

**Miracle-Workers and Magicians in the Acts of the Apostles  
and Philostratus' *Life of Apollonius of Tyana***

by

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## Summary

The miracle-workers and magicians we meet in the Greco-Roman world and on the pages of Greco-Roman narratives are among the most difficult characters for modern scholars to understand. While Greco-Roman writers presume their readers will share their socio-cultural script and understand how one distinguishes between a legitimate miracle-worker and an illegitimate magician, this script is lost on modern scholars. Hindered first by absolute definitions for miracle and magic from social anthropology and then by relative definitions from the sociology of knowledge, this thesis calls for a re-engagement of the "historic imagination" with respect to these sorts of characters. In particular, this thesis suggests that a detailed investigation into the operation of characters labelled as performers of miracles or magic can reveal the criteria which distinguished the two in the minds of Greco-Roman Mediterraneans as well as revealing the practical outworking of the criteria themselves. Two narratives are chosen for this task—the canonical Acts of the Apostles, representing a Jewish-Christian angle, and Philostratus' *Life of Apollonius of Tyana*, representing a pagan angle. Methodologically the study proceeds by converting these narratives into "narrative worlds" and then subjecting the narrative worlds to a social investigation using models suggested by the work of Mary Douglas and Peter Brown. Under the rubric of "gaining power," "intersecting power," and "defending power" the two narrative worlds projected by these texts are compared and contrasted with respect to the criteria being used to distinguish miracle-worker from magician. The conclusion reached is that in both texts legitimacy for a mediator of divine power is found especially in demonstrating power without appearing desirous of personal gains. A miracle-worker is successful in this regard; a magician is one who fails in this regard.

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## Abbreviations

<i>ABD</i>	<i>The Anchor Bible Dictionary</i> , ed. D. N. Freedman (New York: Doubleday, 1992)
<i>ANRW</i>	<i>Aufstieg und Niedergang der römischen Welt</i> , ed. H. Temporini and W. Haase (Berlin and New York: Walter de Gruyter)
<i>Ant.</i>	Josephus, <i>Jewish Antiquities</i>
<b>BAGD</b>	W. Bauer, W.R. Arndt, F. W. Gingrich, and F. W. Danker, <i>Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and other Early Christian Literature</i>
<i>BC</i>	<i>The Beginnings of Christianity</i> , ed. F. J. Foakes-Jackson and K. Lake (London: Macmillan, 1920-33)
<b>BIS</b>	Biblical Interpretation Series
<b>BJS</b>	Brown Judaic Studies
<i>BTB</i>	<i>Biblical Theology Bulletin</i>
<i>CA</i>	<i>Current Anthropology</i>
<i>CQ</i>	<i>Classical Quarterly</i>
<i>DSD</i>	<i>Dead Sea Discoveries</i>
<b>GRBS</b>	<i>Greek, Roman and Byzantine Studies</i>
<b>ICC</b>	International Critical Commentary
<i>JBL</i>	<i>Journal of Biblical Literature</i>
<i>JRH</i>	<i>Journal of Religious History</i>
<i>JRS</i>	<i>Journal of Roman Studies</i>
<i>JSNT</i>	<i>Journal for the Study of the New Testament</i>
<b>JSNTSup</b>	Journal for the Study of the New Testament—Supplement Series
<b>JSOTSup</b>	Journal for the Study of the Old Testament—Supplement Series
<b>LCL</b>	Loeb Classic Library
<b>LSJ</b>	Liddell-Scott-Jones, <i>Greek-English Lexicon</i>
<b>NCBC</b>	New Century Bible Commentary
<i>Neot</i>	<i>Neotestamentica</i>
<b>NICNT</b>	New International Commentary on the New Testament
<i>NTS</i>	<i>New Testament Studies</i>
<b>NovTSup</b>	Novum Testamentum, Supplements
<i>PGM</i>	<i>Papyri graecae magicae</i> , ed. K. Preisendanz (Stuttgart: Verlag B.G. Teubner, 1973, 1974; from original 1928, 1931)
<b>PW</b>	Pauly-Wissowa, <i>Real-Encyclopädie der classischen Altertumswissenschaft</i>
<i>RB</i>	<i>Revue biblique</i>
<i>RhM</i>	<i>Rheinisches Museum für Philologie</i>
<i>RSPT</i>	<i>Revue des sciences philosophiques et théologiques</i>
<b>SBLDS</b>	Society of Biblical Literature Dissertation Series
<b>SNTSMS</b>	Society for New Testament Studies Monograph Series
<i>TDNT</i>	<i>Theological Dictionary of the New Testament</i> , ed. G. Kittel and G. Friedrich
<b>THNT</b>	Theologischer Handkommentar zum NT
<b>TNTC</b>	Tyndale New Testament Commentaries
<i>TynBul</i>	<i>Tyndale Bulletin</i>
<i>War</i>	Josephus, <i>Jewish War</i>
<b>WUNT</b>	Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament

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## Preface

Given the largely inductive path followed for the most part throughout this thesis, it seemed wise to provide the reader with a road map should they desire one. This thesis originally began with the observation that while distinguishing legitimate mediators of divine power from illegitimate ones in ancient texts has proven notoriously difficult for modern critical scholars, ancient narrators seem quite content to place the two side by side without fear of their readers drawing the wrong conclusions about their heroic miracle-workers. Surely there was socio-cultural script in place which modern readers in their great distance from the world of these texts simply miss. Twentieth century attempts to carefully define positive acts of divine mediation (usually labelled "miracle") from illegitimate acts of divine mediation (usually labelled "magic") have frequently obscured rather than illuminated this world. Both the absolute definitions of social anthropology (miracle is supplicative, magic is manipulative) and the relative definitions offered by a sociology of knowledge perspective (your miracle-worker is my magician and vice versa) ultimately yield dead ends. Given this state of affairs, this thesis has taken to heart Peter Brown's challenge to re-engage the "historic imagination." Within the framework of this thesis this involves taking the realm of the gods more seriously as a social reality, trading the camera for the camcorder—that is watching the give and take between intermediary and community rather than simply looking at the final label, and using J. Z. Smith's notion of a polythetic classification which adds the necessary degree of complexity to distinguishing between miracle-workers and magicians while still allowing commonality between ideological foes.

Two religiously diverse but generically similar texts were used to carry out this task: the canonical Acts of the Apostles and Philostratus' *Life of Apollonius*. We have borrowed both from narrative-critical scholarship to create our concept of a narrative world and then sought out suggestions from other social anthropological and historical investigations to assist in our analysis of this narrative world. The work of Mary Douglas and Peter Brown was particularly informative and exercised a considerable

influence on the final shape of this investigation, and so a chapter is dedicated to surveying their constructs of religious virtuosi on their own terms.

Having thus provided the source of our particular take on the social worlds of these two narratives, the study continues by comparing the two narratives in three large blocks. First, under "Gaining Power" we investigate the ambiguities and tensions of gaining power without appearing to desire it. There is power to be found in a fringe status, but that status itself serves to keep any personal power gains in check. In both texts miracle-workers are portrayed as succeeding in this regard, while magicians are portrayed as exhibiting an unseemly ambition both in human and divine social circles. Under "Intersecting Power" we disclose the dynamic of the intermediary who has gained power crossing paths with other forms of religious, community, and political power. The quest for legitimacy and success and lack of success in the encounter between intermediary and these other forms of societal power reveal a good deal about the socio-cultural script that exists between the intermediary and the Greco-Roman communities in which they sought to operate. Finally, under "Defending Power" we look specifically at the intermediary facing charges of religious deviance or political subversion. Here the criteria which we teased out in the previous two chapters are confirmed as miracle-workers and narrators fend off accusations of deviance and magic. Our conclusion simply pulls together our findings on the criteria and suggests where our finding may be fruitfully tested and applied.

# Chapter 1

## Introduction

### I. Prologue: Strange Characters in a Strange World

Philip went down to the city of Samaria and proclaimed the Messiah to them. The crowds with one accord listened eagerly to what was said by Philip, hearing and seeing the signs that he did, for unclean spirits, crying with loud shrieks, came out of many who were possessed; and many others who were paralyzed or lame were cured. So there was great joy in that city.

Now a certain man named Simon had previously practiced magic in the city and amazed the people of Samaria, saying that he was someone great. All of them, from the least to the greatest, listened to him eagerly, saying, "This man is the power of God that is called Great." And they listened eagerly to him because for a long time he had amazed them with his magic (Acts 8:5-11; NRSV).

The world of Philip and Simon is a far off place indeed for the average biblical scholar. Arriving as most of us do with a post-Enlightenment rationality, both Philip and Simon, and the crowds of Samaria eager to pay attention to them are all foreign strangers to us. Little wonder, then, that Philip and Simon appear to cut such a similar figure in our eyes. Jack N. Lightstone, commenting on Acts 8:9ff, states,

[o]ne cannot escape the conclusion that Simon did much the same thing as Philip before the latter's arrival. And just as Philip's talents won recognition of Jesus as a divine being, so Simon's exploits earned for himself divine status....[W]hen one cuts through the obvious layer of polemic in these passages, one invites the conclusion that Philip and Jesus, on the one hand, and Simon, on the other, cut much the same figure as religious virtuosi...<sup>1</sup>

And yet as any reader of Acts, and indeed Lightstone himself, is aware, the writer of Acts clearly casts Philip in the role of a legitimate purveyor of divine power and salvation while Simon is anything but that.

It is the very strangeness of these two characters (from a Western perspective) and the society in which they function which provokes this reaction. Our instinct to

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<sup>1</sup>Jack N. Lightstone, *Commerce of the Sacred: Mediation of the Divine among Jews in the Graeco-Roman Diaspora*, Brown Judaic Studies, no. 59 (Chico: Scholars Press, 1984), 19.

see them as quite similar rather than as instinctively different (as the narrator does) suggests that here is a historical context in desperate need of fresh imagination. Peter Brown suggests that it is the duty of the historian "to take time off; let the imagination run;...[to train ourselves] to imagine with greater precision what it is like to be human in situations very different from our own."<sup>2</sup> Given our modern frame of reference where our default mode is naturalistic explanations, a world populated with miracle-workers, magicians, demons, and miraculous phenomena is particularly hard to imagine. Behind the accusations of magic and the belief in miracles is a world populated with divine beings which are as real to the human inhabitants as one's neighbors, one's governing authority, or one's ancestors.<sup>3</sup> How indeed does one enter into a world in which the realm of divine beings is a given, and one's choices are typically limited to "how one conceives of these beings," or rather, "how one ought to relate to these beings"?<sup>4</sup> But enter it we must. If we are serious about understanding the world of Philip and Simon, a world in which two characters appear to be carrying on fundamentally similar activities but meet with radically different judgments, our historical imagination needs to be exercised.

This thesis is fundamentally an attempt to enter the world of Philip and Simon. To enter this world is to begin to understand the instinctive moves that went on in the mind of the narrator of this story and its original readers. What was it that allowed him to tell a story about two "astounders" of the people of Samaria and assume that his readers would draw radically different conclusions about these two apparently similar characters? How is it that Philip is a legitimate purveyor of miraculous power while Simon is an illegitimate purveyor of magical power? The first obstacle to imagining this world afresh is the legacy of twentieth century definitions for "miracle" and "magic". It is only in moving beyond this obstacle and reconceiving our task that our imagination will be liberated to take a step closer to understanding the "religious

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<sup>2</sup>Peter Brown, *Society and the Holy in Late Antiquity* (London: Faber and Faber, 1982), 4.

<sup>3</sup>Peter Brown, *The Making of Late Antiquity* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1978), 8-9.

<sup>4</sup>Brown, *Making*, 8-9 and *Society*, 14.

virtuosi" that we meet in the Greco-Roman literature of the first centuries C.E.

## II. Problematic Definitions: "Miracle" and "Magic"

The difficulty experienced by modern scholars in distinguishing between a "miracle-worker" such as Philip and a "magician" such as Simon may be attributed first and foremost to the legacy of the definition of "magic," "religion," and "science" (with "miracle" understood as a subset of "religion"). In biblical and classical scholarship within the last hundred years, the pattern has been to look to the field of social anthropology and sociology to provide definitions for these terms. At the risk of oversimplification, I would suggest that defining "magic" and "miracle" has fallen into two developmental stages, reflecting shifts within the fields of social anthropology and sociology from which these scholars were borrowing. The first stage was to use absolute definitions offered by late nineteenth and early twentieth century social anthropology. The second stage was to dive headlong into relative definitions offered by the framework of the sociology of knowledge. The shortcomings of both approaches suggest that there is an urgent need for a third stage in understanding "miracle" and "magic" and the religious superstars who are attributed with performing one or the other in the Greco-Roman world.

### A. Absolute Definitions: Manipulative vs. Supplicative

From the turn of the century onward, at least, biblical scholars have mined the works of anthropologists to define "magic" and "miracle." Very frequently, what they returned with was some variation on the "religion, magic, science" trichotomy used by anthropologists such as James Frazer and Bronislaw Malinowski.<sup>5</sup> Frazer described

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<sup>5</sup>Bronislaw Malinowski, *Magic, Science and Religion and Other Essays*, introduction by R. Redfield (New York: Doubleday Anchor Books, 1955), 19, 70. For the history of the "magic"/"religion" distinction in anthropology see Lucy Mair, *An Introduction to Social Anthropology*, 2d ed. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1972), 210-231. Howard Clark Kee's *Christian Origins in Sociological Perspective* is an excellent example of the use of anthropologists such as Malinowski to define magic ([London: SCM Press, 1980], 63-66). The distinction also is used by scholars of other Greco-Roman religions, such as John Ferguson (*The Religions of the Roman Empire* [London: Thames and Hudson, 1970], 157-158) although he takes great care to qualify the theoretical distinction. A.F. Segal also cites Malinowski as a source of the traditional "religion"/"magic" distinction in "Hellenistic Magic: Some Questions of Definition," in *Studies in Gnosticism and Hellenistic Religions presented to Gilles Quispel on the Occasion of his 65th Birthday*, ed. R. van den Broek and M.J. Vermaseren (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1981), 350. Christopher A. Faraone and Dirk Obbink suggest that many students of Greek magic and religion "continue to cline, consciously or not,

magic as the belief that "the same causes will always produce the same effects, that the performance of the proper ceremony, accompanied by the appropriate spell, will inevitably be attended by the desired result" and this involves no supplication of a higher power. In this sense it is close to science in that both view "the succession of events...to be perfectly regular and certain, being determined by immutable laws, the operation of which can be foreseen and calculated precisely."<sup>6</sup> Frazer even goes so far as to call magic the "bastard sister of science."<sup>7</sup> Religion, on the other hand, involves "the propitiation or conciliation of powers superior to man which are believed to direct and control the course of nature and of human life."<sup>8</sup> But before one attributes all beliefs involving personalized spirits to the realm of religion, Frazer adds that while "magic often deals with spirits, which are personal agents of the kind assumed by religion," whenever it does so "it treats them exactly in the same fashion as it treats inanimate agents, that is, it constrains or coerces them instead of conciliating or propitiating them as religion would do."<sup>9</sup> Malinowski, while differing with Frazer over the relationship of science and magic,<sup>10</sup> essentially took over Frazer's distinction between religion and magic.<sup>11</sup> Thus within "the domain of the sacred, magic [is] a practical art consisting of acts which are only means to a definite end expected to follow later on; religion [is] a body of self-contained acts being themselves the fulfillment of their purpose."<sup>12</sup> Within the realm of biblical studies, one can find no

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to the standard dichotomy" (preface to *Magika Hiera: Ancient Greek Magic and Religion*, ed. C.A. Faraone and D. Obbink [New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991], vi).

<sup>6</sup>James Frazer, *The Golden Bough: A History of Myth and Religion*, abridged in one volume by J. Frazer (London: Chancellor Press, 1994; reprint Macmillan, 1922), 49.

<sup>7</sup>Ibid., 50.

<sup>8</sup>Ibid., 50.

<sup>9</sup>Ibid., 51.

<sup>10</sup>Malinowski did not make the link between science and magic suggested by Frazer but rather believed magic originated in human emotional outbursts in the face of powerlessness (79-82).

<sup>11</sup>Max Weber's language also demonstrates a reliance on "magic" as manipulation, "religion" as supplication, even if he recognizes the grey area that exists between these two realities (*The Sociology of Religion*, trans. E. Fischoff [Boston: Beacon Press, 1963; from German 4th ed., 1956], 24-31).

<sup>12</sup>Malinowski, 88.

better application of this trichotomy of religion, magic, and science than Howard Clark Kee's definition of miracle, magic and medicine.

*Medicine* is a method of diagnosis of human ailments and prescription for them based on a combination of theory about and observation of the body, its functions and malfunctions. *Miracle* embodies the claim that healing can be accomplished through appeal to, and subsequent action by the gods, either directly or through a chosen intermediary agent. *Magic* is a technique, through word or act, by which a desired end is achieved, whether that end lies in the solution to the seeker's problem or in damage to the enemy who has caused the problem.<sup>13</sup>

If we put to one side the problem of science in order to focus on magic and miracle, within this interpretive framework, magic is manipulative; miracle, which is an aspect of religion, is supplicative.

This absolute definition for miracle and magic frequently carried with it particular accretions which only further muddied the waters. Among the most pernicious was the immediate assumption that any rite involving lesser divine beings, such as angels, demons, or δαίμονες belonged to the realm of magic.<sup>14</sup> Scholars of early Christianity such as Stephen Benko and John M. Hull working within this manipulative/supplicative framework claim that early Christian belief in the demonic "amounts to a superstitious inclination towards the magic inevitably associated with such belief."<sup>15</sup> The use of the term "superstitious" is, of course, intentionally pejorative

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<sup>13</sup>*Medicine, Miracle and Magic in New Testament Times* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 3. In an earlier publication, Kee, citing social anthropologist Lucy Mair, states that "religion involves communication with beings, while magic consists in manipulation of forces. Both seek ends that are not attainable by human efforts and hence call on forces or beings outside the realm of the ordinary. Where communication dominates, is religion: where operation of forces prevails, is magic" (*Miracle in the Early Christian World: A Study in Sociohistorical Method* [New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1983], 62-63). On Kee's apparent misreading of the anthropological literature, including Lucy Mair, see the critique by Susan R. Garrett, *The Demise of the Devil: Magic and the Demonic in Luke's Writings* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1989), 29-30. In fairness to Kee and contra Garrett, Mair does provide some justification for Kee's distinctions, especially in *Introduction*, 229.

<sup>14</sup>For a more extended treatment on this particular subject see W. J. Lyons and A. M. Reimer's "The Demonic Virus and Qumran Studies: Some Preventative Measures," in *Dead Sea Discoveries* 5 (1998): 16-32.

<sup>15</sup>John M. Hull, *Hellenistic Magic and the Synoptic Tradition* (London: SCM Press, 1974), 51. Stephen Benko states that early church fathers "firmly believed in the existence of demons as intermediary beings and that [this belief] is one of the preconditions for any system of magic." He then goes on to list the exorcism of demons as a blatant example of magical elements in early Christian practice ("Early Christian Magical Practices," in *SBL 1982 Seminar Papers*, ed. K. H. Richards [Chico: Scholars Press, 1982], 10-11).

as is the further connection made between magic and the intellectually and financially impoverished masses. Manipulative magic is stigmatized as the uneducated person's religion.<sup>16</sup> Ultimately absolute definitions for miracle and magic tend to suffer from the lingering traces of religious Darwinism in which religion is believed to move from manipulative syncretistic magic to monotheistic supplicative religion, at which point religious scholars halt the process while more thoroughgoing Enlightenment scholars see a final step to post-religious natural sciences in which all superstition is finally shaken loose.<sup>17</sup> While few scholars still hold to this historical narrative, the effects of these accretions to the absolute definitions continue to be felt.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>16</sup>One rather expects this sort of equation in a study which absolutizes the notion of magic, such as Hull's *Hellenistic Magic*, where he characterizes magic beliefs as flourishing "particularly amongst the lower and servile classes," and later speaks of the study of magic as that which "brings us closer to the ordinary beliefs of the uneducated first-century man," (9,44). Lumping belief in demonic influence with other irrational superstitions, Frederick E. Brenk describes those who wrote *hypomnemata* about Apollonios as "gullible and barely educated people" and later contrasts the "citizens of a more sophisticated world" who expunge literal demons from their beliefs with the "lower level of the population [who] undoubtedly lived in a different world, a world only vaguely reproduced in the writings of these intellectuals" ("In the Light of the Moon: Demonology in the Early Imperial Period," in *ANRW* II.16.3 [1986], 2137, 2141). His latter statement may well be a hint as to where this notion originates in the first place. Ramsey MacMullen likewise regards magic as characteristic of the lower classes which slowly percolates up as philosophy in the Imperial period declines (*Enemies of Roman Order: Treason, Unrest, and Alienation in the Empire* [Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1966], 127). This truism still finds expression in more recent works such as C. E. Arnold's *Ephesians: Power and Magic* ([Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989], 19) who is followed by Ben Witherington III (*The Acts of the Apostles: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary* [Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1998], 578). More surprising is a similar statement cropping up in the more nuanced treatment of Hellenistic magic by A. F. Segal, "Hellenistic Magic," 358 and David E. Aune, "Magic in Early Christianity," in *ANRW* II.23.2 (1980), 1521. For a more careful reading of the connection between class and magic see Gerd Theissen, *The Miracle Stories of the Early Christian Tradition*, trans. F. McDonagh, ed. J. Riches (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1983), 240-243. Despite Kee's rather rigid definition of magic, he has throughout his work avoided making the magic/proletarian connection; note for instance *Christian Origins*, 66-67. A. D. Nock traces the designation of "magic" as a value-laden term from modern scholars back into antiquity ("Paul and the Magus," in *BC*, vol. 5 [1933], 169). On the ancient elitist bias passed on to modern scholars unwittingly see Charles R. Phillips, "The Sociology of Religious Knowledge in the Roman Empire to A.D. 284," in *ANRW* II.16.3 (1986), 2690-2694, 2716. Perhaps one of the best first century sources which ought to give pause to anyone assigning "magic" to the uneducated masses is Pliny, especially *Natural History* 28.3-4. The "wisest men" may reject belief in incantations (28.3), but the public generally (28.3) and even chief magistrates (28.3) and Caesar himself (28.4) believe in "there is power in ritual formulas" (28.3).

<sup>17</sup>C. R. Phillips, "Sociology," 2757 and "Nullum Crimen sine Lege: Socioreligious Sanctions on Magic," in *Magika Hiera: Ancient Greek Magic and Religion*, ed. C. A. Faraone and D. Obbink (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991), 266-7. Hans Dieter Betz, "Magic and Mystery in the Greek Magical Papyri," in *Magika Hiera*, 244-245.

<sup>18</sup>See particularly Lyons and Reimer. Peter Brown traces a parallel phenomena with the ongoing influence of Hume's thesis on the correlation of theism and a rational elite and polytheism with the irrational masses in *Society*, 8-12.



The death blow for absolute definitions for miracle and magic, however, is simply the ambiguous nature of the ancient evidence itself.<sup>19</sup> As David E. Aune concludes, "magic not infrequently supplicates while religion not infrequently manipulates supernatural powers."<sup>20</sup> And in fairness to the biblical scholars who used these social anthropological definitions, the ambiguity was often noted even if not fully addressed.<sup>21</sup> It remained, however, for the discipline of the sociology of knowledge to lay bare the inter-group polemic implicit in the language of "magic" and "miracle."

### **B. Relative Definitions: Magic and Miracle as Intergroup Polemic**

The much needed corrective to the manipulative versus supplicative set of definitions was best captured by Robert M. Grant's often quoted, "your magic is my miracle, and vice versa."<sup>22</sup> This is simply a recognition that group identity played a role in determining whether the ancients labelled given beliefs and practices as "magic" or "miracle." That is to say, magic and miracle involve fundamentally the same sort of practices; the only difference is that "magic" is a negative label which you attach to your opponents' beliefs and practices, and particularly elements of the extraordinary within their camp, while "miracle" is what one terms the extraordinary within one's own group.<sup>23</sup> To use the term suggested by J.Z. Smith, one of the foremost advocates

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<sup>19</sup>A succinct demolition of the "magic"/"religion" distinction when applied to Greco-Roman texts can be found in Nock, "Paul," 169-171. In his words "there is not...a sphere of magic in contrast to a sphere of religion" (170). See also Erwin R. Goodenough, *Jewish Symbols in the Greco-Roman Period*, vol. 2, *The Archeological Evidence from the Diaspora* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1953), 155-161. Essays in *Magika Hiera* draw similar conclusions on some of the most obviously "magical" texts, the Greek *defixiones* (Christopher A. Faraone, "The Agonistic Context of Early Greek Binding Spells," 20) and Greek amulets (Roy Kotansky, "Incantations and Prayers for Salvation on Inscribed Greek Amulets," 122). A. F. Segal's article takes apart the "magic"/"religion" distinction from several angles, both in terms of the ambiguity of the supposedly magical texts and from a sociological perspective.

<sup>20</sup>Aune, "Magic," 1513. This observation is also present Weber, 25-31.

<sup>21</sup>Aune cites several examples in "Magic," 1511-1512. Kee, *Christian Origins*, 66.

<sup>22</sup>Robert M. Grant, *Gnosticism and Early Christianity* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1959), 93.

<sup>23</sup>To cite but a handful of the many studies for which this is the new orthodoxy: Phillips, "Sociology," 2711-2732; Segal; Aune, "Magic;" Garrett, *Demise*; Harold Remus, *Pagan-Christian Conflict over Miracle in the Second Century* (Cambridge, Mass.: The Philadelphia Patristic Foundation, 1983); Jonathan Z. Smith, "Towards Interpreting Demonic Powers in Hellenistic and Roman Antiquity," in *ANRW* II.16.1 (1978), 425-439; Lightstone, *Commerce*; and Jacob Neusner, "Science and Magic, Miracle and Magic in Formative Judaism: The System and the Difference," in

of this sort of definition, "magic" is a "locative" term.<sup>24</sup>

While Grant's original statement did not arise out of a self-conscious use of the sociology of knowledge, it is a statement which stems very much from a sociology of knowledge perspective.<sup>25</sup> That is, the sociology of knowledge suggests that conceptual categories, indeed the whole conceptual framework of a human being, is not just socially conditioned but socially constructed. What one takes for granted as simply "reality" is a subjective construction. We perceive as if we are involved in a self-evidently logical reading of what actually is but this belies the social constructedness of this very perception. So, while terms such as "magic" and "miracle" may appear to have objective content, or refer to real entities, these are simply the products of human social interaction. In this case, one's group identity causes one to view certain actions when carried out by approved persons as "miracle," while similar actions by someone disapproved of as "magic." Our ancient observer who sees magic in the other group and miracle in their own is caught in the very human trap of having socially constructed blind spots in their perception of reality. Scholars who continue to treat these terms as if they had some objective content are, therefore, simply falling into the same trap.

Perhaps nowhere is this sociological observation better demonstrated than in the debate between Celsus and Origen. Celsus claimed Jesus was a magician and Asclepius a miracle-worker while Origen rebutted this claiming Jesus was the miracle-

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*Religion, Science, and Magic: In Concert and In Conflict*, ed. J. Neusner and E. S. Frerichs and P.V.McCracken Flesher (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989), 61-81.

<sup>24</sup>J. Z. Smith actually labels "Devil Worship" a locative term, that is, it locates certain individuals and their practices as "beyond the pale" or socially unacceptable ("Towards", 427). As such it applies equally to "magic" as Garrett demonstrates who also describes magic as a "locative" category because "it serves to differentiate between the person(s) labelling and the person(s) so labelled" (*Demise*, 4).

<sup>25</sup>The "sociology of knowledge" perspective adopted here is largely drawn from the same sources most biblical scholars draw their framework from: Peter L. Berger and Thomas Luckmann, *The Social Construction of Reality: A Treatise in the Sociology of Knowledge* (London: Penguin Books, 1967); Peter Berger, *The Sacred Canopy: Elements of a Sociological Theory of Religion* (New York: Doubleday, 1969); and Peter L. Berger and Hansfried Kellner, *Sociology Reinterpreted: An Essay on Method and Vocation* (New York: Anchor Press/Doubleday, 1981).

worker and Asclepius the magician.<sup>26</sup> Rival groups claimed their virtuoso is/was a miracle-worker while the other group's wonder-worker is/was a magician to voice their socially pre-determined approval or disapproval.

### **C. Moving Beyond Relative Definitions**

#### **1. The Sociology of Knowledge Loop**

While the sociology of knowledge allowed a break with the absolute categories of stage one, the problem with this sociological approach, as applied to the definition of magic and miracle, is that it has itself become an institution, or perhaps a typification to use Berger's sociology of knowledge vocabulary.<sup>27</sup> The charges and counter charges of magic are immediately met with a newly formed habit of assuming that the "reality" of this situation is simply inter-group polemic. Inter-group polemic, with two self-interested parties talking past each other is all we perceive, as we skim over the "manifest" motives of the text or speech acts and dive head long into "latent" motives such as group self-definition.<sup>28</sup> With the present sociology of knowledge approach to miracle and magic, all that seems to be accomplished is that we are building a grand file of case studies which prove that miracle and magic are simply empty labels that competing religious groups use for their own convenience. Lightstone's comments on the similarity of Philip and Simon in Acts 8 are typical product of this perspective. Continuing with this approach seems likely to produce little more than a constant reinventing of the proverbial wheel.<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>26</sup>Origen *Contra Celsum* 1.67-68, 3.22-31, 7.35. See discussion of the Origen-Celsus debate in this regard in Remus, 57-58, 104ff. Eugene V. Gallagher, *Divine Man or Magician? Celsus and Origen on Jesus*, SBLDS 64 (Chico, Cal.: Scholars Press, 1982).

<sup>27</sup>Berger and Luckmann, 45-47.

<sup>28</sup>Berger and Kellner suggests that sociology "...presupposes a very peculiar angle of vision to begin with, which is the essence of sociology: underneath the visible edifices of the human world there is a hidden, invisible structure of interests and forces waiting to be uncovered by the sociologist. The "manifest" is not the whole story; "latency" is there to be studied. Or, in the simplest terms, *the world is not what it appears to be*" (4).

<sup>29</sup>H. D. Betz offers a similar critique over the definition of magic and religion: "[S]taying at the level of social science-inspired relativism will inevitably mean that definitions of magic and religion will always turn out to be a matter of personal, subjective preference," ("Magic and Mystery," 247).

## 2. Shared Criteria: An Analogy from Orthodoxy and Heresy

In an ironic twist, Charles R. Phillips' *ANRW* article entitled "The Sociology of Religious Knowledge," while offering a strong case for a sociology of knowledge approach to the conceptual categories such as "belief," "orthodoxy and heresy," "magic and religion," and "holy men," also demonstrates the blind spots of this very approach.<sup>30</sup> It is his examination of the terms "orthodoxy" and "heresy," not so distant cousins of our two terms, which demonstrate this most clearly.<sup>31</sup> Phillips suggests that these are simply labels for "our group" over against "your group," and vice versa. However, it is noteworthy that he then adds, as if providing proof of the emptiness of these terms, the statement that "[f]idelity to the alleged 'original' teachings of Jesus represented the common claim of all of the groups, a fidelity which probably did not exist in the way the various groups claimed."<sup>32</sup> Aside from the fact that it is extraordinary that Phillips, apparently sensitive to the self-deconstructing nature of the sociology of knowledge, should presume that *he* has the true inside track on Jesus' original teachings,<sup>33</sup> this statement seems to demonstrate that the categories of "orthodoxy" and "heresy" were not at all empty, or purely locative. Rather, there was a shared criterion between the various groups as to what placed a person or group in these categories—adherence or non-adherence to the 'original' teachings of Jesus. It was not so much a case of a complete lack of "objective" criteria for the categories, but rather a very subjective application of the "objective" criteria on the part of the one doing the labeling. There is less "talking past one another"<sup>34</sup> than the scholar of the

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<sup>30</sup>Phillips' article deals with four "traditional conceptual categories"—belief, magic and religion, orthodoxy and heresy, and holy men—each of which is deconstructed in a similar fashion from a sociology of knowledge perspective ("Sociology," 2672ff., 2733-2752).

