹⁷⁴ While examples appear of genealogical references being inverted, none follow this exact pattern. For instance, the prophet

¹⁷³ Kirk, *Ancient Greek Lists*, 8.

¹⁷⁴ Johnson, *The Purpose of the Biblical Genealogies*, 237.

Zephaniah is mentioned first with the list of ancestors following (Zeph 1:1).¹⁷⁵ The genealogy of Ezra in 2 Esdras is also inverted, which begins with Ezra and ends with Aaron (2 Esdras 1:1–3). However, in these instances, the inversion does not stretch as far back as Luke’s genealogy does, to God.

The closest parallel to Luke’s genealogy may be found in ancient West Asian royal genealogies, such as the *Behistun Inscription of King Darius*.¹⁷⁶ In Darius’ genealogy, the entire line serves a singular message, outlining his qualifications and divine credentials to rule. In contrast, Luke’s genealogy does not emphasize Jesus’ kingship in the same way as Matthew’s does, which would relate more to the King Darius inscription. A more related parallel might be found in the *Aeneid*, particularly in the parade of heroes and the depiction of Vulcan’s shield.¹⁷⁷ However, both examples are proleptically organized, starting from the progenitor and looking forward, framing the past from a future perspective. Luke’s genealogy, on the other hand, while still maintaining its temporal frame, reverses the sequence, starting with Jesus and looking backward, while retaining the lineage’s original order. Although these other examples are not directly instructive for understanding Luke’s genealogy, they do offer us some insight into how similar genealogies are constructed.

6.4.2 Sonship

Sonship is a key theme in Luke’s genealogy with Jesus explicitly being called the son of God, connecting him through the genealogy to Adam (Luke 3:22, 37b). The line avoids the Davidic rulers and traces the progeny through Nathan, the third son of David emphasizing that sonship is not determined by hereditary claims to royal power but through an alternative genealogical structure (Luke 3:31). Moreover, the grammatical syntax further emphasizes sonship. While Matthew’s genealogy uses the Greek verb “γεννάω” to connect generations, Luke employs the genitive construction τοῦ, with the sole explicit reference to υἱός appearing in the proclamation of

¹⁷⁵ Most of these genealogical references are short, like Bezalel (Exod 31:2), Korah (Num 16:1), Zelophehad (Num 27:1), Achan (Josh 7:1), Hannah’s husband, Elkanah (1 Sam 1:1-2), and Saul’s father, Kish (1 Sam 9:1-2).

¹⁷⁶ The Behistan Inscription of King Darius.

¹⁷⁷ Parade of Heroes: Vergil, *Aen.* 6.752–807; Vulcan’s Shield: Vergil, *Aen.* 8.626–30; 8.729–31.

divine approval by the Father (Luke 3:22). Additionally, Jesus is referred to as the “*supposed* son of Joseph” (ἐνομιζέτο) which deemphasizes his earthly sonship (Luke 3:23). Thus, while the genitive construction minimizes individual claims to sonship, it simultaneously highlights the broader, genealogical claims of sonship for everyone.¹⁷⁸

The theme of Jesus’ sonship is further emphasized throughout the Gospel. His sonship is framed in terms of Davidic sonship (Luke 1:32; 18:38–39; 20:41–44), Abrahamic sonship (Luke 19:9), and divine sonship (Luke 1:35; 4:9, 41; 22:70; cf. 20:36).¹⁷⁹ At his baptism, Jesus is called, “beloved” (ἀγαπητός) (Luke 3:22), and at the Transfiguration, he is referred to as “chosen” (ἐκλέγομαι) (Luke 9:35). Following the Transfiguration, a man entreats Jesus to heal his son, saying, “Teacher, I plead with you to look at my son, for he is my only son” (Luke 9:38). The father’s description of his son as “one and only” (μονογενής), echoes this theme in Luke’s Gospel (Luke 7:12; 8:42; 9:36). This juxtaposition of the father’s plea and Jesus’ divine sonship underscores the significance of God’s blessing on his “beloved” Son. Jesus is also called “son of the Most High” (υἱὸς ὑψίστου) (Luke 1:32; 8:28), highlighting the intimate relationship between the Son and the Father. Jesus also claims that only those who know the Father can do so through the Son (Luke 10:22). Furthermore, Jesus’ connection to the Davidic line brings with it messianic implications.¹⁸⁰ Notably, Luke uses the title “son of man” in the infancy narrative, a title not found

¹⁷⁸ The grammatical sequence that proceeds from Jesus is the string of genitives (τοῦ) as a “genitive of relationship” but is predicated on the ἐνομιζέτο sonship of Jesus to Joseph. In fact, this string of genitives is sustained throughout the whole genealogy (3:24–38).¹⁷⁸ This is different from the more explicit γεννάω in Matthew’s Gospel. See Culy, Parsons, and Stigall, *Luke: A Handbook on the Greek Text*, 120. He states, “Genitive of relationship. The genealogy of Jesus begins here, and the remaining verses contain no verbs. Instead, 3:24–38 contains a string of genitives of relationship tracing the lineage of Jesus...It is not uncommon to refer to the son of someone by simply using a genitive form of the proper name without υἱός.”

¹⁷⁹ Jesus as the “Son of God” is a fluid and multifaceted terms. N.T. Wright avers, “There were already two worlds of meaning within which the phrase had resonance, and the Christians, addressing both, seem to have consciously transcended both.” See Wright, *The Resurrection of the Son of God*. Vol. 3, 724. Wright comments that the “son of God” appellation in Jewish contexts could have two different meanings, one being Israel and/or King/Messiah, citing, Exod 4:22; Jer 31:9; Hos 11:1; 13:13; Mal 1:6 for Israel and 2 Sam 7:14; 4Q174 10–13; cf. 4Q246 2:1; 1 Chron 17:13; Pss 2:7; 89:26ff.

¹⁸⁰ Strauss, *The Davidic Messiah in Luke-Acts*; Rowe, *Early Narrative Christology*; Byrne, “Jesus as Messiah in the Gospel of Luke,” 80–95. Byrne argues that Luke’s Gospel gestures at Davidic and messianic claims *but* heightens them to include a filial relationship with God; Buckwalter, *The Character and Purpose of Luke’s Christology*; Yamazaki-Ransom, *The Roman Empire in Luke’s Narrative*.

in Matthew's version of the narrative (Luke 1:32; 35).¹⁸¹ In any case, sonship is a recurring theme throughout Luke's Gospel, with the genealogy providing the programmatic instance of this claim.

6.4.3 Empire and Adoption

With these themes and motifs in mind, we must consider the larger contextual connection of the genealogy within the Greco-Roman world, particularly in relation to the concept of the Roman empire.¹⁸² Michael Kochenash argues that the identification of Jesus as the "son of God" parallels Augustus' claim to deification, and that the Golden Age of Augustus is connected to the coming of the kingdom of God in Luke's Gospel.¹⁸³ Just as Aeneas is the ancestor of Julius Caesar, who adopted Augustus, so David is the ancestor of Joseph, who adopts Jesus.¹⁸⁴ Furthermore, Kochenash draws comparisons between God's Spirit and Apollo as a "divine parent."¹⁸⁵ Other scholars, such as Chris Blumenthal, have explored parallels between Jesus and Augustus in Luke's Gospel as well.¹⁸⁶ Blumenthal makes the insightful observation that Augustus' reign is finite (Luke

¹⁸¹ The "Son of Man" motif is prevalent in the Gospel; 5:24; 6:5, 22; 7:34; 9:22, 26, 44, 58; 11:30; 12:8, 10, 40; 17:22, 24, 26; 18:8, 31; 19:10; 21:27, 36; 22:22, 48, 69; 24:7. This relates to the vision in Daniel 7 as the relevant background to the "son of man" motif more generally, see also 1 *En.* 37–71 and 4 Ezra 13. These texts are especially helpful for the Aramaic rendering. For history of interpretation of the "Son of Man" motif, see Müller, *The Expression "Son of Man" and the Development of Christology*; Casey, *The Solution to the "Son of Man" Problem*; Allison Jr., *Constructing Jesus: Memory, Imagination, and History*. Furthermore, Jack Dean Kingsbury asks this very question of why the "Son of Man" designation is not used of Jesus before Matthew 8:20, see Kingsbury, "The Title 'Son of Man' in Matthew's Gospel."

¹⁸² Carter, *The Roman Empire and the New Testament*; Brent, "Luke–Acts and the Imperial Cult in Asia Minor," 411–438; Talbert, *Reading Luke–Acts in its Mediterranean Milieu*; cf. Kim, *Christ and Caesar*.

¹⁸³ Kochenash, "'Adam, Son of God' (Luke 3.38)," 307–325. "In addition to affecting readers' perceptions of Jesus' significance, reading Luke's genealogy with an Augustan framework creates consistency among Luke's references to the paternity of Jesus. Identifying Jesus' ancestor—through (adoption by (?)) Joseph—as the offspring of God provides Jesus with a second parental link to the divine; Jesus' conception by God's spirit/power provides the first. This presentation mirrors Augustan claims: in addition to being fathered by Apollo, Augustus advertised his descent from Aeneas—through adoption by Julius—who was said to have been the offspring of Aphrodite/Venus." See also, Wardle, "Suetonius on Augustus as God and Man," 307–326; Gradel, *Emperor Worship and Roman Religion*; Cole, *Cicero and the Rise of Deification at Rome*; Kolb and Vitale, *Kaiserkult in Den Provinzen Des Römischen Reiches: Organisation, Kommunikation Und Repräsentation*. Kochenash believes that Luke fabricated Jesus' genealogy regarding the connection to God, to imitate Roman propaganda, although this is not the main point of his work, see p. 311.

¹⁸⁴ Kochenash, "'Adam, Son of God' (Luke 3.38)," 311–14.

¹⁸⁵ Kochenash, "'Adam, Son of God' (Luke 3.38)," 314–18.

¹⁸⁶ Blumenthal, "Augustus' Erlass und Gottes Macht: Überlegungen zur Charakterisierung der Augustusfigur und ihrer erzählstrategischen Funktion in der lukanischen Erzählung," 1–30; Brent, "Luke–Acts and the Imperial Cult in Asia Minor," 430–431; Schreiber, *Weihnachtpolitik: Lukas 1–2 und das Goldene Zeitalter*, 70;

2:1; cf. 3:1), contrasting the limited nature of *Pax Augustus* with the eternal kingdom of God.¹⁸⁷ In general, while the relationship between the coming kingdom and sonship language juxtaposing Caesar Augustus to Jesus is insightful, I believe there is more to the inverted genealogy worth considering.

In keeping with the general theme of Greco-Roman connections with Luke/Acts, David Balch has compared and identified close parallels between the Dionysian story of Rome's origins and the narrative in Luke/Acts.¹⁸⁸ Additionally, he closely evaluates the relationship between Jesus and Dionysius as "founders."¹⁸⁹ By doing so, he alleviates potential tensions within ethnic communities who identified as Christ followers, thereby establishing a united founding claim. Balch also argues that women were suppressed in Luke/Acts due to Roman patriarchal influence, as well as the suppression of the Dionysus and Isis cults, citing the lack of women's direct speech outside the infancy narrative.¹⁹⁰ He further suggests that the household codes were written in response to Roman cultural pressure to enforce male headship.¹⁹¹ If the lack of women's voices in Luke's Gospel can be attributed in part to these cultural tendencies, it is possible that the absence of women in the genealogy could be similarly attributed to Roman influence, although Balch does not make this connection. However, it is also important to note that although there might be a lack of direct speech recorded by women, Luke's Gospel does feature women prominently throughout.¹⁹²

for adjacent concerns with the historical questions of Jesus and Quirinius, see Smith "Of Jesus and Quirinius," 278–293.

¹⁸⁷ Blumenthall, "Augustus' Erlass und Gottes Macht," 19–20.

¹⁸⁸ Balch, "Founders of Rome, of Athens, and of the Church," in *Seeing the God*, 177–205.

¹⁸⁹ Balch, "Luke-Acts: *Political Biography/History under Rome*," 65–99, esp 80. For a work comparing the infancy narrative to Augustus' rule, see Schreiber, *Weihnachtspolitik*.

¹⁹⁰ Balch, "Luke-Acts: *Political Biography/History under Rome*," 75. "The Acts of the Apostles includes prominent and some socially well-placed women in the narrative (1:14; 2:17; 5:1; 6:1; 9:36; 12:12; 13:50; 16:1, 13–14; 17:12, 34; 18:1, 28; 21:9; 22:4; 23:16). However, we never read the words of these women, other than those of Mary and Elizabeth in the infancy narrative (Luke 1:24, 46b–55; for Anna see 2:36–38). Writing in Roman culture, Luke silenced those women who had been leaders in the earliest church." For Livy's account, see Livy *Hist.* 39:8–19; See also Sarolta A. Takács, "Politics and religion in the Bacchanalian Affair of 186B.C.E.," *HCSP* 100 (2000): 301–10.

¹⁹¹ Balch, "Luke-Acts: *Political Biography/History under Rome*," 65–99.

¹⁹² Luke 1–2; 2:36; 4:25–26, 38; 7:12, 37; 8:2, 42, 43, 51; 10:38; 11:27, 31; 12:53; 13:11; 15:8; 17:32, 35; 18:3, 29; 20:28, 46; 21:2; 22:56; 23:27, 49, 55; 24:1, 10, 22. See also, Reid, "The Gospel of Luke: Friend or Foe of Women Proclaimers of the World?" 1–23; Karris, "Women and Discipleship in Luke," *CBQ* 56 (1994): 1–20; D'Angelo, "Women in Luke-Acts: A Redactional View," 441–461.

This observation, along with the unique way Luke traces the lineage, recalls the idea that fluidity in genealogies can express the specific circumstance surrounding the recording of the list as well as the dynamics embedded within the list.¹⁹³ Since lineages can be traced through different ancestors and adapted to various contexts, the fluidity in Luke's genealogy reveals its literary and theological purpose. Following the insights of Kochenash and Balch, I too see Luke/Acts within much of a Greco-Roman space and considering this conceptual framework, I propose specifically to examine the role of adoption and baptism in understanding it.

In this context, the specific arrangement of Luke's genealogy stresses the relationship between baptism and divine adoption.¹⁹⁴ Adoption inserts an individual into the lineage regardless of biological ties.¹⁹⁵ Some scholars argue that Matthew and Luke both present Jesus as adopted into the Davidic lineage through Jewish adoption practices, countering arguments that frame Jesus' adoption as a feature of Roman law.¹⁹⁶ While Roman emperors were well known for their adoptive practices, these were largely due to the shortcomings of Roman law in articulating proper succession.¹⁹⁷ Nevertheless, Roman adoption practices are important to consider when thinking about the genealogy.¹⁹⁸

¹⁹³ Wilson, *Genealogy and History in the Biblical World*, 27–36; Fowler, “Genealogical thinking, Hesiod’s *Catalogue*, and the creation of the Hellenes,” 3–4.

¹⁹⁴ Peppard, “Adopted and Begotten Sons of God: Paul and John on Divine Sonship,” 92–110. Adoption in the ancient world, see Epictetus, *Diatr.* 1.3; Suetonius, *Tib.* 23; Pliny the Younger, *Ep.* 8.18; Tacitus, *Hist.* 1.16. Here is a speech by Galba showing the importance of adoption. He adopted Piso as his son in 69CE.

¹⁹⁵ Even the fact that Jesus is not referenced as the “son of Joseph” but as the “son of Mary” is important (Mark 6:3; Matt 13:55). See McArthur, “Son of Mary,” 38–58. In Matthew’s account he is referred to as the carpenter’s son. McArthur argues that Jesus would have been identified as the “son of Joseph”, but he had passed away by the time of the writing of the Gospels or sometime before, so out of a sense of familiarity, Jesus would have been called the “son of Mary.”

¹⁹⁶ Friedeman, “Jesus’ Davidic Lineage and the Case for Jewish Adoption,” 249–267. Contra, Levin, “Jesus, ‘Son of God’ and ‘Son of David’”, 415–42. Yigal Levin argued that the adoption of Jesus in the Gospels was framed by Roman law, not Jewish law.

¹⁹⁷ Mousourakis, *Roman Law*, 20.

¹⁹⁸ Mousourakis, *Roman*, 102–4. Adoption happened primarily for males, since women could not continue a lineage, Riggsby, *Roman Law and the Legal World of the Romans*, 181–84; Kunst, *Römische Adoption: Zur Strategie einer Familienorganisation*. See especially the fourth part where she argues that adoption was primarily used as a mechanism for restructuring the family unit; Dixon, *The Roman Family. Ancient Society and History*, esp. 98–132; Lindsay, “Adoption and its Function in Cross-Cultural Contexts,” in *Childhood, Class, and Kin in the Roman World*, 190–204, esp. 201–04; Lindsey, “Adoption and Heirship in Greece and Rome,” in *A Companion to Families in the Greek and Roman Worlds*, 346–360.

