In his 1996 essay, Craig Koester argued for a ‘heterogeneous readership’ for the Fourth Gospel that includes ‘Christians of Jewish background’, ‘Samaritan Christians’ and ‘Gentile Greeks’. In this paper, I will survey evidence for the existence of another group at work in the Eastern Mediterranean and addressed by the Gospel: retainers who served the Roman administration. Their presence provided a point of intersection where the small amount of Latin that was used in the East came into contact with other languages, creating Roman-aware auditors, people with at least minimal knowledge of the Latin language and Roman conceptions of the world. After briefly surveying the evidence of that contact both in the cities connected with the production of John’s Gospel and within the text of the Gospel itself, I will take us through a narrative analysis of the character of Pilate followed by a discussion of the rhetorical construction of social groupings, both informed by an awareness of the presence of these Roman retainers.

Note that as Koester himself says, although some ‘misreadings’ are excluded, ‘[t]he message of the text is multidimensional and can be approached at different levels by different
types of readers’, so that layers of readings are not mutually exclusive. I will argue here that the trial narrative activates the Roman encyclopaedia for a group of readers whose cultural resources are not usually recognized. Reading the passage highlighting its references to Rome shows Pilate characterized as acting with Rome in view and suggests an analysis of ‘the Jews’ that blurs the boundaries between them and the Romans and presents the family of God in Roman terms.

Material Evidence for Roman-aware Auditors

Although a thorough survey of Latin evidence in the Eastern Mediterranean is not possible here, and although such evidence does not extend to any widespread bilingualism, Latin was used in the Roman administration (especially for legal documents for Roman citizens), in the army, and in commerce as well. A few pictures, perhaps, can tell the story more quickly than lengthy explanations—Latin evidence exists for all three cities usually connected with the production of the Gospel of John: Ephesus, Antioch, and Alexandria. We will also look briefly at evidence in Palestine, the Gospel’s setting.

A snapshot from the end of 2014 of the state of affairs in the Epigraphic Database Heidelberg, which continues to be updated with Latin and Latin-Greek inscriptions, shows the extent of such evidence throughout the Eastern Mediterranean.

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3 While Tom Thatcher argues, as I do here, that ‘John’s image of Christ is always a photographic negative, a mosaic built up from thousands of tiny words, symbols, and ideas that he found on the cognitive trash heap of ancient Mediterranean culture’, he concludes that ‘[m]any of these fragments were taken from broken statues of various emperors, which John has integrated into his Christological sum through the persistent application of a “greater than” equation’. As we will see, I believe instead that John simply used the language available to him, but that “greater than” was not always implied [Tom Thatcher, Greater Than Caesar: Christology and Empire in the Fourth Gospel (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2009), 6].
4 I will use the Jews’ in this paper as the translation of οἱ Ἰουδαίοι without engaging the ongoing debate.
5 Heidelberger Akademie der Wissenschaften, ‘Epigraphic Database Heidelberg’. Note that this database does not exclusively catalogue Latin and bilingual inscriptions, but that is its primary objective. Latin and Greek should not be taken to be the only languages present in Ephesus. Although he does not mention Latin, Casey notes that ‘there may have been a significant number of people in Ephesus who were bilingual in Aramaic and Greek, and fluent readers of Hebrew’ [Maurice Casey, Is John’s Gospel True? (London: Routledge, 1996), 93]. Latin inscriptions in Ephesus dated between 50 B.C.E. and 150 C.E. include HD000805, HD000808, HD000876, HD016451, HD026368, HD049167 and HD049169.
In Ephesus, we find more Latin and Latin-Greek inscriptions than anywhere else in Asia Minor. There are not only very public demonstrations of Roman power such as the Latin inscriptions on either side of the central Greek lines on the Gate of Mazaeus and Mithradates from 4 or 3 B.C.E.
but also many private inscriptions such as the mid-first century C.E. epitaph of Gaius Stertinius Orpex.\textsuperscript{6}

The epitaph of this freedman is in Latin, but it is followed by an enumeration of the funds donated subsequent to his death, detailed in Greek but 'structured according to the Roman rather than the local calendar'.\textsuperscript{7} It is relevant here that Orpex had been a \textit{scriba librarius}, and thus literate.\textsuperscript{8} That his tombstone is inscribed with both Latin and Greek and uses the dating

\textsuperscript{6} The Packard Humanities Institute, ‘Ephesos 2618’, http://epigraphy.packhum.org/inscriptions/main?url=oi%3Fikey%3D250349%26bookid%3D490


\textsuperscript{8} There seems to be some disagreement over the use of the term. Berger describes a \textit{scriba} as '[a] clerk in a court or in an office, a secretary' and notes that '[a] \textit{scriba} is to be distinguished from a \textit{librarius} who was simply a copyist. When a \textit{scriba} performed the tasks of a \textit{librarius}, his title was \textit{scriba librarius}' [Adolf Berger, \textit{Encyclopedic Dictionary of Roman Law}, Transactions of the American Philosophical Society 43.2 (Philadelphia: American Philosophical Society, 1953), 692]. Gordon, Reynolds, Beard and Roueché, however, put the \textit{scriba librarius} in the ranks of clerks, for example to a tribune [Richard Gordon et al., ‘Roman Inscriptions 1991-95’, \textit{JRS} 87 (1997): 203-240 (207)]. Laird, in the context of Imperial Italy, sets down a \textit{scriba librarius} as a 'clerk to the decurions' [Margaret L. Laird, ‘Private Memory and Public Interest: Municipal Identity in Imperial Italy’, in \textit{The Art of Citizens, Soldiers and Freedmen in the Roman World}, ed. Eve D’Ambra and Guy P. R. Métraux 1526
procedures of Rome may indicate his own working knowledge of Greek as well as the legal
forms of Latin. Even ‘freedmen and slaves … identified themselves with the Roman citizen
body of which they became members when they were freed. They were not simply acclimatized
to using the language of their bosses and of their ultimate master the emperor, who is often
mentioned in their titulature, but probably also acquired status through using the language that
separated rulers from ruled; they show awareness of “propriety” in doing so’.⁹ Thus, we see
that some Latin was acquired even by non-élites.

Moving on to Antioch, we find evidence close by of a business transaction in Latin.

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⁹ Barbara Levick, ‘The Latin Inscriptions of Asia Minor’, in Acta Colloquii Epigraphici Latini:
Scientiarum Fennica, 1995), 393-402 (398-99). In general, Levick argues for ‘propriety’ as a social factor
influencing language choice in the East.
In 166 C.E., while stationed in Seleucia Pieria, Antioch’s port city, one naval officer sold seven-year old Abbas (a slave boy renamed Eutyches) to another (P.Lond. 2.229=Tris #11654). The bill of sale is in Latin. The Latin subscription of the seller is ‘the painful performance of a very unready writer’. The witnesses’ Latin subscriptions are ‘fairly well written’, and the final dating (that follows the Syrian practice) and the subscription at the end are in Greek. Here again we have evidence not of full bilingualism, necessarily, but of some Latin knowledge.

Stopping briefly in Masada, we find, among the remains of Herod’s stores, pieces of an amphora dated to 37-34 B.C.E. which has both Garum and Βασιλέως(ς) as part of its titulus pictus. It seems likely that the amphora was labelled with its contents in Latin at its point of origin in Spain, and perhaps the fish sauce was marked as reserved for Herod with the Greek word Βασιλέως upon its arrival in the East. Although the two writers may never have met, the author of the Greek was at least aware of the Latin.

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Finally, in Alexandria, we find Latin both in public and private inscriptions. In the example used here of a public inscription, Latin is found on the claw (Latin inside, Greek outside) of one of the four crabs that originally held up the obelisk popularly called ‘Cleopatra’s Needle’.  