<sup>31</sup>In terms of Phillips positive contribution to our study, see below no. 48.

<sup>32</sup>Phillips, "Sociology," 2734.

<sup>33</sup>Phillips, "*Nullum*," offers a more circumspect conclusion on the ability of "objective" or "scientific" approaches to get at "reality" (267-268).

<sup>34</sup>Remus, x. In fairness Remus is not willing to concede Pagan-Christian debate of the miraculous is purely a matter of group rhetoric and that the points each make are still worth considering (183).

sociology of knowledge may first notice.<sup>35</sup>

Phillips goes on to point out that Roman paganism, unlike Christianity, showed no great interest whatsoever in notions of "orthodoxy" and "heresy." But here again one finds in the midst of this apparent gulf a point worth considering. Much as church sects argued over adherence to the original teachings, paganism, Christianity, and Judaism all put forward claims to antiquity and, therefore, demonstrated the alignment of their beliefs with the most ancient teachings. Indeed as Phillips points out it is the antiquity of Judaism which was a factor in Roman toleration of Judaism.<sup>36</sup> The apparent gulf between groups is perhaps less than an initial sociology of knowledge reading would suggest. Do we have a parallel in the definition of magic and miracle?

Alan Segal's "Hellenistic Magic: Some Questions of Definition" is an excellent example of a sociology of knowledge perspective on the definition of magic. However, at least twice in his case for a group polemic definition for magic he adds a statement which appears to suggest that magic is perhaps not quite so empty a category as his argument presumes, much as Phillips on orthodoxy and heresy. Segal states:

...the charge of "magic" helps distinguish between various groups of people from the perspective of the speaker but does not necessarily imply any essential difference in the actions of the participants. In a narrative about the event, the narrator will attempt to clarify his grounds for distinction.<sup>37</sup>

The obvious question: where did the narrator find these grounds?

There were no objective criteria separating the miracle worker from the magician. So, it was often necessary for an adept to prove himself a miracle worker and not a magician.<sup>38</sup>

Again the statement begs the question—how did the miracle worker do this?

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<sup>35</sup>Neusner who uses the sociological distinction between miracle and magic as the model for constructing a similar distinction between science and magic refers to this "conventional" definition as "theoretically impoverished but therefore unencumbered" ("Science and Magic," 63). While some may place a very high value on "unencumbered," it seems the theoretical impoverishment is such that rather "obvious" bits of data are left unexamined, indeed they remain undetected.

<sup>36</sup>Phillips, "Sociology," 2747.

<sup>37</sup>Segal, 367.

<sup>38</sup>Ibid., 368.

If magic and miracle labels are truly as empty as one might initially gather from a sociology of knowledge perspective, it is worth asking where exactly a narrator or miracle worker might begin in the process of clarifying the grounds for defending themselves. Surely between the writer and reader, miracle worker and audience, there existed some shared ground on which the appeal was made.<sup>39</sup> Perhaps there is more to be learned by noting the content of the debate than simply by demonstrating once more the apparent emptiness of the labels exchanged. Indeed, this study will argue that the historic imagination can only be re-engaged by stepping beyond the sociology of knowledge loop and asking new questions of the data.

### **3. Re-engaging the Historic Imagination: Polythetic Classification**

In their own way, both absolute and relative definitions for "miracle" and "magic" and closely related terms have blocked the exercise of Peter Brown's "historic imagination."<sup>40</sup> Our contention is that a quest for polythetic definitions within the framework of some fresh methodological approaches will open new possibilities for thinking about the ancient contexts in which one finds characters such as Philip and Simon.

Key to these fresh methodological approaches is a commitment to take seriously the fact that in ancient context the gods are a given. As we suggested in our prologue, behind the applause of a designation of miracle or an accusation of magic is a world of invisible beings which were taken seriously by the players in these social interactions. It is at this point that the sociology of knowledge can serve as a

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<sup>39</sup>Remus, who follows a sociology of knowledge approach admits that while terms such as "magic" involve a "social and cultural judgment...this does not necessarily mean there are no 'objective' criteria, i.e., canons mutually agreed upon between social groupings or at least within such groupings" (54). However, Remus' study places most of its emphasis on the "social and cultural judgments" rather than the shared criteria. Susan R. Garrett's article suggests this is precisely the case when she suggests that in the case of Apuleius' *Apology* one ought to ask not "Was Apuleius a magician?" but "What were the cultural presuppositions upon which Apuleius drew in his own defence?" ("Light on a Dark Subject and Vice Versa: Magic and Magicians in the New Testament," in *Religion, Science, and Magic: In Concert and In Conflict*, ed. J. Neusner and E. S. Frerichs and P. V. McCracken Fleisher [New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989], 151). As we shall observe below, Garrett does an excellent job of drawing out the specifically Jewish-Christian presuppositions on magic in Luke-Acts, but our study seeks to situate these presuppositions in the larger socio-cultural milieu of the Mediterranean world, both in its pagan and Jewish-Christian expressions.

<sup>40</sup>*Society and the Holy*, 4.

surprising ally. It is a maxim of the sociology of knowledge that one "consider social facts as things," that "'reality' [is] a quality appertaining to phenomena that we recognize as having a being independent of our own volition" and that this "reality" is a social construction.<sup>41</sup> If the heavenly beings were real to the first century Mediterranean, our study of their social world must surely treat these as having, if nothing else, a "virtual reality," every bit as real as other social beings such as emperors, slaves, or barbarian hordes. To the extent that magic and miracle have dealings with these beings, the social interaction implied between human and divine must be taken seriously before the psychologizing begins.<sup>42</sup>

If our historic imagination is enhanced by taking the realm of the gods more seriously, the tyranny of the relative definitions offered by the sociology of knowledge approach can be broken with two further moves. First, one begins with those characters who seem to bear out most obviously the principle of "my miracle-worker is your magician, and vice versa." As our quotation from Segal above demonstrated, it is with extraordinary individuals that one is most likely to find cross-accusations which have been the mainstay for the inter-group polemic approach. But it is also here that one is most likely to find the culturally shared implicit and explicit criteria for determining whether an individual is performing miracles or practising magic.

The second move is to trade the camera for the camcorder. So long as our studies of miracle and magic remain synchronic, that is, they remain a picture of two groups with entrenched positions caught in the act of insulting one another, our diagnosis of inter-group polemic seems inevitable. We must attempt to imagine the accusation as part of a process and move back to a time when the individual associated with extraordinary phenomena first arrived on the scene and the members of these groups were forced to decide on the status of these phenomena. As we then watch

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<sup>41</sup>Berger and Luckmann, 13-15,30.

<sup>42</sup>Betz makes a case for this specifically in regard to the problem of defining magic and religion stating, "In order to understand what was meant by distinguishing between magic and religion...one will have to shift from social science to theology....[O]ur dilemma of defining magic versus religion will simply remain unsolvable if we do not allow theological questions to play their role" ("Magic and Mystery," 247).

this situation develop, we may better sympathize with the divergent perspectives of the latter entrenched groups.

Having retooled our historic imagination so as to include the whole social structure, visible and invisible, and armed with questions about how labels came to be attached originally, we are set to look again for the definition of miracle and magic in the ancient Mediterranean context. The question is, what can we hope to find as we sift through the details of the relevant data? If we return to the analogous definitional problem of "orthodoxy" and "heresy," we discover that while groups ended up exchanging labels, they shared a criterion of "faithfulness to Jesus' original teaching." The question is whether, when different groups use terms such as miracle and magic, they also share some criteria even if the application of the criteria is subjective and controlled by group allegiance.<sup>43</sup> It would seem counterproductive that having shaken off the absolutist definition of miracle and magic with a sociology of knowledge perspective we should simply return to another one. What appears more helpful is something along the lines of J.Z. Smith's "polythetic classification."<sup>44</sup>

A monothetic classification is one in which distinctions are made based on a list of absolute criteria. Polythetic classification throws in a degree of complexity. Rather than absolute criteria, one assembles a list of possible criteria, of which only some may apply in any given case.<sup>45</sup> There are a number of ways polythetic classification techniques could be applied to the study of miracle and magic, but if our goal is to enter the worlds portrayed by ancient Greco-Roman authors, one possible use would be to collect a group of ancient criteria for one or the other. My suggestion is that we enter a third stage in the definition of miracle and magic which consists of a quest for a

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<sup>43</sup>It is worth noting that Aune's work on magic and early Christianity demonstrates some of the advantages of a multi-layered criterion with his two-fold definition which brings together aspects of both the inter-group polemic and the manipulative/supplicative definition. However, to the extent that it is dependent on the notion that magic is goal-oriented practices with virtually guaranteed results his analysis falls prey to the same criticism as any other using the manipulative/supplicative definition ("Magic," 1515).

<sup>44</sup>Jonathan Z. Smith, "Fences and Neighbors: Some Contours of Early Judaism," in *Approaches to Ancient Judaism*, vol. II, ed. W. S. Green (Chico, Cal.: Scholars Press, 1980), 1-25.

<sup>45</sup>J. Z. Smith, "Fences," 4-5



polythetic classification for both. Our end goal, therefore, would be a list (not necessarily definitive) of the criteria which cluster around the two labels in our ancient sources.

#### 4. Promising Starts: A.B. Kolenkow on Miracle Doers

In this task we are given a head start, or at least a starting point and direction, by A. B. Kolenkow's "A Problem of Power: How Miracle Doers Counter Charges of Magic in the Hellenistic World".<sup>46</sup> In this brief overview of magic accusations and defence from those charges, Kolenkow explores the dynamics whereby "miracle doers ...avoid charges of *goeteia* [(magic)] in the Hellenistic world and yet affirm their own powers."<sup>47</sup> Kolenkow suggests an adversative or corroborative relationship may exist between power gained by miracle-working and other forms of power in society.<sup>48</sup> She further claims that accusations against miracle doers are based on a perceived threat to society and fall into three broad types: accusations of subversion, accusations of using power to work harm (*maleficia*), and accusations of using miracles to "gain riches or other power."<sup>49</sup>

Kolenkow's article points to the tensions in which our religious superstars (hereafter "intermediaries")<sup>50</sup> must operate. Simply stated, miracle-working both requires and builds power for the intermediary in a snowball fashion. However, according to Kolenkow, the very build-up of power and its clash with other societal power structures brings the intermediary into danger of being accused of working magic. When we begin to unpack these various tensions within narratives from the Greco-Roman world, we shall be in a position to posit further the way labels such as "magic" and "miracle" come to be attributed to the activities of the intermediaries,

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<sup>46</sup>Anitra Bingham Kolenkow, "A Problem of Power: How Miracle Doers Counter Charges of Magic in the Hellenistic World," in *Society of Biblical Literature: 1976 Seminar Papers*, ed. George MacRae (Missoula: Scholars Press, 1976), 105-110.

<sup>47</sup>Kolenkow, "Problem," 105.

<sup>48</sup>Kolenkow, "Problem," 106. Phillips also suggests this is an aspect of magic accusations in need of further exploration when he states that, "Magic is often related to social tensions and asymmetries of power" ("Sociology," 2727).

<sup>49</sup>Kolenkow, "Problem," 107.

<sup>50</sup>On this term see below page 42.

outside of simple recourse to an inter-group polemic explanation. Understanding this particular aspect of this cultural game will further our understanding of these culturally distant literary and historical characters and the nature of the society in which they lived and functioned.

### III. Two Case Studies

Obviously if our goal is a more or less diachronic investigation of characters who at some stage in their career are lauded as performers of miracles or scorned as purveyors of magic, the ideal place to begin is in the narrative accounts of these individuals. The two narrative texts chosen for this particular task are the canonical Acts of the Apostles and Philostratus' *Life of Apollonius*. While the choice is somewhat arbitrary and ultimately is justified on the basis of the heuristic value of the results, there are some features of these texts which make them ideal candidates for our "field study."

There were two primary features of these texts which provoked their inclusion in this foray into Mediterranean socio-religious culture. First, and patently self-evident, both are texts which narrate the lives of characters who perform miracles and characters who practise or are accused of practising magic.<sup>51</sup> Second, these two texts come out of two different religious sub-cultures. Acts is rooted in a Jewish-Christian monotheism; Philostratus' *Life of Apollonius* arises from a polytheistic pagan religious culture. By choosing two apparently different constructs of the numinous, we increase our chances of moving beyond describing the plants which grow in the fertile Mediterranean socio-cultural soil, to describing the soil out of which they arise.<sup>52</sup> Reasonably widespread religious conversion to and from Christianity among

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<sup>51</sup>Both, curiously are plagued by questions of genre which we do not, fortunately, have to answer here as it is enough for us that they are patently narrational and take as their heroes religious superstars capable of performing miraculous deeds. On the difficulty of identifying the genre of *Life of Apollonius* see Thomas G. Knoles, "Literary Technique and Theme in Philostratus' *Life of Apollonius of Tyana*" (PhD Thesis, Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey, New Brunswick, 1981), 15-17; on the elusive generic identity of Acts see the overview by Mark Allan Powell, *What are they saying about Acts?* (New York: Paulist Press, 1991), 9-13.

<sup>52</sup>On one point Morton Smith is surely correct in talking about Greco-Roman holy men: "Similar elements may always have come, not from another example of the pattern, but from the general religious and intellectual milieu" ("Prolegomena to a Discussion of Aretologies, Divine Men, the Gospels and Jesus," in *JBL* 90 (1971): 186-187.

polytheistic pagans of the Greco-Roman world suggests that while as a religious expression there may be large gulfs between them, on a very practical level, they must share certain cultural values for this to be possible. And, indeed, an account like Lucian's *Peregrinus* would suggest that even religious virtuosi such as we will investigate with this study could, with some degree of success, move back and forth between a Christian and a pagan context (11-16). If Kolenkow's starting point is correct, it is not too great a stretch to speculate in advance that pagans and Christians in the Greco-Roman world share on some level a mechanism for dealing with miracle-doers.

#### **A. Acts of the Apostles: A Jewish-Christian Angle**

There are several features of Acts which make it a particularly good choice for this study. First, given that our approach will invoke the canons of a narrative-critical methodology, having what appears to be a complete self-contained text is helpful. Certainly if one wishes to explore narrative accounts of Christian miracle-workers and magicians in the Greco-Roman world the second and third century apocryphal "acts" would seem obvious choices. However, given the fragmentary nature of all of these texts, it is difficult to determine the overall narrative strategy and portrait of the characters in those texts.<sup>53</sup> The other obvious choice would be the canonical gospels. This suggestion, however, invokes the second feature of Acts which makes it an ideal candidate for our study.

When Harold Remus wrote *Pagan-Christian Conflict over Miracles in the Second Century*, he claimed that he limited himself to the second century on the grounds that "the study of miracle is a field less ploughed" in the second century than in the first and that "second-century Christian sources generally lie outside the Christian canon of scripture" and thus "the religious commitment that has informed much of the study of miracle accounts in the first-century Christian sources is not as

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<sup>53</sup>Of the five primary apocryphal acts, only the Acts of Thomas offers us a complete manuscript. However, in this latter case the original text is in Syriac and there is strong evidence of extensive ongoing redaction throughout the transmission of this text (J.K. Elliott, *The Apocryphal New Testament* [Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993], 439-440).

intrusive in the study of the second century." By remaining in the second century, Remus claimed that "the way thus seemed more open to fresh analysis and perhaps a more dispassionate hearing."<sup>54</sup> It is for roughly similar reasons that I believe Acts is preferable to the canonical gospels as a case study. While the interest in Acts has increased in recent years, it has not received the sort of attention that all four canonical gospels have, particularly in studies involving miracles and miracle-stories. From German *Formgeschichte* to the American *Jesus Seminar*, and every imaginable reconstruction of the "historical Jesus" in between, it is nearly impossible to wander into the world of Jesus and the gospels without getting bogged down in methodological and historical cross-currents which would sabotage the sort of large scale project attempted in our study. Furthermore, as the renewed interest in the historical Jesus has demonstrated, there seems to be a good deal more at stake when one investigates Jesus the miracle-worker than Peter the miracle-worker. The thorny theological issues of Christology are ever below the surface whenever one works in the gospels. So with Remus, we will decline the challenge of navigating these rough waters.

Finally, Acts seemed an appropriate choice for a case study because one gets, in some senses, two religious frameworks for the price of one. That is, Acts, or at least the narrative of Acts, moves in a world in which the distinction between Judaism and Christianity is not firmly drawn.<sup>55</sup> As Garrett's study amply demonstrates, "Luke's discussion of magic most often reflects traditions exhibited also in...Jewish or Jewish-influenced documents....[which is in accordance] with the recent contention of some scholars that Luke identified very strongly with the Jewish tradition, even if he was not himself a Jew by ethnic origin."<sup>56</sup> It is an added bonus for our study that Acts represents, in certain ways at least, both major monotheistic religious streams of the

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<sup>54</sup>Remus, xi.

<sup>55</sup>Jacob Jervell has been particularly convincing on this point (*The Unknown Paul: Essays on Luke-Acts and Early Christian History* [Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1984]).

<sup>56</sup>Garrett, *Demise*, 8.

Greco-Roman world over against the polytheistic Philostratus' *Life of Apollonius*.<sup>57</sup>

### B. Philostratus' *Life of Apollonius*: A Pagan Angle

That Philostratus' *Life of Apollonius* (hereafter abbreviated *VA*)<sup>58</sup> should be used in a comparative manner with a NT text might be seen as hardly innovative. It is a tradition which extends all the way back at least to Hierocles and his anti-Christian tract based on *VA* and prompted a rival piece of comparative literature by Eusebius.<sup>59</sup> In more recent years it has been a favorite text particularly for German scholars fixated on *Formgeschichte* and *Religionsgeschichte*.<sup>60</sup> One might rightly question whether any further insights may be gained by placing these two texts side by side. However, as it will become immediately apparent, most of the work done by scholars bringing together *VA* and the NT is largely irrelevant to our present work. First and foremost our methodological approach, focusing as it does on the final form of the larger literary whole with little concern for form and source critical issues or questions of historicity, effectively cuts us off from much of the previous biblical scholarship which used *VA* in some fashion.<sup>61</sup> And second, the comparison between *VA* and the NT has inevitably

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<sup>57</sup>For some interesting recent remarks on the gulf separating monotheistic and polytheistic religious frameworks in the Greco-Roman world see G. W. Bowersock, *Fiction as History: Nero to Julian* (Berkeley and Los Angeles and London: University of California Press, 1994), 121-122 (and following).

<sup>58</sup>We shall continue to use the English title for Philostratus' biography of Apollonius. However, given the possible confusion of the abbreviation *LA* (for *Life of Apollonius*) for "Luke-Acts", in the abbreviated form we shall use the more traditional abbreviation of *VA* from the Latin title, *Vita Apollonii*, while still using the English title in full, following Graham Anderson's method in this regard in *Philostratus: Biography and Belles Lettres in the Third Century A.D.* (London: Croom Helm, 1986).

<sup>59</sup>Eusebius *The Treatise of Eusebius the Son of Pamphilus against the Life of Apollonius of Tyana written by Philostratus, Occasioned by the Parallel Drawn by Hierocles between Him and Christ 1-2* (hereafter *Treatise*).

<sup>60</sup>An excellent summary of the whole history of scholarship on Philostratus' *VA* over the last two centuries can be found in Knoles thesis, 6-12. Indeed the observations and sentiments expressed by Knoles' review of scholarship and the ability of more narrative approaches to move us beyond the narrow range of issues which have swirled around studies of *VA* are very much shared by myself.

<sup>61</sup>Even very recent German scholarship on miracles and miracle-working in the NT and early church, such as Bernd Kollmann's *Jesus und die Christen als Wundertäter: Studien zu Magie, Medizin und Schamanismus in Antike und Christentum* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1996), follows a cataloging approach primarily concerned with establishing (or especially denying) the historicity of reported miracles and miracle-workers in antiquity, including those of Apollonius. Truly puzzling is the near disappearance of Acts in a study which purports to investigate *early Christians as miracle-workers*.

been focused on Jesus and the four Gospels, only including Acts as an afterthought.

It is, of course, an overstatement to suggest that this study is completely cut off from previous scholarship which brought together NT texts with *VA*. A case in point is G. Petzke's *Die Traditionen Über Apollonius von Tyana und Das Neue Testament*, which does point out some of the parallels between Acts and *VA* we will note in the course of our study.<sup>62</sup> However, as others before and after him, Petzke's emphasis on *Traditionsgeschichte* and *Formgeschichte* issues, and his nearly obsessive desire for utter neutrality in terms of *Religionsgeschichte*, result in much data with little interpretation.<sup>63</sup> Somewhere between parallelomania and parallelanoia is surely some fertile ground which will yield fresh results should we go in with a new set of questions and expectations. What the previous scholarship which has brought *VA* and NT texts together has taught us is that the overlap between these two texts, despite originating in two distinct religious traditions, offers unique opportunities for a comparative project.

A point of overlap between the two texts which is significant for our study is the one-sided nature of both Acts and *VA* in their portrayal of their respective heroes.<sup>64</sup> This feature of these texts has suggested to many scholars a propagandistic purpose for both.<sup>65</sup> In our study the apparent propagandist purposes of Philostratus' *Life of*

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<sup>62</sup>G. Petzke, *Die Traditionen Über Apollonius von Tyana und Das Neue Testament* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1970).

<sup>63</sup>The first section, approximately two-thirds of the book, is devoted to a *traditionsgeschichtlich* and *formgeschichtlich* investigation, while the second section, devoted to a *religionsgeschichtlich* investigation offers little more than a synopsis of parallels between *VA* and the canonical gospels. On Petzke's concern for neutrality in *religionsgeschichte* research see both the introductory (5-16) and particularly the concluding (230-238) chapters.

<sup>64</sup>We are adopting Graham Anderson's stance that while propagandistic biographies or historiographies may be suspect in terms of historicity in many points because of their strong agenda, "at the same time a hagiographical source [a category which both our chosen texts roughly fall into] can communicate something of the personalities and ethos of those involved" (*Sage, Saint, and Sophist: Holy Men and Their Associates in the Early Roman Empire* (London and New York: Routledge, 1994), 22).

<sup>65</sup>On various takes on the propagandistic purposes of Acts see J. B. Green's summary in "Acts of the Apostles," *Dictionary of the Later New Testament and Its Developments*, ed. R. P. Martin and P. H. Davids (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1997), 16-17, and Luke T. Johnson in "Luke-Acts, Book of," *ABD* 4, ed. D.N. Freedman (New York: Doubleday, 1992), 407-408. On the "apologetic" nature of *VA* see M.-J. Lagrange, "Les Légendes Pythagoriques et L'Évangile," in *RB* 46 (1937): 5-28; Bowersock (introduction to Philostratus, *Life of Apollonius*, trans. C. P. Jones, ed. and

*Apollonius* make it an ideal candidate for exploring the social dynamics at play when religious virtuosi practised their "craft" in the ancient Mediterranean world. Despite more recent claims to the contrary, it seems rather certain that Moiragenes had written a four volume treatise on Apollonius in which he was *negatively* labelled a "magician."<sup>66</sup> Furthermore, on a number of occasions, Philostratus has his narrator address the reader directly to provide a defence against "free-floating" allegations which exist against his hero.<sup>67</sup> Philostratus, it seems, is writing intentionally against a belief that Apollonius was a magician (negatively understood), and thus his text offers unique insights into the nature of that accusation.<sup>68</sup>

The chief hurdle in using Philostratus' *Life of Apollonius* is date. Philostratus

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abridged by G. W. Bowersock [Middlesex: Penguin Books, 1970], 15); and Gallagher (34-35). Knoles rightly surmises that "the entire work takes on the tone of an encomium (133).

<sup>66</sup>Philostratus *Life of Apollonius* 1.3, 3.41; Origen *Contra Celsus* 6.41. Both Ewen L. Bowie and D. H. Raynor claim that it does not follow from Philostratus and Origen that the Moiragenes' biography was critical, especially since the title, Τὰ Ἀπολλωνίου τοῦ Τυανέως μάγου καὶ φιλοσόφου ἀπομνημονεύματα, suggests Moiragenes portrayed him positively as a philosopher in a Xenophontic framework (Bowie, "Apollonius of Tyana: Tradition and Reality," in *ANRW* II.16.2 [1978], 1673-1674; Raynor, "Moeragenes and Philostratus: Two Views of Apollonius of Tyana," in *CQ* 34 [1984], 222-226). However, their joint claim that the term μάγος has a positive referent in the title based on Apollonius' positive definition of the term in his epistles simply does not follow (Apollonius *Epistles* 16, 17). It is precisely because μάγος has been hurled at Apollonius as a well-known insult that he makes the rhetorical move of redefining the term to give it the positive connotation of the ancient Persian priestly caste. That this is *not* the typical or popular referent for the term is clear from here and elsewhere, making it unlikely that anyone wishing to cast Apollonius in a positive light would actually *entitle* their work with this term. Among those who conclude Moiragenes is a biography in which Apollonius is negatively portrayed are G. W. Bowersock (*Life*, 11); Henry Chadwick (in Origen, *Contra Celsum*, trans., intro., and notes by Henry Chadwick [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1965], 356 no. 3); Charles Talbert ("Biographies of Philosophers and Rulers as Instruments of Religious Propaganda in Mediterranean Antiquity," in *ANRW* II.16.2 [1978], 1621); B.F. Harris ("Apollonius of Tyana: Fact and Fiction" in *JRH* 5 [1969]: 191-192); and Eduard Meyer ("Apollonios von Tyana und die Biographie des Philostratos," in *Hermes* 52 (1917): 386-387). A systematic treatment in favor of Moiragenes' portrayal of Apollonius as negative see Anderson, *Philostratus*, Appendix 3. On the use of μάγος as typically negative in the context of debates over labeling charismatic sages and miracle-workers, see Jaap-Jan Flinterman (*Power, Paideia & Pythagoreanism* [Amsterdam: J. C. Gieben, 1995], 60-61) and also Nock ("Paul," 164-188). Clarity on exactly what Nock is suggesting in his article is particularly important as it is often cited as evidence for a positive use of the term. Nock does suggest both are possible, but on several occasions concludes the negative connotations of the term are rather more common (165-166, 169, 181).

<sup>67</sup>See below page 277.

<sup>68</sup>The separation between the events portrayed and the actual writing of the apology by Philostratus need not, however, be seen as purely problematic but actually advantageous. As Kolenkow notes, "a hundred years of formalization and idealization from the actual life of Apollonius...enables one to see common defenses against charges of *goeteia*" ("Problem," 108). See also Flinterman, 61-66.

wrote this work in the early third century,<sup>69</sup> and scholars such as Ewen Bowie believe nearly all his sources were second century inventions. While Philostratus claims to base his narrative on a first hand report from Damis, a life-long disciple of Apollonius, this claim to an eye-witness document is written off as a pure fiction by Bowie.<sup>70</sup> Any ties to the historical first century Apollonius are tenuous at best and all but non-existent at worst. Conceding the fictive character of the work is not as problematic as it may first appear, given the narrative critical approach we will outline below. However, *if* Bowie is correct, *VA* will reflect a second and early third century perspective on miracle-workers and magicians.<sup>71</sup> J. A. Francis, for example, regards Philostratus as having "rehabilitated" Apollonius, taming his asceticism so as to transform a dangerous subversive ascetic into a solitary ascetic hero who defends the

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<sup>69</sup>On the identity of this particular Philostratus and the date of his writings see G. W. Bowersock (*Greek Sophists in the Roman Empire* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1969), 2-7) and F. Solmsen ("Philostratos, 10" in *PW*, 20.1, 136-174, esp. 139) and more recently Flinterman, 1-28. Bowersock suggests that the report in *Life of Apollonius* 1.3 that Philostratus undertook the biography "at the request of the Syrian empress Julia Domna, wife of Septimius Severus" but failed to dedicate the finished biography to her suggests a completion date only after Julia's death in 217 CE (*Life*, 9).

<sup>70</sup>"Apollonius," 1653-1671; "Philostratus: Writer of Fiction," in *Greek Fiction: The Greek Novel in Context*, ed. J. R. Morgan and R. Stoneman (London and New York: Routledge, 1994), 181-196. In many ways Bowie is simply following the path laid down by Eduard Meyer. Bowersock seems to concede Damis is a purely literary creation by Philostratus as well (*Life*, 17-19). Bowie's hypothesis, however, is undermined by the failure of subsequent readers of antiquity to spot the apparently obvious generic marks of "romantic fiction" within the text of *VA* (Whitney T. Shiner, *Follow Me! Disciples in Markan Rhetoric* [Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1995], 130; See also Knoles, 12, 43-45, 64 no. 21). Indeed Bowie himself admits the signals within *VA* are mixed ("Philostratus," 193-196). Even if one concedes that the "facts" in the Damis source material are too flawed to be eye-witness testimony, it would be more plausible to suggest either deliberate deceit by Philostratus in an attempt to add credibility to his story or follow J. Miller's preference of viewing the Damis material as "die Fälschung eines Betrügers" ("Apollonios," *PW*, II.1, 146). To use Wolfgang Iser's language, there is little evidence that *VA* is "a fiction signal[ing] its own fictionality" (*The Fictive and the Imaginary: Charting Literary Anthropology* [Baltimore and London: John Hopkins University Press, 1993], 12).

<sup>71</sup>Patricia Cox states that "it is the philosophical and historical stance of the biographer, rather than the subject himself, that dominates the composition of the biography" (*Biography in Late Antiquity: A Quest for the Holy Man* [Berkeley: University of California Press, 1983], 37). Indeed, this may well explain MacMullen's observation that "in some ways [Apollonius'] fate suggests that his accomplishments and character were out of joint with the times [first century] and would have brought greater fame had he lived, say, in the third century" (*Enemies*, 113). As MacMullen later states concerning the stories of *VA*, "everything hangs suspended, as it were, between the early second and early third century" (115). Note too Jean M. André's conclusions regarding the Severan context for understanding the presentation of the conflict between Nero and the magicians/philosophers of Apollonius ("Apollonios et la Rome de Néron" in *Le monde du roman grec: actes du colloque international tenu à l'École normale supérieure [Paris 17-19 décembre 1987]* [Paris: Presses de l'École normale supérieure, 1992], 113-124).



status quo religiously, socially and politically. Philostratus thus stands at the end of a long process of interaction between power wielding social groups interested in maintaining the status quo and the subversive ascetics who threaten to undermine it.<sup>72</sup> Peter Brown, as we shall also see below suggests that a considerable societal shift begins to take place in the second and third century which gives rise to the Late Antique holy man. Are we not in danger, then, of comparing apples and oranges with respect to historical "eras" as it were? Clearly one can only answer in the affirmative.

However, there are other considerations which, I am convinced, negate this concern. First, Graham Anderson has presented a considerable challenge to scholars such as Bowie who choose to write off Philostratus' *VA* as third century fictional romance and Anderson's argument in favor of Philostratus preserving an Apollonius not entirely disconnected with the historical figure from the first century is judicious and, in this writer's opinion, worth serious consideration.<sup>73</sup> Second, as other studies have shown, when one is operating in the realm of miracle, magic and divine power there is a good deal of continuity across the ancient Mediterranean and Near Eastern world, both geographically and chronologically.<sup>74</sup> While certain trends no doubt ebb and flow, there is a religious culture that is reasonably consistent.<sup>75</sup> Anderson's

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<sup>72</sup>James A. Francis states that "its value...pertains to the second century, the era when the traditions about Apollonius developed after his death and before the writing of *VA*, and the third, the social and cultural environment in which Philostratus wrote" (*Subversive Virtue: Asceticism and Authority in the Second-Century Pagan World* [University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1995], 89, see also 83-129, 181). On the issue of whether Philostratus' portrayal of Apollonius' "personal" asceticism (i.e., asceticism as binding only on the extraordinary holy man rather than as a virtue preached to the masses or particularly, the politically powerful), see below page 75.