In Roman law, there were two types of adoption: *adrogatio* and *adoptio*.¹⁹⁹ *Adoptio* could only occur if the adoptee was still under the power of his biological father, in which case permission was required for the adoption. In contrast, *adrogatio* applied to an independent male, along with those under his control, who were transferred into a new family. The adoptive father, now a *paterfamilias* of the son, who takes on the role of *filiusfamilias*, abrogates his own authority until the adoptive father dies, in the new family.²⁰⁰ Typically, adoption in these contexts was meant to be for the purposes of inheritance as an adult male.

Along with the transfer of authority was the issue of familial designation. For example, Caesar Augustus was given an adoptive name from Octavian to Augustus, while Tiberius was adopted into the Augustan line as well, and was later called Tiberius Julius Caesar Augustus.²⁰¹ Likewise, both John and Jesus were given “adoptive” names. Both were not named by their biological parents. For example, John’s father, Zechariah was told by an angel to call their son John (Luke 1:13). This directive was so important that when he doubted, he could not speak, which led to him writing down John’s name even when that name was not in their family lineage (Luke 1:60–66). Likewise, in the case of Jesus, Gabriel the angel told Mary to call him Jesus (Luke 1:31). This makes sense of why some commentators frame Joseph as possessing legal obligations as opposed to biological ones, since Jesus’ name further deemphasizes the biological relationship between father and son.²⁰² And so with ideas of sonship and lineage, adoption stands as an important feature of Jesus’ identity. In this case, Jesus is adopted into Joseph’s line, through Nathan to God. Furthermore, I believe that making a case of adoption through the Davidic and Solomonic line would have presented problems of its own, which would have deemphasized the prophetic and

¹⁹⁹ Dixon, *The Roman Family*, 112. For more sources on adoption, see Corbier, “Divorce and Adoption as Roman Familial Strategies,” in *Marriage, Divorce, and children in Ancient Rome*, 47–78; Gardner, *Family and Familia in Roman Law and Life*, 114–208; Nielsen, “Quasi-Kin, Quasi-Adoption and the Roman Family,” in *Adoption et Fosterage*, 249–262; Kacprzak, “Foundlings in the Greco-Roman world: Status and the (im)possibility of adoption,” 13–54. Kacprzak explores the specific instead of passing three quarters of inheritance a situation of adopting an exposed child, in relation to Greek, Roman, and Egyptian law.

²⁰⁰ Dixon, *The Roman Family*, 112.

²⁰¹ Suetonius, *Tib.* 3; see also Diogenes Laertius, *Lives* 9.5 Zeno of Elea (25).

²⁰² See, Fitzmyer, *The Gospel According to Luke I-IX*, 499; Marshall, *The Gospel of Luke*, 157; Strauss, *The Davidic Messiah in Luke-Acts*, 126-29; Meier, *The Roots of the Problem and the Person*, vol. 1, 217. Much of this perspective is rooted or has precedence in the musings of Julius Africanus, see Eusebius, *Hist. eccl.* 1.7.

royal Davidic lineage. In highlighting Nathan, adoption stands as a legitimate means of entering the genealogy.

6.4.4 The Baptism of Jesus

This brings us to the question of Jesus' baptism, which I argue is central to understanding the composition of Luke's genealogy. Robert Tannehill, in describing the literary unity of Luke/Acts, focuses on the baptism of Jesus, claiming that it begins the theme of the descent of the Holy Spirit through verses 3:22–4:18.²⁰³ He asserts, "Thus the Holy Spirit is connected with each of the narrative segments between 3:22 and 4:18 (*excluding the genealogy*, which interrupts the narrative sequence) and is directly related to Jesus' mission" (italics mine).²⁰⁴ This is, in some respects, a reasonable assessment: the genealogy does seem dislocated from the narrative, despite similar examples in the Hebrew Bible.²⁰⁵ But why would the Gospel writer insert the genealogy at this juncture? Contrary to Tannehill, I believe the genealogy is inextricably linked to the baptism, and thus the narrative sequence flows naturally from one section to the next, which also connects to the themes of sonship and adoption.

In this way, the baptism serves as a theological "preface" to the genealogy. At Jesus' baptism, God opens the heavens and declares, "You are my beloved son" (Luke 3:22b). This declaration functions as a fronted *inclusio*, with the final statement of the genealogy concluding with Jesus being called the "son of God" (Luke 3:38b). To further strengthen this point, Luke's use of the phrase that Jesus was the "supposed" (νομίζω) son of Joseph (Luke 3:23) emphasizes that Jesus was not, in fact, Joseph's biological son.²⁰⁶ This lack of a biological connection with Joseph highlights the role of adoption in the infancy narrative, and the writer goes to great lengths to

²⁰³ Tannehill, *The Narrative Unity of Luke-Acts*, 57.

²⁰⁴ Tannehill, *The Narrative Unity of Luke-Acts*, 57.

²⁰⁵ Moses' genealogy in Exod 6:13–27 is embedded within the narrative that also seems dislocated from the larger narrative.

²⁰⁶ Matthew's genealogy pivots from Joseph to Mary as an implied statement of Jesus' dubious status with respect to Joseph (Matt 1:16), which is further highlighted in Matthew's infancy narrative (Matt 1:18–25). While Luke makes this more explicit.

establish Jesus' direct connection with God.²⁰⁷ This genealogy does not follow the typical genealogical orientation to divinity, as seen in other ancient genealogies. Instead, divinity in this genealogy is framed by adoption, and in this context, baptism is the means by which adoption is realized. Baptism, as a prominent theme throughout Luke-Acts, reconfigures kinship to God.²⁰⁸ Regardless of the kinship defined by the genealogical line, Jesus is considered a beloved son to God.

Recall that it is emphasized that Jesus was “full of the Holy Spirit” right after his lineage and at the beginning of his ministry (Luke 4:1), and prior, at his baptism (Luke 3:21–22). This placement emphasizes the significance of the Holy Spirit in the narrative. The idea of establishing a connection with God through baptism is key to anchoring the genealogy (Luke 3:21–22). One might argue that, had the genealogy been placed like in Matthew's Gospel, the baptism could have been positioned at the end, functioning in a similar way to convey Jesus' connection with God. However, this perspective overlooks the intentional fronting of the baptism in Luke's account. In fact, I would argue that the baptism is so integral to the structure of Jesus' lineage that its omission would effectively erase Luke's primary theological point of its inclusion.²⁰⁹

This brings us back to the structure of the inverted genealogy. In other Greco-Roman genealogies, the focus is on the progenitor, which confers authority to the subject of the genealogy. In the case of Jesus' relationship to God in Luke's lineage, however, the emphasis is placed on Jesus' direct connection to God, which deemphasizes the genealogical aspects of biological relationship, although they are still present. When considering elements such as sonship and adoption, the biological link is further severed. The inverted nature of the lineage highlights Jesus himself, rather than the biological succession. Another reason for Luke's inversion of the genealogy may be an implicit rejection of the notion of Jesus as a demi-god—one whose semi-divine status is conferred

²⁰⁷ See also, Kurz, S.J., *Reading Luke-Acts*, 179. Kurz has a novel explanation for the genealogy in that Adam as God's offspring is an analogy for Jesus' divine conception.

²⁰⁸ Luke 3:7, 12, 16, 21; 7:29, 30; 11:38; 12:50 [although this last reference is to a baptism of judgement]; Acts 1:5; 2:38; 41; 8:12–16, 36, 38; 9:18; 10:47, 48; 11:16; 16:15, 33; 18:8; 19:3–5; 22:16. These are references to all types of baptisms, both water and spirit, as sometimes these baptisms are closely aligned.

²⁰⁹ R. B. Robinson, as he evaluates the genealogies in Genesis and incisively comments on the congruence or symbiotic nature of genealogies in relation to the narrative in which they are embedded, see Robinson, “Literary Functions of the Genealogies of Genesis,” 595–608.

through a divine ancestry. Luke seems to assert that everyone is descended from Adam, and thus from God. Jesus' divinity is not highlighted through the genealogy, as it is his human ancestry that is traced. His conception, defined by the Holy Spirit, stands in stark contrast to rulers like Augustus, and others who might claim divine lineage as a means of legitimizing their authority.²¹⁰

6.4.4.1 Summary

To summarize, Luke's inverted genealogy incorporates multiple significant elements. While there are a few parallel genealogical structures, such as those found in *2 Esdras* and the *Behistun Inscription*, none exactly mirror Luke's approach. The genealogy's emphasis on sonship, both within the lineage and throughout the Gospel, plays a central role in shaping its purpose. Additionally, connections to Greco-Roman concepts of empire and adoption subverted and are juxtaposed within the genealogy. Most importantly, the baptism of Jesus serves as the key to understanding the inverted structure. Instead of tracing a physical lineage to a deity, Luke underscores that Jesus is God's Son, affirmed through both his adoption and baptism. These various features highlight the inverted structure of the genealogy and contribute valuable insight to ongoing scholarly discussions. The ideas of sonship, adoption, and baptism also relate to the overarching theme of this book, which is multiethnic identity, which is connected to the idea of universal kinship in Luke's Genealogy.

6.5 Universal Kinship in Luke's Genealogy

The implications of the inverted nature of Luke's genealogy are two-fold. First, it suggests a universal nature, and second, it reorganizes kinship. Regarding the first point, the genealogy's trace from God to Jesus functionally subsumes all of humanity into a single origin. This universal scope connects all people to Jesus through the lineage. This shared myth of descent binds and connects all of humanity. In ethnic terms, this would reorder all humanity within the same kinship group. As for the second point, kinship is reorganized through Jesus' placement in the lineage. If the

²¹⁰ Being of divine origin or being begotten from a deity is common in Greco-Roman texts. See, Plutarch, *Rom.* 2.5; 4.2; *Thest.* 2, 6, 36; *Alex.* 3; Suetonius, *Aug.* 94; Diogenes Laertius, *Vir. Phil.* 3.

Messiah is a descendant of Adam, then, by virtue of that connection, all humanity is related to the Messiah, which is further emphasized in the inverted nature of the lineage. Scholars have readily noted the universal scope of Luke's genealogy.²¹¹ There is also a correspondence between this genealogy and the account of Adam in Genesis.²¹² Darrell Bock asserts that Luke's genealogy follows the temptation narrative to juxtapose the faithfulness of Jesus with that of Adam.²¹³ This positioning allows readers to compare Jesus with Adam, illustrating a universal theological truth: what began in Adam has now been fulfilled in Jesus.

6.5.1 Reconfiguring Kinship

The concept of reconfiguring kinship is apparent in other literature like in the *Catalogue of Women*, where Hellenic peoples tie their ancestry to the eponymous ancestor, Hellen, the king of Pythia and the sons of Deucalion and Pyrrha. The Hellenic people collectively tied themselves to the progeny of Hellen, Dorus, Xuthus, and Aeolus, and his grandsons, Ion and Achaeus.²¹⁴ In tying their people groups to a shared ancestry, they also socially asserted themselves over-against each other by "ranking" their ancestry.²¹⁵ Thus, the boundaries between people groups helped taxonomize and organize kinship claims within regions with growing diversity.²¹⁶ Although this is not a perfect analogy since some Hellenic groups were excluded from the Hellenic line, like the

²¹¹ Bock, *Luke 1:1–9:50*, 916; Bock, *A Theology of Luke's Gospel and Acts*, 69, 292–301; Bovon, *Das Evangelium nach Lukas* (Lk1,1–9,50), 187.

²¹² Bovon, *Das Evangelium nach Lukas* (Lk1,1–9,50), 187–88. He helpfully points out, Adam to Shem (Luke 36b–38; cf. Gen 5), Shem to Abraham (34–36a; cf. Gen 11:10–32), and from Abraham to David (1 Chron and Ruth), and from David to Jesus, the source material is unknown since the genealogies diverge from this point in both accounts. Scholars also note the genealogical connection to Genesis from Matthew as well, see Heckl, "Der Biblische Begründungsrahmen für die Jungfrauengeburt bei Matthäus: Zur Rezeption von Gen 5,1–6,4 in Mt 1," 161–80. He states, "Die Reihe von parallelen und antithetischen Motiven, die Mt 1,18–25 mit Gen 6,1–4 gemeinsam hat, lässt den Schluss zu, dass der Verfasser die Geburtsgeschichte als Gegengeschichte zu Gen 5,1–6,4, also unter Einschluss von Gen 6,1–4, konzipiert hat" (p. 180). Raik argues that Matthew's genealogy is the counter story to the genealogy in Genesis (Gen 5:1–6:4) and that Mary's virginity is contrasted to the illegitimate offspring in Gen 6.

²¹³ Bock, *A Theology of Luke's Gospel and Acts*, 104.

²¹⁴ Hesiod, *Cat. Wom.* 9

²¹⁵ Hall, *Hellenicity*, 27.

²¹⁶ Hall, *Ethnic identity in Greek antiquity*, 48.

Aitolians and Arcadians, it is still generally applicable.²¹⁷ For those that read themselves into the genealogy, like in the case of the *Catalogue* or *Table of Nations* (Gen 10), they simultaneously see themselves as connected to other kinship groups. In the case of Luke's lineage, humanity can read themselves in Luke's articulation of a universal kinship and see the larger narrative of God's plan of salvation.

This universalizing inclination of the genealogy is done by reconfiguring kinship. Jesus' direct connection with God, which is stressed in the Lukan narrative, simultaneously refigures biological descent and reorganizes familial connection. Note, for example, the Annunciation to Mary, where Gabriel foretells the birth of Jesus to Mary (Luke 1:26–38). In this scene, Mary was pledged to Joseph, and they were not yet married, heightened by Mary being a “virgin” (παρθένος) (Luke 1:26–27). Luke further stresses this reality with Gabriel naming Jesus as the “Son of the Most High,” and the “Son of God,” showing God's power over Mary's biological systems (Luke 1:32–35). This identity as God's son is hinted at when Elizabeth ponders why she is so favored, that Mary “the mother of my Lord” (ἡ μήτηρ τοῦ κυρίου μου) would come to her (Luke 1:43). Mixed identities are already crystallizing in the sense that lordship, sonship, and motherhood are intertwined, deemphasizing the biological or physical genealogical structures. Elizabeth is biologically unable to have children because of her age, and Mary is a virgin. Additionally, both Mary and Elizabeth's songs reference God's fulfilled promises to Abraham, noting fulfillment juxtaposed with impossibility (Luke 1:55; 1:72–73).

Even Zechariah's decision to call his son John (Luke 1:13; 59) was odd to those around them because no one among their “relatives” (συγγένεια) was called by that name (Luke 1:61), signifying the disconnect between the Holy Spirit-initiated births and familial bonds. Similarly, Jesus' name was given to him by the angel before his birth (Luke 2:21). And while Jesus is explicitly described as Mary's firstborn, he is not described in such ways in relation to Joseph, deemphasizing Joseph's role (Luke 2:7). Additionally, the universalism of the Gospel is articulated by Simeon in the temple (Luke 2:32), while later in the narrative, Jesus' rhetorical question to his

²¹⁷ Pausanias, *Desc.* 5.1.4; 8.4.1.

parents, “Did you not know that I must be about my father’s things?” (Luke 2:49), emphasizes Jesus’ relation to the Father.²¹⁸

Along with deconstructing Jesus’ relationship to his earthly father, Luke also provides a framework for including Gentiles into the kinship of believers or at least emphasizing their expanding inclusion.²¹⁹ Gerhard Krodel says it like this,

The inclusion of the Gentiles had been foretold by Old Testament prophets (plural, cf. [Acts] 15:15-18), envisioned by Simeon (Luke 2:31-32), announced by John the Baptist in the words of Isaiah (Luke 3:6), mandated by Jesus (Luke 24:47), enacted by God (Acts 10:1-11:18), and ratified by the church under the leadership of Peter and James and under the guidance of the Holy Spirit (Acts 15).²²⁰

Furthermore, John announces that God can raise up descendants from the rocks, responding to those who appeal to their lineage from Abraham (Luke 3:8). John then states that Jesus will come and baptize them with the Holy Spirit and fire (Luke 3:16), which is a forward-looking reversal, where Jesus is baptized by John, and the Holy Spirit descends on him.²²¹ It is all ironic in that the old established ways of understanding status, identity, and lineage are subverted and reoriented toward Jesus’ inclusion in the genealogy.

6.6 Conclusion

²¹⁸ Tannehill, *The Narrative Unity of Luke-Acts*, 55. Tannehill points out the theme throughout the infancy narrative up to Jesus’ ministry in Capernaum of Jesus as son and God as father. But he limits it to these sections stating, “In this section of the narrative, the narrator shows a special interest in gradually disclosing what it means for Jesus to be Son of God.”