Figure 6: Cleopatra’s Needle

There is a ‘strong symbolic connotation’ in the use of Latin alongside Greek on an obelisk in the temple of Augustus, as Lorenzetti notes.  

Both versions ‘state that the Roman prefect Barbarus and the architect Pontius re-erected the obelisk in Alexandria during the eighteenth year of an emperor, probably Augustus’. And the Latin here both signals the Romanness of the honoree and communicates ‘to readers of either language’. However, when one takes into account the huge obelisk covered with Egyptian hieroglyphics, both the Greek

\[13\] http://www.metmuseum.org/exhibitions/listings/2013/cleopatras-needle; http://urbanwilderness-eddee.blogspot.com/2013_08_01_archive.html (The crabs here are replicas of the originals.)


\[16\] CIL 3.1.6588; Lorenzetti, ‘Greek/Latin Bilingualism’. 
and the Latin on the claws are reduced to insignificance, and the Latin especially, on the *inside* of the claw, practically disappears.

![Claw from Cleopatra's Needle](image)

*Figure 7: Claw from Cleopatra's Needle*

This image can serve as an allegory for the presence of Latin in Alexandria as a whole. In this city, Latin was present but much less publically visible than in Ephesus. We have, for example, birth records on wax tablets from 62 and 103 C.E.\(^{17}\) ‘The requirement that birth certificates should be in Latin … provides an explicit example of the symbolic use of Latin in matters to do with the citizenship’, as James Adams notes.\(^{18}\) But the use of Latin was not only symbolic. In order to produce these administrative documents, Sergio Daris says, ‘There is no doubt that a category of bilingual employees who knew Latin well helped actively in the midst of the prefect’s administration and the supporting offices from which every administrative practice took form and began’.\(^{19}\) So even here where Latin is not much used in public inscriptions, we see its presence among Roman retainers.

\(^{17}\) *CPL* 148 and *BGU* 7.1691. Rochette lists PSI 2.1185 as a birth record, but he is mistaken [Bruno Rochette, ‘Sur le bilinguisme dans l’Égypte gréco-romaine’, *CdE* 71 (1996): 153-68 (160 n 3)]. The picture here is from Arsinotes (*P.Mich.* inv. 766, Arsinoites, August 13, 128 C.E.), but those in Alexandria are similar.


Latin Evidence in the Gospel of John

But what reason is there to think that the Latin in these cities is pertinent to the Gospel of John? Mark is usually thought of as the most Roman Gospel, and its Latinisms are used to support a Roman provenance, but in fact the Fourth Gospel has quite a few Latinisms of its own. While Mark’s ten words with Latin etymologies are used a total of thirteen times, John uses his seven Latin words fifteen times. John is also the only Gospel to explicitly mention the Romans and the Latin language (11:48; 19:20). John uses two Latin grammatical constructions: a nominative where a vocative would be expected in Greek (13:13) and a dative for time where an accusative would be more usual (14:9). \( \text{Παράκλητος} \), it has been argued, is a calque of the

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21 John’s seven words are \( \text{φραγέλλιον}, \text{δηνάριον}, \text{σουδάριον}, \text{λίτρα}, \text{λέντιον}, \text{πραιτώριον}, \text{τίτλος} \).

22 The one exception is a variant of Luke 23:38 that adds, perhaps in dependence on John 19:20, that the notice above the cross was written in Greek, Roman, and Hebrew letters, not quite the same phrasing as John.

23 John is used here as a reference to the final redactor or author of John without making any claims for single authorship.
Latin *advocatus*, and several Greek words, such as *σπεῖρα* and *χιλίαρχος*, have by the first century, developed specifically Roman referents.\(^{24}\) If we add a possible reference to Vergil’s *Aeneid* in John 19:5, the anarthrous phrasing of ὑἱὸν θεοῦ in John 19:7 as a reference to *divi filius*, the mentions of Caesar and Caesar’s friend (John 19:12, 15), and the suggestion by Allan Georgia that the place of the skull (John 19:17) could be a double entendre, referring obliquely to the Capitoline Hill, Latinisms in John’s Gospel begin to look as in the image here, sprinkled throughout the text, but concentrated in the trial narrative.\(^{25}\)

![Figure 9: The Text of the Gospel of John with Latinisms Highlighted](image)

Comparing this to Mark, I have highlighted thirty-two possible Latinisms in John and twenty-seven in Mark. In Mark, we find them concentrated in the discussion over paying taxes to Caesar (12:13-17) and in the flogging and mocking of Jesus (15:15-19).\(^{26}\)

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\(^{26}\) Included in the image, in order of occurrence, are ὁδὸν ποιεῖν (2:23); Ἡρῳδιανοί (3:6; 12:13); συμβούλιον ἐδίδουν (3:6); μόδιον (4:21); λεγίων (5:9, 15); σπεκουλάτωρ (6:27); δηνάριον (6:9, 15, 14:5); περὶ τετάρτην φυλακὴν (6:48); ἔξτησις (7:4); κῆνσος (12:14); Καίσαρ (12:14, 16, 17); ναός (12:42); ῥαπίσμασιν αὐτὸν ἔλαβον (15:65); τὸ ἱκανὸν ποιῆσαι (15:15); φραγελλόω (15:15); πραιτώριον (15:16); τίθεντες τὰ γόνατα (15:19); κεντυρίων (15:39, 44, 45). Even though Lane correctly points out that λεγίων was not newly borrowed
The individual Latinisms I have chosen for these images are disputed, of course, and my choices of which to include and which to reject are my own. But the evidence for contact with Latin in John is comparable to that in Mark and therefore also merits discussion. And while that full discussion is reserved for my thesis, this brief overview, when combined with the material evidence above, provides some grounds on which to proceed with an analysis of the trial pericope.

What we have seen so far, then, is that the retainers who have left behind the evidence exemplified by the remains just cited might speak only minimal Latin yet still be able to understand some Latin terms.27 And their contact with Romans, especially as their dependents (slaves, freedmen, clients, etc.) would motivate them to become not just linguistically but

from Latin, I included it because of its specificity [Lane, *Mark*, 184; on specificity, see Ad Backus, ‘The Role of Semantic Specificity in Insertional Codeswitching: Evidence from Dutch-Turkish’, in *Codeswitching Worldwide II*, ed. Rodolfo Jacobson, Trends in Linguistics: Studies and Monographs 126 (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2001), 125-54]. Possible Latinisms not included were references to time less clearly Roman than in 6:48 (13.35; 14.17, 41, 72; 15.1); πυγμῇ (7.3, see BDAG, s.v. for references to debate) and items from Gundry that were not supported in Lane or BDF including χόρτος (4:28); αἰτία (5:33 v.1.); δ ἔσται (3:17; 7:11, 34; 12:42; 15:16, 42); ἐγκάθως ἔχει (5:23); ἐπειν δοθῆναι αὐτῇ φαγέν (5:43); ἐκράτησεν (9:10); κατακρινοῦσιν αὐτὸν θανάτῳ (10:33); ἔγον ... ὅτι (11:32); συμβούλων ποιῆσαι (15:1); Ῥουφος (15:21) and ἵνα clauses (Lane, *Mark*, 24-25, 184, 243, 246, 422; Gundry, *Mark*, 1044).

culturally competent. These people, whom I have called Roman-aware auditors I suggest constituted part of the audience for the Gospel of John and were therefore addressed particularly in the text. Note that this does not preclude other social groups previously posited among John’s audience. But with these Roman connections in mind, we can understand the trial pericope in two new ways: a new evaluation of the character of Pilate emerges, and social categories are blurred as John presents Jesus and his followers in a very Roman way.