<sup>73</sup>Anderson, *Philostratus*, 121-239. Anderson's position best reflects my own read on the historicity of Philostratus' Apollonius. MacMullen is willing to defend in outline at least, the veracity of Apollonius' trial before Domitian (*Enemies*, 73-75). Bowie's critique of Grosso's attempt to revive Damis as a credible eyewitness stands—non-contradiction of known historical facts does not make an account historical ("Apollonius," 1654-1655). However, given our concern is not whether Apollonius himself associated with Vespasian, but that persons with prophetic insight like Apollonius were entertained by emperors like Vespasian does matter. And we have evidence that Vespasian did in fact take an interest in a prophet who predicted his rise to the throne (Josephus *War* 3.399-408). Also more positive about the historical value of *VA* in terms of Apollonius possible relationship with Roman imperial figures is S. Jackson, "Apollonius and the Emperors," in *Hermathena* 137 (1984): 25-32.

<sup>74</sup>Anderson, *Philostratus*, 236. See especially Todd E. Klutz, "With Authority and Power: A Sociostylistic Investigation of Exorcism in Luke-Acts" (Ph.D. Thesis, University of Sheffield, 1995), 268-406. See also footnote 68 above.

<sup>75</sup>Anderson, *Sage*, 32-33.

conclusion that "a work of this kind would still have been at least conceivable 150 years earlier" certainly stands when all the evidence is considered.<sup>76</sup> Finally, we are not attempting to eradicate difference between the two narratives. While our overall goal is, of course, to find common ground on some level of abstraction, we are not attempting to suggest that *VA* paints the background necessary for understanding Acts (or even that *VA* is an intentional pagan counterpart to the Gospels and Acts).<sup>77</sup> We are not arguing for that level of connection. Some distance between the two texts, therefore, is not in the least fatal for our project. Certainly it is no more illegitimate to read an early third century narrative against a late first century narrative to provoke a new understanding of the socio-religious climate they both represent than it is to use fourth and fifth century magical papyri to elucidate the operation of magicians in the first century!<sup>78</sup>

Chronological considerations, however, are part of the reason the case studies are ordered as they are. Convention in biblical studies theses particularly would suggest one places consideration of non-biblical texts first, dealing with the canonical text only after the "background" has been set. This thesis will investigate Acts first, and then *VA*. This non-traditional arrangement is deliberate and has been chosen for a

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<sup>76</sup>Anderson, *Philostratus*, 121.

<sup>77</sup>This means we shall also not enter the fray on whether Philostratus' *Life of Apollonius* is dependent on the NT narratives, and indeed, is written intentionally as a pagan counterpart to it. The majority of scholars suggest no direct link between the NT texts and Philostratus (as indeed is necessary for one to use *VA* as many scholars do to suggest a pre-existing Hellenistic θεῖος ἄνθρωπος model on which the gospels are built)(Ludwig Bieler, *ΘΕΙΟΣ ΑΝΗΡ: Das Bild des "Göttlichen Menschen" in Spätantike und Frühchristentum*, vol. 1 [Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1967; from 2 vol. original 1935, 1936], 7; Moses Hadas and Morton Smith, *Heroes and Gods: Spiritual Biographies in Antiquity* [New York: Harper and Row, 1965], 57-66, 101-104. Barry Blackburn, *Theios Anēr and the Markan Miracle Traditions*, WUNT 2.40 [Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1991], 2-10). F. C. Baur's suggestion (from the early 1800's) that Philostratus was deliberately writing a pagan counterpart to the NT gospels has been dismissed for the most part since the early twentieth century (Solmsen, 145). However, even if one denies direct dependence, it is worth considering Bowersock's contention that the NT stories were a key ingredient in the rise of marvellous fiction and its motifs, of which *VA* is an excellent example, hence the uncanny similarities without any direct evidence of dependence (*Fiction*).

<sup>78</sup>This is, of course, the state of affairs in most studies of "magic" as it pertains to the world of the NT. Aside from very well known studies such as Morton Smith's *Jesus the Magician* (London: Gollancz, 1978) one can add other more recent examples such as Arnold (*Ephesians*) or Susan R. Garrett (*Demise*).

number of reasons. First and foremost, we are not suggesting that *VA* is the "background" for Acts, nor necessarily that Acts is the background for *VA* (although chronological considerations would suggest that is more plausible). Rather, we are looking to both to illuminate shared cultural data. Second, as Bowersock's study of the rise of literary fiction in the Greco-Roman world so ably demonstrates, "the tendency of Christian interpreters to look for the pagan origins of Christian rites, utterances, and images has all too often obscured influences in the reverse direction."<sup>79</sup> Given a certain inevitable urge to see connections and influences or developments between texts, by studying these in correct chronological order, we are assured that these observations will start off on the right foot.<sup>80</sup> Third, this thesis is attempting to gain a fresh perspective by using an innovative methodology. There seems to be no harm in reversing the traditional order in the hope that a different vantage point may just help us to notice details we have overlooked in the past.

#### **IV. Methodological Considerations**

##### **A. Leaving the Text As It Is: Narrative Critical Premises**

For scholars more at home with traditional historical-critical methodology, the methodological approach of this thesis may well seem counter-intuitive and the reading of both major texts naive. Much ink has been spilled attempting to sort out fact from fiction in Philostratus' *Life of Apollonius*,<sup>81</sup> but that pales in comparison to the oceans of ink spilled in the ongoing debates on fact and fiction in Acts.<sup>82</sup> Ewen Bowie, for

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<sup>79</sup>Bowersock, *Fiction*, 127.

<sup>80</sup>Lagrange offers an interesting proposal regarding the relationship of *VA* to the NT gospels, dismissing any suggestion that Philostratus is intentionally writing a pagan counterpart to the gospels (18), but suggests that the spread and influence of Christianity at this point makes some familiarity with the stories about Jesus inevitable (18-20). If one were to move beyond treating these two texts as independent narrative worlds and ask about possible influences of Christian stories on Philostratus work, Lagrange's suggested method of noting differences in the face of apparent similarities would be an excellent choice (20).

<sup>81</sup>For one summary of the nature of the debate between the late 1800's and the late 1970's see Ewen L. Bowie's "Apollonius." Other examples of form-critical type approaches to the text of Apollonius include R. Reitzenstein's *Hellenistische Wundererzählungen* (Leipzig: Teubner, 1906) and A. Priessnig's "Die literarische Form der Spätantiken Philosophenromane" (*Byzantinische Zeitschrift* 30 [1926]: 23-30), both of which are discussed in Cox, 47-56.

<sup>82</sup>For a detailed overview of the history of Acts scholarship particularly as it pertains to the issues of the historicity of Acts see W. W. Gasque, *A History of the Criticism of the Acts of the Apostles* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1975). For a concise introduction to the typical questions

example, is convinced that nearly the entire narrative of *Life of Apollonius* is a second and early third century invention, and indeed proceeds to sort out the various sources and Philostratian redactional elements within the text.<sup>83</sup> Studies of miracles in NT texts particularly have been treated as independent free-floating stories with a pre-set form rather than as aspects of a larger narrative. These are valid studies, of course, even fascinating and worthwhile, if one is concerned with the literary history of the document.<sup>84</sup> Our interest, however, is not the literary history of the work, but the work as a story in its "final form."

Present studies of historical texts which claim to be "literary" over against a "historical-critical" approach can roughly be placed in two camps: those which engage in the text in a cooperative fashion and those which attempt to "read against the grain."<sup>85</sup> The former typically fall loosely under the category labelled by biblical scholars as "narrative criticism"<sup>86</sup> while under the latter one finds various ideological critical stances and deconstruction. If our goal is to genuinely see and hear individuals

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within the fact/fiction debate see Loveday Alexander, "Fact, Fiction and the Genre of Acts," in *NTS* 44 (1998): 380-399, especially 380-382.

<sup>83</sup>"Apollonius."

<sup>84</sup>Petzke, for instance, spends a considerable portion of his study looking at precisely the *traditionsgeschichtlichen* and *formgeschichtlichen* parallels between Philostratus' *VA* and the NT gospels and thus is valuable if one is interested in the *historical development* of specific traditions and literature about holy men.

<sup>85</sup>I shall not even begin to defend this gross generalization nor cite the reams of data necessary to make this claim. This dualistic interpretation was suggested to me by reading Stephen Moore (*Literary Criticism and the Gospels: The Theoretical Challenge* [New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1989]) and two years of interaction in the postgraduate room at the Sheffield University Biblical Studies department. Moore's text itself, while split into two parts which roughly corresponds to my distinction, does not simplify matters thus. Other works consulted to gain a feel for the nature of the narrative critical enterprise include Seymour Chatman, *Story and Discourse: Narrative Structure in Fiction and Film* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1978) and *Coming To Terms: The Rhetoric of Narrative in Fiction and Film* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1990); Meyer H. Abrams, *A Glossary of Literary Terms*, 5th ed. (Fort Worth: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1988); Wolfgang Iser, *The Implied Reader: Patterns of Communication in Prose Fiction from Bunyan to Beckett* (Baltimore and London: The John Hopkins University Press, 1974) and *Fictive*; and Shlomith Rimmon-Kenan, *Narrative Fiction: Contemporary Poetics* (London and New York: Methuen, 1983); not to mention the repetitive introductions to narrative critical methodology offered in the works mentioned in footnote 88 below.

<sup>86</sup>Stephen Moore is, of course, correct in pointing out only biblical scholars use this term (*Literary*, xxii, 54-55). However, neo-logisms for methodological approaches in biblical studies is hardly new and its usefulness is demonstrated by the fact that Moore himself adopts the term (however reluctantly).

from the Greco-Roman world as much as possible on their own terms, the former seems to be a more productive route.

Narrative-critical approaches are sufficiently established within biblical studies that the extensive defences and explanation mounted on their behalf by previous works need not be repeated here. There are standard introductions, such as M. A. Powell's *What is Narrative Criticism?*,<sup>87</sup> as well as numerous studies which have utilized one or another narrative approach.<sup>88</sup> Even *VA* has been subjected to narrative-critical analysis by T. G. Knoles' "Literary Technique and Theme in Philostratus' Life of Apollonius of Tyana," while scholars such as Alain Billault have demonstrated the heuristic value of analysis which allows the text of *VA* to stand as a self-contained narrative rather than hypothetically reconstructing actual events.<sup>89</sup> Our goal, however, is not a narrative critical analysis per se. Rather, we will use the premises of narrative critical approaches to construct a "narrative world" from our text.<sup>90</sup> The minimal use of

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<sup>87</sup>Mark Allan Powell, *What is Narrative Criticism?* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1990). Another standard is Meir Sternberg, *The Poetics of Biblical Narrative: Ideological Literature and the Drama of Reading* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1985). A introduction to the major premises of narrative criticism as well as a critique of this methodology can be found in Moore, *Literary*, 3-68. Perhaps one of the best critiques of the use, abuse, and misuse of narrative criticism can be found in a dissection of Culpepper's *Anatomy of the Fourth Gospel* in John Ashton's *Studying John: Approaches to the Fourth Gospel* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994), 155-165.

<sup>88</sup>To cite examples which focused on Acts (or Luke-Acts) alone: Robert C. Tannehill, *The Narrative Unity of Luke-Acts: A Literary Interpretation*, vol. 2, *The Acts of the Apostles* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1986); Luke T. Johnson, *The Acts of the Apostles* (Collegeville: The Liturgical Press, 1992); John A. Darr, *On Character Building: The Reader and the Rhetoric of Characterization in Luke-Acts* (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1992); David B. Gowler, *Host, Guest, Enemy and Friend: Portraits of the Pharisees in Luke and Acts* (New York: Peter Lang, 1991); Robert L. Brawley, *Centering on God: Method and Message in Luke-Acts* (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1990); Mikeal Parsons, *The Departure of Jesus in Luke-Acts: The Ascension Narratives in Context* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1987). An excellent summary of these works and their contribution can be found in F. S. Spencer, "Acts and Modern Literary Approaches," in *The Book of Acts in its First Century Setting*, vol. 1, *The Book of Acts in Its Ancient Literary Setting*, ed. B. W. Winter and A. D. Clarke (Carlisle: Paternoster, 1993), 381-414.

<sup>89</sup>Alain Billault, "Un sage en politique: Apollonios de Tyane et les empereurs romains," in *Mythe et politique: Actes du colloque de Liège, 14-16 septembre 1989* (Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 1990), 23-32 and "Rhetoric of a 'Divine Man': Apollonius of Tyana as Critic of Oratory and as Orator according to Philostratus" in *Philosophy and Rhetoric* 26 (1993): 227-235.

<sup>90</sup>In so doing we are attempting to avoid some of the stinging critiques levelled against the methodology by Ashton: that much of the theoretical scaffolding is an encumbrance to observations that could be made equally well without (often misused) narratological terminology (156-158); ancient stories are among the most basic type and most of their discursive technique repetitive and hardly worthy of comment (157-159); the implied reader is a "surrogate exegete" (160). We shall not use narratological language for its own sake or subject our texts to a typical narrative critical analysis

typical narrative critical language and constructs (such as "kernels and satellites" or "idealistic empathy")<sup>91</sup> is deliberate given our goal is not a narrative critical analysis. To use Chatman's "two-storey" house model,<sup>92</sup> our goal is to hear the story rather than analyze the discourse in detail.<sup>93</sup>

Thus bracketed out, at least temporarily, from this study's frame of reference are attempts to reconstruct the "historical" figures which lie behind the text. Frederick Brenk reconstructs Apollonius as a manipulative individual responsible for murder in Ephesus by convincing the crowd that an old beggar is the δαίμων of the plague.<sup>94</sup> We, on the other hand, are constrained by our method to see Apollonius rather in the positive light he is cast by the narrator and assume that the old man in the narrative is indeed the δαίμων of the Ephesian plague just as Apollonius and the narrator claim (4.10)! The miracle-working Paul of Acts has also come under a good deal of criticism by those attempting to reconstruct the "historical Paul," in this case usually understood as the character recreated from the Pauline epistles.<sup>95</sup> Again, these sorts of

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of plot, character, and setting (which are, as Ashton observed, unremarkable in and of themselves in the ancient texts we are studying).

<sup>91</sup>Terms are taken from Powell, *Narrative*, 36, 56. The intent is not to mock or denigrate the insider language of a given discipline, or suggest that it is not worthwhile learning, but rather that in this case specialized language will get in the way of the larger task at hand and contribute little to our understanding of the story.

<sup>92</sup>This pun is, of course, taken from Moore, *Literary*, 43.

<sup>93</sup>Chatman, *Story*, 19. While deconstructionists and poststructuralists collapse this two-storey house in their bold demythologizing project (Moore, *Literary*, 135), with the story disappearing into an ever shifting discursive experience, the myth of a story lives on in the mind of most readers. This shared belief that one has discovered a viable story within a given discourse thus allows discussion of this story quite apart from its ontological status. Practically put, Chatman's example that we can recognize the same story in quite different discourses, for example the story of Snow White in a given children's book, film or pantomime, implies that it is meaningful to talk about the "story" projected by a given discourse.

<sup>94</sup>Frederick E. Brenk, "Demonology," 2139-2140. On the other extreme is G. R. S. Mead who worships the sacred ground upon which Apollonius treads, but he too feels the need to distinguish between the "historical Apollonius" and the presentation offered by Philostratus (*Apollonius of Tyana: The Philosopher-Reformer of the First Century A.D.* [New York: University Books, 1966; from 1901 original], 61-62).

<sup>95</sup>Typically the miracle-working Paul of Acts is seen as espousing a *theologia gloriae* in line with the theology of "Luke" the redactor rather than the more appealing (to modern and Protestant sensibilities) *theologia crucis* of the epistles (Ernst Haenchen (*The Acts of the Apostles*, trans. B. Noble and G. Shinn, revised trans. R. McL. Wilson [Oxford: Blackwell, 1971], 49, 112-116). A great divide is created between the Paul of Acts and the Paul of the epistles or the "historical Paul" in both Philip Vielhauer's article "On the 'Paulinism' of Acts" and Edwin R. Goodenough's "The Perspective of Acts" (both in *Studies in Luke-Acts*, ed. L. E. Keck and J. L. Martyn [Nashville:

considerations must be bracketed out if we are really to listen to our narrator's description of his<sup>96</sup> characters and their social world. Rather than an approach in which we hypothetically recreate the "reality" behind the text and are forced to build hypothesis upon hypothesis in an ever-weakening structure, we shall attempt to begin (at least) with the reasonably solid structure of the ancient text itself.<sup>97</sup> That is, we are analyzing the social world of the *narrative* of Acts, rather than analyzing the social world of a hypothetical historical Paul, or hypothetical historical Apollonius.

Other premises of narrative criticism which are most important to this study include the distinction between the point of view and voice of author, narrator(s), and characters, the narrative unity of the text, and the minimal use of extra-textual data. First, in distinguishing between the various "voices" in a given narration, the author is not to be confused with the narrator.<sup>98</sup> Philostratus as an author, for example, is known to have found the vicious feud between Apollonius and Euphrates unbecoming to either philosopher.<sup>99</sup> The narrator of *VA*, however, sides wholly with Apollonius in the dispute and paints Euphrates entirely negatively in the story of their ongoing battles. Even more important, however, is distinguishing between the point of view and voice of the narrator and character. This is particularly an issue which needs close attention when we are dealing in magic accusations and the promotion of holy men in a

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Abingdon Press, 1966], 33-50, 51-59). Note Hans D. Betz' approach in his *ABD* article on "Paul" which is rather typical when reconstructing the words and deeds of the historical Paul ("Paul," in *ABD* 5, ed. D. N. Freedman [New York: Doubleday, 1992], 186-201, especially 192). The miracle-working Paul of Acts has not been without his defenders, however, and in this regard Jacob Jervell has done well to point out the "charismatic personality" of Paul one finds even in the epistolary tradition ("Paul in the Acts of the Apostles: Tradition, History, Theology," in *Les Actes des Apôtres: Traditions, rédaction, théologie*, ed. J. Kremer [Leuven: Leuven University Press, 1979], 297-306 and *Unknown Paul*.)

<sup>96</sup>The gender exclusive pronoun is chosen in this case because of the male authorship of these texts. It would seem to be rather difficult to mount a case for hearing a genuinely "female" narrator in these texts.

<sup>97</sup>In this regard we end up in the company of a researcher such as Bieler who concerns himself primarily with the literary construct of the θεῖος ἄνθρωπος rather than recovering "den geschichtlichen Apollonios oder Peregrinos" (21).

<sup>98</sup>Knoles, 28-29. In this thesis the whole approach to distinguishing between constructs such as "author", "implied author", "narrator", "narratee," etc., has been taken over from Chatman's *Story and Coming To Terms* and Meyer's *Glossary*.

<sup>99</sup>Philostratus *Lives of the Sophists* 7.

Greco-Roman context. Even a reliable character which shares the ideological perspective of the narrator may not always speak entirely truthfully (in a strict sense) if, for instance, the narrator is highlighting the modesty of his or her hero. If our narrator is attempting to realistically portray socio-cultural scripts, as of course we hope our two main narrators are ultimately doing, distinguishing between what a character claims about themselves and what the narrator wishes the narratee to assume about that character are critical.

Narrative unity and the minimal importation of extra-text are related concerns. We must point out that narrative unity is not a valid "discovery" of narrative critical approaches,<sup>100</sup> but rather its starting point, its preferred reading stance.<sup>101</sup> When attempting to interpret a given incident in a narrative, attention must ultimately be given to details in the larger story which precede and follow the incident. Redaction critics quite rightly attribute subtle shifts in terminology or ideology to the vestiges of sources now incorporated into a stitched together whole while post-structuralists subvert the apparently stable rhetoric of the text with various non-cooperative reading strategies.<sup>102</sup> In contrast to this, as narrative critics it is our task to offer (as best we can) an interpretation or understanding of the story which assumes overall unity of purpose, characterization, etc. However, stories, and particularly ancient stories, are not entirely self-interpreting. The narrator assumes a certain level of expertise and pre-understanding on the part of the narratee which may or may not actually be the case when a culturally and historically distant reader plays that role.<sup>103</sup> From time to time

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<sup>100</sup>Stephen D. Moore, *Poststructuralism and the New Testament: Derrida and Foucault at the Foot of the Cross* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1994), 68, 74-81.

<sup>101</sup>Moore might well be correct in suggesting that literary narratologists were only interested in a unity of theory not "the unity of individual narrative works" (*Literary*, 52).

<sup>102</sup>The relationship between the two is explored by Moore, *Postructuralism*, 66-74.

<sup>103</sup>Sternberg makes the following relevant observation which is worth noting in full: "From the premise that we cannot become people of the past, it does not follow that we cannot approximate to this state by imagination and training—just as we learn the rules of any other cultural game—still less that we must not or do not make the effort. Indeed, the antihistorical argument never goes all the way, usually balking as early as the hurdle of language. Nobody, to the best of my knowledge, has proposed that we each invent our own biblical Hebrew. But is the language any more or less of a historical datum to be reconstructed than the artistic conventions, the reality-model, the value system?" (10)



we shall intentionally step out of the confines of the immediate text to incorporate "extra-textual" data, data which we shall argue were most likely shared by narrator and narratee and so must be considered when analyzing given episodes.<sup>104</sup> In actual fact, the importation of extra-textual data always occurs, whether we want to speak of Iserian "gaps" or of the more radical and thoroughgoing readerly "projection" of reader-response criticism or even post-structuralism.<sup>105</sup> However, the arbitrarily chosen method of this thesis is to allow data from the text the highest priority in settling interpretive debates while importing "extra-text" in a minimalist manner and, if possible, in accordance with the clues offered us by the text itself.<sup>106</sup> In the case of Acts particularly, on the basis of opening words of Acts, the gospel of Luke is clearly shared extra-text between narrator and narratee.

The ultimate goal of this reading strategy is to produce a description of a "narrative world." Following Umberto Eco and others, Petersen states that "the narrative world is that reality which the narrator bestows upon his actors and upon

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<sup>104</sup>In this we are following Brawley who correctly states, "...[S]ome interpreters reject secondary information as irrelevant....Importing extra-textual information rewrites the text and misplaces the emphasis, a fallacy against which I have just argued. But information from Theudas and Judas in Josephus may correspond to information in the repertoire upon which Luke-Acts draws, in the same way that stories of the Hebrew patriarchs form a part of the repertoire. In this regard the problem lies not in using extra-textual information but in importing *irrelevant* extra-textual information" (14). Chatman speaks of the audience of a narrative filling "in gaps with essential or likely events, traits and objects which for various reasons have gone unmentioned" (28) and of this capacity to supply details as "virtually limitless" (29). In this case the criteria for *relevant* extra-text is that which I could reasonably convince other members of the biblical studies and historical guild would be a part of the repertoire of an ancient reader of these texts. On the whole issue of presuming what a reader did or did not know see the discussion in Moore, *Literary*, 91-95. On this issue in relation to existing literary critical works on Acts see Spencer, "Acts," 395, 398, 400-401, 405-406.

29 The audience's capacity to supply plausible details is virtually limitless, as is a geometer's capacity to conceive of an infinity of fractional spaces between two points. Not, of course, that we do so in normal reading. We are speaking only of a logical property of narratives: that they evoke a world of potential plot details, many of which go unmentioned but can be supplied. The same is true of character. We may project any number of additional details about characters on the basis of what is expressly said.

<sup>105</sup>Wolfgang Iser, "Indeterminacy and the Reader's Response in Prose Fiction," in *Aspects of Narrative*, ed. J Hillis Miller (New York: Columbia University Press, 1971), 1-45 and *Implied*, 274-294.

<sup>106</sup>In this we are following the path blazed by Brawley (35). See also Rimmon-Kenan (123-128) and Iser (*Implied*, 34-39).

their action, a reality into which he authoritatively invites his audience."<sup>107</sup> Or stated more simply, the narrative world is "the world as it is represented in narrative texts."<sup>108</sup> In attempting to enter a "narrative world" initially, rather than a reconstructed ancient "real world," we open up the possibility of more closely replicating the experience of living in a world shared by visible and invisible neighbors very different from those of our own experience. As Susan R. Garret points out,

The primary context or framework governing discourse between characters in a narrative is the "narrative world," that is, the alternate reality or "finite province of meaning" into which the author draws his or her readers, and which is marked by circumscribed meanings and modes of experience....To interpret the discourse between characters in a narrative "within the context of the narrative world," one must accept its "meanings" and "modes of experience" as determinative. When reading or watching *The Wizard of Oz*, one does not argue that witches do not exist and that scarecrows do not talk; instead, one takes their existence or speech for granted and moves on to learn something about them: there are both "good witches" and "bad witches," and scarecrows (because they are filled with straw) do not have brains.<sup>109</sup>

The goal of our methodology is to thoroughly investigate the social dynamics of the two narrative worlds represented by Acts and *VA* as a necessary step before speculating on the nature of the "real worlds" they may or may not adequately represent. While it would be most natural to investigate the narrative worlds in line with the narrative sequence of events, in the case of the demands of this study, this presentation of the data is less than ideal. Rather than having similar observations scattered and irregularly clumped, the first stage of detailed sequential reading is presumed and the data is presented topically after having gone through several organizational stages. However, in substantiating any claims, we shall return to specific texts in detail and offer interpretations which will play by the rules of narrative

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<sup>107</sup>Norman R. Peterson, *Rediscovering Paul: Philemon and the Sociology of Paul's Narrative World* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1985), 7. The various scholars from which he constructs his definition can be found in *Rediscovering*, 33. See particularly Umberto Eco, *The Role of the Reader: Explorations in the Semiotics of Texts* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1979), 200-226.

<sup>108</sup>Peterson, *Rediscovering*, 33.

<sup>109</sup>Susan R. Garrett, *Demise*, 6. The terminology and concepts in the first sentence are drawn from Clifford Geertz, "Thick Description: Toward an Interpretive Theory of Culture," in *The Interpretation of Cultures: Selected Essays* (New York: Basic Books, 1973), 10.

criticism.

### B. Choosing our Spectacles: Social Anthropology's Thick Description

To suggest our interest is an investigation of "social dynamics," however, is to invite immediate and unwanted criticism from the "social scientific" wing of biblical studies' historical critical camp. A rather influential group of scholars within the biblical studies guild have set about the task of defining what is and is not legitimate scholarship which makes claims to having a "sociological," "social scientific," or even "social anthropological" interest. Their approach (as it has been exercised within the realm of Luke-Acts scholarship at any rate) can be seen in a collection of essays in *The Social World of Luke-Acts: Models for Interpretation* and Philip Esler's *Community and Gospel in Luke-Acts: The Social and Political Motivations of Lucan Theology*.<sup>110</sup> The claim among these biblical scholars is that only a strict model-testing approach, whereby one "borrows" a sociological model developed by a pedigreed social scientist and applies it strictly and rigidly to a given biblical text, is a legitimate exercise in "social scientific" criticism. Only such an approach, they claim, will offer an escape from Western ethnocentrism and produce results which are explicit, clear, and verifiable.<sup>111</sup> Both Susan R. Garrett and Bengt Holmberg have rightly called these extravagant claims into serious question.<sup>112</sup> In the end one is left with the impression

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<sup>110</sup>Jerome H. Neyrey, ed., *The Social World of Luke-Acts: Models for Interpretation* (Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson Publishers, 1991). Philip F. Esler, *Community and Gospel in Luke-Acts: The Social and Political Motivations of Lucan Theology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987).

<sup>111</sup>Jerome H. Neyrey, preface to *The Social World of Luke-Acts*, xi. John H. Elliott, *What is Social-Scientific Criticism?* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1993), 11. Esler, 14-16. Bengt Holmberg, *Sociology and the New Testament: An Appraisal* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1990), 14-16. See also the excellent discussions in Susan R. Garrett ("Sociology [Early Christianity]," in *ABD* 6, ed. D. N. Freedman [New York: Doubleday, 1992], 89-98) and Dale B. Martin ("Social-Scientific Criticism," in *To Each Its Own Meaning: An Introduction to Biblical Criticism and Their Application*, ed. S. L. McKenzie and S. R. Haynes [Louisville: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1993], 103-119). The voice of Bruce J. Malina, however, has been the most vitriolic in denouncing all studies which purport to be "social" in some sense but fail to follow his strict model-testing approach ("The Received View and What It Cannot Do: III John and Hospitality," in *Semeia* 35 [1986]: 171-194).

<sup>112</sup>Among other problems, Garrett points out the issue of "incommensurability." She concludes that "investigative procedures that systematically compare early Christianity with models based on culturally-distant social groups will encounter the problem of incommensurability in heightened form: in order to make such comparisons work, both early Christianity and the movement (or 'model') to which it is being compared must be treated at a high level of abstraction, which

that the social-science critics within the biblical studies guild are attempting to be more "scientific" than their social science counterparts.<sup>113</sup>

Hence, we shall choose to ignore the cries of the strict sociological model-testing wing within biblical studies and press on with a more eclectic interpretive approach better suited to the task at hand and every bit as open to scholarly evaluation as any other approach. Once again, as with narrative criticism, our goal is not to demonstrate competence in using the insider language or code of a given discipline (in this case that of the social sciences), but rather to borrow wherever we can as best fits our project. Ironically enough, we are applauded in this task by the unofficial matriarch of the "social scientific" model testers, Mary Douglas.<sup>114</sup>

Our "spectacles" or lens through which we shall investigate the narrative worlds of Acts and *VA* is provided by Clifford Geertz's interpretivist approach; our goal is "thick description." Geertz describes culture as the webs of significance in which humans are suspended and which they themselves have spun. The analysis of culture is "therefore not an experimental science in search of law but an interpretive one in search of meaning."<sup>115</sup> He describes this interpretive process of analysis, which

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increases the risk that distortion of meaning will occur" ("Sociology," 93). Holmberg further suggests that far from eradicating the danger of ethnocentrism, models such as "the traditional church-sect distinction is not the neutral, cross-cultural, ideal-type sociological model claimed by many sociologists (and believed by some exegetes), but rather strongly limited to one specific culture, the Christian" (*Sociology*, 109). That the social scientific types have not actually eliminated the sins of their historical critical forebears is obvious in Malina's "Received." While Malina rails on scholars such as Malherbe for having undisclosed and ethnocentric presuppositions and offering "results more out of loyalty than argument... [or] intellectual articulation," he is himself caught by the same net. Malina's unquestioned assumptions about the existence a specific "Johannine Christianity" and even more specifically that Diotrephes' challenge was a result of its unique features are all "undisclosed presuppositions" which do not lie within the specific text at hand or in his model, but are very much a recent scholarly construct ("Received," 177, 180-181, 187).

<sup>113</sup>Clifford Geertz's criticism of anthropologists applies rather well to the social-scientific critics within biblical studies. Geertz is pressing the case that ethnographical writing makes pretensions to be pure scientific report (which is supposedly devoid of the "author-function") but is actually also literary text. He is disputing that ethnographers convince simply on the basis of adequate and convincing raw data, but that their real convincing power lies in their mode of writing, which causes us to be convinced that they (the author) was "really there" in an exotic, 'distant' culture. This is less dependent on copious data and more on the rhetoric of the ethnographic author (*Works and Lives: The Anthropologist as Author* [Cambridge: Polity Press, 1988], 4-20).

<sup>114</sup>Mary Douglas, "Introduction: Thirty Years after *Witchcraft, Oracles and Magic*," in *Witchcraft Confessions and Accusations*, ed. M. Douglas (London: Tavistock Publications, 1970), xxxvi. See below page 60.