²¹⁹ Gerstmyer, “The Gentiles in Luke-Acts: Characterization and Allusion in the Lukan Narrative.”; Meeks, *The Gentile Mission in Old Testament Citations in Acts*; Siker, ““First to the Gentiles””, 73–90; Dupont, *The Salvation of the Gentiles*; another angle from which to view Gentiles is through their speech, see Padilla, *The Speeches of Outsiders in Acts*.

²²⁰ Krodel, *Acts*, 399–400.

²²¹ Then, continuing the reversal theme, John rebukes Herod and the forerunner to Jesus is imprisoned (3:19–20).

In conclusion, the genealogies in the Gospels refract different theological and social concerns as they are embedded within their own literary and historical contexts. In my analysis, five distinct purposes of the genealogies in the Gospels exist and are listed below. This is by no means the most extensive list but is instructive in showing the multi-faceted nature of the lineages. The genealogies are flexible literary constructions that, in total, reveal something about those included within the chain of ancestors. The main components of genealogies in the Gospels include:

(1) The genealogical reject claims of lineal purity. There are multiple ways to read the divergences between the two genealogies, and numerous suggestions have been made. However, one of the conclusions that seems clear is that a “pure” lineage is not possible. In the case of Matthew’s genealogy, the gentile women are included, and in Luke’s genealogy, all humanity are connected to Adam. This does not mean that ethnic differences and customs are irrelevant or not meaningful, only that at some level, we are all connect by virtue of being “in Adam”. Furthermore, salvation ultimately comes from the one who comes from the line of David, certainly an important theme, but also comes from a lineage mixed with gentile women such as Tamar, Rahab, and Ruth.

(3) Matthew’s genealogy possesses ethnic implications for those included in the lineage. The inclusion of non-Israelite women clearly indicates that the lineage of Jesus is mixed. This signals to the reader that no lineage is “pure” in a biological sense, but instead, lineages are constructs formed by the merging of various peoples and biological connections. Furthermore, we see that Mary’s inclusion is significant for issues related to her virginal conception, as well as her relationship to Elizabeth, drawing continuity within the lineage as well as presenting clear distinctions within it.

(4) Luke’s genealogy emphasizes adoption and sonship. The inverted genealogy is purposefully structured to emphasize Jesus’ position at the top of the lineage. The baptism, situated before the genealogy, provides the key to understanding its function. The baptism signifies that Jesus has a direct connection to God, deemphasizing the role of biological justifications that anyone might claim through descent from God in the genealogy. The genitive construction of the genealogy further supports the idea that all are sons of God. The baptism, the name “Jesus” given by God, and the dissociation of Jesus from Joseph all strengthen the claim that adoption into the line is

central to Luke's genealogy. All of this reinforces the idea that the baptism is crucial to understanding the inverted structure of the genealogy.

(5) Luke's genealogy makes universal claims about kinship. Luke's Gospel emphasizes the universal inclusion of humanity by integrating Jesus into the lineage that traces back to Adam, and thus to God. Through this connection, all humanity is incorporated into the "family line." In addition to this, latent kinship claims within the genealogy signify universal kinship. Luke/Acts demonstrates that the Gentiles are not only included in God's plan of salvation for all humanity but are also redefined as kin groups through their inclusion in the genealogy, which traces back to Adam. Therefore, the genealogy functions as an interpretive framework that shapes how we understand the Gospel.

Chapter 7: Multi-Ethnic Identity in the New Testament: Acts, Lists, and Timothy

7.1 Introduction

This chapter explores the significance of lists in Acts and their role in depicting multi-ethnic identity, alongside an analysis of Timothy's unique multi-ethnic background. Throughout this book, I have demonstrated how Greco-Roman and New Testament literature reflect multi-ethnic realities, and here, I argue that lists in Acts serve as key data points for understanding the ethnic expansion of the early Christ-following community. Lists, embedded within narratives, are curated and structured with specific purposes. For instance, they respond to surrounding events, such as the enumeration of nations in Acts 2 and the appointment of leaders in Acts 6. Despite their narrative and theological significance, lists in Acts remain largely unexplored.

My contention is that there is a thematic connection among the various lists in Acts that has yet to be fully explored. Most theological and thematic studies on Acts remain noticeably silent on the topic of lists in general, and even more so on any thematic relationship between them.¹ Although, some scholars do examine the lists in more detail, for example, Sean Adams argues that the character lists (Acts 1:13–14; 6:5; 13:1; 20:4), shifts the focus of narrative attention and aids in the overall narrative structure and development of Acts.² Others, briefly acknowledge the Greco-Roman literary convention of list-making, but often do not delve deeply into its significance within Acts.³

¹ The lists are never taken as a whole in the theology or literary structure of Luke-Acts, for example, Winter and Clarke, *The Book of Acts in Its Ancient Literary Setting*; Jervell, *The Theology of the Acts of the Apostles*; Conzelmann, *The Theology of St. Luke*; Marshall, *Luke*; Elser, *Community and Gospel in Luke-Acts*; Bovon, *Luke: The Theologian*; Bock, *A Theology of Luke and Acts*; Tannehill, *The Narrative Unity of Luke-Acts*. 2 vols; O'Toole, *The Unity of Luke's Theology*.

² Adams, *The Genre of Acts*, 184–187.

³ Keener, *Acts*, vol 1, 741. Here Keener highlights the idea that Greco-Roman literary tradition contains list writing but does not explore that dimension further.

Additionally, Timothy stands out as one of the few individuals in the New Testament whose multi-ethnic identity is explicitly recorded. His matrilineal descent is leveraged in 2 Timothy to affirm his role and mission. My main contention here is that genealogical descent and ethnic fluidity are directly relevant to how we read and interpret Timothy in the New Testament. Thus, drawing on scholars such as Robert Belknap, Athena Kirk, Eric Barreto, and Shaye Cohen, this chapter examines (1) Lists in Acts and Multi-Ethnic Identity, (2) Timothy in Acts 16, and (3) 2 Timothy 1:5 and Matrilineal Faith.

7.2 Lists in Acts and Multi-Ethnic Identity

7.2.1 Acts 1:8

The first list appears at the beginning of Acts, during the account of Jesus' ascension (Acts 1:1–11). Jesus instructs his disciples to remain in Jerusalem and await the gift of the Holy Spirit (Acts 1:4–5). When the disciples inquire about the restoration of the kingdom, Jesus responds that such knowledge is not for them to possess (Acts 1:6–7). He then says in Acts 1:8, “But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.” Though this list is concise, its progression is unmistakably expansionist, moving outward from the central location of Jerusalem to Judea, Samaria, and ultimately, to the ends of the earth.

The various locations of the list are significantly patterned with Jerusalem serving as both the geographic and theological underpinning for the narrative, marking the culmination of the movement toward it in Luke's Gospel and the starting point of the outward mission in Acts.⁴ Judea refers to the southern region of Roman Palestine, while Samaria, located south of Galilee, plays a

⁴ Luke 2:25, 38, 41, 43, 45; 4:9; 5:17; 6:17; 9:31, 51, 53; 10:30; 13:4, 33, 34; 17:11; 18:31; 19:11; 21:20; 21:24; 23:28; 24:13, 18, 33, 47, 52; Acts 1:8, 12, 19; 2:5, 14; 4:5, 16; 5:16, 28; 6:7; 8:26, 27; 9:2, 13, 21, 26, 28; 10:39; 11:2, 22; 12:25; 13:27, 31; 15:2, 4; 20:22; 21:11, 12, 13; 21:31; 22:5, 17, 18; 23:11; 24:11; 25:3. For a brief bibliography on Jerusalem, for an earlier source, see Jeremias, *Jerusalem in the Time of Jesus*; Magness, *Jerusalem through the Ages*; Murphy-O'Connor, *Keys to Jerusalem*; Murphy-O'Connor, *The Holy Land*; Regev, “Jerusalem as the Central Place for Paul and Acts”: 713.

significant role in both Luke and Acts.⁵ The phrase “the ends of the earth” has been interpreted in various ways, including references to Spain, Ethiopia, or Rome.⁶ Craig Keener argues that, while Luke may have understood “the ends of the earth” as referring to Rome, the phrase also functions as a proleptic marker, suggesting a broader and more expansionist view.⁷ The nations as implied in “the ends of the earth” are repeatedly highlighted as the scope of God’s mission, a theme that also plays a pivotal role in the conclusion of Luke’s Gospel.⁸ But perhaps this idea can be extended a step further in that it is intentionally open-ended and possibly infinitely expansionistic, reflecting Athena Kirk’s musings on the potentially indefinite nature of a list. In this way, the order of the geographic locations is not randomized or incoherent, they are expansionist and indefinite.

This programmatic list sets the framework for subsequent character lists, beginning in Jerusalem with familiar figures and later returning there with an entirely new cast after a journey abroad (Acts 1:12–14; 20:4–5). The lists in Acts follow the general progression of the expanding to Rome, where Paul is imprisoned (Acts 28:11–31). The text ends abruptly, implying that the narrative is not finished or completed. This rhetorical explanation aligned with Mediterranean antiquity of suspended endings.⁹

Since Luke’s Gospel emphasizes the importance of Galilee, it is odd that it is not included in this initial list. Galilee is featured in this immediate section of Acts as well, for example, after this list, the angel refers to the disciples as “men of Galilee” (Acts 1:11) and following Pentecost, Galileans are explicitly mentioned (Acts 2:6–8). Yet, some like Joseph Fitzmyer suggests that “nothing should be made of the omission of ‘Galilee’ here; Luke is simply using a stock phrase in mentioning the two.”¹⁰ This is reinforced by a reading of Acts 8:1, when the early Church faces

⁵ Some point out how it differs from other geographical sections of Palestine, such as Samaria, Galilee, Perea, Idumea, and the Roman province of Syria, see Fitzmyer, *The Acts of the Apostles*, 206; for texts on Samaria, see Luke 9:51–56; 10:25–37; 17:11–19; Acts 8:4–40.

⁶ Fitzmyer, *The Acts of the Apostles*, 206; Talbert, *Reading Acts*, 9.

⁷ Keener, *Acts*: vol 1, 704–708, esp., 707. He states, “Rome thus serves the function of the ends of the earth for Luke, but only in a proleptic way, as already noted, like the Diaspora Jews at Pentecost (Acts 2:5–11) or the African court official (8:27).”

⁸ Isa 41:5, 9; 42:10; 43:6; 45:22; 48:20; 49:6; 52:10; 62:11; Luke 24:47.

⁹ Talbert, *Reading Acts*, 231.

¹⁰ Fitzmyer, *The Acts of the Apostles*, 206.

persecution, the apostles are scattered to “Judea and Samaria,” with no mention of Galilee. It would be strange if no one left for Galilee, which supports the observation offered by Fitzmyer.

Yet, there is a way to understand the omission of Galilee to support the idea that the geographic list is expansionist and proleptic, along the lines of the perspective offered earlier. One plausible reason for the omission of Galilee is that Jesus’ ministry was primarily centered there, diminishing the need for additional witnesses in the Acts narrative. This explanation is admittedly more prosaic than poetic, making the symmetry and order of the list in 1:8 more of a pragmatic consideration by the author. However, and more significantly, from the perspective of ethnicity and mission, both the elision of “Galilee” as well as the emphasis on the “ends of the earth” underscores the indefinite expansion of the narrative. The outward expansion from Jerusalem, Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth is an ever expanding geographical and programmatic blueprint of Acts that frames the eventual inclusion of the Gentiles into the Christ-following community.

7.2.2 Acts 1:12–14

The first list of characters in Acts appears when the early Jesus community casts lots to choose Matthias as Judas’ replacement. Before this apostolic selection commences, a list of those present is given with those in attendance: Peter, John, James, Andrew, Philip, Thomas, Bartholomew, Matthew, James the son of Alphaeus, Simon the Zealot, Judas son of James, along with the women, Mary the mother of Jesus, and Jesus’ brothers (Acts 1:12–14). This list is mentioned after his ascension (Acts 1:1–11) and before the Pentecost event (Acts 2:1–13). The list in Acts differs slightly from the one in Luke 6:13–14, in that Judas Iscariot is excluded, while Simon Peter is still at the top of the list. The order of John, James, and Andrew is reversed from the list in Luke as well (see Table 1). This slight reordering is likely because of the prominence of Peter, John, and James in the subsequent Acts narrative.¹¹ Most notably, the Acts list includes the women, specifically Mary, the mother of Jesus, and his brothers, a detail which is absent in Luke’s list.

¹¹ Adams, *The Genre of Acts*, 184–5.

This list serves a similar function to the double ascension at the end of Luke's Gospel and the beginning of Acts, which forms continuity between volumes. Adams observes that this list reintroduces the characters from the Gospel, which is especially relevant for those that play major roles in the narrative.¹² For those readers and listeners of Acts, this would be a helpful memory aid and would establish continuity between the volumes. However, this list evinces features that are interpretively significant beyond its reintroduction of characters. For instance, it expands the parameters of the disciple lists in the Gospels to include women and the family of Jesus. For those included in the list, it highlights the expanding circle of those deemed followers of Christ, creating ramifications throughout the narrative. This expansion anticipates the widening scope of the Gospel, which will soon reach "the ends of the earth". The list stands as a starting point to evaluate the character lists from the programmatic list (Acts 1:8).

This list also possesses a proleptic dimension. In my estimation, the disciples are listed sequentially in diminishing orders of prominence: Judas was added last in the original list, replaced by Matthias in this list, while Peter is placed first, with little movement between John, James, and Andrew. Peter for example occupies a major role in the first part of Acts. The break in the pattern occurs when the list shifts to the women and Jesus' family, creating a separation from the disciples. The break in the pattern, is not necessarily a "break" but implies a cohesion within the present and future communities. This phrase "All these continued together with *one mind* in prayer" (οὗτοι πάντες ἦσαν προσκατερουῖντες ὁμοθυμαδὸν τῇ προσευχῇ) is key to understanding the proleptic dimension (Acts 1:14). Being of "one mind" or (ὁμοθυμαδόν) often relates to the expanding reality of the early church (Acts 2:46; 4:24; 5:12). In other words, those that participate in the life and rhythms of the early church are shown to be of this similar mind. This list also evinces the idea that the church is a collection of many individuals, deemphasizing the idea of a small group of disciples, but a large and inclusive group. In all, this phrase foreshadows the repetitive introduction and reintroduction of the early church communal life in Acts.

Furthermore, the pattern of names emphasizes the idea that this list expands the disciple list in accordance with Acts 1:8 and the growing geographic movement. After mentioning Mary and

¹² Adams, *The Genre of Acts*, 184.

Jesus' brothers, the last person mentioned, is Matthias. This break in the disciple list implies that all are included as disciples, not just the ones mentioned in the Gospels or those that replace others. Another possible reason for this order, is that it prevents the implication that Mary, Jesus' mother and his brothers, were of lesser importance than the disciples, which is reorganized with their inclusion into the list, in between the original eleven and Matthias the replacement of Judas. Perhaps emphasizing this point, is the fact that James, Jesus' brother, is not mentioned by name, but does occupy a significant role in the narrative (Acts 12:17; 15:13–21; 21:18–25).

The expanded disciple list in Acts 1 aligns with the mission of Acts 1:8, emphasizing the Gospel's reach to the “ends of the earth” and reflecting growing diversity. First, women, absent from Gospel lists, are now included, highlighting gender inclusion in the Jesus movement. Second, the additions are not random but include those closely connected to Jesus, such as his family, who were previously skeptical (Mark 3:21, 31–35; 6:3; Matt 10:34–37; 13:55–56; Luke 8:19–21; John 7:3–5), suggesting a shift from exclusion to inclusion. Third, omissions from previous lists, like Judas, are replaced, reinforcing that others can be added. Finally, the gathering grows, reaching 120 participants (Acts 1:15). These changes demonstrate a proleptic aspect of the list of anticipating future expansion, while maintaining coherence with the programmatic vision of Acts 1:8.

Matthew 10:2–4	Mark 3:16–19	Luke 6:12–16	Acts 1:13–15, 26
Simon “Peter”	Simon “Peter”	Simon “Peter”	Peter
Andrew “his brother”	John “Sons of Thunder”	Andrew “his brother” (of Peter)	John
James “son of Zebedee”	James “Sons of Thunder”	James	James
John “his brother”	Andrew	John	Andrew
Philip	Philip	Philip	Philip
Bartholomew	Bartholomew	Bartholomew	Thomas
Thomas	Matthew	Matthew	Bartholomew
Matthew	Thomas	Thomas	Matthew
James “son of Alphaeus”	James “son of Alphaeus”	James “son of Alphaeus”	James “son of Alphaeus”

Thaddaeus	Thaddaeus	Simon “the Zealot”	Simon “the Zealot”
Simon “the Zealot”	Simon “the Zealot”	Judas “son of James”	Judas “son of James”
Judas Iscariot	Judas “who betrayed him”	Judas “who became the traitor”	“with the women”
			Mary
			Jesus’ brothers
			Matthias

Table 1: Disciple Lists in the Gospels and Acts

7.2.3 Acts 2:5–12

The next list appears in Acts 2 during the events of Pentecost. Those present in Jerusalem at this time were described as Ἰουδαῖοι (Acts 2:5–12), noted to be “devout” (εὐλαβεῖς) and “from every nation” (ἀπὸ παντὸς ἔθνους) (Acts 2:5). Immediately following the filling of the Holy Spirit, those present heard the Galilean group speaking in their own languages (Acts 2:6–8). The list included Parthians, Medes, and Elamites, residents of Mesopotamia, Judea, Cappadocia, Pontus, Asia, Phrygia, Pamphylia, Egypt, and parts of Libya near Cyrene, as well as visitors from Rome—both Jews and converts—Cretans, and Arabs (Acts 2:9–11).