Pilate as a Character

Analyses of Pilate as a character can usually be divided into two groups. Some believe that John’s Pilate is manipulating ‘the Jews’; some that it is he who is being manipulated. The two possible responses, often classified as ‘weak’ or ‘strong’ might easily be represented by the two consecutive essays on Pilate in Brooke and Kaestli’s Narrativity in Biblical and Related Texts. In the first of these essays, Christopher Tuckett repeatedly characterizes Pilate as ‘taunting’ while in the second, de Boer’s preferred term is ‘reluctant’. That two scholars writing at the same time for the same volume can come to opposite conclusions about Pilate demonstrates not only the lack of consensus on this important Johannine character but also the degree to which the text supports—even requires—a pre-understanding of Pilate in order to fill

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28 Apparitores such as scribes, Augustales, freedmen serving decurions, and other ‘upwardly mobile’ people from the economic groups Longenecker labels ‘middling’, as well as veterans and traders, might constitute 17% of a city’s population [Bruce W. Longenecker, ‘Exposing the Economic Middle: A Revised Economy Scale for the Study of Early Urban Christianity’, JSNT 31.3 (2009): 243–278 (245, 264-67); Nicholas Purcell, ‘The Apparitores: A Study in Social Mobility’, Papers of the British School at Rome 51 (1983): 125-173]. Although Purcell points out that apparitores are rarely mentioned in the provinces, he includes evidence of men in similar positions (Purcell, ‘Apparitores’, 131, 134, 139, 150, 154, 159, 160). He goes too far when he cites Tertullian as evidence of ‘the wonderful rise of the Christians at this time’, though. Tertullian is pointing to the spread of Christians, not their status (Tertullian, Apol. 37; Purcell, ‘Apparitores’, 134).

in its gaps.\textsuperscript{30} As Francois Tolmie points out, ‘Depending on the way in which such a gap is filled, different pictures of Pilate may result’.\textsuperscript{31} Here, I would like to suggest that the passage should be read with two important pre-understandings.

First, those hearing John’s Gospel already knew that Jesus was crucified under Pontius Pilate. Although the majority of John’s characters might be evaluated ‘\textit{in terms of their response to Jesus}’, this is manifestly not true for all.\textsuperscript{32} Caiaphas, for example, is not generally evaluated this way, in part because his rejection of Jesus comes as no surprise (e.g., John 11:49-52). The plot focuses not on what will happen but on how it will happen, as Susanna Braund suggests is typical of ancient drama.\textsuperscript{33} Instead, Caiaphas’s character is important for the dramatic irony that supports the author’s message.\textsuperscript{34}

I suggest that Pilate’s character must be analysed similarly. The outcome of the trial is never in doubt.\textsuperscript{35} John has been preparing his auditors for Jesus’ death on the cross from the beginning of his Gospel (e.g. John 1:29; 2:19-22), and Pilate will be the character who sends him there.\textsuperscript{36} This problematizes the idea that Pilate should be evaluated on the basis of his response to Jesus. Thus, I will describe the character of Pilate in a way that relies primarily on

\textsuperscript{30} That there are gaps to be filled is suggested as well by Pilate’s first question to Jesus, ‘Are you the King of the Jews?’ (John 18:33), a question that demonstrates, as most commentators note, communication with Pilate not explicitly explained in the text [D. Francois Tolmie, ‘Pontius Pilate: Failing in More Ways Than One’, \textit{in Character Studies in the Fourth Gospel: Narrative Approaches to Seventy Figures in John}, ed. Steven A. Hunt, D. Francois Tolmie, and Ruben Zimmermann, WUNT 2.314 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2013), 578-97 (583)].
\textsuperscript{31} Tolmie, ‘Pontius’, 582.
\textsuperscript{33} Ancient drama, unlike ours, was frequently focused not on outcome but on the way that outcome was achieved [Susanna Braund, ‘5. Analysis of Aeneid Books 10-12 and Conclusion (February 6, 2007)’, \textit{in Virgil's Aeneid: Anatomy of a Classic}, Stanford on iTunes U (2007); Richard A. Horsley and Tom Thatcher, \textit{John, Jesus, and the Renewal of Israel} (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2013), 63].
\textsuperscript{34} Adele Reinhartz concludes that he and Annas ‘are minor players whose knowledge of and attitudes towards Jesus are not of particular interest to the implied author’ [Adele Reinhartz, ‘Caiaphas and Annas: The Villains of the Piece?’, \textit{in Character Studies in the Fourth Gospel: Narrative Approaches to Seventy Figures in John}, ed. Steven A. Hunt, D. Francois Tolmie, and Ruben Zimmermann, WUNT 2.314 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2013), 530-36 (536)].
\textsuperscript{35} John has been preparing his auditors for Jesus’ death on the cross from the beginning of his Gospel (e.g. John 1:29; 2:19-22), and Pilate will be the character who sends him there.
\textsuperscript{36} ‘John and his readers know that Jesus was crucified under Pontius Pilate. This fact was an irremovable and unchangeable part of the tradition about Jesus’ death’ (de Boer, ‘Narrative’, 145).
his role as a Roman governor, without asking whether he develops or has the potential to develop faith in Jesus.

The second presupposition that I will use to fill in the gaps of the text comes from this role as a representative of Rome. Paul Weaver has pointed out the likelihood that those appointed to imperial provinces would be serving in parallel with others who owed their appointment and thus their loyalty not to a superior officer but each directly to the emperor. So for example, in Pilate’s case, he owed his position to Tiberius—but so would other lesser officials. This would engender not just close connections with the emperor but also distrust between the various parties. There was always the possibility of someone else independently sending a poor report back to Rome. This is not to say that Roman-aware auditors would necessarily be aware of the reasons for governors’ suspicions or behaviour, but that their actions and attitudes would be familiar to them.

Jerome Neyrey, in an analysis that emphasises the agonistic positioning for honour and shame in the trial passage, sets forth the various claims, challenges, and ripostes as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Inside Forum: The Trial of Jesus before Pilate</th>
<th>Outside Forum: The Struggle between Pilate and the Crowd</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>claim:</strong> Jesus’ status</td>
<td>Pilate’s authority</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>challenger:</strong> Pilate</td>
<td>the crowds</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>riposte:</strong> Jesus’ defense of being a king</td>
<td>Pilate solicits the crowd’s disloyalty to God and loyalty to Caesar</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>public verdict:</strong> innocent</td>
<td>Pilate’s title over the cross</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


38 Jerome H. Neyrey, *The Gospel of John in Cultural and Rhetorical Perspective* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2009), 424. Note that Neyrey is analysing the honour-shame contest as it would be understood by the Gospel's audience rather than from the perspective of Pilate as a character, so he takes information gleaned from the whole Gospel into account, which I do not. See especially p. 430 where information is adduced not just from the rest of the Gospel, but from the whole New Testament (Neyrey, *Cultural*, 430).
Neyrey says, for example, that ‘Pilate claims the honor of procurator and magistrate…. [The Judeans] challenge him by asserting their own power’. Certainly, competition for honour was a part of the first century C.E. world. However, based on Weaver’s insights, I want to suggest that Pilate’s main concern was not his honour vis-à-vis the people before him, which would be unassailable, but rather his honour vis-à-vis the emperor in Rome. The Jews challenge not his right to rule, but his ability and his loyalty. In a situation of domination, James Scott notes that the oppressed can challenge the powerful in just this way, by ‘claiming that these rulers have violated the norms by which they justify their own authority’. And what Pilate principally owes Caesar is peace in the province.

This means that, although in analyses of Pilate’s character, his sense of justice is often impugned, his character’s actions would more likely be based on whether either Jesus, or ‘the Jews’, or both pose a threat to Caesar’s peace. Josephus gives us an example of the way expediency and peace might be prioritised before justice in a Roman decision when he describes the killing and enslaving of over 30,000 prisoners who had been promised their freedom. Josephus exonerates Vespasian by blaming ‘his friends’: ‘However, his friends were too hard for him, and pretended that nothing against Jews could be any impiety, and that he ought to prefer what was profitable before what was fit to be done, where both could not be made consistent’ (W.J. 3.536 [Whiston]). Thus, justice is not necessarily the highest criteria for judgement in the Roman world, and anyone living under their rule would know that.