<sup>115</sup>Geertz, "Thick Description" 5.

he sees as the end product of ethnography, as follows:

Finding our feet...is what ethnographic research consists of as a personal experience; *trying to formulate the basis on which one imagines...* We are not...seeking either to become natives...or to mimic them.... We are seeking, in the widened sense of the term..., to converse with them, a matter a great deal more difficult...than is commonly recognized.... Looked at this way, the aim of anthropology is the enlargement of the universe of human discourse.... [I]t is an aim to which a semiotic concept of culture is peculiarly well adapted. As interworked systems of construable signs..., *culture is not power*, something to which social events, behaviors, institutions, or processes can be causally attributed; *it is a context, something within which they can be intelligibly—that is, thickly—described.* [italics added]<sup>116</sup>

To describe culture and the process of cultural analysis thus is to force us to rethink both the process by which we do ethnographic research and the means of evaluating the end product. Geertz, in suggesting that one cannot draw a line between "mode of representation and substantive content...in cultural analysis," is aware that this "seems to threaten the objective status of anthropological knowledge by suggesting that its source is not social reality but scholarly artifice."<sup>117</sup> He responds,

It does threaten it, but the threat is hollow. The claim to attention of an ethnographic account [rests]...on the degree to which [the author] is able to clarify what goes on in such places, to reduce the puzzlement—what manner of men are these?—to which unfamiliar acts emerging out of unknown backgrounds naturally give rise. This raises some serious problems of verification...of how you can tell a better account from a worse one.... If ethnography is thick description and ethnographers those who are doing the describing, then the determining question for any given example of it...is whether it sorts winks from twitches and real winks from mimicked ones. It is not against a body of uninterpreted data, radically thinned descriptions, that we must measure the cogency of our explications, but against the power of the scientific imagination to bring us into touch with the lives of strangers.<sup>118</sup>

Geertz goes on to point out that interpretations cannot even be evaluated on the basis of the coherence of the description as a whole, as interpretations which remain close to the behavior and events of a given context may well suffer from the

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<sup>116</sup>Ibid., 13-14.

<sup>117</sup>Ibid., 16.

<sup>118</sup>Ibid., 16.

same minimal amount of coherence as the cultural system itself.<sup>119</sup> As for the range of "made-in-the-academy concepts and systems of concepts—'integration,' 'rationalization,' 'symbol,' [etc.]," these he describes as "woven into the body of thick-description ethnography in the hope of rendering mere occurrences scientifically eloquent."<sup>120</sup> Geertz simply tests an interpretation on the basis of whether it has fulfilled the point of semiotic approach to culture. Has it aided us "in gaining access to the conceptual world in which our subjects live so that we can, in some extended sense of the term, converse with them"?<sup>121</sup> If this approach seems all too subjective for the biblical scholar interested in social scientific approaches, it is because the subjective nature of the social sciences, particularly as it deals with cross-cultural descriptions, has not been faced. But, as Geertz points out, there is no need to despair.

The fact is that to commit oneself to a semiotic concept of culture and an interpretive approach to the study of it is to commit oneself to a view of ethnographic assertion as... "essentially contestable."

Anthropology, or at least interpretive anthropology, is a science whose progress is marked less by a perfection of consensus than by a refinement of debate. What gets better is the precision with which we vex each other.<sup>122</sup>

This sort of interpretivist approach, with its acceptance of a degree of subjectivity in the translation of culture, does not by necessity rule out the value of models, just strict dependence on them. So long as "[t]heoretical formulations hover...low over the interpretations they govern," Geertz has no qualms about using a "line of theoretic attack developed in connection with one exercise in ethnographic interpretation and employ[ing] it in another, pushing it forward to greater precision and broader relevance." The goal of theories, here, however, is "not to codify abstract regularities but to make thick description possible."<sup>123</sup>

It is precisely Geertz's suggestion that one uses theoretical formulations from

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<sup>119</sup>Ibid., 17-18.

<sup>120</sup>Ibid., 28.

<sup>121</sup>Ibid., 24.

<sup>122</sup>Ibid., 29.

<sup>123</sup>Ibid., 25-26.

one context in another to aid "thick description" which we shall latch onto in this thesis. The social anthropologist Mary Douglas has extended the invitation to historians to join "raiding forays" into the realm of social anthropology,<sup>124</sup> and so we shall. Our task, therefore, is to treat the narrative world much as a "world explored by anthropologists." Petersen describes the task as follows:

The world of a narrative, or of a corpus of authorially related narratives, and the world of a people subject to anthropological scrutiny are first and foremost closed systems. To be sure, neither can be described exhaustively....But when and as such worlds are experienced, they comprise an internally ordered whole which is the ultimate object of interest, for it is the frame of reference in which the part makes sense. The reader of a narrative is therefore like an anthropologist to the extent that both are participant observers in other worlds....[Both] must suspend both belief and disbelief in these worlds in order to comprehend life as it is lived in them. Both the reader and the anthropologist "learn" these worlds by attending to the things referred to and done in them, to how they are referred to and done, and to why. The anthropologist's informant within a world is even comparable to the narrator of a story, for both tell us about what we see and even show things to us....Both literary critics and anthropologists are concerned with the meanings of the actors' behavior within the actors' world of meanings. Life in narrative worlds is subject to the same kinds of constraints and motivations as life in "real" worlds.<sup>125</sup>

Fortunately, for our purposes, we can avoid the most controversial step in Petersen's method—that of converting epistolary text into a narrative sequence of events. Our chosen texts have an indisputable narrative quality. As Petersen's description suggests, careful narrative analysis—listening to the voice of the narrator and the various characters, observing their actions and interactions, and probing why they say and do the things they do within the context of the story as a whole—is in a sense the first step in "learning" these worlds, or in Geertz's words, "to converse with them."<sup>126</sup>

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<sup>124</sup>Douglas, "Introduction," xxxvi.

<sup>125</sup>Petersen, *Rediscovering*, 20. Petersen states his anthropology teaching "...experience led to the recognition that 'worlds' are human constructions, whether they are the constructions of societies or of narrators, and that narrative worlds are comprised of the same kinds of social facts—symbolic forms and social arrangements—as so-called real worlds. Thus narrative worlds can be studied like any other world" (*Rediscovering*, ix).

<sup>126</sup>Geertz, "Thick Description," 13.

### C. From "Narrative World" to "Historical World"

The final move which our methodology envisions is the move back to the "historical world" from the "narrative world." This may well beg the question as to why we do not simply begin with a social analysis of the "historical world." At least part of the answer lies in Graham Anderson's study of Greco-Roman holy men, *Sage, Saint and Sophist*. While Anderson's work suggested many of the avenues we will ourselves traverse in our exploration of the two narrative worlds, his work also demonstrates the difficulty of beginning with historical reconstruction and then moving to social analysis. Anderson begins by pointing out the problematic fact that much of our data on Greco-Roman holy men comes from polemical and propagandistic sources.<sup>127</sup> His solution to this obstacle is to walk a line between utter disbelief and gullibility, "a kind of Celsus-eye view of much of [the] evidence."<sup>128</sup> In practice, what this frequently implies is that the Greco-Roman holy man is portrayed as the skilled illusionist who understands enough about human nature to skillfully pull off what will be perceived as "miracle" by a gullible public.<sup>129</sup> While Anderson ought to be applauded for his willingness to find "historical kernels" in miracle stories, the net effect of this reconstructive technique is to give the holy man an aura of the grand trickster, a well-meaning but shameless huckster.<sup>130</sup> While the Lucians and Celsuses of the Greco-Roman world would no doubt frequently appreciate Anderson's subtle denigration of these characters, if our concern is to understand the social fabric in which these characters operated, another tack is required. It is more noteworthy that frequently both proponents *and* opponents of intermediaries functioned under the belief that some form of divine power was at work in these individuals and that

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<sup>127</sup>*Sage*, 18-19.

<sup>128</sup>*Sage*, 220, see also 20. Anderson used this methodology before in *Philostratus* (see especially 141).

<sup>129</sup>Anderson's reconstructions occasionally even fail to give the holy man credit in terms of skilled illusion as when he suggests that the blinding of Bar Jesus was carried out by a blow from Paul's hand reinterpreted as the "hand of the Lord" (*Sage*, 146).

<sup>130</sup>His work also suffers from a tendency to loathe apocalyptic or eschatological style holy men and one is left with the distinct impression this polemic is part of a larger rhetorical battle with Howard Clark Kee (*Sage*, 30, 63-64, 220-221, 227)



genuine feats of miracle or magic were performed by these characters.<sup>131</sup>

One could equally well complain of Anderson's uneven treatment of historical sources as he frequently mixes rather uncritical use of certain sources with detailed attempts at historical reconstruction with texts.<sup>132</sup> However, it is precisely where Anderson fails to reconstruct the historical "kernel" that one finds the most interesting insights into the interaction between holy man and society. Indeed, Anderson himself claims that

...some of our fictional instances have a plausibility and sense of realism which offers genuine documentary value, in the sense that they aim to present what is obviously credible and probably typical. Sometimes a fictional recreation fills in a missing part of our factual mosaic quite convincingly; more often it is in matters of ethos or psychological motivation that fictional texts are able to enrich our appreciation of more strictly historical evidence.<sup>133</sup>

Recent scholarship on Greco-Roman fiction has both laid out the framework for and demonstrated the value of using material which has a fictional quality (i.e., the author and reader have an unspoken contract that the story line does not depict "actual events") to illuminate our understanding of the socio-political world in which they were written and in which the fictional story line and characters are frequently placed.<sup>134</sup> As Fergus Millar concludes in his study of Apuleius' *Golden Ass*, even "the invented world of fiction may yet represent—perhaps cannot help representing—important features of the real world."<sup>135</sup> J.R. Morgan's essay "Make-Believe and Make Believe" points out that "fiction is close enough to *social reality* to be useful as

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<sup>131</sup>See below page 67.

<sup>132</sup>A prime example of this can be found in chapter 9, where after uncritically using a variety of sources to talk about the relationship of holy men and Caesars, he suddenly exhibits considerable concern to discover the truth behind the Secundus account (*Sage*, 159).

<sup>133</sup>*Sage*, 178.

<sup>134</sup>On both the elusive definition for fiction and its relationship to the non-fictional "real world" see particularly the collected essays in *Lies and Fiction in the Ancient World* (edited by Christopher Gill and T. P. Wiseman [Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 1993]). See also G. W. Bowersock (*Fiction*) and E. L. Bowie, "The Novels and the Real World," in *Erotica Antiqua* (Bangor: International Conference on the Ancient Novel, 1976), 91-96. A particularly good example of using a "narrative world," which in this case is entirely fictional, to illuminate the "real world" is Fergus Millar's "The World of the *Golden Ass*," in *JRS* 71 (1981): 63-75.

<sup>135</sup>Millar, 75.

evidence for it."<sup>136</sup>

If one's concern is with socio-cultural scripts, it is not a question of whether an actual event did or did not take place, but whether the characters' actions and speech narrated by an ancient author contain the expected or a plausible social discourse for the given scenario. Given our interest lies particularly with characterization, it is worth noting that for ancient writers, plausibility and believability were particularly attached to character. As Morgan suggests, ancient writers strove for "generic appropriateness rather than psychological individuality" and hence in narratives, "kings must act like kings, slaves like slaves."<sup>137</sup> Thus, Cox's conclusion that the holy man of Late Antique biography (of which *VA* is one example) is caricature to the extent that "history was distorted, if not actually lost" is ultimately not a hindrance to our cause.<sup>138</sup> Rather, our designated narrative world, entered into and understood on its own terms (as much as is possible for late twentieth century readers), will offer us a distilled version of the sort of social discourse which played itself out in a world in which religious superstars could expect both acceptance as legitimate purveyors of divine power and denigration and rejection as illegitimate magicians. Flinterman's comments on propagandistic and apologetic texts such as *VA* and the Celsus-Origen debate over Apollonius and Jesus are noteworthy in this regard:

It is plausible to suppose that such controversies were based on some tangible social phenomenon: the activities of charismatic wise men and miracle-workers, who operated more or less independently of the institutionalised cults, and who claimed a special relationship with the divine which was expressed in their supernatural powers. Their activities provoked a wide range of reactions, ranging from devotion to disapproval. Either the supernatural powers of the sage and miracle-worker were attributed to a special relationship with the divine or divinity; or the supernatural acts were simply treated as instances of magic or *goēteia*.<sup>139</sup>

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<sup>136</sup>Italics added. Taken from J. R. Morgan, "Make-Believe and Make Believe," in *Lies and Fiction in the Ancient World*, edited by C. Gill and T. P. Wiseman (Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 1993), 200-201.

<sup>137</sup>Morgan, 228. Anderson states that "[a] hagiographical source can communicate something of the personalities and ethos of those involved" (*Sage*, 22).

<sup>138</sup>Cox, 145.

<sup>139</sup>Flinterman, 60.

Limiting our investigation to two "*narrative* worlds" is not intended to bypass historical constructs entirely. The ultimate goal of our investigation of these two narrative worlds is thus not to be left with two non-historical constructs of social reality, but to bring the results of this investigation to bear on other texts and historical constructs of the Greco-Roman world. It is through these two narrative worlds that we hope to become better at understanding the expected behaviour of those who mediate divine power and the respective judgments brought to bear on them by the communities in which they functioned. Space will not permit us to extensively test or evaluate the usefulness of the results of our investigation of Acts and *VA*. However, in our conclusion we will suggest how the results of our investigation may be tested and applied if we hope to use them to describe the "real world" of the first centuries CE of the Mediterranean world.

#### **D. Tricky Terms: Retaining the Language of "Miracle" and "Magic"**

In what follows the terms "miracle," "miracle-worker," "magic," and "magician" will be used quite intentionally in a value-laden way. The justification for this practice is that this is more commensurate with the Greco-Roman era usage of roughly equivalent terms.<sup>140</sup> A miracle within our modern Western cultural framework is usually seen as a relatively positive phenomenon, an extraordinary occurrence often attributed to a benevolent divine being. But these positive connotations might in some contexts be disputed by others. Particularly among those committed to more rational explanations or forms of discourse, a miraculous event, or rather interpreting an event as miraculous, is indicative of a lack of critical thought and defining events as miraculous might pose a real danger to those who adopt these into their worldview.

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<sup>140</sup>For one of the most nuanced discussion of the Greek and Latin terms for magic and miracle see Remus, 48-57. Under the rubric of "miracle" he subsumes the terms σημεῖον, τέρας, *prodigium*, *ostentum*, and *miraculum* (he might well have added θαῦμα), while under the rubric of "magic" he subsumes the terms μάγος, μαγεία, *magus*, *magia* and later the term γοητεία (to which ought to be added the matching noun γόης). An equally thorough discussion of the Greek and Latin terms may be found in Fritz Graf, *Magic in the Ancient World*, trans. F. Philip (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1997), 20-60. On the term γοητεία and μαγεία see also Walter Burkert, "ΓΟΗΣ. Zum griechischen 'Schamanismus'" in *RhM* 105 (1962): 50-51. On the development of the terms μάγος and μαγεία and its connection with γόης and γοητεία from fifth century BCE Greece through the Roman era see also Nock, "Paul," 164-182.

Similarly, magic is often cast as a negative phenomena, performed by shadowy characters for some dark purpose, a primitive manipulation of spiritual and material forces and often involving some specific secret rites. On the other hand, there are those who seek to redefine magic, to rub out its negative connotation and see it in a neutral or positive light. Again, in very broad terms, this is the case across the Greco-Roman world where there is a rough consensus that "miracle" is positive, "magic" is negative, but with no shortage of dissenters in both cases.<sup>141</sup> This is not to suggest that "miracle" and "magic" are pure emic terms for categories in the analysis which follows, but rather to point out that as equivalents for value-laden but disputed categories, they are not a bad choice.<sup>142</sup> Rather than redefine these or create new words, maintaining the natural modern connotations for both will hopefully elucidate rather than obscure the analysis.<sup>143</sup> Sometimes tainted terms are better left tainted and used as such.

For a more neutral term, we shall follow the lead of Robert R. Wilson and label both magicians and miracle-workers as "intermediaries."<sup>144</sup> An intermediary is one who serves as some sort of bridge between the culturally defined "natural world" and

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<sup>141</sup>This is well demonstrated by the discussions of the terms both in Remus (48-57) and Graf (especially 20-60). See also Flinterman, 60-61.

<sup>142</sup>The anthropological terms "emic" and "etic" respectively stand for "an insider's perspective and description" and "an outsider's perspective and description." On the problems associated with these terms and the ultimate impossibility of any study being purely one or the other see Robert Feleppa, "Emics, Etics, and Social Objectivity," *CA* 27 (1986): 243-255. Nock suggests that "...both ["magic" and "magical"] have retained the rather contemptuous connotation belonging to them in Greek and Latin literature, so that they customarily afford terms of abuse for religious ceremonies which are regarded as superstitious. This usage is the natural continuation of the classical use of *magus* and *magia*" ("Paul," 169).

<sup>143</sup>In this we are following the approach adopted by Graf, 16-17.

<sup>144</sup>This term was first suggested to me by Philip R. Davies. The term "intermediary" as defined by the *Oxford English Dictionary* (vol. 5, [Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1970], 405) captures the qualities we are interested in better than other possible terms such as "mediator" (which has Christological or conflict-resolution overtones) or "medium" (which is associated primarily with trance-like possession forms of bridging the human and supernatural spheres). Robert R. Wilson in *Prophecy and Society in Ancient Israel* suggests that the term "intermediary" is a useful "neutral, general title that can embrace several religious specialists" including "prophet, shaman, medium, and diviner" but not necessarily "priest" ([Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1980], 27-28). His proposal that the point of commonality between these various characters with their frequently value-laden titles is the task of serving as an intermediary "between the human and divine worlds" serves our purposes rather precisely (28).

the realms of the "supernatural" or "spiritual." We will begin with the construct offered by Peter Brown and define these as individuals with some unique access to divine beings or divine power, which they make available in some way to the natural world which they inhabit with less extraordinary beings. These intermediaries and the divine beings or powers they tap into may be socially defined as either good, in which case activities coming out of their interaction would fall into the realm of miracle, mediated by miracle-workers; or evil, in which case the activities are magic performed by a magician.<sup>145</sup> The precedent for using this "bridge" metaphor for classifying the individuals under scrutiny in our study is further set by Graham Anderson who suggests that the holy man is one whose satisfaction is found in "bridging the gap between human and divine in some significant way, however it may be expressed."<sup>146</sup> While defining the terms at the outset in this manner does, of course, have a formative influence on our results, the proof of the pudding, as always, remains in the eating.<sup>147</sup>

There is one additional complicating factor in the study of "magic" and "miracle" in the Greco-Roman era which we have not clearly dealt with; a problem which has sabotaged otherwise insightful studies of magic in the Greco-Roman world and on numerous occasions threatened this thesis as well. The problem is that of the relationship between the accusation of practising magic, and the actual practices of magic one finds in ancient texts such as the *Papyri Graecae Magicae* and *defixiones* curse tablets.<sup>148</sup> For the sake of precision, one needs to create several overlapping categories. First, there is the social world in which religious virtuosi are, for a number of reasons, accepted as legitimate purveyors of divine power or accused of

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<sup>145</sup>See below page 67.

<sup>146</sup>Anderson, *Sage*, 49.

<sup>147</sup>This particular use of this expression is taken from N. T. Wright's *Christian Origins and the Question of God*, vol. 1, *The New Testament and the People of God*, (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1992), 70.

<sup>148</sup>K. Preisendanz, *Papyri Graecae Magicae: Die Griechischen Zauberpapyri*, vol. I-II (Stuttgart: Verlag B.G. Teubner, 1973, 1974; from original 1928, 1931). H. D. Betz, *The Greek Magical Papyri in Translation including the Demotic Spells* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1986). A. Audollent, *Defixionum Tabellae* (Paris: Fontemoing, 1904). D. R. Jordan, "A survey of Greek defixiones not included in the special corpora," in *GRBS* 26 (1985): 151-197.

illegitimately practising magic. Related to this, but not identical to this latter category, are those individuals who participate in *PGM*-type practices. Studies in the past have typically made the error of assuming that those accused of magic actually engaged in the practices one finds in *PGM* or assuming that accusations of magic were always groundless and simply a labeling exercise. Reality is, as our study will demonstrate, considerably messier than this. The category of those who used *PGM* and curse tablets is rather broad ranging from the "average person on the street" who would have had a popular knowledge of these matters to the full-time professional who collected and dispensed these various rites and spells.<sup>149</sup> There is, of course, overlap between those accused of magic and these practitioners. It has also been frequently noted, however, that religious virtuosi not accused of magic often seem to engage in rites and practices which look very similar to those described in so-called magical texts. The overlap of the two classification schemes (those accused or not accused of magic vs. those practising or not practising *PGM*-type rites) is itself worth exploring, but falls beyond the bounds of this thesis.<sup>150</sup>

For the sake of clarity, this thesis will focus solely on the arena of religious virtuosi and the acceptance of these characters as legitimate miracle-workers or rejected as illegitimate magicians. By focusing on the social categories and social control through labeling, we are not implying any particular relationship between those accused of practising magic and the category of those who actually used *PGM*-type material (except to note on occasion that one accused of practising magic in the ancient world might well be thought of as one who illegitimately used *PGM*-type material).

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<sup>149</sup>This "impression" both arises from the study of the "magical" texts themselves as well as descriptions such as one find in Pliny *Natural History* 27-28 Acts 19 is another case of both professionals (the seven sons of Sceva who appear to be exorcists very much in the *PGM* tradition) and non-professionals (the multitude burning their magical texts) who are users of *PGM* material.

<sup>150</sup>Graf's work implicitly suggests that it is individualism which links the two categories. That is, individual success, i.e., disruption of the status quo social order (61-88), correlates somehow to the individualism of the rites of the professional magician (89-204). The magician is an isolated figure, socially (in the popular conception of the magician) and ritually (in the actual practice of individuals who may or may not have accepted the designation of "magician")(205-233). This would, at the very least, seem a promising starting point in clarifying the categories and their relationships.

## V. Recent Scholarship: An Exercise in Self-Definition

Aside from Kolenkow's "A Problem of Power" and Graham Anderson's, *Sage, Saint and Sophist*, which we have discussed above, there are at least four more recent works on miracle-workers and magicians or magic which demand our attention for a number of reasons. First, these works are noteworthy for their ability to actually advance the discussion of magic, miracle, magicians, and miracle-workers in one way or another. Second, these works in their own way demonstrate the value of our starting point by sharing some of the presuppositions and methodological aspects of this dissertation. Given this, however, our third reason for covering these particular titles is that we need to establish the relationship between the research represented by these titles, and the research undertaken for this thesis. Comprehensive coverage of previous scholarship has been abandoned in favor of surveying only those works which most closely matched the primary concerns of this thesis.

### A. Gallagher's *Divine Man or Magician?*

For our purposes, the most important study on religious virtuosi who are assigned both positive titles such as θεῖος ἄνθρωπος and negative titles such as γόης is Eugene V. Gallagher's *Divine Man or Magician? Celsus and Origen on Jesus*. Gallagher works from roughly the same premise as we have outlined above—among rival claimants to the status of θεῖος ἄνθρωπος there are shared criteria for evaluation and classification even as there are also variations and subjective applications of those criteria.<sup>151</sup> For Gallagher the logic of "X should be considered Y because Z<sub>1</sub>...Z<sub>n</sub>" is represented by propagandistic literature, while "if Z<sub>1</sub>...Z<sub>n</sub> demonstrate Y, not Q, then X should be considered Y, not Q" is the basic structure of apology. The intersection of propaganda and apology, therefore, ought to be the place where one discovers the principles of classification (Z<sub>1</sub>...Z<sub>n</sub>) implied by the statement, "X should be considered Y."<sup>152</sup> Gallagher finds this most explicitly in texts such as Origen's *Contra Celsum*. The key criterion for assigning a given person to the category of "divine man," which

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<sup>151</sup>See especially Gallagher, 28-40 and 174-179.

<sup>152</sup>Ibid., 35-36.

he discovers in the process of dissecting Celsus and Origen's counterclaims about Jesus, is that of being a benefactor of humanity. That is, both Celsus and Origen agree that a divine man is one who benefits humanity in some extraordinary fashion while they disagree on how this applies or does not apply to Jesus because of some fundamental differences in their appreciation of articulate and inarticulate power sources.<sup>153</sup>

Our study will likewise attempt to elucidate the criteria for classification of religious superstars into particular categories, in our case the category of legitimate intermediary / "miracle-worker" or illegitimate intermediary / "magician." We stand by Gallagher's fundamental assumptions about shared criteria and diversity of application and appreciation of specifics in that criteria. Where our study differs is obviously in our use of narrative rather than apologetic discourse, which will allow us to see the development of the religious superstar and interaction between intermediary and community rather than a static end-product. Gallagher's proposal that candidates for divine status are measured according to the criterion of being a benefactor of humanity is, of course, defensible and a form of this criterion will be apparent in our study as well. By using narrative texts, however, the subtle interplay between different types of power and the structures by which communities both appropriate and attempt to limit the divine power offered by intermediaries will become apparent and offer both criteria and a context for understanding the operation of these criteria. Gallagher, because of the text he has chosen, is rather limited to discussing *literary* evaluations of candidates for divine status *after their death*. Our study, probing as it does the interaction between intermediary and community, attempts to understand the ongoing classification that takes place as the intermediary practises his craft, first in a narrative world, but always with an eventual view to speculating on how this took place at a socio-historical level.

A second key difference is that we will not concern ourselves with what the appellation θεῖος actually implies in terms of the ontological status of the holy man.

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<sup>153</sup>Ibid., especially 138-139.



We are not concerned with painting yet another picture of the Hellenistic θεῖος ἄνηρ and have intentionally avoided that term. Our primary concern is how Mediterranean communities determined if a given purveyor of divine power was functioning legitimately, i.e., performing true miracles, or illegitimately, i.e., practising magic. Our goal is not an abstracted θεῖος ἄνηρ ideal type (as legitimate as that exercise is)<sup>154</sup> but a greater understanding of the operation of classificatory schemes for the legitimate and illegitimate use of divine power which we discover in the Greco-Roman world.

### B. F. Graf's *Magic in the Ancient World*

More recently, Fritz Graf, in *Magic in the Ancient World*,<sup>155</sup> has provided some excellent observations on Greco-Roman magic that avoid many of the pitfalls of defining miracle and magic as we outlined above. While much more subtle in his understanding of the overlap of the artificial categories of "religion" and "magic" (as defined by early twentieth century classicists, anthropologists and theologians),<sup>156</sup> he does not allow the ambiguous boundary between the two to prevent him from sketching the fundamental nature of the "magician." His sketch of magicians and their activity is drawn primarily from the magical papyri, lead *defixiones*, and a handful of polemic and apologetic texts (including particularly Apuleius' *Apologia sive de magia*). In many ways, Graf's study works "alongside" our study. His use of the term "magic", for instance, is rather more inductively developed and attempts to approximate "the sense that the ancients gave it" while "avoiding not only the Frazerian notions, but also all the other ethnological notions of the term." Furthermore, he takes seriously the realm of the gods as a piece of the social fabric of antiquity, allowing for a "vertical communicative axis" alongside the more empirical "horizontal communicative axis" in

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<sup>154</sup>This is, of course, Bieler's goal and his work is rightly defended by Gallagher (10-18) after years of repeated attacks.

<sup>155</sup>The French original was published as *Idéologie et Pratique de la Magie dans l'Antiquité Gréco-Romaine* (Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 1994). All quotations and page references are taken from the translated English edition.

<sup>156</sup>For instance, Graf readily demonstrates the overlap between initiation into mystery cults and magic rituals for acquiring a supernatural assistant and the ambiguous relationship between the two particularly as both are concerned ultimately with connecting with the divine and both do so for pragmatic purposes (96-117).

his comparison of magician and community cult.<sup>157</sup> In his investigation of two accounts of magic accusations his observations on the correlation between socially disturbing status enhancement and fringe status and the accusation of magic will be echoed in our study as well.<sup>158</sup> His portrait of the magician as the pragmatic cult of the individual versus the communitarian civic and mystery cults is one which we shall see would be right at home in the two narrative worlds we shall investigate.

What sets our study apart from Graf's work is our placing of legitimate miracle-workers alongside the illegitimate magicians, hence our interest in the purveyors of divine power rather than classifying the ideology of a given text into either magic or religion and our narrower focus on two narratives rather than incorporating texts and inscriptions typically understood as "magical." Our emphasis is precisely on those cases in which potentially "my miracle-worker is your magician and vice versa" so that we can see the criteria by which various Greco-Roman communities determined who would find open acceptance and who would not. What these cases demonstrate is the ambiguous nature of power "from the fringe" or "from the outside" (for it is not just magicians but miracle-workers who come from there) and the pitfalls of exercising this power within the framework of a given community (also something both do). If Gallagher's study primarily focuses on the construction of a legitimate intermediary of divine power and Graf's study is clearly focused on a portrait of the magician, our study is an attempt to see both of these figures side-by-side in a given social setting and observe the judgments for or against these characters as they function with their respective narrative worlds.

### C. H. J. Klauck's *Magie und Heidentum in der Apostelgeschichte des Lukas*

Another important recent work on magic in Acts is that of Hans Josef Klauck's *Magie und Heidentum in der Apostelgeschichte des Lukas*.<sup>159</sup> Klauck claims that the

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<sup>157</sup>Graf, 214.

<sup>158</sup>Graf, 61-88.

<sup>159</sup>(Stuttgart: Verlag Katholisches Bibelwerk, 1996). His overriding thesis was first put forward in "With Paul in Paphos and Lystra: Magic and Paganism in the Acts of the Apostles," in *Neot* 28 (1994): 93-108.

successive stories involving confrontation between the apostles and magic and paganism are part of a strategy by Luke to address a distinct concern he has for his readership. They are in danger of slipping back into magical practice or polytheistic paganism or at the very least into some syncretistic practices.<sup>160</sup> Adding to this difficulty is the fact that the distinction between magic and the miracle-working of the apostles is less than clear.<sup>161</sup> It is precisely at this point that his study overlaps with ours with his suggestion that strategies such as subordinating the miracles to the message of the apostles, the avoidance of wealth, and the rejection of public acclamation to be gods are used by Luke to draw that distinction.<sup>162</sup> Where our study parts paths with Klauck is in our more thoroughgoing probing of the characterization of both illegitimate magicians and legitimate miracle-workers and the strategies of the latter *as characters in the narrative* to both demonstrate divine power but avoid charges of magic and the tensions and ambiguities created by this particular socio-cultural script. These become particularly evident when mediated divine power bumps up against other forms of societal power and particularly as it seeks legitimation. Furthermore, our comparative element (Philostratus' *Life of Apollonius*) will ultimately suggest that Luke is not simply using an exclusively *Christian* framework to combat some form of syncretism, but rather seems to share certain criteria on legitimate and illegitimate mediation of divine power with at least one pagan writer. Klauck then becomes a useful starting point and a confirmation that our observations on Luke's distinction between illegitimate magic and legitimate miracle-workers have not gone completely unnoticed before.

**D. S. R. Garrett's *The Demise of the Devil: Magic and the Demonic in Luke's Writings***

Without a doubt the best recent treatment of "magic" within the narrative of Acts can be found in Susan R. Garrett's groundbreaking *The Demise of the Devil:*

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<sup>160</sup>*Magie*, 34-35, 68-69, 116-117, 137-138.

<sup>161</sup>*Magie*, 112-114.

<sup>162</sup>*Magie*, 137.

*Magic and the Demonic in Luke's Writings*. It is precisely because Garrett's work uncovers the logic of the operation of Satan *within the Lukan narrative world*, particularly the association of Satan and the demonic with magic and magicians, in a most adequate fashion that this work is intentionally moving beyond her observations. So, while there are numerous methodological similarities between her work and this dissertation, ultimately we will take one step further from the text than Garrett. Her study is, quite correctly for her purposes, self-consciously "emic."<sup>163</sup> It seeks to see the narrative world purely as the cultural and ideological "insiders" saw it and so hers is a relatively concrete study of the symbolic universe of Luke-Acts. The following study is moving to a slightly greater degree of abstraction, building on her insights at points but also shifting the focus slightly by examining magic and miracle from the point of view of the interaction between religious virtuosi and the social networks in which they were engaged. Facilitating this is the comparative element which will allow for the observation of certain behavioral patterns apart from a narrow theological framework in which they operate and are justified. In particular, comparison with a pagan rather than other Judaeo-Christian texts is an attempt to do this. It would be hard to disagree with Garrett's observation that "Luke's discussion of magic most often reflects traditions exhibited also in...Jewish or Jewish-influenced documents."<sup>164</sup> It is precisely because this is well established by her study, as well as others, that the comparison needs to be widened. If one imagines "emic" and "etic" perspectives on a sliding scale (no study is ever entirely one or the other), our study, in order to incorporate a broader comparison, will necessarily be forced to move closer to the "etic" pole than Garrett's study of Luke within a Jewish framework. But because it remains interested in the cultural "insiders" criteria for locating and labeling intermediaries, it still remains tilted in favor of the "emic" perspective and classification.