Several key questions arise from this list: How did those present recognize the Spirit-filled individuals as Galileans if they were speaking other languages? Why is “Judea” included among predominantly foreign nations? The presence of Medes and Elamites is also puzzling, as these kingdoms no longer existed at Pentecost.¹³ Many listed locations, such as Cappadocia, Pontus, Asia, Phrygia, Pamphylia, and Egypt, had significant Jewish populations, highlighting a possible pattern. The mention of Rome stands out since its people are uniquely labeled “visitors from Rome” (οἱ ἐπιδημοῦντες Ῥωμαῖοι), a distinction not given to any other group, which is odd because technically everyone there besides those from Jerusalem proper is a visitor. Lastly, the placement of Cretans and Arabs at the end, forming a couplet after “Jews and converts” (Ἰουδαῖοί

¹³ 1 En. 56:5, the Parthians and the Medes appear as enemies to Israel.

τε καὶ προσήλυτοι) (Acts 2:11), raises further interpretive questions. These observations help frame the patterns analyzed in this list, beginning with an evaluation of scholarly perspectives.

Some scholars highlight the connection between the table of nations in Genesis 10 and this passage, suggesting that the list in Acts 2 serves to “update” the Genesis 10 account, which describes the lineage of the three sons of Noah, Shem, Ham, and Japheth and occurs before the tower of Babel account (Gen 11:1–9).¹⁴ Others focus on the geographical ordering of the nations and whether that might be significant within itself, observing that the arrangement of nations begins counterclockwise, then changes direction halfway.¹⁵ Although the list generally circles around Jerusalem, it is not clear that the pattern is in itself significant outside of this fact. Along with this cartological arrangement, some scholars speculate about the source material, since this list does not align directly with the works of other Babylonian and Hellenistic historians.¹⁶ In contrast, other commentators observe similarities between this list and those found in the writings of authors such as Philo and Josephus, who enumerate the locations of Jewish communities in the diaspora.¹⁷ Related to this point, is the position that the primary purpose of this list is to emphasize the inclusion of Jews from all over the world, with special attention given to those in the diaspora.¹⁸ Outside of this “symbolic value” it is difficult to see how the geographic and cartological arrangement clarifies the purpose of this list.

¹⁴ Parsons, *Acts*, 39–40. List of nations: Gen 10:3–17; Sib Or 3:160–172, 205–209; Pseudo Philo, LAB 4:3–17. List of Jewish diaspora (Philo, *Legat.* 281–282; *Flacc.* 45–46).

¹⁵ Dunn, *The Acts of the Apostles*, online edition, *The Reaction of the Crowd*, 2.5–13; Keener, *Acts*, vol 1, 835ff.

¹⁶ Fitzmyer, *The Acts of the Apostles*, 240.

¹⁷ Philo, *Legat.* 245; 281–83; Josephus, *Ant.* 1.6.1–4, 122–47; 7.43; 14.114–8; *Ag. Ap.* 2.282; *J.W.* 2.393; see Talbert, *Reading Acts*, 26. Cf. Barrett, *Acts of the Apostles*, vol.1, 122. He states, “This list is by no means identical with that in Acts; there is no question of dependence, or, in the narrow sense, of a common source. The form however is similar, and it is probable that, unless we are to suppose that Luke made up his own list on the basis of his own knowledge of geography, he used the precedent of Jewish lists in order to construct a register of the potential people of God.”

¹⁸ Johnson, *The Acts of the Apostles*, 47; Talbert, *Reading Acts*, 25–26; Calvin, *Acts of the Apostles*, vol 1, 79. God bringing in those from a range of nations shows his greatness; Craig Keener has an excellent overview of the possible options, see Keener, *Acts*, Introduction and 1:1–2:47, 835–851. The main options for understanding this passage is by geography, astrological pattern, table of nations in Genesis 10, reversal of Babel, or proleptic universalism. See also, Keener, *Acts*, vol 1, 834.

However, other scholars focus on aspects of the list beyond its geography, toward a more Roman orientation. One scholar posits that the list of nations is a reworking of Roman lists that honors the emperor by showcasing a catalog of conquered peoples.¹⁹ Although this suggestion is interesting, it does not evince any other characteristics of a Roman procession, outside of a list of “conquered” peoples, but even that connection is tenuous. If anything, this catalog might allude to that reality for the early reader and listener, but not explicitly. Others examine this list with a focus on the inclusion of the Roman participants, suggesting that Rome is added to mark the climax of the book, as Paul finds himself there at the end.²⁰ Helpful, this perspective sees the end of the narrative while considering the beginning, with elements of foreshadowing in the lists. Although this is related to the proleptic dimensions of the lists, I believe there is more literary value to it.

Other interpretations focus on more of the ethnic and linguistic components of the list. For instance, one scholar posits that the list of nations serves as an affirmation of the language miracle and anticipates the global reach of the Gospel.²¹ The mention of Cretans and Arabs may be included to further emphasize the expansive nature of these regions.²² Regarding the ethnic components of the list, some argue that the terms “Jews” and “proselytes” do not refer to distinct ethnic categories, making the list uniformly speak of those with Jewish descent.²³ The expansive nature of this list is surely in view of the author, although it is difficult to see how προσήλυτος does not necessarily imply a different ethnicity. By definition, it includes someone who identified within a different ethno-religious system and has changed their loyalties to the God of the Jews. Other ancient authors comment on the change in their beliefs and practices, indicated their Gentile status.²⁴ But I generally agree with the positions focusing on the ethnic and linguistic dimension of the list.

¹⁹ Malina and Pilch, *Book of Acts*, 29.

²⁰ Barrett, *Acts of the Apostles*, 124.

²¹ Tannehill, *The Narrative Unity of Luke-Acts*, 27–28; for an earlier source picking up on this reflection of the multiple directions as indicating the global reach of the Gospel, see Haenchen, *The Acts of the Apostles*, 169–170.

²² Fitzmyer, *The Acts of the Apostles*, 243.

²³ Johnson, *The Acts of the Apostles*, 44.

²⁴ Proselytes who contribute to the Jewish temple have renounced their ancestral religion (Tacitus, *Hist.* 5.5.2).

A final note of observation is that a number of nations are conspicuously absent, such as Achaia, Macedonia, Cilicia, Syria, and Galatia.²⁵ Additionally, the inclusion of Judea raises questions about whether Luke was aware of the cartographical features of the Mediterranean, along with the seemingly discordant arrangement of nations. Some scholars, such as C.K. Barrett argue that Luke used other lists in the Greco-Roman world as a guide or reference to construct his own, which I find reasonable.²⁶ This brings us to a more conservative and straightforward claim, articulated by Barrett, which is that that Luke aimed to provide a rough or approximate depiction of the world as it was perceived in his own time.²⁷ This explanation helpfully positions the cartological features away from overt theological claims.

Given the plethora of interpretive options available, I tend to prefer the more straightforward and prosaic position that Luke was attempting to construct the world as he knew it, with the aid of known cartographical resources available at the time.²⁸ I also perceive a multi-ethnic and proleptic usage of this list, which was articulated earlier. This means that the list itself, is meant to be seen as an inclusive structure of other identities, primarily Jews from the diaspora, and is anticipating the inclusion of the Gentile and multi-ethnic world at the time. As the lists expand, so does the growing diversity within those lists.

What is clear is that multiple identities are cited in the list itself. Certain elements of the passage are anachronistic, while others are associated with the Jewish diaspora.²⁹ The inclusion of “residents” (οἱ κατοικοῦντες) from Judea is self-evidently odd, as why visitors so close to Jerusalem would be explicitly added, while those from Rome are designated as “visitors” (οἱ ἐπιδημοῦντες) (Acts 2:9–10). In other words, why would there be a need to include those living in

²⁵ This is a great observation mentioned by Fitzmyer, *The Acts of the Apostles*, 240; also pointed out by Kwon, *A Commentary on Acts*, 22.

²⁶ Barrett, *Acts of the Apostles*, vol 1, 121–124. Cf. Keener, *Acts*, vol 1, 78–79. Interestingly, Keener points out that Luke did not have reliable cartological sources which may explain why the movement was not exactly counterclockwise.

²⁷ Barrett, *Acts of the Apostles*, 124.

²⁸ Philo, *Flacc.* 44–47; *Legat.* 281–283; *Sib. Or.* 3.207–209; Ps.-Callisthenes 2.4.9; 2.11.2; Arrian, *Anab.* 7.15; Strabo, *Geogr.*

²⁹ See Keener, *Acts*, vol 1, 846. Cf. Fitzmyer, *The Acts of the Apostles*, 241. Fitzmyer here argues that these places did in fact exist at this time or at least implies it.

such close proximity to Jerusalem and why Roman “visitors” would be the language specified by the author? The reason for this lies in the fact that these areas, both Judea and Rome (by implication) connect to the programmatic list in Acts 1:8. In other words, they follow or fulfill the programmatic list in Acts 1:8.

Additionally, the addition of Jews and converts, Cretans and Arabs signifies ethnic identity, much like the Parthians, Medes, and Elamites, which necessarily implies that different ethnicities were present (Acts 2:10). Other identities mentioned include residents of Mesopotamia, Judea, Cappadocia, Pontus, the province of Asia, Phrygia, Pamphylia, Egypt, and parts of Libya near Cyrene, emphasizing that Jews lived in these regions, expanding the proleptic dimensions outward (Acts 2:9–10). The diversity in the list is accentuated as all of them heard in their own language, which emphasizes the future inclusion of different ethnicities (Acts 2:4, 6, 11).

To illuminate and configure these observations and insights into a discernable structure, I have presented a chart outlining the respective identities present within this list below. The identities listed are Jews who heard the Gospel in their respective languages (Acts 2:5, 8). Secondly, they are characterized in three different ways: by their specific regions, as visitors from Rome, or as coterminous with their geographical areas, meaning that there is a high degree of diversity within this group (Acts 2:9–11).

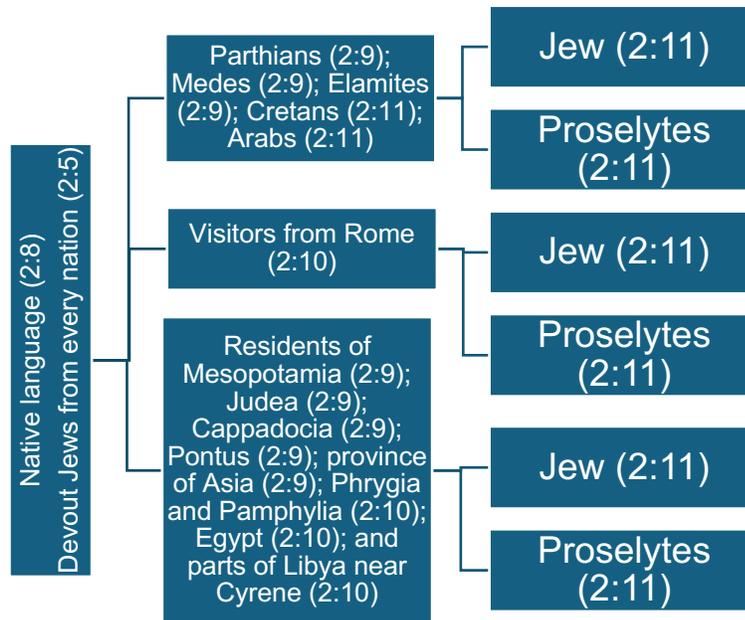


Table 2: List of Visitors for Pentecost in Acts 2

This table, which is reorganized to emphasize the constituent visitors, consisting of both Jews and proselytes, indicates that not all are ethnic Judeans, but possess their own ethnic identities since they are converts (Acts 2:11). This distinction is reinforced by contrasting the geographical term *Ἰουδαία* (Acts 2:9) with the religious designation *Ἰουδαῖος* (Acts 2:5, 11), illustrating that not all Jews are from Judea. Similarly, not everyone from these regions is ethnic Judean. Yet, they are explicitly described as “devout Jews” (Acts 2:5), which makes sense given the large influx of religious Jews arriving in Jerusalem during a festival. Furthermore, those ethnic terms such as Parthians, Medes, Elamites, Cretans and Arabs enhance this idea that there were multiple ethnicities present. The arrangement of the list and configuration of the different and overlapping identities suggest that the list itself is multi-ethnic.

7.2.4 Acts 6:5

The leader list in Acts 6:1–7 highlights the election of seven men in response to tensions in Jerusalem, where Greek-speaking Jews (Hellenists) complained that their widows were being neglected in food distribution (Acts 6:1). To address this, the Twelve appointed men to oversee

these operations (Acts 6:3–4), allowing them to focus on their mission. The selected leaders were Stephen, Philip, Prochorus, Nicanor, Timon, Parmenas, and Nicolas (Acts 6:5).³⁰

The structure of the list is significant. Stephen and Philip stand out as key figures in Acts—Stephen is martyred (Acts 7), and Philip becomes an itinerant evangelist, ministering in Samaria and later hosting Paul (Acts 8:4–40; 21:8).³¹ In contrast, little is known about the others except for Nicolas, who is identified as a “convert” (προσήλυτος) from Antioch (Acts 6:5). This term appears only four times in the New Testament, always contrasting “Jew” (Matt 23:15; Acts 2:11; 13:43), suggesting Nicolas was a former Gentile before becoming a Christ-follower. By referencing that Nicolas was a “convert” and from Antioch, his inclusion signals the ethnic expansion of the early church. As he is positioned at the end of the list, Nicolas also conceptually connects this list to others before and after (Acts 2:5–12; 13:1), reinforcing the theme of increasing diversity within the early Christian community.

The Hellenistic component of those included in the list also reveals a multi-cultural aspect of the early church. It is very likely that a significant number of Hellenistic Jews were exclusively Greek-speaking.³² What we know for certain about this list is that all the names are Greek, possibly originating from the diaspora, as it would be difficult to be a Ἑλληνιστής in Judea or Galilee.³³ Exceptions appear, like those living in Tiberias or in the surrounding Decapolis. Since Nicolas is identified as a “προσήλυτος,” in contrast to the others in the list, we can infer that the rest were Jewish.³⁴ Regardless, we have a group of Hellenist Jews, most likely originating from the diaspora, alongside one Gentile convert, who is not ethnically Jewish.

³⁰ Keener, *Acts*, vol 2, 1279–1288; for an argument that Hebraios is connected to speech, see Staples, *Israel*, 77–83.

³¹ Talbert, *Reading Acts*, 60. Talbert points out that this is a literary device of Luke. And for a source that analyzes Philip's depiction in the book of Acts, see Spencer, *The Portrait of Philip in Acts*.

³² Malina and Pilch, *Book of Acts*, 56.

³³ Johnson, *The Acts of the Apostles*, 107; Fitzmyer, *The Acts of the Apostles*, 350–351; *Acts*, vol 2, 1279–1288.

³⁴ Haenchen, *The Acts of the Apostles*, 264.

Yet, others see this list in another light. Luke Timothy Johnson argues that when Luke intends to make an explicit contrast between Jew and Greek in ethnic terms, he employs uses Ἕλληνα, and not Ἑλληνιστής, meaning that this is a linguistic category.³⁵ This is also echoed by earlier interpreters with some going so far to explicitly say that all were Jewish Christians, including Nicolas.³⁶ While the general observation that Ἑλληνιστής is a linguistic category holds merit, the presence of προσήλυτος among the leadership (Acts 6:5) and within the broader community in Jerusalem, as noted in Acts 2:11, suggests that non-Jews were also included. In this passage, Luke is not making a direct contrast, since the description of the community implies that it was multi-ethnic to some degree. The presence of both Ἑλληνιστής and προσήλυτος in Jerusalem during this time (Acts 6:1) indicates a multi-cultural and multi-ethnic environment.