But John’s depiction of the trial from the beginning puts Pilate’s ability to keep the peace in question. The arrival of the large contingent of Roman soldiers to arrest Jesus in the garden (John 18:3, 18), for example, suggests that they were ‘obviously expecting resistance

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42 Similarly, see Josephus, *W.J.* 2.333-35; 2.345-404 but also 4.119.
Hunt 16

from either him or his followers’, as Helen Bond rightly points out. What is at stake, then, for Pilate, is whether this man, and these people, will cause him shame before the only people who matter: the emperor and Pilate’s Roman peers. Thus, in a Gospel that emphasises faithfulness to Jesus, Pilate’s own faithfulness comes into question; his allegiance to Caesar must be maintained and visible.

With these two elements in place, let us revisit the character of Pilate in the Gospel of John according to these pre-understandings: (1) Pilate will crucify Jesus, and John’s audience knows this; (2) Pilate’s main concern is Rome.

The structure of the trial has been too often discussed to need revisiting here, except to say that I am following the seven-fold division set forth by Brown, but focusing primarily on the dialogue. Jerome Neyrey specifically notes the two cycles in which three of the ‘formal elements of a Roman trial’ are repeated twice: the ‘charges’ in 18:28-32 and 19:7, the ‘judge’s cognitio’ in 18:33-38a and 19:8-11 and the ‘verdict’ in 18:38b and 19:12. We will see that these two cycles can also be seen to describe Pilate’s attempt to test first the danger posed by Jesus and second the loyalty of ‘the Jews’. As we begin, it is important to repeat that this analysis will not attempt to evaluate Pilate according to a Johannine scale of belief. Furthermore, this paper does not engage in questions about the historical Pilate except as a historical understanding of Roman practices helps to fill gaps in the text. Rather, the analysis

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45 Neyrey, Cultural, 423. Neyrey is a bit vague about his divisions, however. I have listed the verses in his chart, but they do not match those in his discussion. See for example the initial ‘Charges’ listed with verses 18:29-33 (Neyrey, Cultural, 424). In fact, Neyrey is there examining the charges that Pilate mentions in 18:33 in relation to Jesus’ titles in the Gospel as a whole. He does not discuss the initial exchange between Pilate and ‘the Jews’ at all.
here proposes to describe the way the character of Pilate develops in the text when starting with the above two assumptions.\textsuperscript{46}

\textit{Pilate Tests Jesus: Is he dangerous?}

\textbf{John 18:28—19:3}

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>central question: Is Jesus dangerous?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>\textit{first question-answer:}</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>\textbf{Q}: Why did ‘the Jews’ bring this man to me?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>\textbf{A}: They want me to execute him.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>\textbf{P}: What is the accusation that you are bringing against this person?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘\textbf{J}’: If he were not an evildoer, we would not have handed him over to you.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>\textbf{P}: Take him yourselves and use your own law to judge him.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘\textbf{J}’: But we do not have permission to kill anyone.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| \textit{second question-answer:}  |
| \textbf{Q}: Is this man dangerous?  |
| \textbf{A}: Possibly  |
| \textbf{P}: You! You are the king of the Jews?  |
| \textbf{J}: Are you saying this, or did others tell you about me?  |
| \textbf{P}: I’m not Jewish, am I? It was your own people and the chief priests who handed you over to me. What have you done?  |
| \textbf{J}: My reign is not from this world. If this were the world my reign was from, my officers would be fighting so that I would not be handed over to the Jews. But instead, this reign of mine is not from here.  |
| \textbf{P}: You are an emperor, then?\textsuperscript{47}  |
| \textbf{J}: Are you the one telling me that I am an emperor? I was born for this, and for this I have come into the world, so that I might witness to the truth. Each person who is from the truth listens to my voice.  |
| \textbf{P}: What is truth?  |

| \textit{third question-answer:}  |
| \textbf{Q}: Does he have a public following?  |
| \textbf{A}: No.  |
| \textbf{P}: I find no basis for the charge against him. Now it is a custom among you that one person should be pardoned at the Passover for you. So shall I pardon the King of the Jews for you?  |
| ‘\textbf{J}’: Not him! Barabbas, instead!  |

\textit{decision: Flog Jesus; soldiers mock him as Caesar}

\textsuperscript{46} This is contra many descriptions where Pilate is evaluated as he is described, e.g. ‘Pilate … does not draw the correct conclusion from Jesus’ response’ (Tolmie, ‘Pontius’, 594). This kind of evaluation takes us outside of the character’s own motivations and evaluations and into Pilate’s character as evaluated by the narrator. Important as these can be, they are not attempted here.

\textsuperscript{47} For the justification for this translation, see Laura Hunt, ‘Σὺ εἶ ὁ βασιλεὺς: Are You an Emperor, or a King?’ (paper presented at Conference of the British New Testament Society, Manchester, UK, 5 September, 2014).
The passage begins with Pilate’s willingness to go out of the praetorium to meet with ‘the Jews’. Tolmie suggests three possibilities for this choice: he ‘succumbed to their pressure’ (Tolmie’s preference); he was avoiding antagonising them, or it was an act of courtesy.\textsuperscript{48} However, it is also possible that Pilate needed to engage the Jews to evaluate the seriousness of the situation. This, in fact, fits with the concerns others have brought up about the presence of armed men in Jerusalem and the lack of follow-up action against the disciples.\textsuperscript{49} While Neyrey is right to point out that the inside of the praetorium is by no means a private space, if Pilate demanded that the discussion be held indoors, he would lose all of his Jewish audience except those most devoted to Jesus’ judgement.\textsuperscript{50} He would thereby also lose the opportunity to test Jesus in sight of the crowd, gauging their response as well as his.

Pilate’s opening question merely seeks to establish the formal accusation against Jesus (John 18:29). But in response to ‘the Jews’’ sarcastic reply, he offers Jesus back to them (v. 30-31). It is true as most scholars note that this is not a serious offer. Tolmie for example points out that in addition to demonstrating his superiority over ‘the Jews’, Pilate also ‘expresses his reluctance to be involved in the matter at all’.\textsuperscript{51} But his response conveys more than simply disdain for ‘the Jews’. The tension that Tolmie notes between Pilate’s unwillingness to be involved and inability to avoid the matter comes from his social position. It is expressive of his superior status that he would seek to appear disinterested. Mastery of one’s passions was a sign of masculinity, and only masculinity fitted one for rule.\textsuperscript{52}

On the other hand, ‘the Jews’’ response to the offer to release Jesus will be telling. Most commentators note that Pilate necessarily had previous contact with ‘the Jews’ on this matter.

\textsuperscript{48} Tolmie, ‘Pontius’, 584, with references for each choice.
\textsuperscript{49} Martin, ‘In Jerusalem’; Justin J. Meggitt, ‘The Madness of King Jesus: Why Was Jesus Put to Death, but His Followers Were Not?’, \textit{JSNT} 29.4 (2007): 379-413. This paper recognizes the importance of Meggitt’s question while offering a different answer: at least within the narrative world of the Gospel of John, Pilate concludes that Jesus has no followers who present a danger to the Pax Romana.
\textsuperscript{50} Neyrey, \textit{Cultural}, 422.
\textsuperscript{51} Neyrey, \textit{Cultural}, 585.
\textsuperscript{52} Colleen M. Conway, \textit{Behold the Man: Jesus and Greco-Roman Masculinity} (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 24.
since he supplied soldiers for the arrest. Less often noted, though, is the primacy of Judas in earlier scenes. It was Judas who was first designated as the one who would betray Jesus (6:71; 12:4); it was into Judas that Satan enters (13:2, 27), and it was Judas who took the lead in Jesus’ arrest (18:2, 3, 5). Thus, John’s narrative suggests that it was from Judas that Pilate learned of Jesus. But Pilate does not know how big a following Jesus might have. In the arrest, Judas is ‘taking’ (λαβών) not just the Roman soldiers (τὴν σπείραν) but also the Jewish officials (ὑπηρέτας) to make the arrest. By offering to release Jesus into ‘the Jews’ custody, then, Pilate can find out more about the possible danger Jesus poses—how interested are the rest of ‘the Jews’ in this man? Their answer is reassuring: they want him killed (18:31).