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<sup>163</sup>See Garrett's discussion of "emic" and "etic" with reference to her own work and other studies on magic in *Demise*, 27-36.

<sup>164</sup>Garrett, *Demise*, 8.

## VI. A Guiding Principle: Pragmatism

In the end our methodological approach is only as good as the results it offers. Methodological "sophistication" or methodological purity for its own sake seems hardly appropriate in studying two texts in which the heroes, according to the ancient sources anyway, were ardent opponents of sophistry.<sup>165</sup> In the end, any investigation must be judged by the results which it produces. While we bracket out certain questions at certain stages in our research, in the end one cannot, for instance, utterly divorce the "real world" from the "narrative world" when working with the Acts or *VA*. Quite simply, the narrator assumes a good deal of working knowledge from the "real world" in order for the story to work. Methodologically we hope to move from the "narrative world" to the "real world," but that will not always be possible. A certain arbitrary pragmatism must, therefore, prevail if our reading of these texts is not to fall into the nonsensical category. Likewise, we have suggested above that following a pre-existing given sociological model with slavish attention does not guarantee interesting or especially worthwhile results. Literary criticism, history, and yes, even sociology, are as much arts as they are sciences. In the end a piece of art must be judged by its overall effect on the observer, not on whether it followed some strict methodological canon. The test by which this study ought to be judged is whether in the final analysis it offers fresh insights into the categories of "miracle" and "magic" and the activities of religious virtuosi which were assigned these labels in the Greco-Roman world.

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<sup>165</sup>See for example *VA* 8.22, Acts 4:13 and 2 Cor 10-13. Whether, in fact, in shunning or claiming a lack of sophistic skill they are actually engaging in a peculiar form of sophistic rhetoric is open to question, as indeed is my claim that a pragmatic free-spirited approach is not just as methodologically deliberate as any other strictly defined approach.

## Chapter 2

### Useful Social Models for Understanding Intermediaries

#### I. Introduction

As we stated in our opening chapter, our observations of the social world of the narratives of Acts and *Life of Apollonius* will not proceed on the basis of a strict sociological model-testing approach. Rather, following Geertz, our interest is in using a "line of theoretic attack developed in connection with one exercise in ethnographic interpretation and employ[ing] it in another, pushing it forward to greater precision and broader relevance."<sup>1</sup> With this specific goal in mind, therefore, in what follows we shall look at the work of Mary Douglas on witchcraft accusation societies and the work of Peter Brown on the Late Antique Holy Man. The work of these two outstanding scholars has, at times, crossed paths, and so Peter Brown's work serves a twofold purpose. It both demonstrates the applicability of Mary Douglas' work on witchcraft and sorcery to the ancient context, and it demonstrates how this might be done not in a rigid model-testing manner but rather with a more interpretivist approach unafraid of the nuanced complexity and frequently contradictory nature of the historical evidence. While this chapter does not lay bare all the presuppositions of our investigation of the social world of the narratives of Acts and *VA*, it is intended to point the reader to the source of many of the questions and observations made in the following chapters. Simply put, Douglas and Brown have had a shaping influence on the presentation of the data from Acts and *VA* and so need to be heard on their own terms first.

#### II. Mary Douglas's Witchcraft Accusation Societies

It is difficult to summarize a work such as Mary Douglas's *Purity and Danger* in a succinct fashion and be left with a convincing argument.<sup>2</sup> Her monographs tend to be summaries in their own right, bringing together vast personal experience as well as a

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<sup>1</sup>Geertz, "Thick Description," 25.

<sup>2</sup>Full title is *Purity and Danger: An Analysis of the Concepts of Pollution and Taboo* (London and New York: Routledge, 1966).

nearly limitless number of field research accounts. These are then stitched together to form the evidential basis for the macro theories which are her trademark. This wide angle approach is both the strength and weakness of her work—credibility becomes rather stretched when theories encompass cultures which range from African Dinka to Western industrialized societies. On the other hand, her theories open up the possibility of cross-cultural comparison and provide a framework for predicting correlations between certain types of social frameworks and groupings of social, religious, and political behaviors. And in fairness to Douglas, she is careful to avoid the charge of simplistic determinism, and willingly cites examples which do not fit her scheme.<sup>3</sup> So, rather than summarize her theoretical framework as a whole, we shall go forward with the assumption that her macro theories stand up well enough to scrutiny and only extract those bits which are relevant for our particular study. At any rate, the ideas extracted are not intended to stand alone, but rather serve as starting points and suggestions for a critical examination of the social worlds of Acts and *VA*.

## **A. Powers and Danger**

### **1. Power and Societal Patterning**

In *Purity and Danger* Douglas analyzes the human tendency to order experienced reality through social structure and ritual. Her chapter on "Powers and Danger" in particular provides some interesting suggestions for our present study. She begins by pointing out both the power and the danger which lie on the fringe of societal patterning.

Granted that disorder spoils pattern; it also provides the materials of pattern. Order implies restriction; from all possible materials, a limited selection has been made and from all possible relations a limited set has been used. So disorder by implication is unlimited, no pattern has been realised in it, but its potential for patterning is indefinite. This is why, though we seek to create order, we do not simply condemn disorder. We recognise that it is destructive to existing patterns; also that it has potentiality. It symbolises both danger and power.

Ritual recognises the potency of disorder. In the disorder of the mind, in dreams, faints and frenzies, ritual expects to find powers and

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<sup>3</sup>Douglas, "Introduction," xxxv-xxxvi.

truths which cannot be reached by conscious effort. Energy to command and special powers of healing come to those who can abandon rational control for a time. Sometimes an Andaman Islander leaves his band and wanders in the forest like a madman. When he returns to his senses and to human society he has gained occult power of healing (Radcliffe Brown, 1933, p. 139). This is a very common notion, widely attested.<sup>4</sup>

Having established that there is a power both in societal form and other power in the surrounding non-form, in the inarticulate areas and beyond the external boundaries,<sup>5</sup> Douglas proceeds to dichotomize and demonstrate correlations between forms of spiritual power and social systems. For instance, she contends that internal or involuntary and uncontrolled power, such as the evil eye, witchcraft, gifts of visions or prophecy, often apply to persons in dangerously ambiguous roles in an ill-articulated social system whose use of these powers threatens society and is disapproved of. This is a threat from the non-structure. On the other hand, external or voluntary and controlled power, such as spells, blessings, curses or incantations, often apply to persons holding clearly defined authority positions in a well-articulated social system whose use of these powers is on behalf of the social structures and is approved of. This is power within the structure upholding the explicit social structure.<sup>6</sup>

## **2. Negative Power in Authority Positions**

In typical Douglas fashion, she then proceeds to cite the cases which seem to disprove her tidy correlation. It is here that we find some suggestions about the social function of witchcraft and sorcery accusations which may prove enlightening when we look particularly at magic as a negative accusation. There are several scenarios which defy the above categorization. For instance, sorcery, which is a matter of external control of symbols and should therefore be found exercised on behalf of societal structure from an approved position of authority, is also sometimes found in interstitial places, operating quite anti-socially and disapproved of (places where one would

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<sup>4</sup>Douglas, *Purity*, 94.

<sup>5</sup>*Ibid.*, 98.

<sup>6</sup>*Ibid.*, 98-103.



expect involuntary witchcraft accusations).<sup>7</sup>

Douglas deals with the anomalies in two ways. First, she discards those cases on either extreme of no formal authority within a given society on the one hand and a strong effective secular authority on the other. Secondly, and more interesting for our purposes, she introduces the need for societies to account for failure in office and competition for positions of authority. One "in a position of authority who abuses the secular powers of his office" can be conveniently charged with having entered "the class of witches, exerting involuntary, unjust powers instead of intentionally controlled powers against wrongdoers."<sup>8</sup> The case of sorcery operating in the structural interstices where we would expect witchcraft is usually a product of a society in which there is considerable competition for positions of weakly defined authority. Typically in this case sorcery is available to those who want to acquire it. It is an instrument for self-promotion, but equally, sorcery charges can also cut short one's reign. To the extent that both witchcraft and sorcery are a form of spiritual power biased toward failure, they belong in the same classification. Witchcraft accusations are a form of dealing with role failure punitively within interstitial roles, while sorcery accusations deal with role failures in official positions. Thus sorcery beliefs allow for the possibility that the one filling "an official position will fail to fill it creditably" and these beliefs therefore act "as a check on the use of secular power."<sup>9</sup>

### **3. Positive Power in Interstitial Places**

These negative cases have interesting positive correlatives according to Douglas. Positive power (Luck, *baraka*, *mana*), bringing good fortune to recipients of its activity, often can be found in the same place as witchcraft—within societal interstices, especially when a society's formal authority is weak or ill-defined or for some reason powers of blessing cannot emanate from its key points.<sup>10</sup> She offers the

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<sup>7</sup>Ibid., 104-105.

<sup>8</sup>Ibid., 106.

<sup>9</sup>Ibid., 109.

<sup>10</sup>Ibid.

following example from the Somalis where inter-Muslim fighting makes the latter the case. Here the holders of spiritual power are distinct from the holders of military power.

Religion is represented not by warriors but by men of God. These holy men, religious and legal experts, mediate between men as they mediate between men and God. They are only reluctantly involved in the warrior structure of society. As men of God they are credited with spiritual power. It follows that their blessing (*baraka*) is great in proportion as they withdraw from the secular world and are humble, poor and weak.<sup>11</sup>

She concludes

...it is a common feature of competitive segmentary political systems that the leaders of the aligned forces enjoy less credit for spiritual power than certain persons in the interstices of political alignment....The paradox of spiritual power vested in the physically weak is explained by social structure rather than by the local doctrine which justifies it.<sup>12</sup>

Douglas, therefore, calls us to beware of the fact that both power and danger often come from the same location, the fringes and interstices of social systems. Furthermore, in addressing cases in which one finds unexpected witchcraft charges against authority figures, or sorcery charges among political rivals, we find another notion which may prove helpful for our study. That is, sorcery and witchcraft accusations can function as a means of controlling "political" offices and guarding against abuse of the privilege of an authoritative office. On this latter point, it is worth exploring some of the ideas put forward in her introductory essay in *Witchcraft Confessions and Accusations*.

## **B. Witchcraft Accusation Societies**

### **1. Evans-Pritchard's *Witchcraft, Oracles and Magic***

In this collection of essays by anthropologists and historians on the subject of witchcraft, Douglas elaborates on the structure and function of witchcraft accusations in an essay entitled, "Introduction: Thirty Years after *Witchcraft, Oracles and*

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<sup>11</sup>Ibid., 110.

<sup>12</sup>Ibid.

*Magic*."<sup>13</sup> She begins with a summary of the dominant influence which E. E. Evans-Pritchard's *Witchcraft, Oracles, and Magic among the Azande* has had on scholarship regarding witchcraft since its original publication in 1937. Douglas quite rightly summarizes Evans-Pritchard's work as "first and foremost...a book about the sociology of knowledge...[showing] how the Azande, clever and sceptical as they were, could tolerate discrepancies in their beliefs and could limit the kinds of questions they asked about the universe."<sup>14</sup> She laments that anthropologists in utilizing Evans-Pritchard's work exhibited a similar social restraint upon perception and natural curiosity. Her complaint is that "the relation between belief and society, instead of appearing as infinitely complex, subtle, and fluid, was presented as a control system with a negative feedback."<sup>15</sup> In overly idealized primitive cultures,<sup>16</sup> anthropologists suggested that witchcraft beliefs were not fearful and oppressive but rather a means of bringing grievances to the surface in areas of ambiguous social relations and thus resolving tensions as well as enforcing adherence to the social and moral code. Douglas points out the inevitable circularity which has followed this analysis. The problem was that "...wherever belief in witchcraft was found to flourish, the hypothesis that accusations would tend to cluster in niches where social relations were ill defined and competitive could not fail to work, because competitiveness and ambiguity were identified by means of witch accusations."<sup>17</sup> She does not, however, advocate disregarding Evans-Pritchard's insight, but rather takes "away the rigidity and crudity of the homeostatic control model...[leaving] an explanatory framework based on the idea of a communications system" in which people are trying to control one another—with limited success.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>13</sup>Douglas, "Introduction," xiii-xxxviii.

<sup>14</sup>Ibid., xiv. This is echoed by Eva Gillies' introduction to an abridged version of *Witchcraft, Oracles and Magic among the Azande* (E.E. Evans-Pritchard, *Witchcraft, Oracles and Magic among the Azande*, abridged and intro. by Eva Gillies [Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1976], xxvii-xxviii).

<sup>15</sup>Ibid., xiv.

<sup>16</sup>Ibid., xxiii.

<sup>17</sup>Ibid., xviii.

<sup>18</sup>Ibid., xxv.

## 2. Witchcraft Accusations in their Societal Context

According to Douglas, witchcraft beliefs can be either active or inactive (believed but practically dormant), and where active, can be analyzed on the level of the individual or the community.<sup>19</sup> Individuals are likely to make witchcraft accusations where relationships are ambiguous. This may be the case because unregulated competition is the normal state of affairs. It may also be the case that "some class of persons comes into an altogether anomalous position of advantage or disadvantage so that the umbrella of community protection is withdrawn from them."<sup>20</sup> Activated at this individual level, the community level response varies with local organizational differences. It "depends on the state of community politics and what pattern of relationships need redefining at the time...[as] witchcraft beliefs are essentially a means of clarifying and affirming social definitions."<sup>21</sup>

Douglas then sketches out five variations of witchcraft accusations. The first two fall under the rubric of the witch as an outsider (1). The function of these accusations is to redefine the group boundaries. In the first (1.a.) the witch is a vague outsider who is not identified or punished, while in the second (1.b.) the witch is a group member expelled as an intruder from the outside.

### 1. Witch as Outsider<sup>22</sup>



a. Not identified



b. Identified and Expelled

The other three operate on the notion of the witch as an internal enemy (2). This takes place in a social organization in which "two or more factions are embraced within a community."<sup>23</sup> When the witch is a member of a rival faction (2.a.), the

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<sup>19</sup>Ibid., xxiv.

<sup>20</sup>Ibid., xxv.

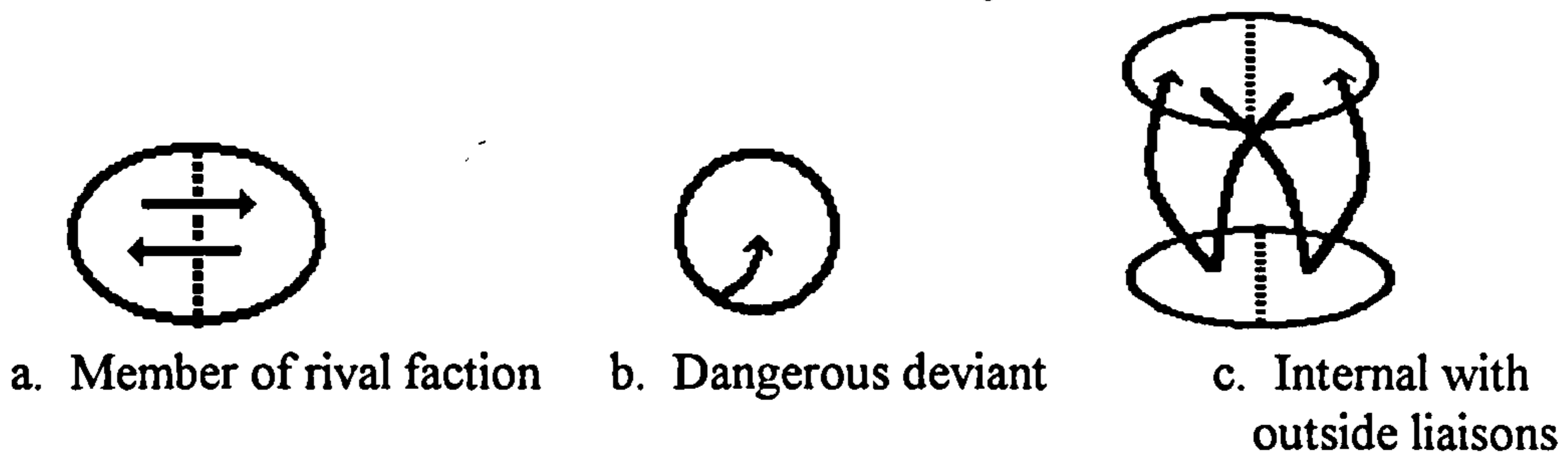
<sup>21</sup>Ibid.

<sup>22</sup>Diagrams taken from Douglas, "Introduction," xxvi.

<sup>23</sup>Ibid., xxvii.

accusation functions to redefine faction boundaries, to realign faction hierarchy, or to split the community. If the witch is seen as a dangerous deviant (2.b.), for instance, dangerously powerful, rich, or demanding, the accusation functions "to control [these] deviants in the name of community values."<sup>24</sup> Finally, if the witch is "an internal enemy with outside liaisons" (2.c.), the accusation functions to promote factional rivalry or community fissure, or to redefine the hierarchy.

## 2. Witch as Internal Enemy<sup>25</sup>



Douglas posits that distinctive kinds of witchcraft (internal psychic power or black magic) and distinctive types of social structures or societal sectors will gravitate to certain types of accusation. She expects, for example, that internal, non-conscious witchcraft power would correspond to 2.b. where the witch is an internal enemy. She maintains that if "witchcraft sharpens definitions where roles are ill defined," one ought to expect inactive or absent witchcraft belief where human interaction is sparse and irregular; anthropomorphic ideas of power (but not witchcraft accusations) in a society with intensive but well defined social relations; while a witchcraft-dominated cosmos would only appear where *intensive social interaction is ill defined*.<sup>26</sup>

With a trademark Douglas conclusion, the article ends with the case of the Banyang of West Cameroon who defy her expectation that "where social interaction is intense and ill defined" there one finds witchcraft accusations.<sup>27</sup> She "cherish[es] their case as a warning against a too rigid social determinism."<sup>28</sup> She also presents a

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<sup>24</sup>Ibid.

<sup>25</sup>Ibid.

<sup>26</sup>Ibid., xxx.

<sup>27</sup>Ibid., xxxv.

<sup>28</sup>Ibid.

challenge which extends to our particular study by stating that "historians need to be warned against copying slavishly our methods and conclusions."<sup>29</sup> Like the historians of this collection of essays, we are free to join "raiding forays" into the realm of social anthropology,<sup>30</sup> and so we shall.

### 3. Application of Evans-Pritchard to Late Antiquity

One particular historian within this collection who has made use of Evans-Pritchard in much the same way as Douglas is Peter Brown in his essay, "Sorcery, Demons, and the Rise of Christianity."<sup>31</sup> His work bears out immediately Douglas's suggestion that witchcraft (as internal psychic power) and sorcery (external articulated spells) often function in fundamentally similar ways.<sup>32</sup> In late antiquity, Brown suggests that situations which foster sorcery accusations and offer scope for resort to sorcery are ones in which

*...two systems of power are sensed to clash within the one society. On the one hand, there is articulate power, power defined and agreed upon by everyone (and especially by its holders!): authority vested in precise persons; admiration and success gained by recognized channels. Running counter to this there may be other forms of influence less easy to pin down—inarticulate power: the disturbing intangibles of social life; the imponderable advantages of certain groups; personal skills that succeed in a way that is unacceptable or difficult to understand. Where these two systems overlap, we may expect to find the sorcerer.*<sup>33</sup>

His best example of this clash is that of the charioteers. While the power of the orthodox bishop unified the Late Roman town by his singular dominance, chariot racing was the outlet for the expression of rivalry and competition among the local aristocracy. The charioteer served an undefined mediatorial role as "both the client of local aristocracies and the leader of organized groups of lower-class fans."<sup>34</sup> These

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<sup>29</sup>Ibid., xxxvi.

<sup>30</sup>Ibid.

<sup>31</sup>Peter Brown, "Sorcery, Demons, and the Rise of Christianity," in *Witchcraft Confessions and Accusations*, ed. Mary Douglas (London: Tavistock Publications, 1970), 17-45.

<sup>32</sup>Douglas, "Introduction," xxvii-xxix. Douglas, *Purity*, 107.

<sup>33</sup>Brown, "Sorcery," 21-22.

<sup>34</sup>Ibid., 25.

charioteers owed their position to extraordinary personal skill which "was both increased and frequently attacked by magic."<sup>35</sup> Rivals accused one another of gaining their advancement by sorcery. Here, as elsewhere, the sorcerer was one who was "pressing upward against...[the] rigid barrier" of traditional culture and its offer of power through absorption of traditional culture and discipline by being a person of "uncontrolled occult 'skill'."<sup>36</sup>

It was only as the Christian church in the fourth and fifth century experienced stabilization that the church leaders managed to shift emphasis away from human agents of misfortune and evil to the "ambivalent and somewhat faceless *daemones* of pagan belief."<sup>37</sup> This was absolutely necessary if the Christian community was to avoid being shattered by the rivalry, envy and blame which would accompany belief in human agents of evil.<sup>38</sup> If there were sorcerers, these were seen to operate outside the boundaries of the Christian community which now resolved its tensions by "projecting them in the form of an even greater demonic menace from outside."<sup>39</sup>

Brown goes on to compare briefly the spiritual powers of the saint and the sorcerer. We shall integrate these observations in the more complete discussion which follows on Brown's *Late Antique Holy Man*. It need only be stated at this point that Brown's use of Evans-Pritchard's insights into the nature of witchcraft accusation societies demonstrates the practical value of the exercise. In what follows, it is also evident that Late Antiquity as analyzed by Brown, at many points confirms and develops the social anthropological observations offered by Mary Douglas. Brown's use of social anthropological insights within the context of historical analysis will therefore serve both as a useful base of comparative knowledge and a model for the use of social anthropology within a historical discipline.

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<sup>35</sup>Ibid.

<sup>36</sup>Ibid.

<sup>37</sup>Brown, "Sorcery," 32-33.

<sup>38</sup>Brown, "Sorcery," 32.

<sup>39</sup>Brown, "Sorcery," 33.

### III. Peter Brown's Late Antique Holy Man<sup>40</sup>

In 1971 Peter Brown wrote "The Rise and Function of the Holy Man in Late Antiquity," an article in which he tracked the rise of holy men in the eastern Mediterranean society (particularly Syria and Egypt) in the fourth and fifth centuries to the height of their influence in the fifth and sixth centuries.<sup>41</sup> In subsequent publications on "Late Antiquity" (circa 200 to 700 C.E.),<sup>42</sup> Brown has demonstrated the advantage of seeing the holy man as an indispensable part of the landscape of this period. While it is difficult to summarize his many nuanced discussions into one succinct description, it would be fair to state that one of his primary hypotheses has been that the holy man can only be understood within the framework of everyday life within the Late Antique period. Furthermore the language used to describe and define the role of the holy man is to be found in the everyday language of power brokerage as it was practised in this period.

#### A. The Social Contexts of the Holy Man

Peter Brown discusses the rise of the Holy Man in the Late Antique period against a number of backdrops. While Brown seems to emphasize continuity in the rise of various societal shifts which make the uniquely Late Antique Holy Man possible, it is worthwhile for our purposes to choose three particular societal contexts into which Brown places the Holy Man.

##### 1. The "Face-to-Face" Society of the Roman Town

Brown begins his monograph on *The Making of Late Antiquity* with the observation that "the religious historian...needs a sense of life lived twenty-four hours in the day."<sup>43</sup> He takes to task accounts of Mediterranean society in this period which

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<sup>40</sup>"Holy Man" is Brown's chosen term for the intermediaries of the Eastern Roman Empire of Late Antiquity. The masculine form will therefore be retained throughout. Furthermore, Brown's earlier work does not use gender inclusive language and no attempt will be made to alter this in direct quotations.

<sup>41</sup>Peter Brown, "The Rise and Function of the Holy Man in Late Antiquity," in *The Journal of Roman Studies* 61 (1971): 80-101. It is reprinted in Brown, *Society*.

<sup>42</sup>Peter Brown, *The World of Late Antiquity: AD 150-750* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1971), 7.

<sup>43</sup>Brown, *Making*, 6.



overemphasize the urban nature of Roman society and the loneliness and rootlessness of immigrants that filled its cities. His picture of life in Late Antique society follows a very different line.

The towns of the Mediterranean were small towns. For all their isolation from the way of life of the villagers, they were fragile excrescences in a spreading countryside....In such towns we move among small human groups. The "face-to-face" community is the unit of Late Antique religious history...Even in the greatest cities, we know far less than we might about the stability of the population and its tendency to coagulate into *quartiers* that were as stable and as intimate as any villages. Wherever we have the evidence, we can sense the outlines of the basic "cells" of urban life: crowded streets where everyone knew each other; small professional associations that collaborated vigorously in maintaining traditional social controls; a world with very little privacy, where the non-participant was only too readily recognized....If anything, claustrophobia and the tensions of living in a face-to-face society, not loneliness or rootlessness, are the leitmotifs of the specifically Late Antique form of being unhappy.<sup>44</sup>

This carefully observed world of social networks with their implied obligations was a taut community in which competitive forces were both unleashed and controlled within peer groups.<sup>45</sup> The web of obligation did not apply only to physical neighbors. In a world shared with powerful invisible beings, they also had to relate to these with "the same sense of unavoidable obligation as they experienced in wide areas of their relations with more visible neighbors."<sup>46</sup> This particular picture of the social world in the early stages of Late Antiquity is one well worth keeping in mind as when one considers the narrative worlds of Acts and *VA*. Brown believes that the causes of the religious changes which occurred in Late Antiquity are not to be found so much in the military turmoil and political insecurity so much as the dynamics of this sort of society, filled as it was with a mixture of religious ideas and myths.<sup>47</sup> The typical societal obligations, the expected patterns of behavior within a society in which agonistic and

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<sup>44</sup>Ibid., 3-4.

<sup>45</sup>Ibid., 34-38.

<sup>46</sup>Ibid., 9.

<sup>47</sup>Ibid., 4, 7.

potentially violent outbursts<sup>48</sup> were controlled by networks of obligations, was about to receive a seismic shift as an "age of ambition" tilted the balance in favor of the competitive spirit, and opened up the possibility of the rise of the super-hero, both political and religious.

## 2. An "Age of Ambition"

Brown characterizes the Antonine period as one in which overt competitiveness was carefully checked by peer group pressure.

In a peer group...forms of individual achievement, like wealth, are there to be spent not hoarded. Those who accumulate too much to themselves are cut down to size in no uncertain manner, if not by the envy of their fellows, then, at least, by the ineluctable envy of death..... Put at its most material, to lavish funds on the public cults was a way of insuring oneself against envy and competition. The benefactor gave over wealth to the gods who, as invisible and immortal, stood for all that could be shared by the community.<sup>49</sup>

The sudden drop in public and private support for traditional city cults in the late second and early third century is for Brown evidence not of social collapse or the bankruptcy of paganism, but evidence that this peer group check was breaking down. Ambition did not need to be tempered with lavish community expenditures. There were a number of reasons why this came about; not least was the ever-increasing "weight of imperial patronage" and the role of the army within this unleashing of the competitive spirit.<sup>50</sup> Within Late Antiquity there developed a "pyramid" hierarchy, wide and open-ended at the bottom, with great rewards for those who climbed to the top.<sup>51</sup> Within the new structure, "collaborators came to identify their status and power with the position they enjoyed in the imperial government....[and this] more exalted source [of power] made it that much less vulnerable to local pressure; and the power itself—which manipulated a system of taxation and of punishment that had increased in

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<sup>48</sup>Ibid., 40.

<sup>49</sup>Ibid., 35.

<sup>50</sup>Ibid., 32, 46; "Rise and Function," 85-86.

<sup>51</sup>Brown, *Making*, 46-47; *World*, 32, 38-40.

weight—could win out in a more unambiguous manner."<sup>52</sup> It was a power structure in which there was a willingness to reward ambition and cede power to individuals on a new scale.<sup>53</sup>

### 3. The Eastern Mediterranean Village

There are two specific features of villages in the eastern Mediterranean which Brown relates to the rise and role of the Late Antique Holy Man. One he describes in relation to Egyptian villages,<sup>54</sup> the other to Syrian villages.<sup>55</sup>

According to Brown, Egyptian villages in the Late Antique period were suffering from a social shift similar to that which occurred among the ruling classes within the empire at large. Brown suggests that one must keep in mind the usual tension of face-to-face that always existed within peasant villages, "the need to cooperate in order to control the precious water of the Nile [which] forced households of natural egotists into constant, humiliating, and friction-laden contact and collaboration with their fellows."<sup>56</sup> In fourth-century Egypt, however, the villagers became "peasant-proprietors" and the possibility of advancing oneself as a village landowner (competition) coupled with an increased tax burden leveled on the village as a whole (requiring cooperation) brought a heightening of these tensions.<sup>57</sup> One should not be surprised, therefore, that opting out (*ἀναχώρησις*) from "a society enmeshed in oppressive obligations and abrasive relationships" became a heroic means of resolving tensions.<sup>58</sup>

Syrian villages also underwent economic restructuring as large estates were replaced by "a new class of independent and self-respecting farmers" bringing about an

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<sup>52</sup>Brown, *Making*, 48.

<sup>53</sup>Ibid., 97.

<sup>54</sup>Brown, "Rise and Function."

<sup>55</sup>Chapter 4, "From the Heavens to the Desert: Anthony and Pachomius," in Brown, *Making*, 81-101.

<sup>56</sup>Brown, *Making*, 84.

<sup>57</sup>Ibid., 84-85.

<sup>58</sup>Ibid., 85-86.

increase in wealth and population.<sup>59</sup> These newly prosperous villages sought a particular form of leadership which would both fulfill the dual function of connecting them with the larger world and which would resolve the internal tensions of village life. What they sought was "a hinge-man, a man who belonged to the outside world, and yet could place his δύναμις, his know-how and (let us not forget) his culture and values at the disposal of the villagers."<sup>60</sup>

What the patron could offer, was power on the spot. Δύναμις is a central element in the role of the patron. By means of such δύναμις, he could help the villagers to conduct their relations with the outside world: he would forward their lawsuits; his protection might cover their feuds with other villages; he might arrange for them to meet tax demands...[He] is a man who would use his δύναμις to smooth over the thorny issues of village life. He would provide—and help distribute—the all-important water supply of the village. He would arrange the canceling of debts. He could settle disputes among the villagers on the spot.<sup>61</sup>

The problem of Late Antiquity was that the traditional "hinge-men"—the urban landowning aristocrats—which these villages required were no longer interested in the difficult leg work involved in developing a bilateral relationship between patron and village client. The Syrian villages of the fourth and fifth centuries, therefore, found others who would fill the role of the patron, including the military and, of course, the Holy Man.

#### **B. The Late Antique Debate on the "Holy": Checks and Balances**

Against this background of the tension of face-to-face society, increasingly giving way to unrestrained ambition, and villages seeking individuals tapped into a source of power which they will put at the disposal of its social needs, Peter Brown analyzes the rise and role of the Holy Man. The power shifts which transformed the Roman empire during the third and fourth century were both paralleled by the mediation of divine power and in a number of ways influenced by and influential on

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<sup>59</sup>Brown, "Rise and Function," 85.

<sup>60</sup>Ibid., 86.