This list is structured with two key priorities. First, the prominence of Stephen and Philip suggests a descending order of importance, which explains the lack of information about the middle names.³⁷ However, Nicolas stands out with more details than the others, raising a second consideration: his placement at the end serves to conceptually link the lists in Acts. In Acts 2:11, both Jews and converts appear at the end of the Pentecost list, mirroring the inclusion of at least one προσήλυτος (Nicolas) in the Jerusalem leadership (Acts 6:5). This suggests a thematic connection between these lists. Additionally, Nicolas' Antiochian origin ties him to the later leader list in Antioch (Acts 13:1), reinforcing the expansion of the movement. Similarly, in Acts 13:1, Saul is placed at the end of the list but later serves as the link to the companions listed in Acts 20:4–5. In both cases, a key figure at the end of one list introduces the next, shaping the narrative's progression.

7.2.5 Acts 13:1

³⁵ Johnson, *The Acts of the Apostles*, 105. Here Johnson makes the salient point that when Luke wants to make an explicit contrast, he uses the term Ἕλληνα (11:20; 14:1; 16:1; 19:17; 21:18); see also, Parsons, *Acts*, 82. Interestingly, Paul refers to himself as a Ἑβραῖος rather than a Ἑλληνιστής (Phil 3:5; 2 Cor 11:22).

³⁶ Haenchen, *Acts*, 264; See Fitzmyer, *Acts*, 347, citing “C.F.D. Moule, “Once More, Who Were the Hellenists?” *ExpTim* 70 [1958-59]: 100-102.”

³⁷ This is echoed by Sean Adams who observes, “Again, this list commences with two characters who are found later in the narrative and appear in decreasing order with respect to the amount of narrative given to them”, Adams, *The Genre of Acts*, 186.

In Acts 13:1, there is a list of prophets and teachers in Antioch. The list includes Barnabas, Simeon called Niger, Lucius the Cyrenian, Manaen, a lifelong friend of Herod the tetrarch, and Saul (Acts 13:1). Scholars are split in their understanding of the list, its order, and arrangement. Some point out the apparent disorganization of the list regarding its order, symmetry, and lack of pairing, which is encapsulated in the fact that Barnabas and Saul are separated in the list.³⁸ While some suggest that Barnabas is listed first due to his leadership role, others refrain from positing a definitive organizational structure, instead emphasizing the multicultural dimensions of the group.³⁹ Some propose that the separation between Barnabas and Saul might be understood grammatically, suggesting that the first part of the list pertains to prophets (Barnabas, Simeon, and Lucius?) while the last two refer to teachers (Manaen and Saul), marked by the post-positive conjunction ($\tau\epsilon$).⁴⁰ This interpretation may be inferring too much, since the second $\tau\epsilon$ appears after Manaen, leaving the whole grammatical construction uneven and discordant.

Another approach to identifying the literary structures embedded within the book of Acts is proposed by Charles Talbert, who states, “Within the inclusion (13:1–3; 14:24–28), the material falls into an ABA’B’A“B” pattern (A = to Jews, B = to Gentiles), reflecting the motif ‘to the Jew first and also to the Greek’ (3:26; 13:46; Rom 1:16; 2:10).”⁴¹ In this hypothesis, 13:1–3 and 14:24–28 function as the *inclusio* of this pattern (A=13:4–5; B=13:6–12; A=13:13–45; B=13:44–52; A=14:1–7; B=14:8–18, 19–23).⁴² In this case, Acts 13:1–3 consists of four major components in which the list in v.1 is part of the “introduction” to the front part of the *inclusio*.⁴³ Instead of situating this within the larger literary framework, I believe the list itself requires a deeper examination of its literary and ethnic construction.

³⁸ The list is importing variety into the list, since if the list were ordered by pairs, then Barnabas and Saul would have been coupled, see Barrett, *Acts of the Apostles*, 603.

³⁹ For a commentator who points out Barnabas’ leadership role, see Fernando, *Acts*, 373; for a commentator who points out the multicultural aspects of the list, see Stott, *The Message of Acts*, 216; Parsons, *Acts*, 184.

⁴⁰ Keener, *Acts*, vol 2, 1982, citing “Dunn, *Acts*, 172–173; Longenecker, *Acts*, 212.”

⁴¹ Talbert, *Reading Acts*, 115.

⁴² Talbert, *Reading Acts*, 116.

⁴³ Talbert, *Reading Acts*, 116.

Despite this uncertainty, scholars generally recognize that lists serve specific purposes and that their order often conveys underlying meanings. Notably, two of the names in the list, Simeon and Manaen, are mentioned only here. Manaen for example, is described as a close friend (σύντροφος) of Herod the tetrarch, suggesting high social status among the leaders of Antioch. But his high status does not factor explicitly in the list or in a discernable way, for it is not clear how that status affects his position in the list. Therefore, one might conclude that the list reflects the relative importance of these individuals within the Antiochian church at the time, as opposed to their social status in general. This interpretation positions Barnabas as a longstanding leader, while Saul, placed last, is recognized as a more recent figure in the community. Although this is a reasonable explanation, I believe there is more to this list, than a descending order of importance in the church in Antioch.

I believe that like the other lists in Acts, this one also exemplifies multi-ethnic characteristics. The list includes two likely Africans, Simeon and Lucius, alongside two Jews, Barnabas and Saul. Manaen is probably Jewish, but he could also just as likely be Idumean, Roman, or Syrian as his exact connection to Herod's household remains unclear. Speculatively, like the literary pattern proposed above by Talbert, it is distinctly possible to have both Barnabas and Saul provide the *inclusio* for the list itself with all the other leaders being Gentile or alternating ethnicities, seen in the order of this pattern: A, B, A/B, B, A (A=Jew; B=Gentile). Admittedly, this is speculative, but it would be an explanation for how Barnabas and Saul are positioned at the beginning and end of the list but are featured together for much of the subsequent narrative. It also proposes an explanation for why we know that both Barnabas and Saul are Jewish, but the others are more ambiguous.

Saul appears at the end of the list in Acts 13:1 because his name introduces the next list in Acts 20:4–5, which details Paul's traveling companions. Just as Nicolas in Acts 6:5 links to the Antioch leaders, Saul serves as a bridge between these lists. Furthermore, Luke highlights the diverse cultural and ethnic backgrounds of the Antiochian leaders to emphasize the expanding multi-ethnic nature of the Christ-following movement. Some scholars like Parsons sees the diversity within this list solely in an economic and social capacity asserting that they “are no less diverse in their social

and economic backgrounds than were the Twelve whom Jesus originally called.”⁴⁴ I would expand Parsons’s argument to say that this group is profoundly more diverse. Antioch, as a multicultural hub, brought together Jews, Africans, and people of various social statuses into a single community. The list follows a structure of relative importance, with Barnabas first and Saul last, similar to the disciple list in Acts 1. However, it also reflects the movement’s growing ethnic diversity, reinforcing the trajectory set in Acts 1:8 and echoed in Acts 2:5–12 and 6:5, and connects lists together throughout the narrative.

7.2.6 Acts 20:4–5

Finally, the last list in Acts details the friends and co-workers of Paul in Acts 20:4–5. In this passage, Paul and his team depart from Ephesus, traveling to Macedonia, then into Greece, and attempt to sail to Syria. However, they are sidetracked by a plot against Paul and return to Macedonia instead (Acts 20:1–2). This journey is set against the backdrop of their eventual return to Jerusalem (Acts 21).⁴⁵ At this point, Paul is accompanied by several individuals, including Sopater, son of Pyrrhus, from Berea; Aristarchus and Secundus from Thessalonica; Gaius from Derbe; Timothy; and Tychicus and Trophimus from the province of Asia (Acts 20:4).

A few different angles that scholars utilize to enhance their interpretations of this list, include its numerical value, geography, and the influence of Paul’s ministry. One interpretation analyzes the number of seven companions as significant, highlighting a numerical interpretation.⁴⁶ Although seven companions are listed, nothing about the context reveals anything more significant about their number. Some scholars observe that Paul’s companions represent the various regions where the Gospel spread.⁴⁷ Related to this perspective are those that highlight the effectiveness of Paul’s ministry, suggesting that this group symbolizes the “fruits of Paul’s labors” while also evoking

⁴⁴ Parsons, *Acts*, 184; similar sentiment articulated by Peterson, *The Acts of the Apostles*, 374–375.

⁴⁵ Adams, *The Genre of Acts*, 187. For Adams, this list, “marks the beginning of his travels back to Jerusalem.”

⁴⁶ Talbert, *Reading Acts*, 175; Parsons, *Acts*, 286.

⁴⁷ Parsons, *Acts*, 286.

connections to Jesus' own companions.⁴⁸ While these interpretations are reasonable, they are not sufficiently well evidenced. Although the companions represent different geographical regions, it is not clear where these companions heard the Gospel, on their travels or at home, or to what degree Paul was involved in sharing the message with them specifically. Even as the geography of the companions seem to be a major component of this list, it does not appear to be literarily patterned or meaningful, much like the geography in Acts 2. Timothy's city is omitted because his name was mentioned earlier in the narrative (Acts 16:1–3). This also does not explain why Gaius and Aristarchus have their cities included, when they appear just before this list in the narrative (Acts 19:29).⁴⁹ The discontinuity between these explanations shows that there is more to the list than the geography, such as the expanding multi-ethnic diversity in the Christ-following movement.

Another interpretation frames the list in view of the collective whole, instead of examining the importance of each individual. Malina and Pilch suggest that the specific identities of Paul's travel companions are not as important as viewing the group as a collective, given the collectivistic nature of the culture at the time.⁵⁰ In many cases, this perspective is surely relevant for a modern Western audience with different assumptions, with our individualistic worldview. However, I argue that in examining the individuals within the group and the geographical references, we see the diversity of the group more clearly.

Several points help us to understand this observation. Timothy, a notable figure in Acts, occupies the fifth position in the list of seven (Acts 20:4–5). Although he is multi-ethnic, Luke does not mention that identity in this list, nor does he attach a geographical location to him (Acts 16:1–3). This is perhaps because his identity and location were already mentioned earlier in the narrative. Sopater is associated with Berea, while both Aristarchus and Secundus hail from Thessalonica, which is located about 45 miles from Berea. Gaius is identified as being from Derbe, while

⁴⁸ Tannehill, *The Narrative Unity of Luke-Acts*, 2.246.

⁴⁹ There are a few reasons why Timothy's city was not included, (1) he was from Derbe and thus is meant to be read with Gaius, (2) Lystra's close proximity to Derbe was enough of an association to omit Lystra, or (3) like the reference to Paul (ἀὐτῶ) without any reference to a city because of his importance, perhaps Timothy at the time of composition was also well-known enough to have omitted his city.

⁵⁰ Malina and Pilch, *Book of Acts*, 143.

Timothy is most likely from Lystra (Acts 16:1).⁵¹ Tychicus and Trophimus are both from the province of Asia.⁵² Macedonia, where Berea and Thessalonica are located, is the westernmost province mentioned, while the list skips over the province of Asia to include Galatia, where Derbe and Lystra are found, before concluding again in Asia, back west.⁵³ These locations are diverse and wide-ranging, showing that there is multi-ethnic expansion, connecting back to Acts 1:8.

Some of the names appear in other parts of Acts and the New Testament which help us to better locate these companions.⁵⁴ If Sopater is the same individual mentioned in Romans 16:21 (Σωσίπατρος) then we can plausibly infer that only Sopater is Jewish.⁵⁵ On the other hand, Gaius and Aristarchus are mentioned earlier in Acts as being in Ephesus with Paul, and both are referenced as “Macedonians” (Acts 19:29). Interestingly, although Gaius is identified as a Macedonian in Acts 19, he is listed as being from Derbe in Acts 20:4. On the other hand, Aristarchus is also mentioned alongside Gaius as a Macedonian, in 20:4, his hometown is Thessalonica, which would correspond to the Macedonian reference. In Acts 27, Aristarchus is specified as being a Macedonian from Thessalonica.⁵⁶

One wonders about the relationship between the two references to Gaius because both are mentioned as Paul’s travelling companion and in close proximity to Aristarchus (Acts 19:29; 20:4).

⁵¹ Most likely his city of origin was Lystra, see Acts 16:1–2. Paul went to Derbe and Lystra, and immediately after the text mentions the two cities that Timothy was well-known, which is Lystra and Iconium. The overlapping references to Lystra is enough to make an inference, although ultimately speculative.

⁵² Tychicus in some manuscriptal evidence is transcribed as Ευτυχος, who is referenced in Acts 20:9 as the young man who fell out of the window during one of Paul’s teachings, Codex Bezae D (05). Εφεσσιοι D sy^{hmg} sa. Tychicus and Trophimus in other manuscriptal traditions are described as the “Ephesians,” the “Ephesian,” or the “Asians.” The interesting aspect of this is that Ephesus was in the larger Roman province of Asia, so Ephesus only adds specificity to the geography. Perhaps this was done to keep the uniformity of geography limited to cities instead of provinces, or likely Ephesus was conceptually connected to Asia as it directly preceded this in Acts 19.

⁵³ Fitzmyer, *The Acts of the Apostles*, 665.

⁵⁴ Sopater (Rom 16:21), Aristarchus (Acts 19:29; Col 4:10; Phlm 24), Timothy (Rom 16:21; 1 Cor 4:17; 16:10; 2 Cor 1:1, 19); Tychicus (Eph 6:21–22; Col 4:7; 2 Tim 4:12; Titus 3:12), and Trophimus (2 Tim 4:20); Gaius (Acts 19:29; Rom 16:23; 1 Cor 1:14; 3 John 1). Furthermore, while there are seven names in this list, there are potentially eight or more if we include the “we” sections, suggesting Luke may also be part of this group, see Fitzmyer, *The Acts of the Apostles*, 665.

⁵⁵ If Sopater is indeed the same individual as Sosipater mentioned in Romans 16:21, then he could be identified as a Jew or a relative of Paul (συγγενής). If this is the case, then he is Jewish.

⁵⁶ Acts 27:2. Interestingly, some manuscriptal traditions include Secundus as well, NT28: “Θεσσαλονικεων δε Αρισταρχος και Σεκουνδος (Αρισταρχου και Σεκουνδου 2147) 614. 1505. 2147 sy^h.”

While it remains uncertain if these references are to the same individual, it raises questions about identity: If someone is born in one location but spends a considerable time elsewhere, can they be considered from both places? Additionally, how long must a person reside in a location to be identified as from that area? One explanation which rationalizes Gaius' dual geographical reference is exactly this. He is Macedonian (Acts 19:29) but has spent a considerable amount of time in Derbe (Acts 20:4), making sense of this dual location, much like the experience of migrants or itinerant folks today.

This brings us to the central exegetical and literary observation, which is that following the enumeration of Paul's companions, the author specifically mentions that they went ahead and waited for Paul in Troas (Acts 20:5). The following verses state that Paul stayed in Philippi after the days of Unleavened Bread, then met the group back in Troas (Acts 20:6). Most commentators pick up on this detail and make the point that Paul is an observant Jew because of his stay until after the seven-day festival.⁵⁷ But what about the group that left for Troas? Why would the author make the point that they stayed in Philippi until after the Feast of Unleavened Bread, while the other group left? We know that Paul and his group intended to pass through Macedonia to encourage communities there (Acts 20:1–2). But there is no indication of why the companions made the choice they made. If this group diverges at this key Jewish calendrical date from Paul, with no indication of their Jewish religious disposition, perhaps this group was primarily made up of Gentile Christ-followers, outside of Sopater and Timothy.

But there is more from the narrative in Acts that might indicate their non-Jewish identity. In Jerusalem, Paul meets James and the leaders there, sharing with the group about their missionary journeys (Acts 21:18–19). In an attempt to portray Paul as an observant Jew, James presents four men of their own community, who are under a vow (Acts 21:23). Paul accompanies these four Jewish men through the purification rites and goes to the temple to give notice of the ritual (Acts 21:23–26). However, Jews from the province of Asia become distressed when they see Paul at the temple and seize him, accusing him of bringing Greeks into the precinct, specifically citing Trophimus the Ephesian (Acts 21:29). This raises an important question: Why would the Asian

⁵⁷ Talbert, *Reading Acts*, 176; Parsons, *Acts*, 286; Fitzmyer, *The Acts of the Apostles*, 666.

Jews assume that Paul had brought Greeks into the temple, particularly Trophimus?⁵⁸ The most plausible explanation is that Trophimus, being a Greek from Ephesus, is a Gentile follower of Christ.⁵⁹ His presence alongside Paul likely fueled suspicions among the Asian Jews, who knew Trophimus' identity.

If so, this aligns with the expanding Gentile mission in Paul's ministry. The diversity is also reflected in the geographical origins of his companions, who come from three provinces: Macedonia, Asia, and Galatia. This list is the most diverse and multi-ethnic in Acts, emphasizing the growing inclusion of various communities in the mission to the Gentiles.