In the second question and answer exchange, Pilate turns his attention to Jesus. His question in verse 33 checks to see what Jesus thinks of himself: Does he claim to be king of ‘the Jews’? The subsequent conversation is ambiguous. Jesus indicates (v. 36) that he, like Caesar, has a heavenly mandate although, unlike Caesar, not a military one. Eventually (v. 37), Jesus moves the discussion into what to Pilate is the realm of philosophy (Cicero, De Natura Deorum 1.67). If there is an implicit invitation to Pilate, it is not in a form he would recognize. Therefore, it seems more likely that this is a side reference to the auditors (John 19:37). They are those ‘from the truth’ and are not expecting Pilate to believe. And in accord with normal Roman behavior, Pilate may dismiss Jesus with his famous response, ‘What is truth?’ (v. 38) because he is interested in safety, not philosophy, and he knows that philosophers, too, could be dangerous to Rome. But the questioning is not over.

Whether or not Jesus’ own self-understanding is a threat depends on whether he has a following, which the third series of questions and answers is specifically designed to further

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54 Contra Neyrey’s construction of ‘God’s world’ (Neyrey, Cultural, 425).
55 Brown, e.g., says that ‘on the theological level the evangelist uses the question to show that Pilate is turning away from the truth’ (Brown, John, 2:869). See also Andrew T. Lincoln, The Gospel According to Saint John, ed. Morna D. Hooker, BNTC (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2005), 463.
56 Suetonius, Dom. 10; Dio Cassius 67.13. See also Epictetus, Discourses 3.8.9 and footnote (Oldfather).
test. Perhaps ‘the Jews’ only denounced Jesus because they were afraid his large following would attract Roman attention (11:47-48). By offering to *pardon* Jesus, especially as ‘King of the Jews’ (18:39), Pilate can test whether there are any among them who would actually like Jesus to be free to continue gathering support. Thus, this offer, too, is not a serious one. But the offer of release and the designation ‘King of the Jews’ are not simply taunts, either. Rather than mocking the hope of the Jews for a national leader, Pilate is testing it. The response of ‘the Jews’ shows Pilate that they are not interested in Jesus as the leader of any planned rebellion. They ask for Barabbas instead (18:40).

This does not allay the danger for Pilate, though. Instead, it raises a new concern. If ‘the Jews’ are not planning a rebellion with Jesus at its head, might they be planning a rebellion behind Barabbas? It will be important, in the second half of this trial, to remember that expediency rather than justice seems to be the primary issue for Pilate. From here on, Pilate is testing the loyalty of ‘the Jews’.

Pilate’s last act in this first cycle, then, is to have Jesus flogged. This is a very visual display, for the benefit of ‘the Jews’, of what they can expect to happen to anyone who opposes Caesar. But more than that, by downplaying the scourging and emphasizing the mocking, John speaks in Roman imagery. It is a comparison with Caesar himself that is most likely intended by the crown of thorns (instead of laurels), the purple robe, and the Roman soldiers’ salutes. Pilate himself joins in the mockery; his Ἰδοὺ ὁ ἄνθρωπος (John 19:5) echoes the presentation of

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57 This is *contra* those who believe that the declaration of innocence is sincere. If Pilate’s character as a Roman is taken seriously, he would not publically act contrary to his own declarations unless the latter were not meant to be serious. Those who believe the declaration to be sincere include Tolmie, ‘Pontius’, 587. He in fact notes the way the apparently just declaration of Jesus’ innocence is ‘immediately negated’ by the ‘choice between Jesus and Barabbas’. But, first, in this Gospel Pilate only offers to release Jesus; it is in Matthew that Pilate offers the crowd a choice between the two men (27:17) and second, it seems easier to reconcile the apparent shift from a just to an unjust Pilate by taking the offer as not serious to begin with. Note that the analysis presented here also answers the ‘challenge’ of explaining why Pilate calls him here the ‘King of the Jews’ (Tolmie, ‘Pontius’, 588).

58 Bennema, ‘Pilate’, 243. This interpretation is supported as well by John 19:12 where ἐκ τούτου and the imperfect tense of the main verb seem best translated as an ingressive: ‘From this point on, Pilate started to try to release him’, implying that this had not been his intent before.


60 As, also, Bond, *Pilate*, 183-84.
Augustus in Vergil’s *Aeneid* (6.791). And while Pilate could not know ahead of time that this mockery was coming, it enhances the flogging and display of the rebel that brings out the cautionary effect of the odd placement of this episode in John’s narrative world.

*Pilate Tests ‘the Jews’: Are they dangerous?*

**John 19:4-16**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><em>central question:</em></th>
<th>Are ‘the Jews’ loyal?</th>
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| *first question answer:* | Q: Are ‘the Jews’ loyal to Caesar? | P: See! I am bringing him out to you, so that you might know that I find no case at all against him. Behold, the man. ‘J’: Crucify! Crucify! P: Take him yourselves and crucify him. As for me, I find no case against him. ‘J’: We have a law and according to that law he ought to die because he declared himself ‘Son of God’.

| *second question answer:* | Q: Is this man connected with Caesar? | P: So where is it that you are from? ‘J’ is silent. P: Are you not even speaking to me? Don’t you know that I have the authority to release you and the authority to crucify you? ‘J’: You would not have authority over me at all if it had not been given to you from above. Because of this, it is the one who handed me over to you who has the greater guilt.

| *third question answer:* | Q: Are ‘the Jews’ loyal to Caesar or this man? | ‘J’: If you release this man, you are not a friend of Caesar! Everyone who declares himself to be an emperor speaks against Caesar. P: Behold, your emperor! ‘J’: Away! Away! Crucify him! P: Your emperor? Should I crucify him? ‘J’: We have no emperor except only for Caesar.

| *decision:* | Crucify Jesus as local pretender.

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61 Hunt, ‘Ecce Homo’.

62 This odd placement is frequently discussed. *Contra* Bond, there is no reason to think that only a ‘milder beating’ would be ‘cautionary’ nor that such a beating would have to be followed by Jesus’ release (Bond, *Pilate*, 182-83). *Contra* Tolmie, this is not ‘another scheme to set Jesus free’ since I have rejected the possibility that Jesus’ innocence or freedom is of any concern to Pilate (Tolmie, *Pontius*, 590). Flogging as a means of extracting further confessions fits the first century world as well as the character of Pilate as we are developing it here and could equally be seen as his motivation for the insertion at this point of the narrative [Cornelis Bennema, *Encountering Jesus: Character Studies in the Gospel of John* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2014), 185].
So, what will ‘the Jews’ do with this mock-Caesar? As Pilate declares his innocence (19:4), ‘the Jews’ respond as faithful Roman *perigrini*: ‘Crucify him!’ (19:6). The mob rejects this Emperor Jesus—but do they reject Rome and its authority? If Pilate refuses to crucify him, will they exceed their authority and crucify a man Rome has declared innocent? Pilate’s offer in verse 6 tests their willingness to abide by his decision. In their answer, ‘the Jews’ go from screaming (verse 6) to simply answering (verse 7). And although they still demand death, they more reasonably reference their law, which in general the Romans chose to respect. But they also include a new accusation: Jesus claims to be a Son of God.