<sup>61</sup>Ibid., 85.

divine mediation. Brown has described this as "a debate on the holy."<sup>62</sup>

### 1. Divine Power: "Heavenly" and "Earthly"

As suggested above, invisible beings shared social space with more visible neighbors within the Greco-Roman world.<sup>63</sup> Along with A. D. Nock, Peter Brown suggests that the notion of supernatural power receives more emphasis than supernatural personalities throughout the Roman empire.<sup>64</sup> These "invisible neighbors," therefore, fit into the societal exercise and distribution of power in a way it is hard for modern Western academics to comprehend. Brown offers as a key to understanding the operation of this power the notion that divine power comes in two basic varieties—"heavenly" or "earthly"—and that criteria existed for determining which a particular manifestation of divine power might be. With increasing clarity, divine power, or rather, "heavenly" divine power, was seen as "the opposite of all other forms of power."<sup>65</sup> The heavenly region represented all that the earthly region was not. It was removed totally "from the ambiguity, the criticism, the envy, and the resentment that were observed to attend the impingement on fellow human beings of mere human skill, human force, and human powers of persuasion."<sup>66</sup> "Earthly" power was no less a form of supernatural power. It, however, "shared in the ambivalent, shadowy, and tension-ridden quality of the earthly regions."<sup>67</sup>

Brown cites a classic articulation of these poles from Heliodorus' *Ethiopica*.

There is a vulgar science and one which, I might say, crawls on the surface of this earth... The other, my son, is truly wise, of which the vulgar form is an illegitimate version masquerading under the same

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<sup>62</sup>Brown, *Making*, 1-26, 97.

<sup>63</sup>*Ibid.*, 9.

<sup>64</sup>*Ibid.*, 11; A. D. Nock, "Studies in the Graeco-Roman Beliefs of the Empire," in *Essays on Religion and the Ancient World*, ed. Zeph Stewart (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1972), 35, 43. This emphasis on power over personality is a constant throughout the Late Antique period according to Brown—the real debate was "where exactly this 'divine power' was to be found on earth and, consequently, on what terms access to it could be achieved." (Brown, *Making*, 11).

<sup>65</sup>Brown, *Making*, 11.

<sup>66</sup>*Ibid.*, 12.

<sup>67</sup>*Ibid.*, 18.

name: this one it is which looks up to heaven, which speaks directly with the gods and shares in the quality of those superior beings.<sup>68</sup>

He could have equally cited the following description of the "firmament" in the *Martyrdom and Ascension of Isaiah*, the first level in Isaiah's ascension to the seventh heaven, which stands in stark contrast to the seven well-ordered heavens above it.

And we went up into the firmament, I and he, and there I saw Sammael and his hosts; and there was a great struggle in it, and the words of Satan, and they were envying one another. And as above, so also on earth, for the likeness of what (is) in the firmament is here on earth.<sup>69</sup>

As one might easily guess, human agents of supernatural power could potentially tap into either source.

## 2. Saint and Sorcerer

Brown points out that Late Antique willingness to allow individuals to act as agents of supernatural power was not an act of "undifferentiated credulity;"<sup>70</sup> "[f]or to vest a fellow human being with powers and claims to loyalty associated with the supernatural, and especially a human being whose claim was not rendered unchallengeable by obvious coercive powers, is a momentous decision for a society made up of small face-to-face groups to make."<sup>71</sup> The distinction between the two possible poles of supernatural power offered the Late Antique person a

meticulous and exacting questionnaire as to the alternative sources of any manifestation of the supernatural. This enabled him to assess the possible aims of any human being who used its powers and, by implication, the possible repercussions for himself and his group of a decision to acclaim an individual as the bearer of "heavenly" rather than of "earthly" forms of supernatural power.<sup>72</sup>

The face-to-face group was thus protected from unscrupulous use of divine power. Claims by individuals to be agents of divine power need not be accepted uncritically. Claimants could be either seen to ally with "heavenly" power and thus be

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<sup>68</sup>Heliiodorus *Aethiopica* III, 16 in Brown, *Making*, 18

<sup>69</sup>*Martyrdom and Ascension of Isaiah* 7:9-10, as translated by M.A. Knibb in *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, vol. 2, ed. James H. Charlesworth (New York: Doubleday, 1985), 166.

<sup>70</sup>Brown, *Making*, 19

<sup>71</sup>*Ibid.*, 16.

<sup>72</sup>*Ibid.*, 19.

acclaimed as holy men or saints or with "earthly" power and thus be dismissed as "sorcerers." "The one could receive unalloyed loyalty, the other no more than an enforced and transient respect."<sup>73</sup> The criterion was not simply polemical or theological but rather a practical exercise in the control of power in small groups. A true holy man could not dominate outright or operate in an egotistical manner. Late Antiquity, with its transformation of power structures, had "an atmosphere heavy with tacit resentments at power exercised in a manner that threatened merely to replicate, to the disadvantage of [another,]... patterns of domination and dependence current in society at large."<sup>74</sup> To be seen to operate in this fashion ensured being written off as a sorcerer, one allied with "earthly" power.

## 2. The Rise and the Role of the Holy Man

These checks and balances were critical in the third and fourth century as Late Antique humanity looked more and more to individuals to bring heavenly power to bear on earthly situations, to serve as permanent bridges between the two realms.<sup>75</sup> The forces which unleashed the competitive drives and thrust individuals up a hierarchical pyramid of power within Roman society were also responsible for (or possibly fed by) a sort of spiritual hierarchical power structure in which individual humans could achieve a sort of permanent status as a conduit of divine power.<sup>76</sup> Brown does not suggest this outright, but it seems that intensification and consolidation of social tension and ambition required an intensification and consolidation of divine sources of power as well.

It would, however, be a mistake simply to understand the exercise of divine power as a mirror image of the more human socio-political power.<sup>77</sup> Rather, as the "heavenly"/"earthly" distinction demonstrates, divine power gained its true potency specifically by *not* imitating the excesses of ambition. The holy man "wielded" his

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<sup>73</sup>Ibid.

<sup>74</sup>Ibid., 21.

<sup>75</sup>Ibid., 11-12.

<sup>76</sup>Brown, *Society*, 178; *Making*, 59.

<sup>77</sup>Brown, *Society*, 14.

'idealized' power in society by adopting stances that were the exact inverse of those connected with the exercise of real power."<sup>78</sup> This is perhaps best demonstrated by two examples mentioned above—the Egyptian and Syrian villages.

The rising tension of Egyptian villages was accompanied by the rise of desert ascetics who exercised complete social disengagement (ἀναχώρησις) in response to the unreconcilable demands of village life. These new ascetic holy men gained their "power and prestige...from acting out, heroically, before a society enmeshed in oppressive obligations and abrasive relationships, the role of the utterly self-dependent, autarkic man."<sup>79</sup> It was a radical means of resolving these tensions. Once in the desert, the holy man, in a process of self-discovery, did battle with the demonic—the anomalous "earthly" powers—and in so doing forged a new identity, one which stood completely outside the structures of society.<sup>80</sup> But in rejecting "power," he gained a whole new form of power.

Furthermore, *anachōrēsis* placed supernatural power beyond the ambiguities of the "earthly" regions by having grown it, in pure culture as it were, in the antithesis to human society. Prolonged rituals of social disengagement reassured the clientele of the ascetic that his powers were totally acceptable, because they were wielded by a man dead to human motivation and dead to human society.<sup>81</sup>

As those who had put aside the anomalies of earthly power so thoroughly—both socially and within themselves—they could now serve as safe and effective conduits or points of contact with heavenly divine power.<sup>82</sup>

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<sup>78</sup>Ibid., 181.

<sup>79</sup>Brown, *Making*, 86.

<sup>80</sup>Brown makes a solid case for understanding battle with demonic forces as an overcoming of personal anomalies within the ascetic. Take Brown's quote from *Apophthegmata Patrum*, Poimen 67, 337C for example. "Abba Poemen said to him: "The demons fight against you?...Our own wills become the demons, and it is these which attack us in order that we may fulfill them." To understand and to reject the demonic was an act of self-exorcism analogous to the symbolic achievement of 'simplicity' through the exorcism of baptism. It closed disturbingly open frontiers in the self" (Brown, *Making*, 90).

<sup>81</sup>Ibid., 94. As Brown points out, "There was, of course, an element of *panache* in so studious a rejection of supernatural power. It was a case of *reculer pour mieux sauter*: the monks gained more power through rejecting it" (Ibid., 93).

<sup>82</sup>E. R. Dodds puts it rather simply when discussing prophecy: "Naturally some form of control was needed to ensure that the inspiration really came from the *pneuma* and not from a demon....In practice, the control seems to have been at first chiefly moral: so long as the itinerant



Brown's Syrian Holy Man gains his influence in a similar fashion. What Brown focuses on in his study of the Syrian Holy Man is the way this character fulfills the role of rural patron.<sup>83</sup> Much like the Egyptian ascetic, the Syrian Holy Man achieves an "otherness" by a life lived on the fringes of normal society, usually by living in the Syrian "wilderness."<sup>84</sup> This separation from the ambitions and tensions of normal village life allows him to fill at least three patron-type roles: arbiter in village disputes (exorcism being one form of this), intermediary between village and town (or other locuses of socio-political power), and intermediary between villagers and a divine source of power.<sup>85</sup> The interrelatedness of the three is obvious—success in any one would add clout in the other two.<sup>86</sup> Once again, in rejecting outright dominance or making an obvious grab for power and influence, the holy man was ultimately attributed with an incredible level of power and influence. The sort of "power reserve" which exists in "reputational power" such as this should not be underestimated. The Syrian villages found in these supernatural "hinge-men" a much needed replacement for the former landowning aristocratic patron.

### C. Mediation of the Divine before 200 C.E.

Technically, Peter Brown's discussion of Holy Men is largely concerned with adequately describing the specifically *Late Antique* locus of the holy. Our interest in the main is to have this model as a suggestive or comparative model for our analysis of Acts and *VA*. However, Brown ventures back into the pre-Late Antique era to draw distinctions between the mediation of the supernatural before and during Late Antiquity. As both Acts and the character Apollonius fall into this earlier period, it would be a shame to ignore these comparisons, on the possibility that they may (or may not) prove to be exactly the sort of distinctions which can be seen between

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*prophetes* lives humbly and asks nothing for himself, he is probably all right" (*Pagan and Christian in an Age of Anxiety* [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1965], 58).

<sup>83</sup>Brown, "Rise and Function," 87.

<sup>84</sup>Ibid., 82-83, 91-92.

<sup>85</sup>Ibid., 88-89, 91-93, 97.

<sup>86</sup>Ibid., 81.

intermediaries in our two works and Late Antiquity.

As we have already noted, Brown sees a definitive shift in the locus of the supernatural between Marcus Aurelius and Constantine.<sup>87</sup> The Late Antique Holy Man marks out where it ended up.<sup>88</sup> The natural question is where did it shift from? In one of his clearest statements on the subject, he states that between 200-400 C.E. there was an increasing acceptance "that this '*divine power*' *did not only manifest itself directly to the average individual or through perennially established institutions:* rather '*divine power*' was represented on earth by a limited number of exceptional human agents."<sup>89</sup> Throughout Brown's work there are hints on exactly where and how he sees this more "average individual" and "institutional" mode of supernatural manifestation operated. One example is that of the Asclepion healing incubations where individuals received direct contact with the god through the dreams and visions they had while sleeping within the temple.<sup>90</sup> Traditional oracles, likewise, were a more "immediate" contact with the gods who spoke directly through temporarily "transparent" mediums in a trance-like state.<sup>91</sup> Furthermore, since these oracles were entrenched and highly localized community institutions, they tended to reinforce traditional community values and structures.<sup>92</sup> The supernatural locus was more one of place than person.

Brown parallels the spiritual and socio-political spheres in this era much as he does in the Late Antique period.

In the second century, the boundaries between the human and the divine had remained exceptionally fluid. The religious language of the age is the language of an open frontier. Access to divine sources of power was as assiduously informal as access to the person of the emperor in Antonine circles. Hence the importance of the dream in the religious life of the age. It was the paradigm of the open frontier: when a man

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<sup>87</sup>Brown, *Making*, 11.

<sup>88</sup>Brown, *World*, 102-103.

<sup>89</sup>Brown, *Making*, 12.

<sup>90</sup>*Ibid.*, 13.

<sup>91</sup>*Ibid.*, 13, 24.

<sup>92</sup>*Ibid.*, 23-24, 36-38.

was asleep and his bodily senses were stilled, the frontier lay wide open between himself and the gods.<sup>93</sup>

This fluid boundary within pagan religion was paralleled within early Christian communities. Early Christian prophecy, like its pagan counterpart, was a matter of transparent possession.

It was the kind of possession that emphasized the solidarity and the basically undifferentiated structure of the group....The true prophet spoke when God caused him to speak and he spoke about the needs of the groups as a whole—not about individuals. It is an emphasis on the collective role of prophecy as firm as that of any pagan.<sup>94</sup>

The level of power achievable for a given individual was therefore seriously limited in this period.

Ease of access, however, meant a lack of contour....There was no reason to believe that the pagan divine man or the Christian martyr enjoyed it on any different terms from the sorcerer or the man in the street, nor that they could wield the power that came from it in any more effective or lasting manner. No unambiguous and permanent "vesting," such as would lodge the divine *dignatio* in specific persons, stood in the way of continuous and inconclusive competition in spiritual status. The "friends of God" found themselves competing in a peer group, in which outright dominance was hard to achieve.<sup>95</sup>

I would suggest, however, that this is to see just one pole in a continuum. It is useful to characterize the pre-Late Antique period as one of fluid boundaries between the human and divine spheres in which communal structures prevented individuals from becoming permanent and powerful spokespersons for the divine while the Late Antique period preferred the latter. However, as Brown himself admits in places, it is more a matter of tendency to one pole or the other than an all or nothing state of affairs. Christianity, for example, with its Apostles, certainly had started the move towards the focus on individuals as mediators of divine power.<sup>96</sup> Indeed, Brown states that the "Christian church was the *impresario* of a wider change."<sup>97</sup> Furthermore,

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<sup>93</sup>Ibid., 65.

<sup>94</sup>Ibid., 67.

<sup>95</sup>Ibid., 65-66.

<sup>96</sup>Ibid., 12.

<sup>97</sup>Ibid., 12, 62.

Lucian's polemic against characters such as Alexander of Abonouteichos point out that within paganism one also had precursors to the Late Antique locus of divine power, a point pressed further by J. Z. Smith.<sup>98</sup> Jack N. Lightstone, also using Brown's distinction of holiness of place versus holiness of person, argues that this shift also predates Late Antiquity in diaspora Judaism.<sup>99</sup> On the other hand, pagan oracles (the best example of transparent mediation) may have suffered some decline, but they did not immediately die out in Late Antiquity either.<sup>100</sup>

Graham Anderson is reasonably convincing in his view that "the basic necessities of a holy man's society—friends and enemies, clients and emperors, skills of communication and 'superhuman' performance—are matters which go with the world of later antiquity in general and have to be considered regardless of the shifting doctrine and ideological allegiances which help to generate them."<sup>101</sup> Anderson certainly goes some way in demonstrating that "it takes little by way of illustration from these classic lives [of Late Antique holy men] to appreciate the continuity with holy men of the preceding centuries."<sup>102</sup>

Brown's characterization of mediation of the divine leading up to Late Antiquity does not, therefore, preclude our using characteristics of the Late Antique holy man to elucidate the operation of miracle-workers and magicians in Acts and *VA*. Rather it suggests that we need to be particularly aware of a potential dichotomy

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<sup>98</sup>Ibid., 25. J. Z. Smith in "The Temple and the Magician" on the basis of the autobiography of Thessalos argues that Brown's description of the move from place to personality within Late Antiquity can be equally applied to this second century document (in *God's Christ and His People: Studies in Honour of Nils Alstrup Dahl*, ed. Jacob Jervell and Wayne A. Meeks [Oslo: Universitetsforlaget, 1977], 237-238). Anderson, on the other hand, uses the example of Alexander of Abonouteichos to suggest that the line between temple and holy man is not entirely clear in reality (*Sage*, 32).

<sup>99</sup>Lightstone, *Commerce*. In fairness, much of his material is drawn from Late Antique sources so one could question whether this devalues its application to the earlier texts he also cites (including Acts [19-20] and Pauline texts [38, 45, 151]).

<sup>100</sup>Brown, *Making*, 51.

<sup>101</sup>Anderson, *Sage*, 33.

<sup>102</sup>*Sage*, 201, see especially 205. It is particularly noteworthy for our study of the evaluation of these holy men that "the nature of the Eastern Mediterranean and Near-eastern societies of the last centuries BC made it easy enough for any claims of holiness to be taken on their own terms by outsiders, and accepted or rejected on their real or supposed merits" (*Sage*, 33).

between temple cult and holy man and sensitive to distinctions between transparent community prophet and more permanent mediators of divine power. Also one might also be led to expect somewhat greater hesitance to accept and perhaps heightened competition over individual claims to mediate divine power and presence.<sup>103</sup>

#### D. An Aside on Francis' *Subversive Virtue*

At first glance James A. Francis' *Subversive Virtue: Asceticism and Authority in the Second-Century Pagan World* appears an ally in our use of Brown's Late Antique holy man to explore the operation of intermediaries in the first few centuries C.E. He claims that,

[i]n many respects, the nature and function of the holy man actually changed very little from the archaic period on. As for the conflation of philosophers, miracle workers, and holy men, this phenomenon was not a new product of the second century C.E., but a theme that can be traced back to the fourth century B.C.E. and earlier.<sup>104</sup>

However, Francis' core thesis is somewhat problematic. His claim is that asceticism was a socio-political move which threatened the status quo of authority structures in the Imperial world by calling into question core political and social values.<sup>105</sup> Our study will not question the premise that ascetic or fringe intermediaries represented a threat to existing societal and community power structures. However, Francis seems to be suggesting that these characters, while having a popularity with the masses, required the domestication that a sophistic writer such as Philostratus provided, to make them appealing to the educated and ruling classes. *VA* is thus a uniquely *third century* portrayal of a pagan holy man, later matched by Athanasius' domesticated portrayal of St. Antony.<sup>106</sup> Much, however, depends on whether the ascetic holy man in question stands outside of societal structures and so finds a boldness or vantage

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<sup>103</sup>In describing the pre-Late Antique period, Brown states: "Men committed to constant competition within a "model of parity" are not likely to allow any one of their peers to draw heavily on sources of power and prestige over which they have no control. Appeals to the other world as a source of special status in this world had to be kept within strictly conventional limits if they were to be acceptable" (*Making*, 35).

<sup>104</sup>Francis, 123.

<sup>105</sup>*Ibid.*, 184.

<sup>106</sup>*Ibid.*, 83-129, 181-189.

point from which to offer judgment, or whether the ascetic holy man is attempting to draw others into his ascetic and anti-social mode of behaviour.<sup>107</sup> To the extent that the holy men are admired and sought out for their *extraordinary* ability to stand outside normal societal structures, they have done what others are incapable of doing. This in itself tones down the socially subversive nature of asceticism.<sup>108</sup> Once one views ascetics less as prophets calling for followers in a social revolution than as individuals who bring divine power from the fringes, the interest those holding existing positions of power would have in them becomes rather universal, and hardly limited to the third century and the domesticating influences of sophists such as Philostratus. Indeed, while Lucian may rail against Alexander of Abonouteichos, it remains the case that Rutilianus, a Roman consul, governor, and eventually proconsul of Asia, was more than impressed with Alexander.<sup>109</sup> We ought not to be discouraged from the outset, therefore, by the suggestion that Philostratus represents a *uniquely* third century portrait of the collusion of ascetic intermediaries and socio-political power structures.

#### IV. Summary

Without much further ado, therefore, we shall move into our investigation of the narrative worlds of Acts and *VA* and the rise and function of “miracle-workers” and “magicians” within their societies. The work of Douglas and Brown suggest that we need to be particularly sensitive to the way in which individuals functioning as divine intermediaries represent both power and danger. They represent power from beyond

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<sup>107</sup>This is a distinction which is important to draw and Francis' own statements suggest this is true (especially 107). Certain Christian groups indeed called for ascetic or at least very anti-social behaviour from all followers and thus presented a considerably greater threat than, say, a Peregrinus who was hardly calling for his followers to join him in self-immolation. He was a hero to be worshipped at a safe distance. Likewise the apocryphal Acts portray opposition to the traveling apostles only when they induce others (usually married or betrothed women) to follow them in their ascetic practices.

<sup>108</sup>Indeed we will argue that the withdrawal from normal societal structures in some ways makes this fringe holy man a “safe” purveyor of divine power. Francis points out Apuleius' statement that his philosophical way of life with its accompanying poverty has brought suspicions of magic upon him (Apuleius *Apologia* 18, 22; Francis, 93), however, the case as it unfolds demonstrates Apuleius' sudden fortune, not his poverty, which has brought on the accusation and it is his voluntary poverty as *philosopher* which forms part of his defence (Apuleius 27-28, 66ff., especially 72).

<sup>109</sup>Lucian *Alexander the False Prophet* 30-35.

the fringes of normal societal structuring, but as such also represent a threat and danger to existing societal power structures. They are individuals with a potentially limitless source of power which existing communities might wish to access, but also against which existing communities must defend themselves. In what follows, therefore, we shall investigate each of the two narrative social worlds with an eye to the way in which religious virtuosi gain their power as intermediaries, the way in which this rising power intersects with existing societal power structures, both positively and negatively, and the manner in which these intermediaries defend themselves and their mediatorial activity. It is in studying the operation of these intermediaries and their intersection with existing community power structures that we hope to enhance our ability to sort out, as Geertz suggests, the “winks from [the] twitches,”<sup>110</sup> or in our case, the “miracle-workers” from the “magicians.”

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<sup>110</sup>Geertz, "Thick Description," 16.

## Chapter 3

### Gaining Power

#### I. Introduction

The work of Douglas and Brown which we reviewed in the last chapter suggests that intermediaries, the enigmatic figures making divine power available in the human realm, often gain their power through withdrawal from everyday societal structures. This fringe or interstitial existence is both a source of their power and a safeguard against abuse of their power, making the exercise of the power thus gained acceptable. Anderson's observation that the holy man "from villages in remotest Syria or Asia Minor to Rome itself...steered a course in and out of the civilised world"<sup>1</sup> provides further confirmation that fringe existence is indeed a typical enough feature of intermediaries within the context out of which our narratives arise to warrant further investigation. In what follows we want to follow the footsteps of the intermediaries in our narrative in their rise to prominence as mediators of divine power and the manner in which the narrator presents both legitimate and illegitimate varieties of intermediaries. What will become apparent in this process is that despite clear differences in emphases, in both narrative worlds the cultural scripts demand that legitimate intermediaries cultivate and maintain a fringe status as they gain ever increasing prominence as purveyors of divine power. In both narratives the means of gaining a reputation as powerful intermediaries frequently function equally to provide limits on their power. In terms of distinguishing miracle-workers from magicians, legitimate intermediaries are those who are capable of navigating these ambiguous waters, or at least, are seen to manage the tension of gaining power without being seen to be ambitious, while illegitimate intermediaries are those who are seen to fail in this regard.

To explore this dynamic of a fringe existence which is both a source of power

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<sup>1</sup>Anderson, *Sage*, 42.



(for good or ill) and a means of controlling potential power gains, we shall look at three features in each of our narrative worlds. First, we shall note the manner in which intermediaries cultivate a fringe status through various forms of withdrawal from the typical social network, particularly through abandoning careers or societal expectations, travel, and any concerns for personal security or safety. Second, it is necessary carefully to investigate a feature which is both a sign of power gained and a means of accruing further status as an intermediary—performing miracles. Miracle-working in both narratives has been subject to a variety of interpretive spins by modern scholars, many of which cloud rather than clarify the function of miracles and miracle-working in both accounts. This section, therefore, will also function as a ground-clearing exercise which dispenses with several red herring on the whole subject of miracle-working. Finally, in our third section, the focus will return to the function of maintaining a fringe status, particularly as it relates to how a successful miracle-working intermediary must handle the potential wealth and power which could accrue through their activities. It is this last section which will provide some of the best data on how communities within these narrative worlds managed to use the divine power these fringe characters could provide and at the same time defend themselves from unscrupulous use of that power. It is at this point that the criteria for distinguishing miracle-workers from magicians becomes most apparent, and it is here that one has both fascinating overlaps and some dissimilarities between the two accounts. Before we can do any of that, however, it will be necessary to identify the intermediaries of interest in both narratives.

## **II. Gaining Power in Acts**

### **A. Identifying the Intermediaries**

Given our definition of an intermediary as one who serves as some sort of bridge between the culturally defined "natural world" and the realms of the "supernatural" or "spiritual," who in the book of Acts fits this description? Certainly, there can be little argument that the key miracle-workers in Acts—Peter, Paul, and

Philip—fit this category. There are, however, others worth considering as well.

The intermediaries which meet with the narrator's approval include the "Twelve." The Pentecost language miracle (1:4; 2:12) as well as several summary statements concerning their miracle-working (2:43; 4:33; 5:12) make it plain that all twelve apostles<sup>2</sup> function as intermediaries. Stephen is also mentioned as a miracle-worker in a summary statement in 6:8, while in 7:55-56 he sees and reports a heavenly vision. Ananias in Damascus receives heavenly visions and instructions as well as transmitting the Holy Spirit to Paul (9:10-19). There is a reference to prophets travelling from Jerusalem to Antioch, one of whom is named as Agabus (11:27-28). He turns up later in the narrative as well, travelling from Judea to Caesarea to offer a prophetic warning to Paul (21:10-11). Besides Paul, there are four other prophet/teachers at Antioch: Barnabas, Simeon, Lucius, and Manaen (13:1). Two prophets, Judas and Silas, accompany the letter indicating the decision of the Jerusalem assembly (15:22, 32). There are some unnamed disciples at Tyre who warn Paul in some prophetic fashion (21:4) as well as Philip's four daughters who also prophesied (21:4).

The intermediaries which do not meet with the narrator's approval are found in four different episodes. These include Simon the magician who is played off against Philip and Peter in Samaria (8:9-24), Bar-Jesus or Elymas, a Jewish magician/false prophet, who contends with Paul before the proconsul Sergius Paulus on Crete (13:6-12), a fortune-telling slave girl with a pythonic spirit in Philippi who makes life difficult

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<sup>2</sup>The term "apostle" has two possible meanings in the Acts narrative: (1) one of the twelve especially chosen by Jesus (Luke 6:13) / the Lord (Act 1:24) who function as unique witnesses of Jesus' ministry and resurrection (Acts 1:21-22) and (2) significant miracle-working traveling preachers, namely Barnabas and Paul, who may or may not overlap some of the criteria of the "Twelve" (Acts 14:4, 14). Source criticism would resolve this dual usage by suggesting clumsy redaction in this regard (e.g., Kirsopp Lake, "The Twelve and the Apostles," in *BC*, vol. 5 (1933), 51). Indeed the Western text omits the reference to Paul and Barnabas as "apostles" in 14:14. However, from a narrative perspective which has chosen a critical text such as UBS<sup>4</sup>, 4:4 and 14 remain as integral to the story and both definitions must, therefore, be accepted. Context thus determines which meaning one is working with at any given point. It is worth asking what extra-text the first readers of Luke-Acts might bring to the term, but even here evidence is elusive. Casting our net broader than Luke-Acts would probably suggest finding along the lines of Dieter Georgi's conclusions that the term ἀπόστολος is still rather fluid and its application a point of conflict rather than a fixed term in the first century (*The Opponents of Paul in Second Corinthians* [Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1986; from German original 1964]), 32-39).

for Paul (16:16-19), and finally Jewish exorcists using Jesus' name in their trade, including seven sons of a Jewish high priest named Sceva, who are operating in Ephesus at the same time as Paul (19:13-16).

It is inevitable that not all of these characters will receive equal treatment. Our primary interest lies with those characters given enough narrative space in our text to allow some sort of analysis of them as intermediaries. The four negative cases are, by their very nature, of considerable interest to us and so will also receive extensive coverage. The sheer number of possible intermediaries within the Acts narrative world, however, is somewhat surprising. One might well describe this as a world in which the membrane separating the natural and the numinous spheres is rather permeable. Furthermore, exploitation of this permeability by certain individuals appear to be a regular feature of the socio-religious landscape.

#### **B. Withdrawal from the Social Network**

Within the narrative world of Acts the key intermediaries have all undergone some form of intentional social dislocation and it is worth noting how a "desert" of this kind "emerges as a perpetual power-house from which the holy man's energy is generated."<sup>3</sup> Ironically some of our best evidence for withdrawal, or something akin to Brown's Late Antique Holy Man retreating into the Egyptian desert or the Syrian wilderness, among the characters of early Christianity all fall outside our chosen narrative parameters. John the Baptist (Luke 3:2ff., Mark 1:2ff, Matt 3:1ff), Jesus (Luke 4:1-13, Mark 1:12-13, Matt 4:1-11), and perhaps even Paul (Gal 1:17) at one point or another exercised a radical withdrawal for a limited period of time.<sup>4</sup> One gets the sense that the time for sitting out in the desert doing solitary battle with the devil has passed in the rush of activity which characterizes so much of the narrative of Acts. That stated, however, the text implies certain forms of withdrawal from the social network—the first stage of cultivating a fringe status—and that this can be assigned to

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<sup>3</sup>Anderson, *Sage*, 46.

<sup>4</sup>It is worth noting that Jesus, who is pictured as withdrawing not only before he begins a life of a wandering preacher and teacher, but also at various points thereafter, also (within the NT narratives at least) has a greater reputation as a miracle-worker and suffers more direct "magic" accusations (Luke 11:15, Mark 3:22, Matt 12:24) than his apostolic followers.

the *modus operandi* of the superstar intermediaries of Acts.

### 1. Abandoning Livelihoods

First, some of our intermediaries have abandoned their traditional livelihoods. We have already defended our use of the Gospel of Luke as an extra-textual "database" for characters which appear in the Acts narrative. While Peter is living in Jerusalem at the start of Acts, we know from Luke that Peter used to be a fishing boat owner who fished the waters of the Lake of Gennesaret with his partners James and John (Luke 5:1-11). Peter abandoned a Galilean fishing career for a life of following Jesus, a wandering teacher/miracle-worker, around the various towns and villages of first century Palestine and ultimately to Jerusalem. One gets the impression that all, or at least a majority, of Jesus' followers who are gathered together in Jerusalem at the beginning of Acts are not local residents but Galilean visitors to the city.<sup>5</sup> However, given that this applies to many of the "ordinary" members of the Christian community in Jerusalem, and not just those easily identified as significant intermediaries, the value of this observation is somewhat tempered. That little is said directly in Acts about livelihoods left behind, however, can be attributed to the fact that this theme has already been addressed by passages such as Luke 5:11, 9:57-62, 12:22-34.<sup>6</sup> Certainly Peter's career abandonment is a bit of data on his character which is part of the undisputed "extra-text" of the Acts narrative world.

Paul's career abandonment is not narrated in quite the fashion Peter's is, although the cumulative evidence of the Acts narrative points in this direction as well. While Acts is not explicit about his livelihood before his conversion, given his pre-conversion activities, one can make reasonable inferences as to his original lot in life. Saul/Paul is introduced in the narrative as a young man at the end of the stoning of

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<sup>5</sup>Jesus chooses some of his disciples (if not all) in Galilee (5:1-11, 6:12-16) and does the majority of his teaching there according to Luke, although attracting crowds from surrounding regions (5:17 6:17). At Jesus' trial Peter is thought to be a follower of Jesus because he is Galilean (Luke 22:59). Jesus and his disciples are required to find a guest room for their Passover in Jerusalem (Luke 22:7-12), presumably unnecessary if our narrator imagined numerous Jerusalem residents as followers of Jesus.

<sup>6</sup>See Gerd Theissen, *Sociology of Early Palestinian Christianity*, trans. J. Bowden (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1978; from German original 1977), 9-16.