7.2.6.1 Summary of Findings

The lists found throughout the book (Acts 1:12–14; 2:5–12; 6:5; 13:1; 20:4–5) reveal a progressively mixed ethnic composition among the disciples and Christ followers. These lists are strategically placed within the narrative, marking key sections of the story and highlighting the expanding multi-ethnic dimension of the early Christ-following community. The programmatic geographical list in Acts 1:8 serves as the paradigm for understanding this expanding diversity, framing the movement from Jerusalem to the ends of the earth. The inclusion of “proselytes” (προσήλυτοι) in Acts 2:11 and 6:5 conceptually links these passages, while Antioch acts as a geographical and narrative bridge between the lists in 6:5 and 13:1. Similarly, Saul serves as a connecting figure between the lists in 13:1 and 20:4–5. These lists are embedded purposefully within the narrative of Acts, moving outward from Jerusalem to Rome. In doing so, they function as narrative signposts, emphasizing the broadening ethnic and geographical scope of the Christ-following movement. Their strategic placement and structural arrangement underscore their significance in portraying the community's growing diversity and the fulfillment of the mission outlined in Acts 1:8.

⁵⁸ Cohen, *The Beginnings of Jewishness*, 360–362. Here, Cohen argues that it would have been very difficult to prove or disprove whether or not Trophimus was a Gentile, adding to the complexity of ethnic identity in the ancient world. This is perhaps why Luke does not record Paul's response to his accusers.

⁵⁹ Fitzmyer, *The Acts of the Apostles*, 666. “In any case, one concludes from the latter passage that Trophimus was a Gentile Christian.”

7.3 Timothy in Acts 16

For this section, I will examine the literary depiction of the circumcision of Timothy in Acts 16 and its significance within the larger context of multi-ethnic identity. Timothy, as noted earlier, had a Jewish mother and a Greek father, and since his mixed parentage is recorded in the text, it makes him a unique figure in the early Christian movement (Acts 16:1). His body becomes a critical site of meaning, as he is described and portrayed in complex and nuanced ways. The rite of circumcision is central to this narrative complexity, especially when viewed in juxtaposition with the decision of the Jerusalem Council (Acts 15:1–29).⁶⁰ The Council's ruling in Acts released Gentile converts from the obligations of specific Jewish rites and rituals, such as circumcision, as a requirement for becoming Christ-followers. Yet, immediately following this, we find Paul taking Timothy to be circumcised. This act raises critical questions about the relationship between ethnicity, religious identity, and the bodily practices that mark those identities. Timothy's case is especially significant due to his prominence in the New Testament. He is frequently mentioned across multiple letters and narratives.⁶¹ His role in the early Christian mission and the apostolic leadership places him at the heart of both theological and social developments in the nascent church, all of which, help us to see the importance of his multi-ethnic identity.

The increased presence of diverse Christ-followers among Paul's companions in Acts 20:4–5 serves as a crucial backdrop for understanding Timothy's circumcision in Acts 16. Following Eric Barreto, I contend that the author of Acts depicts Timothy's circumcision in light of the previous council, precisely because he was both Jewish and Greek, that is, multi-ethnic. Paul ordered the circumcision because, as the number of Jewish Gospel workers decreased with the Gospel's expansion, Timothy's Jewish heritage became increasingly important. The Jews they ministered to knew of Timothy's Greek lineage (Acts 16:3), and because of this, Paul, out of necessity, emphasized Timothy's Jewish background. His circumcision allowed Timothy to be accepted in Jewish circles, utilizing his dual identity to the mission's advantage. In this literary context, Timothy's ethnic malleability became a key asset in bridging the gap between Jewish and Gentile

⁶⁰ Discussion about circumcision as an identity marker, see Horrell, *Ethnicity and Inclusion*, 157–159.

⁶¹ (Acts 17:14–15; 18:5; 19:22; 20:4; Rom 16:21; 1 Cor 4:17; 16:10; Phil 2:19; 1 Thess 1:1, 3:2, 6; 2 Thess 1:1; 2 Cor 1:1; Phil 1:1; Col 1:1; Phlm 1:1).

communities. This argument hinges on the list of companions later in the narrative, in Acts 20:4–5, which I have previously discussed. The predominance of gentile Gospel workers in this list shows that Jewish workers were becoming fewer as the mission expanded, or that the Gentile communities were increasing. Paul’s decision to have Timothy circumcised highlights the strategic use of Timothy’s multi-ethnic background to meet the growing need for Jewish workers in these areas. Thus, Timothy’s circumcision was not a contradiction of the Jerusalem Council’s decision in Acts 15 but a practical response to the evolving ethnic composition of the Christian mission. This interpretation underscores the adaptive strategies employed by early Christian leaders, particularly in contexts where ethnic identities were fluid and multi-dimensional.

In Acts, Timothy’s identity is linked to the diaspora, as he most likely originated from Lystra (Acts 16:1). Those in the diaspora often reformulated their sense of belonging, especially if they felt a strong connection to their ancestral homeland. For example, this cultural reformulation can be seen in the necessity of creating translations of Hebrew Scriptures into Greek or utilizing Greek genres and literary adaptations for Jewish texts.⁶² These adaptive strategies connected to the intended audiences and show the degree to which cultural exchange occurred in literature. We can assume other aspects of culture were influences as well, such as cuisine and clothing. At the very least, Timothy’s identity likely reflects aspects of this multi-dimensional complexity, and at the most, was totally assimilated. John Barclay observes that “the multi-locale attachments of diaspora—belonging both here and there—create an ambiguity of identity, whose particular configurations vary, of course, from case to case.”⁶³ The fact that, Eunice, Timothy’s mother married a Greek, their son had a Greek name, Jews in the area knew his father was Greek (Acts 16:3), he was not circumcised, and lived in the diaspora are all grounds for believing that Timothy was assimilated.⁶⁴

⁶² Rajak, *Translation and Survival*; Adams, *Greek Genres and Jewish Authors*; for a source about the diaspora throughout history, see Diner, *The Oxford Handbook of the Jewish Diaspora*.

⁶³ Barclay, “Introduction: Diaspora Negotiations,” in *Negotiating Diaspora Jewish Strategies in the Roman Empire*, 2. See also, Hall, “Cultural Identity and Diaspora,” in *Colonial Discourse and Post-Colonial Theory: A Reader*, 227–37. He argues that the diaspora experience is constructed through hybridity, a constant transformation with the present, past, and vast diversity within a specific location. This is in contrast to the traditional conception of diaspora with a foreign people with a singular tie to a historic homeland.

⁶⁴ Cohen, *The Beginnings of Jewishness*, 35–6; Cohen, “Jewish Names as Cultural Indicators in Antiquity”: 97–128.

And while we can only speculate to what degree Timothy was enculturated, there is no doubt that his identity was influenced by his cultural environment in the diaspora.

I also want to briefly address how mixtures of competing cultures and ethnicities in a similar and related context can shape an individual's identity, providing a framework for approaching Timothy. Later in early Christian discourse, Christians were labeled as a "third race," as they did not fit into established categories like "Jew," "Greek," or "Gentile." They were also not fully understood within existing ethno-religious paradigms, much like the debates surrounding Jewish versus Judean identity discussed in the previous chapter.⁶⁵ In many cases, Christians transcended conventional ethnic language, using their faith as the dominant interpretive lens for understanding ethnic and personal identity. This idea of a "third race" aligns well with the concept of mixed ancestry, which presents a way of being that is flexible and malleable.⁶⁶ In this sense, Timothy's multi-ethnic background can be seen as a reflection of this fluid existence, making the language of a "third race" particularly apt.

Those of multi-ethnic backgrounds often faced challenges fully identifying with one part of their heritage over the other. This tension can be heightened when they attempt to assimilate into the dominant culture. While scholars often focus on other aspects of the narrative, Timothy's role as an interpretive paradigm should not be overlooked. Willie James Jennings insightfully addresses this, stating, "Commentators tend to run much too quickly past Timothy to come to Paul and the complications of his mission. The mission, however, should in truth be read through the prism of Timothy's body."⁶⁷ In other words, despite the narrative's emphasis on Timothy's unique identity,

⁶⁵ Lieu, *Christian Identity in the Jewish and Graeco-Roman World*, 253, 239–68. She shows the continuity/discontinuity of Christians connecting their identity with Israel but also seeing discontinuity with that history as well as with pagan attempts to differentiate and demean Christians. The self-identification through the act of "othering" is further developed 269–97. (Clement of Alexandria, *Strom.* 6.5; *Diogn.* 1, 5; *Herm. Sim.* 9.17; Suetonius, *Nero* 16.2; Tertullian, *Nat.* 1.8 [he argues that this is in regard to belief not race]; *Scorp.* 10; *Mart. Pol.* 14, 17 [righteous race]). In a Jewish context this is apparent as well. For instance, Josephus states that the Jewish nation does not encourage learning and study of other languages including Greek (Josephus, *Ant.* 20.263).

⁶⁶ For early Christian examples of engaging with ethnic language (γένος) for its movement as well as transcending it, see Leiu, "Identity Games in Early Christian Texts: The Letter to Diognetus," in *Identities and Ideologies in Early Jewish and Christian Texts, and in Modern Biblical Interpretation*, 59–71. Also found within her larger text, Lieu, *Neither Jew nor Greek?*; See also, Gruen, "Christians as a 'Third Race': Is Ethnicity at Issue?" in *Christianity in the Second Century: Themes and Developments*, 235–49.

⁶⁷ Jennings, *Acts*, 152.

scholars tend to shift focus onto Paul and the broader mission. Instead, understanding Timothy's body and identity is key to interpreting this passage and the complexity of the mission it represents. Within his body we see the conflict of tension and fluidity with identifying with ancestral heritage.

Commentators differ in their interpretation of the emphasis or lens through which this narrative is viewed. Bruce Malina, for instance, argues that Timothy's Greek name and father would have exempted him from circumcision, suggesting that being "Greek" (Ἕλληνα) here refers to socio-cultural status rather than ethnicity.⁶⁸ According to this view, Timothy was the product of a mixed cultural marriage, not necessarily an ethnic one, which emphasizes the socially constructed nature of identity.⁶⁹ Malina further argues that the circumcision Timothy underwent was symbolic, rather than the full removal of the foreskin. This interpretation, Malina suggests, helps reconcile the tension between the Jerusalem Council's decision in Acts 15 (where Gentiles were not required to be circumcised) and Paul's decision to circumcise Timothy in Acts 16.⁷⁰ Pragmatically, Malina posits that this symbolic circumcision would explain how Timothy was able to travel immediately afterward (Acts 16:3–4), although the text does not detail the specifics of the procedure.⁷¹ According to Malina, Timothy's Greek father "would surely not allow his son to be mutilated in this totally un-Greek (that is, uncivilized) way," since circumcision would have lowered his son's social status.⁷² Here, Malina interprets the contrast between Timothy's Jewish mother (γυναικὸς Ἰουδαίας) and his Greek father (πατὴρ δὲ Ἕλληνας) (Acts 16:1) as reflecting the socio-economic differences between his parents rather than ethnic ones. While Malina's perspective offers valuable insight into the socio-cultural aspects of Timothy's identity, it overemphasizes the socio-economic and honor-shame paradigms in this episode while downplaying the ethnic tension inherent in his body. The narrative clearly emphasizes the importance of Timothy's mixed heritage, and this tension is integral to understanding why Paul took the steps he did regarding Timothy's circumcision. Timothy's physical circumcision is in view here, and not a "symbolic" one. As noted

⁶⁸ Malina, *Timothy*, 101.

⁶⁹ Malina, *Timothy*, 102. He argues that Israelites living in majority non-Israelite contexts would have taken on identifiers of "Judean" and "Greek" pertaining to their relationship to Greek cultural and education.

⁷⁰ Malina, *Timothy*, 104–5.

⁷¹ Malina, *Timothy*, 102.

⁷² Malina, *Timothy*, 104.

earlier, the difficulty in outlining what a symbolic circumcision exactly means makes this reading unnecessarily obscure.

Mitzi J. Smith offers a different perspective, arguing that Paul's decision to circumcise Timothy was rooted in "respectability politics," the notion that individuals from minority cultures adopt certain practices to gain respectability and acceptance within a dominant society.⁷³ In this view, Paul has Timothy circumcised to ensure acceptance among Jewish communities, leveraging cultural respectability for their mission. Smith highlights how minorities in majority spaces are often acutely aware of such cultural dynamics. The challenge with this perspective, however, lies in the fact that, within the broader context, Jews, especially those in the diaspora, were themselves a minority, not the dominant group.⁷⁴ In this case, Timothy's circumcision would represent a move to appease a minority culture (the Jews) while Timothy was already accepted within the dominant, or majority Greco-Roman culture due to his Greek father. Smith also argues that circumcising Timothy is hypocritical considering the Jerusalem Council's decision (Acts 15).⁷⁵ However, Timothy is both Jewish and Greek, which complicates the situation. It is more plausible that Timothy had not been circumcised because, having been thoroughly assimilated into Greco-Roman culture, he and his family did not see the necessity for the ritual. Or perhaps they thought it would present problems in non-Jewish contexts, which would directly argue "respectability politics" from the other direction. And although this is not explicitly mentioned in the text, I feel confident speculating that Timothy's mixed heritage might have raised questions in Jewish areas and thus, Paul saw the need to physically circumcise Timothy.

⁷³ Smith, "Paul, Timothy, and the respectability Politics of Race": 1–13. She draws parallels between this and non-white people in a white dominated space.

⁷⁴ Cf. Smith, "Paul, Timothy, and the respectability Politics of Race," 6. She states, "In a racialized society, few would identify Timothy as bi-racial; the dominant group in a biracial society would view Timothy as Greek/Gentile, associating him with the subordinated race." She also states, "The Jewish leadership and apostles dominate over the Gentile believers in that the former make the crucial decision about outsiders and insiders, how people become insiders and on what basis; the Jews are the dominant race in Acts (of course Rome is the overarching hegemony)" (2). It is true that within the narrative of Acts, the point of view is situated within a context that Jewish religious history and characters are dominate. But the actions and larger context, as Smith points out, is determined by Rome, or the larger Gentile hegemony. So, the actions of the "dominate Jews," in the case of Acts is constrained by the overarching dominant vs. subservient context. In other words, their actions in many instances do not make sense without reversing the larger hierarchy. To not acknowledge that is to set aside this larger context and view these actions within a context with is narrower than required.

⁷⁵ Smith, "Paul, Timothy, and the respectability Politics of Race," 4.

Similar to the previous interpretation which casts Paul as politically and religiously savvy, are arguments that reflect the idea of accommodating Jewish sensibilities, giving credibility to Timothy for his act, weigh the pressure that Paul felt in having Timothy circumcised.⁷⁶ Others, however, see this episode as a Lukan invention, an attempt by the author to depict Paul as a strict observer of Jewish law.⁷⁷ This perspective misses the ethnic fluidity revealed by Timothy's dual identities, which is key to understanding this. But before I establish my own claims about this, one more important consideration deserves attention.

Shaye Cohen offers an alternative view, arguing that Timothy was portrayed as a Gentile with a Jewish mother, diverging from the later Rabbinic matrilineal principle of Jewish identity.⁷⁸ He highlights that early Christian commentators like Jerome, Augustine, and Ambrosiaster did not universally consider Timothy Jewish, reinforcing his argument.⁷⁹ This ethnic ambiguity, where Timothy is seen as Gentile in one era and Jewish in another, exemplifies the central premise of this book: multi-ethnic identity adapts to different contexts. Cohen's analysis underscores the ancient debate over whether Timothy's Jewish heritage defined him, suggesting that the matrilineal principle was not yet established in his time.⁸⁰ We know that in later Rabbinic literature, the data concerning the legal status of children of mixed marriages are far more concerned with Jewish women and Gentile men, rather than Gentile women and Jewish men, perhaps indicating its prevalence.⁸¹ This supports the likelihood that the matrilineal principle had yet to be codified.⁸²

⁷⁶ Parsons, *Acts*, 222; Talbert, *Reading Acts*, 137; Johnson, *The Acts of the Apostles*, 288–289; Fitzmyer, *The Acts of the Apostles*, 574–575. See also Fernando, *Acts*, 435; Darrell L. Bock, *Acts*, 523. “Paul’s action shows his desire to continue to reach out to Jews and affirm his new faith’s link to the promises of the past in Judaism.” This is in contrast to Titus, who was not circumcised since he was not of mixed heritage. Some believe Paul was trying to “normalize” Timothy’s ambiguous identity, as being uncircumcised while of Jewish descent would have caused more issues than it solved in their mission context, see Keener, *Acts*, vol 3, 2311–2316.

⁷⁷ Haenchen, *The Acts of the Apostles*, 478–482.

⁷⁸ Cohen, *The Beginnings of Jewishness*, 363–377.

⁷⁹ Cohen, *The Beginnings of Jewishness*, 363–377.

⁸⁰ Cohen, *The Beginnings of Jewishness*, 377. For a history of the development of the matrilineal principle, especially in regard to the Bible, Second Temple period, first century extra-biblical data—which generally revealed a lack of knowledge about this principle until Rabbinic literature, see, Cohen, “The Origins of the Matrilineal Principle in Rabbinic Law”: 19–53.