As previously noted, this analysis presupposes that Pilate’s primary concern for his honour is not *vis à vis* ‘the Jews’ but *vis à vis* Caesar. To learn that Jesus has claimed Caesar’s very title makes the mocking of him as an emperor suddenly threatening to Pilate. In a world where other emissaries from Caesar might report directly back to Rome, no stranger can be trusted. And although it is unlikely from our perspective that any Roman would believe that a nondescript Jew had been declared a ‘son of God’ by Rome, in the narrative the possibility did exist that he had just flogged and mocked someone with imperial connections. Furthermore, the Greek here, ὅτε ἤκουσεν ὁ Πιλᾶτος τοῦτον τὸν λόγον could be translated: ‘when Pilate heard this phrase’. It is not so much their words as their reference to the emperor, *divi filius*, that concerns him. Perhaps, too, the character of Pilate is meant to be aware, as at least some

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63 Against the idea that this is another attempt to release Jesus, see Bond, *Pilate*, 186. But in the place of mockery, I am arguing that Pilate is testing the loyalty of ‘the Jews’.
65 See on Jesus’ claims to honour listed by Neyrey, *Cultural*, 424. This is not only a question of how much honour Jesus might have (Neyrey, *Cultural*, 428-29) but power. For an example of antagonism between Romans in Judaean, see Ummidius Quadratus’s reports against Cumanus and Celer which ended with the emperor’s orders that ‘banished Cumanus, and sent Celer back in chains to Jerusalem to be dragged around the city and executed’ (Horsley and Thatcher, *John*, 46).
Romans later were, that ‘men starting from Judea should possess the world’.\(^6\) So for the first cause if not the second, Pilate had reason to fear.\(^6\)

The reasonable question for Pilate at this point, then, is where did this Jesus come from (v. 9): Nazareth, or perhaps Rome?\(^6\) Jesus was arrested only upon the double verification that he was ‘Jesus of Nazareth’ (18:5, 7), and he will be crucified under that title as well. While it is true, as many point out, that origins are of particular interest to John, within the storyline, Pilate asks this question to verify once more that he has arrested the right man.\(^6\) Pilate lives with the spectre of Caesar looking over his shoulder. And when Jesus finally answers Pilate’s question (19:11), he brings that spectre forward even more clearly saying: ‘You would not have authority over me at all if it had not been granted to you from above’ (19:11). For Pilate, this, too, is a reference to Caesar.

If Jesus’ words have made Pilate think of his responsibilities and his honour before Caesar, his next words decrease that tension. Once Jesus says, ‘the one who handed me over to you has the greater guilt’ (v. 11) we are told that Pilate begins to seek his release (v. 12).

Guilt for a Roman soldier was a serious thing. Valerius Maximus, in his section on military discipline, tells the story of an officer who sent his defeated soldiers back into battle to punish the guilt of their loss. The story ends with the victory of the ‘weary’ men, and the

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66 Tacitus, *Histories* 5.13 (Moore, Jackson); Suetonius, *Vespasian* 4.5 and Josephus, *J.W.* 3.402. Many thanks to George van Kooten for these references.

67 There is also the possibility that, rather than a connection with divine Caesar, Pilate grew afraid that Jesus was connected more directly with a god. For this see Bond, *Pilate*, 187. It is important to note that in contrast to Pilate’s declarations of Jesus’ innocence or offers for release, here for the first time the narrator gives us information about Pilate. Unlike statements put into Pilate’s mouth, which can be lies, unintentional truths or truths, the narrator’s words must be taken at face value. On taking the comparative as an elative here see Bond, *Pilate*, 187. However Tolmie argues against this reading (Tolmie, ‘Pontius’, 592). If the comparative sense is taken, Pilate’s fear would be understood in this analysis to have been continuously growing vis à vis Caesar and his responsibility to keep the peace.

68 It is interesting that Jesus’ Nazarene origins are discussed in John only in relation to the trial and in the discussion with Nathanael, where Jesus goes from ‘Jesus of Nazareth, son of Joseph’ to ‘Rabbi, the Son of God, the King of Israel’ (1:45, 49). The same progression happens here but in a Roman rather than a Jewish encyclopaedia.


70 For the ingressive here, see above n. 58.
moral of the story: ‘Thus the most effective hardener of human weakness is necessity’ (Valerius Maximus, 2.7.10 [Shackleton Bailey]). Also, in his section on justice, Valerius describes a foreign leader whose justice was so stern and abrupt (*praefringo et abscido*) that he fell on his sword when he realized he had broken one of his own laws, rather than ‘conceal his guilt’ (6.5.external 4).

If this man Jesus has enough connections in Rome to allow him to assign guilt yet is not holding Pilate primarily responsible, this is good news.\(^{71}\) This does not completely exonerate Jesus, but perhaps at this point Pilate hopes to hedge his bets and release him.\(^{72}\)

However, in the last exchange, in response to Pilate’s efforts to release Jesus, which, although not specified, are apparently genuine for the first time, ‘the Jews’ themselves question Pilate’s allegiance to Caesar (19:12).\(^{73}\) Pilate is now caught between two choices, either of which might cause him to appear disloyal to Caesar. So he ‘listen[s]’ to the ‘words’ of ‘the Jews’ (19:13).\(^{74}\) He tests their loyalty one last time by offering them ‘their’ king (19:13-14).\(^{75}\) And when they clearly declare themselves loyal to Caesar, Jesus, who says nothing more, becomes expendable.\(^{76}\)

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\(^{71}\) Neyrey’s list of the claims made here underscores the fact that Pilate would have to either conclude that Jesus is mad, a philosopher, or has some legitimate claims to honour (Neyrey, *Cultural*, 425). In this paper, Pilate’s only concern is understood to be the latter and sidesteps the issue of who Jesus does hold responsible. For a variety of opinions, see Bond, *Pilate*, 188-89 (in discussion with Barrett); Bennema, ‘Pilate’, 245 n 23.


\(^{73}\) The reference to ‘friend of Caesar’ has been sufficiently discussed. What is important here is not whether it is used as a technical term but simply that it calls Pilate’s loyalty to Caesar into question (Bond, *Pilate*, 189-90).

\(^{74}\) This translation is based on the distinction between *ἀκούω* with genitive versus accusative, which is disputed. Still, if it is translated here as ‘listen’, it does explain Pilate’s change of heart. Although this is not a distinction that can be made absolutely, perhaps it is significant here especially in contrast with 19:8. See BDF §173.

\(^{75}\) The discussion over whether Jesus or Pilate is seated seems to have reached an impasse. Although Lincoln says that deliberate ambiguity is not a choice because John does not use grammar for ambiguity elsewhere, he does not take John 19:1, 16 and 19 into account where the agent of the action is ambiguous and those beyond the immediate actors seem to be implicated by the lack of grammatical precision (Lincoln, *Gospel*, 469). Neyrey calls the intransitive reading the ‘literal’ one which seems odd in light of his acknowledgement that ‘[g]rammatical studies support both readings’ (Neyrey, *Cultural*, 430-31).

\(^{76}\) Tolmie’s conclusion that ‘the Jews’ ‘have achieved their objective’ and Pilate ‘has not achieved his’ depends on his understanding of Pilate’s desire ‘to fulfil his judicial role in a just way’ which he is never able to do. Here, however, Pilate’s desire to keep the peace is seen as primary. Furthermore, since the final pronouncement of ‘the Jews’ is, ‘We have no king but Caesar’, this seems an odd achievement for them (Tolmie, ‘Pontius’, 595). Neyrey's conclusion that by 19:15a 'Pilate has lost the game, and his honor has been diminished’
This analysis has described a Pilate who is both strong and weak, not manipulated by ‘the Jews’ (strong) but concerned about his political future (weak). In general, the words and actions that previous analyses have seen as mocking have been regarded here as a way to test loyalties, first Jesus’ and then ‘the Jews’. On the one hand, this description has carried through the text the concerns of the narrative character of Pilate that were set forth at the beginning: (1) Pilate will crucify Jesus; (2) Pilate’s main concern is Rome. But beyond this, what has emerged from this analysis is a Pilate who is continually testing loyalties—the very issue that the Gospel of John itself continually tests.