Stephen story serving in some capacity in the stoning event (7:58, 8:1). At the very least, he is giving open approval to the stoning by guarding the clothes of those involved (22:20). While in this initial text his role is so passive that some even suggest he is nothing more than an onlooker<sup>7</sup> (impossible from a narrative perspective given 22:20),<sup>8</sup> his aggressive leadership role in persecuting the church in 8:3, 9:1-2, 22:3-5, 26:4-11 along with 23:6 suggests that he is connected in some way with the Sanhedrin and the high priestly bureaucracy, specifically as one aligned with the Pharisaic element of the Sanhedrin.<sup>9</sup> Within our narrative world then, Paul, a student of Jewish law, is serving in the capacity of enforcer and promoter of Sanhedrin policy (8:1-3; 22:3-5; 26:4-11). Some sort of temple "police force" has already been introduced earlier in the narrative (a στρατηγὸς τοῦ ἱεροῦ along with several ὑπηρέται [4:1, 5:22, 36]).<sup>10</sup> The composite picture which the narrative presents is one in which Paul has appointed himself the task of rooting out the Christian sect from Jewish synagogues and for this task has at his disposal a Sanhedrin "police force" along with the blessing of the Sanhedrin in his activities.<sup>11</sup> Whatever the *historical difficulties*, the narrative picture is very much that of a man fully occupied with the task of enforcing Jewish religious law (as defined by those ideologically aligned with Paul) in a punitive fashion, initiating

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<sup>7</sup>Kirsopp Lake and Henry J. Cadbury, *BC*, vol. 4, (1933), 85. Likewise Simon Légasse suggests only an "accessory role" for Paul in this incident ("Paul's Pre-Christian Career According to Acts," in *The Book of Acts in Its First Century Setting*, Vol. 4, *The Book of Acts in Its Palestinian Setting*, edited by R. Bauckham [Carlisle: Paternoster, 1995], 386).

<sup>8</sup>Johnson, *Acts*, 141, 143-144 and C. K. Barrett, *The Acts of the Apostles*, vol. 1, ICC (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1994), 388.

<sup>9</sup>On the issue of how the Luke-Acts narrative perceives these various groupings (as well as a critique of current scholarship on the matter) see Steve Mason, "Chief Priests, Sadducees, Pharisees and Sanhedrin in Acts," in *The Book of Acts in its First Century Setting*, vol. 4, *The Book of Acts in its Palestinian Setting*, ed. Richard Bauckham (Carlisle: The Paternoster Press, 1995), 115-177. In particular, Mason offers a needed corrective and nuancing of E. P. Sanders' historical reconstruction of the Sanhedrin (*Judaism: Practice and Belief 63BCE-66CE* [London: SCM Press, 1992], 458-490).

<sup>10</sup>On these see Barrett, *Acts*, 218-219; Joachim Jeremias, *Jerusalem in the Time of Jesus* (London: SCM Press, 1969), 163.

<sup>11</sup>Torrey Seland's arguments in favour of viewing the action against Stephen (and presumably subsequent persecutions of the early Christians in Jerusalem and Damascus) as acts of establishment vigilante violence are convincing and offer a reading of the evidence that is historically and sociologically sound and surprisingly fit the narrative presentation by Acts rather well (*Establishment Violence in Philo and Luke: A Study of Non-Conformity to the Torah and Jewish Vigilante Reactions* [BIS 15; Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1995], 238-256).

policy, enforcing it with considerable zeal, and casting judgments against those caught.<sup>12</sup>

If this is what we are to understand to be the bulk of Paul's "pre-Christian" career just before conversion, it is noteworthy that Paul is engaged in his "occupation" when he is confronted by "the Lord" and, at the Lord's command, a radical abandonment occurs, much as with Peter in Luke.<sup>13</sup> There are many differences between the two, but this point of similarity is interesting. If nothing else, it points to the significance of the abandonment of a given social location or position in favour of a distinctly different lifestyle.

It is also worth observing that other characters within the narrative world register the impact this "change of career" or unexpected social location has on other's perception of these intermediaries. In 4:13 the bold speech (παρρησία) of Peter and John astonishes (θαυμάζω) the Sanhedrin members who realize that these men, as one might expect of a pair of former fisherman, are uneducated (ἀγράμματος) and unprofessional (speakers?) or common-place persons (ἰδιώτης).<sup>14</sup> Paul's shift is even more dramatic (in a different sort of way) and those hearing him in the Damascus

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<sup>12</sup>On both the portrayal and the possible historical difficulties see Martin Hengel (*The Pre-Christian Paul* [London: SCM Press, 1991], 65-79; and *Acts and the History of Earliest Christianity* [London: SCM Press, 1979], 77) and Légasse (379-389). Commentators such as Hans Conzelmann (*Acts of the Apostles: A commentary on the Acts of the Apostles*, Hermeneia [Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1987], 71) and Haenchen (294, 297-299, 320-320) remain very skeptical, while others such as F. F. Bruce (*The Acts of the Apostles: Greek Text with Introduction and Commentary*, 3d rev. and enlarged ed. [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990], 232-233), Ben Witherington III (*The Acts of the Apostles: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary* [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998], 302-303, 670), Barrett (*Acts*, 445-448) and J. D. G. Dunn (*The Acts of the Apostles* [Peterborough: Epworth Press, 1996], 104-106, 120-121) find the scenario less implausible.

<sup>13</sup>Exactly what one is to make of Paul as a tentmaker by trade, mentioned only once in 18:3 and there in a circuitous fashion, is uncertain. Within the Jewish tradition, the student of law learning and engaging in a manual trade is acceptable and perhaps expected (Hengel, *Pre-Christian*, 15-16; Légasse, 378-379; Jeremias, 3). Whether the persecuting Paul was engaged in this activity or to what extent he practised it during his travels as a Christian is not hinted at by the narrative. The significance of its appearance in 18:3 will be explored below on page 125.

<sup>14</sup>On boldness see R. J. Cassidy in *Society and Politics in the Acts of the Apostles* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1988), 45-46. See also Heinrich Schlier, "παρρησία," in *TDNT*, vol. 5, 871-886 and "ἰδιώτης," in *TDNT*, vol. 3, 215-217. The terms receive considerable treatment in Bruce, *Acts*, 152-153. Based on the Justin parallel and on the sense of παρρησία, the reference is probably to Peter and John as unskilled in the finer arts of public rhetoric. See also Bruce W. Winter's discussion of ἰδιώτης τῷ λόγῳ and his conclusion that it refers to one not a professional rhetor (*Philo and Paul among the Sophists* [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997], 213-215).

synagogue are amazed (ἐξίστημι) at the radical transformation that has taken place in the persecutor (9:20; similarly 9:26-27). If we accept Malina's description of Mediterranean culture as one characterized by dyadic personality, that is outsider definitions of oneself carrying the greatest weight coupled with a social inertia favouring ascribed or inherited social status,<sup>15</sup> then the fact that the unexpected career change has registered with "others" is significant. As intermediaries, Peter and Paul have shifted out of their expected social position and this will be a source of power and danger.<sup>16</sup>

In terms of self-understanding, both of these intermediaries believe themselves to be "called" into this radical new lifestyle (Luke 5:8-11; Acts 5:29-32; 22:1-21). To be sure this is not the ἀναχώρησις of Brown's Late Antique Holy Man who withdraws into the Egyptian desert or the Syrian wilderness, cutting off all former relationships and responsibilities. Nor is it Douglas's Andaman Islander leaving the band and wandering the forest like a madman. On the other hand, these are not "community intermediaries" of the sort Brown describes as more typical of the pre-Late Antique era<sup>17</sup> but those who have abandoned their traditional community roles. This is the first in a series of actions which will serve to separate the intermediary from the normal community social structure in which they and others would expect to find them. It is the first step in cultivating a fringe status. The impact of the abandonment of careers itself is then accentuated by what replaces these careers—extensive travel.

## 2. Travel

Obtaining and maintaining a fringe status through travel is perhaps more

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<sup>15</sup>See for example B. J. Malina and J. H. Neyrey, "Honor and Shame in Luke-Acts: Pivotal Values of the Mediterranean World" and "First Century Personality: Dyadic, Not Individual" in *The Social World of Luke-Acts: Models for Interpretation*, ed. J. H. Neyrey (Peabody: Hendrickson, 1991), 25-96; J. H. Neyrey, "Dyadism" and J. Plevnik, "Honor/Shame" in *Biblical Social Values and Their Meaning: A Handbook*, ed. J. J. Pilch and B. J. Malina (Peabody: Hendrickson, 1993), 49-52, 95-104; and B. J. Malina and J. H. Neyrey, *Portraits of Paul: An Archeology of Ancient Personality* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1996), 153-201. Although only hinted at, this portrayal of the first century "Mediterranean" personality also lies behind B. J. Malina's "Jesus as Charismatic Leader?" (*BTB* 14 [1984]: 55-62).

<sup>16</sup>Douglas, *Purity*, 94.

<sup>17</sup>See above page 71.

explicit within the Acts narrative world than the abandonment of career.<sup>18</sup> In the face-to-face society in which one's social contacts were relatively constant and well-known, constant travel may have placed someone in a non-typical status. The wandering intermediary, an obvious outsider from the standpoint of the communities he wandered through, occupied an ambiguous status.<sup>19</sup> In terms of the power/danger potential of this ambiguous individual, the intermediaries' travel could add to their mystique; they had knowledge gained in strange, foreign places.<sup>20</sup> This latter point will play a greater role in *VA*. For some readers of Acts and indeed for Aegean and Roman characters within the Acts narrative world the Syro-Palestinian region could well have been the start of the exotic East.<sup>21</sup> The ancient Greek novels, for example, paint a particular picture of the East in terms of popular imagination, an "East" which may well begin in Syria.<sup>22</sup> When one adds to this the fact that intermediaries in Acts see their travels as divinely directed, the mystique factor would only increase. What appears quite certain

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<sup>18</sup>Anderson dedicates a chapter to the travel motif in accounts of holy men in the Greco-Roman world (*Sage*, 167-177) but fails to note both the way in which constant travel would serve to maintain the ambiguous (and potentially powerful) fringe status and the (often dangerous) mystique of having acquired foreign knowledge.

<sup>19</sup>This of course would not apply to the more well-known travelling military men or merchants, whose status was clarified by the well-known role they fulfilled. On the topic generally see Paul R. McKechnie, *Outsiders in the Greek cities in the fourth century B. C.* (London : Routledge, 1989).

<sup>20</sup>It is interesting to note the expectation Diogenes Laertius has that philosophers will travel expressed in his comment on Socrates lack of travel (*Lives* 2.22)

<sup>21</sup>On the Greek awe of the ancient wisdom of the East see MacMullen, *Enemies*, 98.

<sup>22</sup>On this point see Loveday Alexander, "In Journeyings Often: Voyaging in the Acts of the Apostles and in Greek Romance," in *Luke's Literary Achievement: Collected Essays*, ed. C.M. Tuckett (JSNTSup, 116; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1995), 17-39 and "Narrative Maps: Reflections on the Toponymy of Acts," in *The Bible in Human Society: Essays in Honour of John Rogerson*, ed. M. D. Carroll R. and D. J. A. Clines and P. R. Davies (JSOTSup, 200; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1995), 17-48, especially 23-31, 36-38, 40. The idea that Acts' Palestinian settings and its trials before Eastern monarchs might strike a chord with novel readers was suggested by Loveday Alexander in the oral presentation of some of the material from these two articles. Lucian (himself curiously from the East originally) on at least two occasions makes the Syro-Palestinian region the home of striking (and from Lucian's perspective *charlatan*) intermediaries (*Lover of Lies* 16 and *The Passing of Peregrinus* 11). J. G. Gager's *Moses in Greco-Roman Paganism* certainly would suggest that the Jews, as represented by Moses, could be seen as representatives of both a form of oriental philosophy and particularly powerful magic (with a strong Egyptian flavor to both)([Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1972], 25-79, 134-161). Obviously, one has to assume a non-Palestinian readership for the narrative for this "effect" to be there. Within the narrative world (which is our primary interest), this effect would only hold for characters in non-Palestinian regions, i.e., Paul in his Aegean travels and en route to Rome.



is that travelling intermediaries would prove less of a threat to the local community because they would move on rather than threaten to entirely overturn the existing power and status distribution within a local community.<sup>23</sup> To use Anderson's phrase, travel would "preserve an air of detachment."<sup>24</sup>

#### a. The Itinerant Intermediaries

Itinerancy at some stage marks nearly all of the approved intermediaries within the Acts narrative world as well as one set of non-approved intermediaries, while long-term residency is characteristic of at least two intermediaries negatively labelled in Acts. The emphasis on itinerancy is captured by the term *διέρχομαι*, which is used forty-three times in the NT, three quarters of those occurrences in Luke-Acts, and nearly half in Acts alone.<sup>25</sup> Indeed Peter uses the verb to encapsulate the activities of Jesus, the miracle-worker par excellence, describing him as *ὁς διῆλθεν εὐεργετῶν καὶ ἰώμενος πάντας τοὺς καταδυναστευομένους ὑπὸ τοῦ διαβόλου* (10:38). Furthermore, Jesus' instructions to his most intimate associates are that they too take up an itinerant lifestyle which is marked by travel (Luke 9:1-6, 22:35-36, Act 1:8). The three most prominent miracle-workers of Acts are all itinerant, or at the very least, their most impressive miracle-working occurs during the itinerant stage of their ministry.

Acts opens with Peter as a resident in Jerusalem, but given the extra-textual data of Luke, we already know he is not a local (Luke 5:1-11; Acts 2:7) and remains in Jerusalem as a result of Jesus' instructions (Luke 24:49, Acts 1:4). Peter's first

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<sup>23</sup>MacMullen, speaking of "magicians" (used rather loosely), suggests "even the worst frauds could make a living off some village, if they did not stay too long" (*Enemies*, 60). On the potential conflict and resolution of conflict between itinerant prophets and the local community authority structures see Stephen J. Patterson, "Didache 11-13: The Legacy of Radical Itinerancy in Early Christianity" in *The Didache in Context: Essays on Its Text, History and Transmission*, edited by C. N. Jefford (NovTSup 77; Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1995), 313-329.

<sup>24</sup>*Philostratus*, 146.

<sup>25</sup>Putting to one side the use of *διέρχομαι* in 11:22 on text critical grounds and 10:38 (the verse under discussion), the remaining twenty uses break down as follows: eleven are clear references to the "travelling about" by intermediaries (8:4, 40; 9:32; 10:38; 13:6; 15:3, 41; 16:6; 18:23; 20:2, 25); five are better understood in the sense of "travelling through," simple movement from one place to another (9:38; 12:10; 13:14; 14:24; 18:27); three are hard to determine in terms of which of these two they belong (11:19; 19:2; 19:21); and one refers to Paul's tour of Athens (17:23).

narrated journey outside Jerusalem does not take place until chapter 8 when the travels of another intermediary spark an interest within the Jerusalem Christian community which causes them to send Peter and John to investigate the happenings in Samaria (8:14). However, there are enough indicators in the text that journeying was indeed Peter's *modus operandi*. The return journey from Samaria fits the typical description of itinerant preachers in Acts (πολλάς τε κώμας τῶν Σαμαριτῶν εὐηγγελίζοντο [8:25]). Peter's travels in chapters 9-11 are introduced with the phrase ἐγένετο δὲ Πέτρον διερχόμενον διὰ πάντων (9:32) which certainly seems to suggest that the narrated trip which includes Lydda, Joppa and Caesarea is simply part of Peter's regular "travelling about." This particular journey is particularly marked by spectacular success as a miracle-worker—healing a paralytic in Lydda (9:32-35), raising the dead in Joppa (9:36-43), and provoking a replay of the Jerusalem "Pentecost" miracle in Caesarea after experiencing visions (10:1-48). The itinerancy of Peter as an apostle is further underscored by the development of a leadership structure in Jerusalem which does not consist so much of intermediaries but rather an eldership structure with James as the undisputed leader. The narrative suggests that even as Peter remains a frequent resident of Jerusalem, local community authority has passed on to other hands (11:1-3; 12:17; 15:1-22).<sup>26</sup> Aside from Peter's reintroduction in the text at the Jerusalem council, his departure from the narrative generally in Acts 12 leaves one with the sense that Peter has departed Jerusalem rather permanently. The reader's possible extra-textual data at this point is also worth considering as the Pauline corpus suggests a Peter who travelled even more extensively than the Peter narrated in Acts (Gal 2:11; 1 Cor 1:12, 9:5). Whatever the case in this regard, Peter the *itinerant* is firmly fixed within the narrative of Acts.

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<sup>26</sup>On the portrayal of transition in leadership structures within the framework of the Acts narrative itself see Joseph B. Tyson, "The Emerging Church and the Problem of Authority in Acts," in *Interpretation* 42 (1988): 132-145. The episode at the beginning of chapter 11 is particularly telling in that Peter is forced to convince the circumcised believers in Jerusalem of the rightness of his questionable eating practices in Caesarea. Curiously, he brings six witnesses along with him who he invokes apparently to strengthen his case (11:12). Furthermore, his instructions to the group praying for him in chapter 12 to inform "James and the brothers" of his miraculous escape suggests that the church structure portrayed in chapter 15 with James (apparently) presiding over an assembly of elders and apostles is already understood to be the case in chapter 12.

Paul likewise, for all his travel adventures in Acts, is an even more experienced and accomplished traveller in the epistolary tradition (Rom 15:19, 23-28; 2 Cor 1:15-16, 11:23-27, 13:1; 1 Thess 2:2, 3:1).<sup>27</sup> But Acts does not fail to give us a good sampling of his travels by land and sea. In Acts even opponents recognize Paul and his companions as far flung travellers (17:6; 19:26). Precise chronology is notoriously difficult to pin down in Acts given the narrator's irregular attention to details of time and length of stay.<sup>28</sup> The narrative always gives the impression of short stays in one location, some measured in days and weeks,<sup>29</sup> so that even when it suggests that Paul remained in Iconium for a considerable time (ἰκανὸν...χρόνον [14:3]) this is relative to his short stays elsewhere. Corinth and Ephesus represent his longest stays as narrated by Luke (Antioch is a special case which we shall discuss below), and these are a year and a half and two years and three months (18:11; 19:8, 10). That Paul is an intermediary regularly on the move hardly needs defending.

Philip is another travelling intermediary in Acts, and a fascinating case study because he meets his negative counterpart in Simon who is not a traveller. Philip is on the move as a result of persecution in Jerusalem and so ends up preaching and miracle-working in Samaria (8:4-8). Having astounded and convinced the crowds with his activities, he moves on under the influence of angelic instructions (9:26) and after converting the influential Ethiopian eunuch in charge of the treasury of the queen of the Ethiopians (8:27), moves on again, this time even more miraculously (8:39). Philip carries on in an itinerant fashion after his mysterious arrival in Azotus (διερχόμενος

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<sup>27</sup>Paul's adventures by land and sea hinted at in 2 Cor 11:23-27 are curious in light of Richard I. Pervo's attempt to cast Acts as romantic fiction particularly on the basis of its travel adventures and particularly its shipwreck (*Profit with Delight: The Literary Genre of the Acts of the Apostles* [Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1987]). It may well have been the case that the writer of Acts could have narrated several shipwrecks if he wished to more closely imitate romantic fiction. As it is Pervo's observations on parallels between Acts and the novels stand, even if the suggestion that the writer of Acts is intentional in this regard is rather less convincing.

<sup>28</sup>More specific references to the length of a given stay become much more frequent after the first introduction of first person narrative in 16:10 (although gaps remain), and more complete from the Ephesian stay of Chapter 19 and on through Paul's final trip to Jerusalem where even specific days are detailed (20:6, 15; 21:1; 4, 7, 18, 26, 27—these last few represent the very detailed time references for Paul's imprisonment in Palestine and the trip on to Rome).

<sup>29</sup>9:23, 17:2, 20:3, 20:6, 21:4, 21:7.

εὐηγγελίζετο τὰς πόλεις πάσας [8:40]) until his arrival in Caesarea.

What each of these three travelling intermediaries has in common is that their travels are at some stage or another directed by angelic visitors or visionary or prophetic impulse. *VA* will give us rather direct evidence that the well travelled intermediary, particularly those who have trod ancient Eastern lands, carry with them a certain mystique. As we suggested above, this is possible but not provable in Acts. After all, Philip travels into the Judean desert to teach an Ethiopian, rather than to the Ethiopian desert to be taught by the Ethiopian—a pattern one might expect to find in *VA*. However, that stated, a fringe existence coupled with a sense of divine direction in one's journeying (which may or may not have been announced) may well give the impression of a somewhat unusual, even extraordinary individual arriving in a given community.

Finally, there is another group of itinerant intermediaries in Acts, namely the sons of Sceva. They are presented as a subset of certain travelling Jewish exorcists (τῶν περιερχομένων Ἰουδαίων) who were using Jesus' name in their activities (19:13-14). While this latter group does not ultimately meet with the narrator's approval, they are not without initial success.<sup>30</sup> The story itself has a rather awkward introduction and ancient transmitters of the text and modern commentators have both attempted various solutions at smoothing out the difficulties.<sup>31</sup> But taken as it stands, 19:13-14 does suggest that these Jewish exorcists were using Jesus' name with some success before the dread encounter between a particular evil spirit and the seven sons of Sceva.<sup>32</sup> Luke 9:49-50 has already opened up the possibility of success in exorcism

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<sup>30</sup>Contra Klauck who twice refers to them as without "luck," ("With Paul," 100). However, whether the sons of Sceva themselves had luck with the use of Jesus' name, or other unnamed Jewish exorcists did, is not entirely clear.

<sup>31</sup>James H. Ropes, *BC*, vol. 4 (1926), 182-183. Lake and Cadbury, 240-241; Haenchen 565-566; Gerd Lüdemann, *Early Christianity according to the Traditions in Acts*, trans. J. Bowden (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1987), 212-214.

<sup>32</sup>One could possibly construe the story in such a way that excludes any success on the part of the Jewish exorcists using Jesus' name. The use of the verb ἐπιχειρέω in 19:13 might signify an attempt, but not necessarily a successful one. The phrase τοῦτο ποιούντες in 19:14 might only be referring to the very next incident in 19:15 in which this particular attempt meets with abject failure. However, this strains the natural flow of this admittedly awkward tale as it stands. Clearly there are several itinerant Jewish exorcists using Jesus' name in exorcisms, besides the sons of Sceva. One gets

using Jesus' name apart from formal adherence to Jesus.<sup>33</sup> Despite their ultimately negative characterization by the narrator (on grounds other than their failure to travel obviously), it does appear to be the case that travel functions for these intermediaries much as it does for those more positively assessed. That is, these Jewish exorcists make the same gains from being exotic strangers passing through much as other miracle-workers in Acts.

#### b. Intermediaries who Fail to Travel

Stephen is a fascinating case of an intermediary who fails to travel, and while a success as a Christian martyr, he provides an example of the necessity for intermediaries to stay on the move. Stephen fits the pattern of being an "outsider" in some respects. Given that he is most likely to be regarded as one of the Ἑλληνισταί of 6:1 and that he tangles with individuals from the synagogue called Λιβερτίνων which consists of Jews from Cyrene, Alexandria, Cilicia and Asia, his roots most surely lie outside Jerusalem (6:10). While an outsider in Jerusalem proper, Stephen is not likely an outsider with this latter group which initiates a case against him. Ultimately the case of Stephen highlights Jesus' proverbial words that "no prophet is welcome in his hometown" (Luke 4:24). Stephen's case suggests something that is obvious in Paul's travels as well, the *travelling* intermediary will simply survive longer. Stephen's local power gains simply strain the local community's tolerance to the snapping point. However, we shall defer further discussion on this case until our next chapter.

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the sense that this idea has been spread around the guild so to speak. Of these, there are these seven sons of Sceva also doing this (19:14). 19:15ff. then narrates the fateful day in which the practice backfired on these unfortunate brothers.

<sup>33</sup>Berndt Kollmann is among the more recent doubters that there is any historicity to a story about Hellenistic Jewish exorcists using the name "Jesus" in their activities (although he recognizes that there is considerable later evidence for this practice among both pagans and Jews)(*Jesus und die Christen als Wundertäter: Studien zu Magie, Medizin und Schamanismus in Antike und Christentum* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1996), 151-153). While it is not necessary for our study to demonstrate the historical veracity of this particular account, the picture presented by Luke 9:49-50 of another individual using Jesus' name already in Jesus' lifetime actually represents the rapid spread of an potentially powerful name or technique in activities such as exorcism. The sons of Sceva would only have had to observe or hear of one successful exorcism using the name Jesus before they would have experimented with it. The time lines for the spread of information like this which are suggested by many biblical scholars seem overly conservative given personal experience in charismatic Christian and Aboriginal medicine man cultures.

Simon stands out as a shining example of an intermediary who fails to travel and this fact is used to cast indirect aspersions upon him. Obviously Simon faces very negative direct characterization when the narrator describes his activity using the verb μαγεύω and the noun μαγεία (8:9, 11).<sup>34</sup> However, his extended stay in Samaria is also brought forward by the narrator. He was there before Philip (προὔπῆρχεν) and had been at his misleading activities for quite a while (ἱκανῶ χρόνῳ) (8:9,11). He is receiving honours from the Samaritans and he has no intention of moving on.<sup>35</sup> His failure to move on as Philip does implies an unseemly ambition.

The contrast between legitimate and illegitimate intermediaries on the basis of travel is also apparent in the Bar Jesus episode. Bar Jesus, also known as Elymas, suffers a negative characterization on the part of the narrator by making him appear to be a permanent fixture of the proconsul's "court."<sup>36</sup> Wherever he has come from, Bar Jesus appears to have found a comfortable location next to Sergius Paulus (13:7).<sup>37</sup> His opposition to Paul and Barnabas might easily be read as a defence of his own position as "spiritual advisor" to the proconsul (13:8).<sup>38</sup> Paul certainly proved to be a most able competitor (13:9-13), but unlike Bar Jesus, does not take advantage of his

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<sup>34</sup>Klauck suggests there is a twofold problem which requires the overtly negative characterization of Simon in this episode. First Christian missionaries like Philip look a lot like Simon, a "divine man" along the lines of Empedocles, and second, Christian missionaries actually meet (and presumably compete) with "divine men" of this sort in their travels (*Magie*, 26). Whatever one makes of the "divine man" designation, Klauck's observation of closeness breeding competition and the need to carefully demarcate "durch Einschwärzen der Gegenseite" parallels our observations.

<sup>35</sup>Haenchen notes the "considerable time" he has received his exalted title (307).

<sup>36</sup>Klauck, "With Paul," 96-97.

<sup>37</sup>Johnson's comments at this point suggest that Bar Jesus took on the title of μάγος in the positive sense suggested by Philo *On the Special Laws* 3.100 (*Acts*, 222-223). However, 3.101 develops the more usual negative use of the term which makes one suspicious that it was a label Bar Jesus would have chosen for himself. A more likely candidate would be προφήτης or μάντις given the negative label ψευδοπροφήτης assigned by the narrator (so also Klauck, *Magie*, 64-65). Jewish characters (Essenes in each case) who prophesy for kings and political leaders can be found in Josephus *Ant.* 17.345-348, parallel in *War* 2.111-113, where Simon appears to be a part of the court entourage, *Antiquities* 15.371-379; *Wars* 1.78-80; see also *Wars* 2.159. Josephus does, however, also leave the door open on μάγος as a positive title in *Ant.* 20.142 in which a Jewish Cypriot in the Felix's court is also labelled a μάγος by Josephus without overtly malicious intent.

<sup>38</sup>Klauck, "With Paul," 97. Anderson states, "A religious consultant is a perfectly natural adjunct to a provincial governor; but he is judge on results, and failure may result in replacement" (*Sage*, 146).

success by remaining close to this center of political power.<sup>39</sup> Instead, he sails on to the next location.

**c. The Special Case of Community Intermediaries**

In the course of our summary of Brown's paradigm of the Late Antique Holy Man we noted the distinction Brown draws between the transparent community medium and the Late Antique Holy Man proper, the individual religious superstar.<sup>40</sup> There are a whole set of intermediaries in Acts who appear to fit his model of transparent community medium rather than the pattern of the religious virtuosi existing on the fringe of society mediating and capable of mediating astonishing levels of divine power. These individuals include characters such as Ananias, who sees visions and mediates healing and the Holy Spirit to Paul, a group of teachers and prophets in Antioch (which includes Paul and Barnabas at the time), Philip's daughters and others who predict Paul's downfall in Jerusalem en route (9:10-19a; 13:1-3; 20:23; 21:4; 21:9). One might even include the mantic slave girl in Philippi as better classified as a transparent community medium especially if the term *πύθωνα* is to be read as a claim to being some mobile pythonic oracle.<sup>41</sup> That divine mediation of a distinctly Christian variety should be a phenomenon which extends beyond a handful of religious heroes in Acts is not surprising given the emphasis on the decidedly democratic outpouring of the latter-day Holy Spirit (Acts 2:14-21). Just the fact that one finds community prophets, that is a number of prophets in a given community suggests Brown's characterization of early Christian prophecy as "the kind of possession that emphasized the solidarity and the basically undifferentiated structure of the group" is accurate in these cases at least.<sup>42</sup>

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<sup>39</sup>Our socio-economic or political take on the confrontation between Paul and Bar Jesus (with Paul refusing to take on the role of magician left by the defeat of Bar Jesus) supplements the more religio-psychological read offered (however tentatively) by Johnson (*Acts*, 227) and Tannehill (163 no. 15) in which Paul is rejecting his former identity in the person of Bar Jesus.

<sup>40</sup>See above page 71.

<sup>41</sup>For a detailed discussion of the term and its implications within the narrative world of Acts see below page 188.

<sup>42</sup>Brown, *Making*, 67.

That stated, the powerful intermediaries of Acts, those who receive the lion's share of narrative space at least, are, with one notable exception, itinerant fringe characters who in many ways better fit the Holy Man model. The evidence as it stands in Acts suggests that within this narrative world, both forms of divine mediation—the transparent community medium and the crowd-stirring miracle-working itinerant—exist side-by-side. Indeed, Paul and Barnabas in their role as community teachers and prophets in Antioch may well represent the former, but upon beginning their travels, they fall into the mold of the latter (13:1-12). In this case their authority in the local community is interesting—in Antioch they are two of five community teachers and prophets and appear answerable to this community upon their return and in the communities they form in Asia Minor they appoint leaders (11:25-26, 30; 13:1-3; 14:27-28; 15:2; 15:35). Perhaps a continuum is a better model still. This would account for a handful of what appear to be community-based prophets who temporarily travel to deliver oracles or other messages—Agabus and his fellow travelling prophets (11:27-28; 21:10-11), and Judas and Silas (15:32-33). While there are, therefore, intermediaries approved by the narrator who do not fit the pattern of constant movement, it remains the case that the individual miracle-working sensations, characters such as Peter, Paul, and Philip, do tend toward frequent travels.

#### **d. Conclusion**

Aside from the special cases of community intermediaries, the narrator both explicitly and implicitly draw attention to the itinerancy of intermediaries. Constant travel does appear to be a characteristic of extraordinary and especially successful intermediaries in the narrative world of Acts. Failure to travel by gifted intermediaries can lead to martyrdom (as in Stephen's case) or can simply be used as a sign of unseemly ambition on the part of negatively labelled intermediaries. Our opening suggestion stands. Travel could serve at least one, possibly two, functions: first, an intermediary who continues to travel after astounding a local community is self-limiting the sort of local power and wealth gains they could potentially make; and second (and more speculatively), an outsider was an unknown commodity, someone who clearly



existed on the fringe, and perhaps even someone who had exotic foreign knowledge, and curiosity may well have led to heightened initial credibility.<sup>43</sup> If so, travel maximized their power as intermediaries through cultivation of a fringe status, but minimized their disturbing impact on local power structures.

### **3. Disregard for Personal Safety**

The miracle-working heroes of Acts are also noted for a distinct lack of concern for their personal well-being which, like travel, serves a dual role of both adding to the mystique of the intermediary and functioning as a sign of their non-ambition. In Acts, bold disregard for personal safety takes two very obvious forms. The first is that intermediaries are constantly saying things which will provoke opposition and often seem to walk into danger deliberately. Closely related to this is the need for these intermediaries to be convinced by their personal disciples to seek safety and escape danger. Certainly they cannot be accused of operating for their own advantage if their work continuously undermines their well-being.