⁸¹ Satlow, *Tasting the Dish*, 83–118.

⁸² Some scholars point out that in the ancient world, ethnicity was typically passed down through the father, see Grabbe, *A History of the Jews*, vol 4, 495–496. Later Rabbinic literature, however, establishes the matrilineal principle, where Jewish identity is determined by the mother. For a concise yet detailed history of exegesis between the second and eighteenth centuries, most of whom understand Timothy to be a gentile, see Cohen, “Was Timothy

A mixed individual's self-identity could vary significantly depending on their environment. A person with a Jewish Christian mother and a Greek father, living in Rome, might self-identify in ways that emphasize their Jewish heritage, due to the prominence of Jewish culture in that context. On the other hand, a person with a Jewish father and an Egyptian mother, living in Alexandria, might lean more toward identifying with the surrounding Greek and Egyptian cultures, influenced by the larger cultural milieu. Although not specifically multi-ethnic, Alexandrian Jews dealt with the various political and cultural tensions in the city, which affected their cultural and religious identities.⁸³ In other contexts, monarchs such as Cleopatra and Zenobia in late antiquity were presented as navigating cultural tensions such as education, language, and politics.⁸⁴ I also cite a few examples in earlier chapters in which different characters are portrayed differently depending on the author's intention along with the social-status of the character.

What we do know is that Timothy was circumcised by Paul because he was well-known in the area, and the Jews knew his father was Greek (Acts 16:3). This knowledge seems to have led some scholars to posit an either/or juxtaposition between Jewish and Greek identities. Eric Barreto engages this dilemma, stating, "In the end, asking whether Timothy was Jewish excludes an additional fitting alternative: that ethnicities are not either/or propositions but pliable constructions. Asking the question expecting one or another side of a binary pair belies the complexities of the construction of ethnic identities, especially in this text."⁸⁵ Much of what defines identity depends on a variety of factors, including geography, history, and socio-political context. Thus, to view Timothy's identity as strictly one or the other—Jewish or Greek—misses

Jewish (Acts 16:1–3)?: 251–268. He argues that Timothy was not Jewish since the text does not reflect that, and the principle is not in use until it appears in Rabbinic literature. It was otherwise unknown. See, Bryan, "A Further Look at Acts 16:1–3": 292–294. In answering this question, Bryan argues that Luke uses the circumcision of Timothy to preempt the charge that Paul was teaching Jews to not circumcise their children or follow the customs (Acts 21:21). But he also recognizes that first century Jews would have seen some sort of significance in Timothy's Jewish mother.

⁸³ For a discussion on the status of Jewish residence in the Ptolemaic and Roman period of Alexandria see, Cambetti, *The Alexandrian Riots of 38 C.E. and the Persecution of the Jews*, 23–76; Kasher, *The Jews in Hellenistic and Roman Egypt*; for a discussion about the diaspora in general, see Gruen, *Diaspora*.

⁸⁴ For instance, Cleopatra was known to excel politically and socially beyond her Egyptian predecessors, and knew multiple languages and was cultured to the point of teaching Antony, see Plutarch, *Ant.* 26–29; Cassius Dio, *Hist.* 51; Goldsworthy, *Antony and Cleopatra*; Burstein, *The Reign of Cleopatra*; Zenobia was presented as a multi-ethnic monarch of Palmyra in late antiquity, see *Historia Augusta*, *Aur.* 22–34; Andrade, *Zenobia*, 62–63, 98–103.

⁸⁵ Barreto, *Ethnic Negotiations*, 84.

the fluidity and complexity of how ethnic and cultural identities were constructed in the ancient world.

However, in Acts, there does appear to be a binary at work, as Ἰουδαῖος is contrasted with many terms, the most consistent being Ἕλληνα, the exact term used to describe Timothy's father.⁸⁶ But the resolution of this binary does not reinforce the strict polarity between Greek and Jewish identities; instead, it paradoxically complexifies and resolves it. Barreto argues that Timothy's circumcision both crystallized his identity for those Ἰουδαῖος who were aware of his mixed parentage and expressed Timothy's ethnic flexibility by having him circumcised as an adult.⁸⁷ Barreto further states that Luke narrates the idea that Timothy is a complex of ethnic identities and that he is an emblem of the intersection of multiple identities and thus offers an opportunity for the Christ movement.⁸⁸ Ultimately, according to Barreto, Timothy is not either Jewish or Greek but is both.⁸⁹ Luke's portrayal of Timothy is an example of God's reconciling power to transform and reshape ethnic discourse, deconstructing binaries and offering an embodied solution to the ethnic hostilities apparent in the communities.

Following Barreto, I hold that the ethnic flexibility of Timothy's identity is on full display. Paul can take him to be circumcised precisely because he is both Jewish and Greek. The fact that he was not circumcised at that point most likely indicates that his diasporic experience, along with the influence of his Greek father, and potentially the timing of his mother Eunice's conversion to Christianity, all played a role in shaping Timothy's identity. Timothy appears to have been influenced by Greek culture, adopting its practices and identities, yet as a Christ-follower defined as the Jewish Messiah, under the tutelage and partnership of Paul, he is reawakened to his Jewish heritage.

⁸⁶ Barreto, *Ethnic Negotiations*, 112. This information comes from Barreto's research, in his, "Chart 7: Contrasting Terms used with Ἰουδαῖος in Acts": ἔθνος (14:2, 5: 21:21); προσήλυτος (2:11); οἱ κατοικοῦντες Ἱερουσαλήμ πάντες (2:1); ἀλλόφυλος (10:28); Substantial participle of σέβω (13:43; 17:17); Ἕλληνα (14:1; 16:1, 3; 18:4; 19:10; 19:17; 20:21); πόστολος (14:4); Ῥωμαῖος (16:20-21)."

⁸⁷ Barreto, *Ethnic Negotiations*, 116.

⁸⁸ Barreto, *Ethnic Negotiations*, 113, 121. "Ethnic diversity and hybrid identities are not an obstacle for this movement of Christ followers but an opportunity to reach all peoples not by erasing their differences but by participating in the complexities of ethnic discourse. Timothy, the product of a mixed marriage between a Ἰουδαῖος and a Ἕλληνα, is an emblem of this theologically rich negotiation of ethnic difference" (p. 121).

⁸⁹ Barreto, *Ethnic Negotiations*, 63.

Moreover, my own contribution lies in the juxtaposition of two episodes, which is Paul's decision to have Timothy circumcised, and Acts 20:4–5, where the list of Paul's companions reflects the growing diversity in the early church. As Paul continues to advance the Gospel message through various regions, his co-workers and ministry partners become increasingly diverse. Given this growing diversity, Paul is likely influenced by pragmatism, recognizing the importance of accommodating Jewish sensibilities in his mission. Consequently, Paul decides to have Timothy circumcised as part of this broader strategy of expanding the mission and ensuring its acceptance across ethnic lines.

7.4 2 Timothy 1:5 & Matrilineal Faith

In the final section of this chapter, I examine Paul's reference to Timothy's heritage in his letter to Timothy in Ephesus.⁹⁰ In the thanksgiving portion of the letter, Paul highlights the faithful women in Timothy's life. By recalling Timothy's lineage through his Jewish-matrilineal ancestry, Paul is underscoring the legacy left to him by his mother and grandmother. Paul focuses on the faithfulness of his mother and grandmother, both of whom were Jewish Christ-followers. Interestingly, Paul intentionally omits any information about Timothy's Greek father or other relatives, perhaps indicating his non-belief in the Messiah. In doing so, Paul emphasizes the connection to the faith that Timothy has inherited. The focus on his Jewish ancestry might highlight a key aspect of Timothy's identity, especially given the possibility that he was influenced and assimilated into the background, exemplified by the fact that he had a Greek father. Paul's reference to his mother and grandmother might have been referenced to highlight their faithfulness while also resituating Timothy's ethnic and religious self-awareness, encouraging him to more fully appreciate his Jewish heritage. In this way, Paul is calling attention to the importance of Timothy's lineage and the faithful example set by his ancestors, which reaffirms his identity within the broader context of the early Christian community.

⁹⁰ For a discussion and defense of Pauline authorship of the Pastoral Epistles, see Pao, *1–2 Timothy, Titus*, 8–34. See also Johnson, *The First and Second Letters to Timothy*, 55–99. Johnson is not so emphatic about defending Pauline authorship as he is about challenging the conventional arguments or the consensus against Pauline authorship.

The structure of this letter is key to understanding its purpose. Paul's words of encouragement to Timothy are framed within the thanksgiving and exhortation sections (2 Tim 1:3–18) of the letter. The opening includes a greeting to Timothy, his “child” (τέκνον) (2 Tim 1:1–2), reflecting their close bond. Paul expresses gratitude and is reminded of God's faithfulness when recalling Timothy and his lineages (2 Tim 1:3–5). Paul then encourages Timothy to stand firm in his commitment to the Gospel and not to be ashamed of the testimony of the Lord and charges Timothy to safeguard the deposit or gift given to him through the laying on of hands (2 Tim 1:6–14). The later portion of the letter shifts slightly, with Paul reflecting on his own circumstances in an aside (2 Tim 1:15–18). This structure helps to reinforce the primary themes of the letter: gratitude, encouragement, and a call to remain steadfast in faith, all while underscoring the significance of Timothy's spiritual heritage.

Other aspects of this letter also call attention to the function and purpose of the reference to Timothy's mother and grandmother. In this section of the letter, Paul expresses his thanks through the act of remembering: μνείαν, μεμνημένος, and ὑπόμνησιν (2 Tim 1:3–5). Remembering prompts his gratitude and reassures him of God's faithfulness. Paul notes that he served God “as his ancestors did” (ἀπὸ προγόνων), or literally, “from his ancestors” (2 Tim 1:3).⁹¹ Just as Paul is connected to faithful ancestors, so too is Timothy (2 Tim 1:5). Though their specific credentials differ, Paul highlights the continuity between their traditions, showing the shared faithfulness that unites them. A major theme in this letter is the parallelism between Paul and Timothy.⁹² As Paul encourages and instructs Timothy, he does so by aligning their missions and ministries, emphasizing the continuity between them. Also, much of the letter centers on situating the context of ministry succession—from Paul to Timothy.⁹³ This is evident in the “ordination” process, represented by the laying on of hands by church leaders (1 Tim 4:14; 2 Tim 1:6), symbolizing the commissioning of authority and responsibility in ministry. All of these themes and motifs add context to Paul's reference to Timothy's matrilineal ancestry.

⁹¹ William Mounce refers to this grammatical construction as “awkward,” especially with the usage of ἀπὸ. But the sense is nonetheless clear. See, Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles*, 468.

⁹² Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles*, 467–468.

⁹³ Bumgardner, *Family Relationships in the Letters to Timothy and Titus*, 126–127. See also, Hofius, “Die Ordination zum Amt der Kirche”: 261–284. He argues that succession is maintained by ordination, and ordination by all constitutive parts, by both apostolic and non-apostolic participants.

Ben Witherington, analyzing the letter from a socio-rhetorical perspective, identifies Paul's rhetorical use of the *exordium* (2 Tim 1:3–5), an introduction that functions as an emotional connector to the audience and forecasts further discussions in the letter.⁹⁴ Through the lens of honor and shame, Witherington notes, “Pressure is being brought to bear already in this exordium, and the implication is that Timothy will shame his mother and grandmother, not to mention Paul, if he does not act on the instructions of this letter.”⁹⁵ While Witherington does not engage with Timothy's mixed ethnic experience or the significance of the reference to his mother and grandmother in terms of his ethnic identity, he provides an important insight: Paul's logic is to encourage Timothy to act by connecting his faith with his mother and grandmother.⁹⁶ The theme of shame is explicitly mentioned, as Paul tells Timothy that he should not be “ashamed” (ἐπαισχύνομαι) of what he knows in Christ. Paul highlights this further by stating that Onesiphorus was not ashamed of Paul during his imprisonment (2 Tim 1:12, 16). Shame is a significant aspect of the New Testament, and as Te-Li Lau notes in his work on the letters of Paul, and it is even employed to serve the moral formation in communities and individuals.⁹⁷ While this is an important feature of Paul's letter to Timothy, my aim is to explore in more detail the significance of the reference to Timothy's matrilineal ancestry, which connects to the broader socio-rhetorical and literary context.

⁹⁴ Witherington, *Letters and Homilies for Hellenized Christians*, 308–312. Although this is nuanced when considering the thanksgiving prayer element of this *exordium*, which does not usually preview into the rest of the letter. Some other examples of exordiums in the NT include: Acts 7:2a; 13:16; 17:22–23; 26:2–3; Gal 1:6–10; Phil 1:3–11; 2 Cor 1:3–7, *inter alia*.

⁹⁵ Witherington, *Letters and Homilies for Hellenized Christians*, 311–312. He then cites, Fee, *1 and 2 Timothy, Titus*, 173 [sic] (actually 223), Fee's paraphrase: “Don't lose heart, because just as my ministry has continuity with my forebears (v. 3), so does yours. Don't forget your roots; they go way back, and your own faith is like that of your mother and grandmother:”

⁹⁶ Bumgardner, “Family Relationships in the Letters to Timothy and Titus”: 126. Citing LaFosse, “Age Matters”: 143–44 n. 203. Here she argues on three bases that Lois would have been understood to be Timothy's maternal grandmother: (1) “Mothers-in-law and daughters-in-law did not typically have close emotional relationships.” (2) If Eunice were a widow, she might have returned to her birth family. (3) Given typical husband-wife age disparity, a person's maternal grandmother was on average younger than his or her paternal grandmother and would have been more likely to be still living.

⁹⁷ For the use of shame in the NT for the purpose of moral formation, see, Lau, *Defending Shame*, 6. He states, “By cultivating a proper sense of shame, they will live lives that are prudent and self-controlled...”

Other proposals examine the women's role in the letter through other lenses. For instance, one scholar has pointed out that Lois and Eunice exemplify the ideal of Christian education, particularly in the context of their own household in which Timothy was raised, making sense of why they are cited in Paul's letters (1 Tim 3:15).⁹⁸ This aligns with the broader theme of women playing an active role in household education, as noted by Annette Huizenga.⁹⁹ Huizenga compares the pastoral letters to the Pythagorean letters, highlighting how women in both contexts function as active educators, shaping the moral virtues within their households. This understanding sheds light on the references to women in relation to pedagogical practices and training those within their own households (1 Tim 5:10, 14; Titus 2:4; cf. 2 Tim 3:6–7). In this way, women played an immeasurably important role in nurturing the character and virtues left in their charge and especially in their households. Certainly, Paul cites Timothy's matrilineal faith to encourage and strengthen his resolve to resist false teachers.¹⁰⁰ But other considerations that relate to the multi-ethnic character of Timothy are worth considering.

I believe Paul's reference to Timothy's mother and grandmother serves as an anchor for Timothy's identity amid conflict within his community. Paul later states that Timothy "knew the sacred writings" (ἱερὰ γράμματα οἶδας) "from childhood" (ἀπὸ βρέφους) (2 Tim 3:15). Paul is confident that the teachings from Timothy's mother and grandmother during his childhood, and the shared matrilineal heritage of faith he inherited, will reinforce his identity. Paul underscores this notion by appealing to his own faithfulness to his ancestors (2 Tim 1:3) and his own conduct (2 Tim 3:10–11), which provide another model for Timothy to emulate. In essence, Paul is constructing a pattern for Timothy to observe by reorienting him to his Jewish-Christian background and history. The purpose of rooting Timothy in his heritage and ancestry is to fortify him against false speculations and teachings (1 Tim 1:3–11; 6:3–10, 20; 2 Tim 4:4). Thus, given Timothy's mixed background, Paul's appeal to his Jewish-Christian heritage is a maneuver that would not be as effective for other leaders in the nascent Church, especially if they were not mixed. As Barreto asserts, the hybridity

⁹⁸ Getty-Sullivan, *Women in the New Testament*, electronic version, ch. 4, "Women of Prominence: Lois and Eunice".

⁹⁹ Huizenga, *Moral Education for Women in the Pastoral and Pythagorean Letters*.

¹⁰⁰ Long, *1 & 2 Timothy and Titus*, 189.

displayed in key figures like Timothy does not hinder the Christ movement but enriches it.¹⁰¹ In this sense, Timothy embodies identities that span multiple spheres: Jewish, Christian, diasporan, and Greek. Paul is able to cite and strategically rearrange these overlapping identities to serve his purposes.