We have seen that Pilate is often analysed as one whose loyalty or belief in Jesus is tested—as is true of many of the characters in the Gospel of John. However, the reading proposed here suggests instead that the character of Pilate is used to bring out the way both ‘the Jews’ and Jesus are tested for loyalty to the Roman Empire. This testing is likely to have resonated for the audience of the Gospel as they negotiated imperial loyalty amidst the (usually) occasional and local persecutions of early Christian groups. So, from Pilate’s testing of loyalties let us turn, finally, to the loyalties that are rhetorically created among social groups in this Fourth Gospel passage.

only obtains if his primary goal is justice and therefore Jesus’ release (Neyrey, Cultural, 431). See his comments to that effect on (Neyrey, Cultural, 432).

Furthermore, Pilate takes care to be clear about his choice. Jesus is crucified as ‘Jesus of Nazareth’, clarifying that Pilate at least believed that he had tried the right man. And the title King of the Jews is the final ironic opposition of local pretender to a regional throne crushed by the might of Rome. There will be no question where Pilate’s loyalties lie.

This last predisposes the hearer towards interpreting Pilate with consistently negative or violent motives as posited here: peace in the province and honour before Caesar are more important to his character than justice.

On the connections between faith, faithfulness and loyalty, see e.g. ‘πίστις’, BDAG 818–20; Horsley and Thatcher, John, 140, 104, 154.

Social Groupings in John

One of the difficulties in describing the groups referenced in the Fourth Gospel is our desire as analysers to create discrete categories. This facilitates analysis and allows us to address questions such as: How are ‘the Jews’ related to ‘the world’? How are the disciples related to ‘the Jews’? However, studies of group identity and categorization reveal that ‘there is no limit to the number of groups a human can join’ and thus ‘all humans possess multiple social identities’. Thus to be, for example, a member of IBR does not necessarily preclude membership in ETS, SBL, or, indeed, both.

Furthermore, which nametag you are wearing on any given day of the conference or how you introduce yourself may say quite a bit about how you prefer to categorize yourself among specific groups of people. Additionally, we all belong to groups outside the academy, and our memberships in those groups will become salient at certain times and not at others. But how does this relate to the Gospel of John?

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I would like to take us through the trial before Pilate a second time looking at the ways that this pericope divides people into groups, and especially at the way it problematizes the labels that would normally be used to divide people. As Jörg Frey says of the addressees of John’s Gospel, ‘their identity in this way is exactly not—as according to Jewish tradition—determined by physical descent, but by a Christologically and soteriologically justified “family relationship”’. 81

The drama of this scene has long been recognized with Pilate and the action alternating between the outside with ‘the Jews’ and the inside with Jesus. But the repetition of the word *praetorium*, twice right at the beginning (18:28) and then twice more after that (18:33; 19:9), a word that is rare in any earlier writings when used to refer to a location and therefore probably retains all of its Roman specificity, puts Jesus once he is delivered to Pilate, emphatically on the Roman side of the equation:

To set Jesus the Jew (John 4:9) within the Roman camp further ambiguates the referent for ‘the Jews’, understood here to point within the narrative world primarily to ‘the (strict)

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Torah- and temple-loyalists who are mainly located in Jerusalem and Judaea’. Here, we see that Jesus has not only been separated from ‘the Jews’ but taken into the Roman camp.

One might assume then that Jesus and Pilate belong together, until one comes to John 18:35 where Pilate says, ‘I’m not Jewish, am I?’ Although the obvious answer is ‘No’, John’s proclivity for double entendres allows for the possibility that the reader should answer ‘Yes’. Of John’s other two uses of μήτι one clearly functions in such a way. When the woman from Samaria asks, ‘This isn’t the Messiah, is it?’ (4:29) the implied reader clearly knows that the real answer is ‘Yes’; in that pericope, even the Samaritans recognize Jesus as Messiah ten verses later. Thus, although many of the Jewish people that John describes are not members of the group he calls ‘the Jews’ (the parents of the man born blind for example, John 9:22), here a Roman is rhetorically made to be a ‘Jew’. Jesus, then, is the only ‘Roman’ left standing.

But in the second half of the trial, Jesus’ identification as a Roman is taken even further. With a crown of thorns rather than laurel leaves and a purple robe, the soldiers acclaim Jesus

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83 See on this e.g., Andrew T. Lincoln, Truth on Trial: The Lawsuit Motif in the Fourth Gospel (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2000), 240, 399, 19.
as they would an emperor, Χαῖρε, the Greek for the Latin Ave.\textsuperscript{84} The difference, though, is that they do not call him Caesar—they hail him as ὁ βασιλεὺς τῶν Ἰουδαίων, a phrase used in John only in the trial and on the titulus above the cross. For Roman soldiers to mockingly hail the king of the Jews, however, positions them as Jews themselves. And when ‘the Jews’ tell Pilate that Jesus claimed to be the son of God—υἱὸς θεοῦ (19:7) with no articles just as in the Latin divi filius—the implicit comparison with Caesar is heightened. This connection is carried throughout this passage: in 19:5 ‘Behold the man’ echoes Vergil’s presentation of Augustus (‘This is the man’; \textit{Aeneid} 6.791). Next Jesus and Caesar are connected in 19:12 when ‘the Jews’ demand that Pilate choose between the two. There is the possibility that it is Jesus sitting at the βημα in 19:13, and finally in 19:15 ‘the Jews’ declare their allegiance to Caesar rather than to Jesus as their βασιλεὺς, a noun used to refer to the emperor as well as to a king in the first century C.E. Mediterranean world.\textsuperscript{85} Thus, not only is Jesus the last Roman left standing; he is Caesar himself.

But is Jesus really the last Roman left standing? Throughout this same passage, another shift in identity is being portrayed. While we saw a minute ago that Pilate was shifted into the category of ‘the Jews’, ‘the Jews’ themselves are undergoing a shift.

\textsuperscript{84} On this see e.g., Bond, \textit{Pilate}, 183; Hill, \textit{Johannine Corpus}, 306, 330.
In 19:6, as soon as they see Jesus they call for his crucifixion. Although the Romans were not the only people to use this method of execution, in the first century C.E. crucifixion was most often done by them.\(^{86}\) Thus, by demanding crucifixion, ‘the Jews’ identify themselves as Romans. Pilate then offers to let them crucify Jesus themselves, repeating the connection. In verse 7 it is ‘the Jews’ who mention \(υἱὸς θεοῦ\) and although of course this can be interpreted within a Jewish encyclopaedia, it is the Roman referent to the emperor that harmonizes with the rest of this passage.\(^{87}\) Thus, we have ‘Jews’ charging Jesus with \textit{Lex Iulia de maiestate}, in other words, ‘a direct challenge to Caesar’s supremacy and authority’.\(^{88}\) The loyalty they are thereby showing to Caesar, of course, is further heightened in the next few verses. After calling for Jesus’ crucifixion once again (19:15), ‘the Jews’ ultimately declare themselves as loyal \textit{perigrini} by proclaiming their allegiance to Caesar. So in the trial so far, the Romans become Jews, Jesus becomes Caesar, and the Jews become Romans. But just as John is blurring these ethnic boundaries, the Romans had been doing something similar with their identity as their empire expanded.

\(^{86}\) Chapman points out the vivid memory ‘the post-Second Temple generation’ would have of the crucifixions surrounding the fall of Jerusalem and the Temple [David W. Chapman, \textit{Ancient Jewish and Christian Perceptions of Crucifixion} (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2010), 94].