7.5 Conclusion

(1) There is multi-ethnic expansion in Acts. Throughout the narrative, the lists of individuals reflect the expanding diversity of the early Christian movement. The lists begin with the programmatic list in Acts 1:8 and ends in Acts 20:4–5. This progression is seen from evaluating the thematic relationship between the lists along with the constituent parts of the list itself, reflecting the assumptions of what constitutes a list, offered by Belknap in the beginning of the chapter.¹⁰² In Acts 1:12–14, the community is entirely Jewish and encompass those that were prominent in the Gospels and in close proximity to Jesus. However, as the movement spreads, the diversity of the community increases, reaching a peak in Acts 20:4–5, where the list of Paul’s companions reveals a diverse group of co-workers as well as a possible range of ethnicities. These lists are not mere enumerations, rather, they reflect the broader cultural and theological values of the early church, emphasizing the growing diversity within the movement and the global scope of the Gospel’s reach. These “cultural values” are expressed in the lists themselves, as stated by Athena Kirk.¹⁰³

(2) Timothy can best be seen as a multi-ethnic figure, who exemplifies the growing diversity in the early Christian community. He is both Jewish and Greek, embodying a hybrid identity that makes sense of Paul’s decision to have him circumcised, which resolves the tension introduced in Acts 15. Much of the scholarly discussion has either focused on the reason behind Paul’s choice or has viewed Timothy within a binary construct of being either Jew or Gentile. But a crucial aspect often overlooked is how Timothy’s mixed heritage enables him to bridge diverse communities and to be an asset in the early church. Paul leverages Timothy’s flexibility in ethnic identity as an asset

¹⁰¹ Barreto, *Ethnic Negotiations*, 121.

¹⁰² Belknap, *The List*, 15.

¹⁰³ Kirk, *Ancient Greek Lists*, 8.

in his ministry, allowing him to connect with Jewish and Gentile audiences alike. In Acts 20:4–5, as Paul’s missionary team becomes more diverse, the significance of his hybrid identity grows, underscoring the practical necessity of such ethnic fluidity as the Gospel reaches new contexts.

(3) The genealogical descent is key to interpreting 2 Timothy 1:5. The reference to Timothy’s mother and grandmother in 2 Timothy 1:5 emphasizes the importance of genealogical descent, faithful participation in the faith community, and as a spiritual heritage. Paul recalls their faithfulness to encourage Timothy, linking his Jewish-Christian lineage to his current ministry and challenges. By focusing on his matrilineal heritage, Paul reaffirms the value of his background, while also showing that genealogical descent can serve more purposes than just enumerating one’s ancestors. Lineage can be leveraged for a variety of reasons. In this case, it is utilized to encourage Timothy to persevere in the face of difficulties.

Conclusion

Multi-ethnic identities are a reality that have been experienced throughout history. Time and time again, individuals with dual or mixed parentage have sought to understand themselves within a world that often fixates on binary thinking and rigid identities. This tension between fluidity and categorization is not a modern phenomenon but an enduring challenge, shaped by cultural, social, and historical forces. For instance, our collective history shaped by these forces significantly influences how we approach discussions on whether to use the terms *race* or *ethnicity*. While I have chosen to prioritize the term *ethnicity* in this work, I also recognize that the boundaries between these terms are often blurred, overlapping, and, in some contexts, synonymous. This complexity will undoubtedly continue to inform and expand the scholarly discussion in the years to come.

The history of scientific racism and the production of pseudo-scientific notions of race have unquestionably shaped how we approach conversations about definitions of ethnicity and identity. I have endeavored to outline some of the contours of this historical inquiry, without circumventing the very real and consequential aspects of this intellectual era. This intellectual context paved the way for our contemporary discussions, in which the *American Anthropological Association's* statement of race, along with the work modern scholars underscores the genetic variation within humanity and rejects the spurious notions of “polygenesis” in which humanity is derived from multiple origins rather than a singular one.

To engage meaningfully with the topic of ancient ethnicity, I have employed many of Anthony Smith's criteria for understanding ethnic groups as a helpful framework. While this paradigm is not universally applicable and exceptions abound, it serves as a valuable starting point for these discussions. Noticeably, both Smith's work and that of others emphasize the lack of a biological basis for determining identity. Although biological realities exist, they are on the one hand, deemphasized because of the problematic history that precedes this conversation, and on the other, not determinative for a group's collective understanding of itself. For example, the myth of shared

descent is not necessarily grounded in the verifiable truth of a common lineage but in a collective belief that such a lineage exists. Not only is it often impossible to trace shared descent with certainty, but such an approach also fails to account for other factors that shape group identity, such as migration, assimilation, and the flexibility of ethnicity over periods of time.

While I have articulated a preference for the myth of descent, given how it supports the broader flow of my argument, I also remain attentive to other aspects of ethnicity in the ancient world. Religious identity, customs, and lineage all contribute to how ethnic identity is negotiated and reshaped in literature. For example, in *Joseph and Aseneth*, ethnicity is portrayed as inseparable from religious customs and the virtue that a character embodies. The marriage of Joseph and Aseneth makes sense in this context. Someone like Aseneth can be described in terms that are typically reserved for the matriarchs, like Sarah, Rebecca, and Rachel and Leah, while some of Joseph's brothers, are described in terms that are reserved for what we would expect of Egyptians. Identity and belonging are therefore not limited to those with a shared biological lineage but extend to those united by shared virtues, practices, and allegiances. Part of my contribution is to highlight how wide-spread and dynamic these negotiations of ethnic identity are in ancient literature.

I also heavily utilize insights and engage the works of Shaye Cohen, Jonathan Hall, Eric Gruen, Stewart Penwell, Steve Mason, Jason Staples, and Eric Barreto, among many others. A consistent theme in this scholarship is that ethnicity and identity are fluid concepts. For example, Barreto demonstrates that static notions of ethnicity have led scholarship to force Timothy in Acts 16 into categories of either Jewish or Greek, whereas he persuasively expands the conversation to consider how Timothy could embody both identities simultaneously.

One of the primary reasons that Smith's notion of a shared myth of descent is central to my work is that it directly connects multi-ethnic identity to genealogies and lists, which occupy the second half of my book. Robert Belknap and Athena Kirk have been instrumental in developing my thoughts on literary lists and how I can combine insights from ancient ethnicity and these literary constructs. In this regard, my contribution lies in the idea that multi-ethnic identity blurs the criteria that we use to examine ethnic identity as well as introduce the importance of literary constructs to establish multi-ethnic identity. In other words, lists and genealogies vividly instantiate the fluidity

of ethnic identity in the ancient world. A king might reorder his genealogical line to claim descent from a deity as a means of legitimizing his rule. A people might conceive of their shared origins in a hero or divine figure to anchor their place within the broader sweep of history. In this way, genealogies and lists become significant sites where ethnic identity is actively negotiated and reimagined.

Timothy in Acts 16 and his matrilineal lineage in 2 Timothy exemplify this two-part contribution well. Timothy's hybrid identity not only explains Paul's decision to have him circumcised but also highlights Timothy's unique role in bridging diverse communities. While scholarly discussions often focus on Paul's reasoning or frame Timothy within a binary Jew-Gentile construct, his mixed heritage is a crucial asset in early Christian ministry. Paul leverages Timothy's ethnic flexibility to connect with both Jewish and Gentile audiences, and as Paul's missionary team becomes increasingly diverse (Acts 20:4–5), Timothy's hybrid identity highlights the practical necessity of such fluidity as the Gospel expands into new cultural contexts.

In 2 Timothy 1:5, Paul references Timothy's mother and grandmother to highlight the significance of genealogical descent and his spiritual legacy. By recalling their faithfulness, Paul encourages Timothy, linking his Jewish-Christian lineage to his current ministry and challenges. This focus on matrilineal heritage not only reaffirms the value of Timothy's background but also demonstrates how lineage serves purposes beyond mere ancestry, it is leveraged and utilized to offer a source of encouragement and strength in the face of adversity.

Thus, the heart of my argument consists of two interrelated components. First, I contend that multi-ethnic identity is a pervasive and adaptable concept in ancient literature. I have examined texts from Greek, Roman, Jewish, and early Christian contexts to demonstrate this pervasive reality. Although multi-ethnic identity appears across these bodies of literature, its depiction varies depending on the genre in which it expressed. For example, mythographic literature tends to emphasize multi-ethnic identity as a means of constructing genealogical frameworks that shape the flow of history. In Greco-Roman biographies, multi-ethnic identity is often linked to royal or high-status individuals, or to a mixed heritage that traces back to divine origins. In the context of

kingship, such claims commonly serve to legitimize a ruler's right to rule. In short, I demonstrate that multi-ethnic identity is a feature woven throughout diverse literary genres and cultural milieus.

Within the different literary and historical contexts that shape how ethnic identity is constructed and understood, the myth of descent functions as a central, but not exclusive, criterion for rooting a people group in their cultural narrative. This myth provides a foundation for identity, shaping how communities perceive themselves and others. The myth of descent ties a people to a shared history by tracing their origins back to a single source, often a deity or hero. This idea connects communities and societies, helping them construct a narrative framework that explains how their group came into being and situates them within a collective history.

Second, I argue that multi-ethnic identities intersect with literary constructs such as genealogies and lists, which both reflect and negotiate ethnic identities. In other words, genealogies and lists instantiate these negotiations, which demonstrates my second major contribution to scholarship. These literary constructs are not static repositories of data but dynamic vehicles for cultural expression. Through genealogies and lists, ancient authors conveyed the values, priorities, and struggles of their communities, often challenging notions of "purity" and exclusivity. For instance, some genealogies reveal the inherently mixed and complex nature of lineages, resisting simplistic or idealized conceptions of descent. We see that through these complex and often perplexing genealogies; a variety of literary motivations and meanings emerge. For example, the inclusion of women in Matthew's genealogy has puzzled interpreters for millennia. While I am not claiming to have definitively resolved the question of why these particular women appear, I do offer alternative and compelling ways to consider how they relate to one another within the genealogy. The genealogy is inherently multi-ethnic, which should prompt us to ask new and distinctive questions that deepen our understanding of the genealogical composition presented by Matthew and other Gospels.

As for other lists, such as those found in Acts, they illustrate an ever-expanding diversity, reflecting the early church's growing inclusivity across ethnic and cultural lines. These lists, by their very nature, are multi-ethnic, capturing the widening scope of the early Christian movement. Moreover, the lists throughout Acts play an interpretive role in shaping our understanding of context, for

example, which names are included and whether ethnic identifiers are attached to them are sources of information that help us to see the surrounding passage with more clarity. By the time we approach the final list in Acts 20:4, I argue that many of Paul's companions were likely non-Jewish. This list also informs how we interpret subsequent events, such as the division of the group during the feast of Unleavened Bread (Acts 20:60) and the confusion in Jerusalem, where Paul was mistakenly believed to have brought Trophimus in the temple (Acts 21:29). All of this indicates that the multi-ethnic list in Acts 20 occupies a significant interpretive role that has not been fully acknowledged in previous scholarship.

Ultimately, genealogies and lists are more than historical or literary artifacts; they are constructs through which individuals and communities build, adapt, and reimagine their identities in response to evolving circumstances. Found throughout ancient literature, genealogies capture the imaginations of people striving to understand their place within a cosmic framework, grounding them in specific times and spaces. In a world fraught with uncertainty, linking oneself to a famous ancestor, deity, or hero serves multiple purposes. On a personal level, genealogies provide a sense of identity and belonging, often connecting individuals to the land and its traditions. Socio-politically, they are tools of power, used by rulers to legitimize authority and by religious leaders to affirm priestly lineage or purity. In legal and cultural contexts, genealogies articulate shared laws, values, and traditions, revealing how identity is both fluid and multifaceted. By examining the intersections of multi-ethnic identity, myth, and literary expression, this work highlights the enduring complexity of identity formation and its profound impact on how we understand ourselves and one another.

Through this analysis, I aim to encourage scholarship to engage more deeply with the multifaceted criteria for understanding ethnicity, and, more importantly, to recognize how these criteria intersect and blend in the formation of multi-ethnic identities. I hope this study provides both a context and a platform for further exploration of the themes, realities, and literary depictions of multi-ethnic identity. Just as identity is understood today as existing on a spectrum, so too was it in the ancient world, a reality I hope future scholarship will increasingly accommodate. Moreover, literary analyses of Acts and other ancient texts featuring lists, catalogues, and genealogies should consider the interpretive significance of these structures in articulating ethnic identity. These

literary constructs serve not merely as records but as meaningful devices that shape and reflect the complexities of identity. My hope is that scholarship will assign greater interpretive weight to such elements (i.e., summaries, lists, and genealogies) within the broader literary flow and structure of ancient works.

Furthermore, I hope my work will contribute to ongoing conversations about the complex and multifaceted nature of ethnic identity in the ancient world. Literature as varied as mythographies, biographies, epistles, and historiographical texts all exhibit a distinctive way of describing through their respective genre and style. A unifying across these writings is that multi-ethnic identity was a prominent and pervasive feature of the ancient world, as it is today. My research aims to highlight how the fluid nature of ethnicity and multi-ethnic identity permeates these extensive bodies of texts and documents.

More specifically within New Testament studies, I aspire for my work to enrich scholarship on figures and groups such as Jesus, Mary, Herod the Great, Timothy, and the Samaritans. Additionally, I seek to demonstrate the significance of literary constructs such as genealogies and lists in Greco-Roman and Jewish literature. These literary features not only frame the narrative, and situate them within their socio-political contexts, but also reveal the layers of value and meaning attributed to lineage and identity in antiquity.

Finally, by appreciating the diversity and wide-spread reality of multi-ethnic identity in the ancient world, we can gain deeper insights into the construction and negotiation of identities in our own contemporary contexts. For example, we observe that ethnic identity in antiquity was shaped by a range of factors, some of which closely resemble dynamics in the modern world. In U.S. history, miscegenation laws or laws that prohibited mixed marriages were based on the faulty assumption on the inferiority of certain peoples, typically determined by phenotypical characteristics. These laws emerged from a misguided and racist framework that prioritized a particular “myth of descent,” which claimed that white people originated from a different lineage than all other people of color.

Intermarriage, as exemplified in the case of *Joseph and Aseneth*, challenges us to reexamine our own narratives of purity and descent and to consider how we might navigate marriage and kinship in a diverse and pluralistic society. Similarly, in the case of Timothy in Acts 16, his renegotiated identity becomes part of a larger vision in which Paul recognizes his leadership potential and affirms his contribution to the mission of the early church. Regardless of what others may have said about Timothy or his parentage, Paul embraces his identity, and Timothy emerges as an example of the embodied reconciliation of the Gospel, in which traditional boundaries of identity become less rigid.

In the case of genealogies, the way we attach value to our ancestors' mirrors how people in antiquity understood and leveraged their own ancestry. For example, contemporary politicians and athletes are often discussed in terms of their connection to a parent or ancestor who held a similar position or demonstrated comparable achievements. In describing them, commentators frequently emphasize this blood relationship to explain or legitimize how they came to occupy their role in the first place. Similarly, I have documented numerous instances where virtue and character were believed to be biologically transmitted through lineage, as in the case of Cyrus the Great in Herodotus' *Histories*. By taking seriously these ancient conceptions within biblical and Greco-Roman contexts, my work contributes to a more nuanced discussion of race and ethnicity in our modern world.

Looking ahead, two promising avenues for further research emerge. First, examining multi-ethnic identity within specific corpora offers rich potential for insight, particularly through the works of authors such as Plutarch, Vergil, Josephus, and Philo. This approach could extend to analyses of specific historical or literary figures, such as Jesus, Herod the Great, Cimon, and Themistocles, focusing on how their identities are portrayed across different authors. Additionally, exploring how various genres, such as mythography or biography, highlight or downplay multi-ethnic identity would further illuminate the role of genre in shaping these representations. Together, these lines of inquiry would contribute to both historical and literary analyses of multi-ethnic identity.

Personally, I see considerable potential in further evaluating the works of Plutarch and Philo. In my research, I felt I only began to scratch the surface of their extensive writings. In particular,

Philo's recounting of Jewish history and his allegorization of ethnic identity represent two promising avenues for deeper exploration. Philo's perspective across his corpus is notably diverse and shaped on a variety of factors, including the larger socio-political context in which he writes, the specific biblical narratives he engages, and his allegorical strategies he employs. I believe numerous possibilities exist for further study of Philo's writings as they pertain to questions of ethnicity.

A second fruitful direction lies in a deeper exploration of literary structures such as lists, catalogues, and genealogies. These constructs span a wide range of ancient literature and warrant more nuanced analysis than was possible within the scope of this book. Genealogies, for example, are often embedded within biographical or historiographical texts to situate narratives in broader ethnic or historical frameworks. Similarly, ethnographic lists serve not only as inventories but also as devices that structure and frame narratives, reflecting underlying cultural and ideological perspectives. I suspect there is much more to uncover in how these literary forms contribute to the construction and communication of multi-ethnic identities.

Ultimately, I hope this book contributes meaningfully to the broader field of knowledge on multi-ethnic identity. This work would not have been possible without the foundational scholarship of those who preceded me, and I am deeply grateful for their contributions. I also hope that future scholars will build upon this work, advancing our understanding of the complexity and significance of multi-ethnic identity in Greco-Roman and New Testament contexts.

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