\(^{87}\) For Keener, for example, ‘Son of God’ can be connected with Israel and with ‘Messiah’ [Craig S. Keener, \textit{The Gospel of John: A Commentary} (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2003), 1:294-96].

The Roman World

Whether or not the Romans conceived of their empire with boundaries or without is a matter of debate. But even Geoffrey Greatrex, who argues for frontiers, nevertheless begins and ends his discussion by pointing out that the emperors ‘[a]ll believed that they had the right to cross the frontier into barbarian soil and to install forts there if they wished’. Thus, what we see is that although the frontiers existed, this did not inhibit a conception of the inhabited world as entirely within Roman responsibility if not under Roman control.

In Vergil’s Aeneid, for example, Jupiter promises the Romans imperium sine fine (1.278), a phrase that specifically extends to both time (tempora) and geography (metae rerum). The way Romans, especially under the Empire, conceptualized their world is also described by Aristides in his panegyric to Rome. He first points out that, despite claims to the contrary, the sun had set in Alexander’s empire. But, he says, the saying has now come true since ‘the sun’s course is always in [Rome’s] land’ (To Rome 10 [Behr]). He goes on: ‘nor do you rule within fixed boundaries, nor does another prescribe the limit of your power’ (10). This idea of rule without bounds is expanded later when he mentions boundaries again but only to say that what is inside cannot ‘be measured’ and what is outside is only what has been ‘condemned … as useless’ (28). In fact, it is ἅπασα ἡ οἰκουμένη, ‘the whole inhabited world’ that wants ‘this empire [to] last for all time’ (29).

An absence of boundaries for the empire comes up again in sections 80-84 where he describes a ‘circuit’ made of ‘men who hold out their shields’, creating an impregnable defence set up ‘on the borders of the whole world’ (ὁ τῆς πάσης πάσης ἔφορος γῆς, 84). By this means he

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89 For the empire without boundaries, see C. R. Whittaker, Frontiers of the Roman Empire: A Social and Economic Study (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1994), e.g., 29.
conceptualises defensive boundaries that paradoxically exclude no one because they are so vast. The empire (δῆμος) is again equated with ‘the whole inhabited world’ (59) shortly before the section most pertinent for this discussion.91

[Y]ou [Rome] have caused the word ‘Roman’ to belong not to a city, but to be the name of a sort of common race, and this not one out of all the races, but a balance to all the remaining ones. You do not now divide the races into Greeks and barbarians…. But you have divided people into Romans and non-Romans….many in each city are citizens of yours no less than of their fellow natives (63-64)

In this description of the élite citizenry, then, one becomes a Roman without leaving behind one’s previous ethnic loyalties. As Aristides goes on to describe the soldiers, however, he discusses how men of ability were ‘found’, and then ‘when you [Rome] found them, at the same time you severed their ties with their own country and you gave them your city in return, so that in the future they were ashamed to declare their former origins’ (75). And yet, their foreign origins have apparently not been forgotten even by Aristides because he also describes the soldiers as ‘those who both are partners in [the whole inhabited world] and are foreigners’ (85).92 We see here, then, a tension between the concept of Rome as ‘generous with citizenship’

91 For the equation of empire with οἰκουμένη see also sections 101-102.
92 Further contradictions between the speech and what we know of second century C.E. realities can be easily found. Aristeides seems to recognize this himself when he wants to speak of ‘those outside your empire’ (99) despite his earlier assertions that the empire extends to the whole οἰκουμένη. He solves the problem by qualifying his phrase: ‘those outside your empire, if there are any’ (99). Furthermore, in 45 he describes the way other rulers colonize and tax the lands under their rule and Rome, despite Aristides, was not an exception to this practice. In 65, the wrath of Caesar is said to prevent abuses of power, but although Josephus describes such an appeal to Caesar, the result is not freedom from poor rule but more oppression (Josephus, JW 2.294-95). Finally, whether soldiers who were fighting to obtain Roman citizenship would be ‘ashamed to declare their former origins’ (75) is disputed. See e.g. Pollard who argues that ‘Individuals who had lost one identity on transition from civilian to soldier and who could never acquire a “Roman” identity in any real cultural sense found a new identity as members of an institution, namely, the Roman army’ [Nigel Pollard, Soldiers, Cities, and Civilians in Roman Syria (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2000), 8]. Dench points, too, to the ‘assertions of the superior
and the primacy accorded to those with the markers of ‘pure’ Romanness. Praises of Rome exaggerate reality and gloss over the way those born Roman might still vaunt themselves over others whose citizenship was acquired later (e.g., Acts 22:28).

This citizenship, Aristides says, is ‘open to all men’ (60). This, of course, was also not true. Aristides himself qualifies in his next sentence: ‘No one is a foreigner who deserves to hold office or to be trusted’ (60, emphasis mine). This leaves the choice of the deserving in the hands of the Romans. And when Aristides goes on to say that Rome ‘has never refused anyone’ (62), the logical implication is that anyone not chosen to become a Roman citizen is nobody.

Whether nobody or somebody, citizen or not, those embedded within Roman contexts would be aware of this discourse that presented Romans as those who welcomed those previously non-Romans into their midst. But this construction of the Roman world as open to all nations sounds quite familiar when hearing a Gospel that invites all who believe to come into the family of God (1:7, 12) and yet that also leaves some outside the family (3:36). So let me end with some conclusions discussing this connection.

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93 Dench, Romulus, 35. See also D. J. Mattingly, Imperialism, Power, and Identity: Experiencing the Roman Empire, Miriam S. Balmuth Lectures in Ancient History and Archaeology (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2014), 212. Adams notes this tension when he says: ‘In public therefore (as in speeches) Romans sought to remain true to their Roman identity by using a form of Latin untainted by Greek….Greek culture could readily be presented as decadent, and this decadence could be implied by the contemptuous use of Greek terms relating to activities of which the Romans publicly disapproved as being supposedly typical of Greeks’ (Adams, ‘Romanitas’, 202-203).

95 Dench, Romulus, 95.


98 Dench, Romulus, 32.
**Re-defining the World**

By blurring the boundaries between themselves and outsiders, the Romans rhetorically identified Caesar, and by extension themselves as ‘those who bring civilization to the whole inhabited world’...and who wouldn’t want that? Foreigners can become Romans, and at the same time not lose their foreignness; the boundaries of *Romanitas* are not impermeable.\(^98\)

Rather than constructing the Jews as those within the family of God and gentiles as those without, the Gospel of John blurs this familiar distinction, as well. ‘The Jews’, as Susan Hylen has shown, are an ambiguous character, and in the trial pericope they are specifically blurred with Romans. From a Roman perspective, by contrast, the distinction familiar to them would separate civilised citizens from barbarian Jews. But in this passage, a Roman understanding of social categorization is challenged, too. Rather than a people given an empire by the promise of the gods, an empire at whose summit Caesar rules before his death and apotheosis, John presents a different empire, also ruled by one with power from above (18:36; 19:11). This empire includes and simultaneously excludes both Roman citizens and ‘the Jews’, admitting only those who believe.\(^99\) Thus, an analysis that recognizes the Roman referents in John 18:28—19:16 shows a very Roman Pilate testing the loyalties of his subjects and an empire of God led by the emperor Jesus that, like the Roman Empire, invited a re-ordering of previous group loyalties.

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\(^{98}\) The foreignness of those not born to the citizenship was a reason for ‘othering’ among those born to it. The Gospel of John may share a similar ‘othering’ of some believers, for example those who turn back in John 6:60-71, but this cannot be explored here.

\(^{99}\) John 1:4-5, 7-9; 3:19-21; 8:12; 12:46 but see also John 5:35; 9:5; 12:35-36 with their suggestions that the light has or will be brought by others, thus extending the empire from the time of Jesus’ life to the time of the hearers of the Gospel.
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