The terms for bold speech in Acts, *παρρησία* and *παρρησιάζομαι*, summarize rather vividly the fearless honesty of the intermediaries who refuse to moderate or abandon their message even in the face of a potentially deadly persecution.<sup>44</sup> The courageous speech (*παρρησία*) of Peter and John impresses the questioning Sanhedrin (4:13). Later Peter and the rest of the apostles tell the same group they will obey God rather than humans (5:29), after which they are flogged but carry on as before (5:40-42). Stephen also holds back nothing, despite facing the death penalty (6:11-7:60). All of these Jerusalem incidents demonstrate that these intermediaries were not overly concerned with their own well-being, but had abandoned their personal safety for a higher cause. Likewise, Paul seems unable to

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<sup>43</sup>The "outsider" status, offering power from or beyond the fringe of the normal societal network, was not entirely unproblematic as it can also be construed so as to contribute to magic accusations (Gallagher, 54). However, it is worth noting that the "outsider" status does offer power however that power is ultimately evaluated (and the basis for that evaluation is, as we shall see, partly based on whether the intermediary is willing to limit potential local power gains through constant travel).

<sup>44</sup>On *παρρησία* as a characteristic of subversive philosophers see MacMullen, *Enemies*, 56-65.

open his mouth without engendering life-threatening persecution. This occurs in Damascus (9:23), Jerusalem (9:29; 21:27ff), Pisidian Antioch (13:50), Iconium (14:4-5), Lystra (14:19), Philippi (16:19-24), Thessalonica (17:5-9), Berea (17:13), Corinth (18:12-13), and Ephesus (19:23-41). And, in a manner not unlike the Jerusalem apostles, Paul seems to positively invite opposition with remarks which he knows are inflammatory. In 13:46, for example, Paul and Barnabas's response to the Jews who oppose them is characterized as bold speech (εἶπαν modified by παρρησιασάμενοί), which would imply they are fully aware of the most likely outcome to their speech.

The uncompromising element within the miracle-worker's speech can also be seen in the less violent, but equally vivid Areopagus speech by Paul (17:22-32). This episode, which is something of a subtle balancing act as we shall explore below, paints a picture of the miracle-worker who is certainly not a self-promoting rhetor. This is particularly the case if one appreciates a background in which rhetors were respected for their ability to argue *any* point. Indeed the ability to argue *both* sides of a case was the height of the art.<sup>45</sup> However, bantering ideas as an end in itself is marked out for derision by our narrator in 17:21. Our steadfast miracle-worker delivers a most appropriate speech for the occasion,<sup>46</sup> but in the end willingly sacrifices any favour he might have gained with the Areopagus philosophers by boldly proclaiming the resurrection of Jesus (17:31-32).<sup>47</sup> Our narrator has presented a skilled but ultimately uncompromising orator.<sup>48</sup> Steve Mason goes so far as to suggest that the use of a ῥήτωρ by Paul's accusers before Felix in Acts 24 paints a picture of Christians (and I

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<sup>45</sup>Philostratus *Lives of the Sophists*. George Kennedy, "The Sophists as Declaimers" in *Approaches to the Second Sophistic*, ed. G. W. Bowersock (University Park, Pa.: The Association, 1974), 21.

<sup>46</sup>On the speech and particularly the associations with Socrates' defence see Loveday Alexander ("Acts and the Ancient Intellectual Biography" in *The Book of Acts in its First Century Setting*, vol. 1, *The Book of Acts in its Ancient Literary Setting*, edited by B. W. Winter and A. D. Clarke [Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1993], 59) and Witherington (*Acts*, 511-535) and Bruce W. Winter ("On Introducing New Gods to Athens," in *Tyndale Bulletin* 47 [1996]: 71-90).

<sup>47</sup>On the nature of the speech and its results see below page 197 and footnotes 39 and 40.

<sup>48</sup>For a similar conclusion on the historical Paul as a skilled but non-sophistic rhetor see Winter, *Philo*, 145-230, 237-241.

would argue Paul particularly) "as a philosophical school within Jewish culture, bearing the standard of truth against the rhetoric and sophistry of the others...[and] persecuted in the same way that all truth-telling philosophers have always been persecuted by sophists."<sup>49</sup>

Care and concern for the well being of these intermediaries falls to their loyal disciples and followers. These are often the individuals who prevent the intermediary's boldness from becoming suicidal, convincing the intermediary to escape and usually providing the means for escape. In Damascus, while it is Paul who discovers the plot on his life, the escape from the city is orchestrated by his followers (9:24-25). In Jerusalem, it is the "brothers" who learn of the plot on his life and take him to Caesarea and send him to Tarsus (9:30). At Pisidian Antioch Paul and Barnabas are expelled and move on voluntarily (13:50-51), at Iconium they flee from a death plot (14:5-6), while at Lystra the disciples are a little late on the scene to prevent injury (14:20). However, on the next journey the former pattern emerges once again. They are in no great hurry to leave Philippi and do so only once they have met with the believers one more time (16:39-40), while at Thessalonica and Berea it is "the brothers" once again who send Paul and Silas on their way (17:10, 14-15), escorting Paul as far as Athens. During the riot in Ephesus, Paul must be restrained by both the disciples and friendly Asiarchs to prevent him from rushing into the middle of the riot (19:30-31).<sup>50</sup>

The miracle-workers of Acts all demonstrate a lack of concern for safety which puts them in a heroic category. Their lack of attachment to typical earthly concerns can only add to their mystique. And, their uncompromising attitude which provokes the wrath of those who can harm them clearly demonstrates they are not concerned with getting ahead in terms of status and wealth by courting the socially powerful.<sup>51</sup>

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<sup>49</sup>"Chief Priests," 154.

<sup>50</sup>On the Asiarchs see L. R. Taylor ("Note XXII: The Asiarchs," in *BC*, vol. 5 [1933], 256-262) and R. A. Kearsley ("The Asiarchs," in *The Book of Acts in Its First Century Setting*, vol. 2, *The Book of Acts in Its Graeco-Roman Setting*, ed. D. W. Gill and C. Gempf [Grand Rapids: Wm B. Eerdmans, 1994], 363-376).

<sup>51</sup>Within the Luke-Acts narrative as a whole this is a predominant theme, despite readings to the contrary by Klaus Wengst (*Pax Romana and the peace of Jesus Christ*, trans. J. Bowden

#### 4. Conclusion

The work of Douglas and Brown suggested that the place in which one typically finds the type of character we have labelled an "intermediary" is on the fringe of society. Douglas uses the language of power and danger in the disorder at the boundaries of ordered society while Brown speaks of the Holy Man who retreats into the wilderness. A lack of wilderness retreats in Acts (even if not in historical early Christianity of this period) does not necessarily indicate this model is not applicable in Acts. Rather, the withdrawal from normal society is undertaken through the abandonment of livelihoods, constant travel, and a notable disregard for personal well-being. Each of these moves places the intermediary in an interstitial or fringe existence which lies at the heart of their rise as purveyors of divine power. Not only does the intermediary bring power from beyond the boundaries of human society, but by remaining in that interstitial position, they can maintain an air of detachment. As we shall see below, that ongoing detachment is central to a judgment in their favour on the part of communities who must either accept or reject them.

#### C. Performing the Miraculous

If cultivating a fringe status through various forms of withdrawal from society in general fulfills a dual role of both gaining power for the intermediary and providing a ready defence against unscrupulous use of that power, so too miracle-working functions in a dual capacity. In broad terms, performing miracles<sup>52</sup> is both a sign of power gained and a means of gaining further power as an intermediary, much as Brown's analysis of the Holy Man suggests.<sup>53</sup> In Acts, miracles are a sign of power gained in that they confirm that divine favour or approval rests on the miracle-worker—that is, his connection to a divine source of power is demonstrated. This will

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[Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1987], 89-105). For a three point critique of Wengst's thesis see below footnote #36.

<sup>52</sup>We are using the term "miracle" here to describe acts or events which fall outside the "canons of the ordinary" as culturally defined and usually exhibit some self-evident significance for the observers of the miracle. On the terminology of "canons of the ordinary" and the conceptual framework in which it operates see Remus, 3-26. Obviously, we continue to use it in a value-laden way as clarified in the introductory chapter.

<sup>53</sup>Brown, "Rise and Function," 80-86.

be seen in the faith-evoking effect of these actions. But successful miracle-working builds future success and so it is reputation building, a means of further power gains. This connection with a divine source demonstrated by miracles spills over into the very speech acts of the intermediaries and most surprising, given widespread assumptions about miracle-working and magic among modern scholars, punitive miracles can function just as positively as salvific miracles.

### **1. The Primary Function of Miracles in the Acts Narrative World**

The primary function of miracles in the Acts narrative world is not particularly elusive once one has stripped away the influence of "theologically-correct" thinking about the miraculous. Modern theological sensibilities which may be offended by the notion of faith being evoked by a miraculous display, or by proselytizing with the use of miraculous displays, or even belief in supernatural miraculous intervention of any sort, are notably absent from Acts.<sup>54</sup> Simply stated, miracles in the Acts narrative world are primarily there to provoke belief, to convince—the bigger, the better.

But what exactly do the miracles provoke belief *in*? Elsewhere I have argued that in Acts miracles function to confirm that divine favour, authority, or approval rested on the miracle-worker delivering his message. Consequently, miracles also functioned to confirm the truthfulness or divine source of the message the miracle-worker delivered. They thus serve as a sign of legitimate connection with a divine power source. And, in Acts particularly, the deliverance and healing miracles complemented the message these miracle-workers spread of eschatological deliverance enacted by a miracle-working messiah.<sup>55</sup> Stefan Schreiber, in his study on Paul as a

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<sup>54</sup>Lake and Cadbury suggest that "[f]ew modern hypotheses have less ancient testimony in their favour than that miracles were not intended as evidence. On the contrary this was their main object, and therefore they were called σημεῖα" (8). That our narrator is comfortable with a God who "proves" things with miracles is evident in verses such as 17:31b God's impending judgment is "proven" in the resurrection of Christ—πίστιν παρασχὼν πᾶσιν ἀναστήσας αὐτὸν ἐκ νεκρῶν. Even Origen, who preferred allegorical interpretations of miracles, put forward the hypothesis that miracles and wonders were necessary to prompt individuals to abandon their "traditional religion" to accept the new teachings of the apostles (as Gallagher aptly notes [78-79])(*Contra Celsum* 1.46).

<sup>55</sup>Andy Reimer, "Divine Healing Rites in the New Testament: Diversity and Unity" (MCS Thesis, Regent College, Vancouver, 1994), 76-84.

miracle-worker, likewise observes that in Acts miracles fulfill "eine gewisse Beglaubigungsfunktion."<sup>56</sup> He concludes,

So dient das Wunder des Paulus der Legitimation und Konkretisierung der Botschaft, wird auch zum Anlaß, daß Menschen die Verkündigung hören und sich daraufhin zum Glauben an Christus bekehren. Das Wunder zeugt für das Wort, und darum ist der Verkündiger als mit besonderen, von Gott verliehenen Wunderkräften begabt gezeichnet. Dabei kann aber nicht von der Person des Paulus abgesehen werden. Die Botschaft dringt durch den Mund des Verkündigers zu den Menschen, und das Wunder wird durch seine Person vermittelt.<sup>57</sup>

Space does not permit an exploration of the specifics in which a message of eschatological salvation and judgment is concretized or complemented through miracles worked by the name of the agent of that salvation. However, Schreiber rightly draws attention to the fact that both miracle and message are mediated through the person of Paul. Hence, Paul's miracle-working lends credibility to his oral proclamation (itself at times a form of divine mediation).<sup>58</sup> Not only with Paul, but with other miracle-workers as well, the narrative of Acts explicitly and implicitly implies that miracles are *the* sign that the intermediary is legitimately connected to a divine power source where both his miracle-working power and his message ultimately originate.<sup>59</sup>

The function of miracles is nowhere addressed more directly than in Peter's Pentecost sermon in Acts 2:22. Peter describes Jesus as ἄνδρα ἀποδεδειγμένον ἀπὸ τοῦ θεοῦ εἰς ὑμᾶς δυνάμεσι καὶ τέρασι καὶ σημείοις οἷς ἐποίησεν δι' αὐτοῦ ὁ θεὸς ἐν μέσῳ ὑμῶν. That something is "proven" or

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<sup>56</sup>Stefan Schreiber, *Paulus als Wundertäter: Redaktionsgeschichtliche Untersuchungen zur Apostelgeschichte und den authentischen Paulusbriefen* (Berlin and New York: Walter de Gruyter, 1996), 140.

<sup>57</sup>Schreiber, 147.

<sup>58</sup>See below page 106.

<sup>59</sup>This is Weber's conclusion as well regarding prophets in religion generally (47). However, it is worth noting his use of "magic" terminology to describe the "extra-curricular" activities ("divination," "magic healing") of the religion reforming prophet (47). Weber seems to have stumbled over the ambiguity surrounding the performance of the extra-ordinary. In and of itself performance of the extraordinary merely demonstrates connection to a greater power; value judgments on the performance and the source of power are based on a number of other factors which our study demonstrates for at least two "social worlds."

"demonstrated" in miracles, wonders, and signs is obvious from the term ἀποδείκνυμι. The miracles "prove" that God is working through this intermediary and this clearly implies God's approval of the intermediary and the intermediary is thus marked out as his authorized agent. Later, the narrator states that δυνάμει μεγάλη ἀπεδίδουν τὸ μαρτύριον οἱ ἀπόστολοι τῆς ἀναστάσεως τοῦ κυρίου Ἰησοῦ (4:33). If δύνάμις is understood here as "miracle-working power," i.e., the sort of power that works δυνάμεις ("miracles"), then the apostles "testifying-to-the-resurrection" role is not just oral, but linked directly to their miracle-working.<sup>60</sup> That is to say, their miracle-working demonstrates or proves their message concerning a resurrected Jesus.

This faith-evoking function of miracles can be demonstrated in a number of places in the text. The most obvious is a feature of miracle stories noted by form critics—the awestruck reaction on the part of those viewing the miraculous event, which in some cases is coupled with statements that some viewers at least became believers. The amazed reaction of spectators is noted in the language miracle (2:7, 12), the temple cripple healing (3:9-12), Philip's exorcism and healings (8:8, 13), the Gentile language miracle (10:45), Peter's prison escape (12:16), the blinding of Elymas (13:12), the Lystra cripple healing (14:11), and Paul's snake bite survival (28:6). In several cases, there is a report of faith following on the heels of a miraculous display: the language miracle (2:41), Philip's miracle-working (8:12-13), healing of Aeneas (9:35), raising of Tabitha (9:42), and the blinding of Elymas (13:12). These latter examples in particular demonstrate the power the miracle has to convince those observing that the miracle-worker is worth listening to. He must somehow be connected to a divine power source and this translates into confidence in his message concerning the divine realm. Both message and messenger gain credibility through miracle-working.

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<sup>60</sup>Bruce connects δύνάμις ("the power of God manifested in mighty works") here with the δυνάμεις in 2:22 (*Acts*, 160). Several other commentators are agreed on this point: Haenchen, 231; Lake and Cadbury, 48; Barrett, *Acts*, 254; and Gottfried Schille, who connects 4:33 with 5:12 (*Die Apostelgeschichte des Lukas* [THNT; Berlin: Evangelische Verlagsanstalt, 1984], 145).

Certain episodes make this quite clear. First, there are the episodes in which the miracle-worker must correct the impression of the crowd which greatly overestimates the status of the miracle-worker himself: in Jerusalem following the temple healing where Peter must tell the crowd to quit staring at them as if they had done the deed by their own power (3:12), in Paul's healing of the cripple at Lystra he and Barnabas are mistaken for Hermes and Zeus (14:11-18), and on the island of Malta they are convinced Paul is a god (28:6). Second, there are episodes in which it is clear that the message was given a hearing and accepted on the basis of the miracles. In 8:6 it is Philip's σημεῖα which cause the crowd to pay close attention to his words. The Bar Jesus incident closes with the rather unexpected and perhaps telling statement, τότε ἰδὼν ὁ ἀνθύπατος τὸ γεγονός ἐπίστευσεν ἐκπλησσομένου ἐπὶ τῆ διδαχῆ τοῦ κυρίου (13:12). What the proconsul has seen is Paul blinding his personal magician and what one might reasonably expect is a statement concerning his amazement at Paul's power. Instead, the amazement is with the teaching offered by Paul. This would seem to suggest that Paul's message and power as a messenger are so closely linked that they are almost interchangeable. Susan Garrett makes the observation that in the "mutually reinforcing" relationship between "sign and proclamation", miracles are used to draw attention to a particular message apart from the intermediary and that this too validates the miracle. That is, legitimate miracles contribute to something other than the enhancement of the miracle-worker, while magic contributes only to the enhancement of the magician.<sup>61</sup>

But it is not just with unbelievers that the miracle is a validating tool for the miracle-worker, but also with the community of believers. The circumcised believers accompanying Peter accept his preaching to Gentiles when the language miracle occurs (10:44-47) and the retelling of the double visions and the language miracle also convinces the Jerusalem believers of the correctness of Peter's actions (11:4-18). This pattern is repeated at the Jerusalem council where Paul and Barnabas defend their

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<sup>61</sup>Garrett, *Demise*, 63. Klauck, *Magie*, 30. On the whole motif of avoiding self-advancement see below page 114 and following.



method of preaching the "Word" to the Gentiles apart from requiring circumcision by recounting the "signs and wonders" which God had worked through them while doing this preaching (15:12). Miracles clearly have evidential value in determining whether certain individuals are truly divine mediators of the sort approved by God.

It is also worth noting that bigger is better.<sup>62</sup> This is evident first in the details the narrator chooses to divulge in some of the miracle stories, elements which could be described as "intensifications" of the story.<sup>63</sup> The cripple in the temple is not just lame but *χωλὸς ἐκ κοιλίας μητρὸς αὐτοῦ ὑπάρχων* (3:2)<sup>64</sup> and later we are told he was over forty years old (4:22). The cripple at Lystra likewise is *χωλὸς ἐκ κοιλίας μητρὸς αὐτοῦ*, but so the point is not missed the narrator also adds, *ὃς οὐδέποτε περιεπάτησεν* (14:8). Furthermore, the cripple does not just walk, but leaps up (*ἄλλομαι*) and walks about (14:10). These narrative expansions on the condition of the cripple imply that the healing of a recently crippled individual would be impressive, but perhaps open to other explanations, i.e., they were faking their condition or one did not need extraordinary levels of power to produce a healing. However, if one was crippled from birth and had never walked, both the genuineness and severity of the condition were established and thus the magnitude of the miracle which reversed the condition. This intensification may also be seen in the healings produced by the intermediaries without direct contact with the sick, such as Peter's shadow (5:15) or the clothing transmitting Paul's miracle-working power (19:11-12),<sup>65</sup> and in the double vision motif (9:10-16; 10:3-6, 10-23, 28-33; 11:5-14).

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<sup>62</sup>Schreiber claims that the impressiveness of the miracles is part of Acts' polemic in the context of Hellenistic magic and wizardry: "Der christliche Wundertäter steht in der Gefolgschaft Gottes und Jesus und *vermag so weit mehr* als jeder Magier und Zauberer" (italics added)(145).

<sup>63</sup>The term is derived from Theissen, *Miracle Stories*, 277.

<sup>64</sup>The effectiveness of this narrative detail is ironically demonstrated by Lüdemann who rejects this statement outright as having any basis in history because everyone knows "those who are lame from their childhood are (unfortunately) not made whole again" (*Early Christianity*, 54). One suspects that this sentiment was shared by those hearing this story, even if they may have ultimately arrived at different conclusions from Lüdemann.

<sup>65</sup>In this case the narrator specifies that these are not just ordinary miracles (*δυνάμεις...οὐ τὰς τυχοῦσας* [19:11]), leaving the implication that there could be a class of somewhat "more ordinary", or less impressive, miracles. Garrett in commenting on Acts 19 claims "the effortlessness of Paul's healings will make the seven sons' debacle all the more conspicuous" (*Demise*, 91).

Aside from more impressive displays of the miraculous affirming authenticity of the miracles,<sup>66</sup> there is another implication worth considering. As we noted in the previous chapter, Peter Brown suggests Late Antique society divided intermediaries into the categories of saint or sorcerer on the basis of whether they were believed to be connected with “heavenly” or “earthly” forms of divine power.<sup>67</sup> Assuming this is the case within the Acts narrative world where the realm of heavenly powers has the upper hand and is superior in every way to the earthly powers,<sup>68</sup> this ascendancy might transfer into the realm of their intermediaries and their activity. The person mediating the more powerful heavenly power, therefore, is capable of the more impressive display.<sup>69</sup>

Philip's preaching in Samaria, however, offers us our best evidence of the *degree* of the miraculous making a difference. The narrative is structured in such a way that it is evident that Philip's miracle-working is much more impressive than Simon's. The attention (προσέχω [8:6, 10]) which the Samaritans had offered to Simon was now transferred to Philip. While the crowds were once amazed by Simon, now Simon was amazed by Philip (ἐξίστημι [8:9, 11, 13]). Philip's miracles of exorcisms and healings brought about a change of allegiance in the crowd from Simon's lesser miracle-working to Philip's more impressive display of power. One could even speculate that Peter and John's activity was one step up from Philip's, because while Simon followed Philip amazed, when Peter and John can give the Holy

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<sup>66</sup>Stated thus, the counter-intuitive nature of that statement for a skeptical twentieth century scholar is clear.

<sup>67</sup>Brown, *Making*, 18-19. See above page 67.

<sup>68</sup>As illustrated most vividly by Luke 10:18 and 11:17-22 and demonstrated in a thorough fashion by Susan R. Garret (*Demise*, 37-61).

<sup>69</sup>It is particularly worth noting Neusner's article on science and magic in this regard. Neusner quotes *b.San.* 67b in which Pharaoh's magicians are incapable of creating lice and so declare Aaron's and Moses' miracles to be by "the finger of God" and R. Eleazar's conclusion that demons thus "cannot make a creature smaller than a barley seed." Neusner's subsequent statement that "there is no intrinsic difference between...Israelite wonder-working and gentile wonder-working...[and] the distinction is systemic, and the difference is social and conventional" does not entirely follow ("Science and Magic," 74). Rather, here we see the principle of the impressiveness of the miracle (creating something as minute as lice) indicating the divine source of Aaron's and Moses' miracle-working and the demonic power source of Pharaoh's magicians' magic.

Spirit through placing their hands on individuals, Simon decides to invest. We are not informed in this text what occurred which made it so obvious (or impressive) that these people had received the Holy Spirit, but perhaps a prophetic trance and "speaking in tongues" is to be read into this passage from other accounts of the reception of the Holy Spirit (2:4, 10:46, 19:6).<sup>70</sup> Whatever one wants to make of the need for Peter and John to arrive before the Holy Spirit is given out,<sup>71</sup> the episode itself suggests that even among approved intermediaries, there are degrees of power. Peter and John are, for some reason, capable of performing a miracle even Philip does not or can not attempt. It is worth noting that Peter's extraordinary miracle-working ability has already been underscored in the summary statements of Acts 5:12-16 where all the apostles are credited with miracle-working (5:12), but Peter is the one the crowds seek out for healing (5:15).

Obviously miracles in Acts serve other theological and intertextual functions. However, when one asks what the primary function of miracles performed by powerful intermediary figures in Acts appears to be, the best answer is that miracles are a validating tool. The crowd or community of faith that witnesses an intermediary perform an astonishing act of divine power mediation will be more likely to believe the message the intermediary claims to bring from or about the divine realm itself. The truly astonishing miracle established that intermediary's connection with the divine.

## **2. Building a Reputation**

If the primary function of a miracle in the narrative world of Acts was to evoke belief in the intermediary and his message, that is, it served as a sign of power gained, that same miracle could function to exponentially grow one's reputation as an intermediary. That is, a display of miraculous power in one instance could lead to a

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<sup>70</sup>Haenchen rightly notes that the story implies the reception of the Spirit was a visible phenomenon of some sort (308).

<sup>71</sup>That contemporary issues of ecclesiology and pneumatology drive much of the dispute over the interpretation of this text is obvious in the commentaries (F. F. Bruce, *The Book of Acts*, rev. ed. [NICNT; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1988], 168-170; William Neil, *The Acts of the Apostles* [NCBC; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1973], 122-123; I. Howard Marshall, *Acts* [TNTC; Leicester: Inter-Varsity Press, 1980], 157); Schille, 205; Witherington, 288-290; Lake and Cadbury, 93; Dunn, *Acts*, 111).

reputation for mediating divine power which in turn prompts further expectations of the miraculous which itself could lead to further miracles.<sup>72</sup> Whether one views the expectation of the miraculous as contributing to the "faith" element understood psychologically or spiritually, or simply that the expectation of the miraculous brought out the needy which gave further opportunities for successful miracle-working, this exponential growth is actually documented by our narrator.

In Acts 4:16, even the opponents of the apostles concede that the report of the healing of the temple beggar has circulated throughout the entire city, making any move against Peter and John difficult. By Acts 5:12-16 the apostles', and particularly Peter's, growing reputation as miracle-workers brings the sick into the street in crowds and in this context even Peter's shadow is enough to produce results. Likewise, Paul in Ephesus gains a reputation as a healing and exorcistic miracle-worker which leads to both the healings performed by using indirect contact as well as copying by other exorcists (19:11-16). While on Malta Paul is first hailed as a god when he survives the snake bite (28:6) and later heals Publius's father (28:8). Acts 28:9 with its opening *τούτου δὲ γενομένου* points back to the healing as the cause or starting point at least for the trail of ailing islanders which subsequently show up to be healed. While the narrator does not specify whether the snake bite incident also contributed to Paul's miracle-working reputation, it would not be unreasonable to conclude that this is a very plausible implication within the Acts narrative world. These three examples demonstrate that miracle-working not only established the credibility of the intermediary, but it also was the starting point for potentially exponential growth in their reputation and subsequent ability to perform additional miracles. Miracles are a sign of power gained as well as a means of accruing further power.

### **3. Intermediaries as 'Inspired' Speakers**

We suggested above that miracles lend credibility to the messenger and his message. However, in the Acts narrative world, there are times when the spoken word, the message itself, is a miraculous act of divine mediation. What one discovers

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<sup>72</sup>Theissen, *Miracle Stories*, 264.

is that within the Acts the speech of intermediaries itself tends to slide on a scale from bold and impressive to out and out miraculous speech. The recognition of an extraordinary element within the speech of the intermediary is thus also a means of power gained and accruing power. This is hardly surprising given that belief in divinely-inspired speakers was, after all, a rather broadly held conviction within the Greco-Roman culture generally.<sup>73</sup>

We have already mentioned the numerous references to prophets and prophesying, which are a rather obvious case of spoken divine mediation. However, there are also other cases of extraordinary speech on the part of intermediaries to which the narrator draws our attention. The most obvious is the language miracles of 2:4-11 and subsequent "speaking in tongues" which may well be further instances of language miracles (10:46; 19:6).<sup>74</sup> Our problem in this case is that this is a rather democratic experience which seems to occur with persons we would not distinguish as religious virtuosi, although in each case subsequent to Acts 2 this experience is mediated by significant intermediaries. Cases in which effective curse pronouncements are made by intermediaries would perhaps be a better example of the miraculous speech of the *intermediary* (5:1-11; 8:20-23; 13:9-11).

As one moves along the spectrum, intermediaries are also noted as offering

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<sup>73</sup>There are examples of absolute mediation of divine speech, such as the speakers at oracle sites and other forms of prophecy. More ambiguous are the cases of rhetors who are afforded divine honours. In this case it is perhaps less the content of the speech which is divine, but the apparently superhuman technical ability in the art of rhetoric which is attributed to the divine, much as supreme technical ability in some other pursuit could equally bring divine honours. On sophistic rhetors see Bowersock (*Greek Sophists*) and on sophists in the first century see particularly Winter, *Philo*.

<sup>74</sup>One could add to this list other instances of the reception of the Holy Spirit which in the Acts narrative world seems to have carried with it some sort of visible sign, likely speaking in tongues (8:17-19, 9:17-19). Whether the real author has confused ecstatic glossalalia for a genuine language is a matter for the historical critic to decide (Conzelmann, *Acts*, 15-16; Schille 95-96; Barrett, *Acts*, 115-116; Witherington, *Acts*, 135; Marshall, *Acts*, 69-70; Bruce, *Book*, 52). Our narrator implies these were genuine languages in Acts 2, and unless there was some shared extratext concerning what exactly "speaking in tongues" was, one has to assume our narrator treats each instance as some sort of language miracle. From a historical-critical perspective, one could argue that it is quite plausible that the nonsense syllables of ecstatic glossalalia could well have sounded like a foreign language and thus given rise to the belief that they were actual languages which were simply not understood by anyone present (except perhaps those who felt divinely inspired to interpret)(see for example J. D. G. Dunn, *Jesus and the Spirit* [London: SCM Press, 1975], 151-152). The tradition of Acts 2 need not, therefore, develop long after this ecstatic phenomena died away and was misunderstood by subsequent generations, but could be the result of the belief in what they were right from the start.

extraordinarily powerful and bold speech which is divinely inspired or aided. Jesus' words in Luke 12:11-12 have already informed us that defence speeches before persecuting authorities will be a form of divine mediation, a speech inspired by the Holy Spirit. When Peter and John first face the Sanhedrin authorities and defend their actions, not only is Peter described as *πλησθεις πνεύματος αγίου* (4:8), but the authorities are amazed at their bold speech (*παρρησία*)(4:13).<sup>75</sup> They recognize that Peter and John are *αγράμματοί...καὶ ἰδιῶται* (illiterate and common or non-professional). In other words, they are getting a rhetorical (although certainly not a *sophistic*)<sup>76</sup> flourish from someone they would not expect it from, hence the amazement (*θαυμάζω*) on the part of the Sanhedrin (4:13). *Παρρησία* or its verbal cognate *παρρησιάζομαι* are used to describe the speech of various intermediaries 11 times in Acts.<sup>77</sup> Stephen's opponents in the Synagogue of the Freedmen cannot match his wisdom and Spirit-aided speech (*οὐκ ἴσχυον ἀντιστῆναι τῇ σοφίᾳ καὶ τῷ πνεύματι ᾧ ἐλάλει* [6:10]). When Stephen offers a speech in his defence before the Sanhedrin, not only is he granted a Moses-like facial transformation (*τὸ πρόσωπον αὐτοῦ ὡσεὶ πρόσωπον ἀγγέλου* [6:15]), the climax of his speech is a heavenly vision (7:55-56). Paul has hardly had the scales drop from his eyes before he begins preaching in the synagogue (9:20), which may suggest a divine inspiration drove his speaking rather than extended training by another believer.

Besides out and out miraculous speech (tongues and curses) and divinely-inspired and notably extraordinary speech, there are also cases of the intermediary as simply gifted speakers, without any clear reference as to the source of this giftedness. Paul in particular is portrayed as a most competent public speaker. Whether discoursing in the synagogue (13:16-41), before a pagan crowd (14:15-17), among the philosophers of the Areopagus (17:22-31), a mob in the temple (21:40-21), or various court rooms (23:6, 24:10-21; 26:1-29), Paul always has an appropriate speech at hand.

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<sup>75</sup>On the Greco-Roman context for these terms see particularly Heinrich Schlier, "παρρησία," in *TDNT*, vol. 5, 871-886 and "ἐλεύθερος," *TDNT*, vol. 2, especially 487-496.

<sup>76</sup>See above page 96.

<sup>77</sup>Acts 4:13, 29, 31; 9:27, 28; 13:46; 14:3; 18:26; 19:8; 26:26; 28:31.

Furthermore, he is capable of offering a speech in either Greek or Hebrew (Aramaic?) (21:37, 40). Intermediaries, therefore, within the Acts narrative world function both as divinely inspired and talented speakers, and are noted by others as extraordinary speakers.<sup>78</sup>

That extraordinary speech could be seen as an act of divine mediation is also evident in Herod's demise. Herod's speech is met with shouts of Θεοῦ φωνὴ καὶ οὐκ ἀνθρώπου (12:22). Herod's failure to deflect these divine honours leads to his sudden demise.<sup>79</sup> The story demonstrates that our narrative world is one in which extraordinary speech can lead to divine honours much as other forms of miracle-working.<sup>80</sup> Another example of supernaturally inspired speech which meets with the narrator's disapproval is that of the prophesying slave girl in Philippi. Our narrator does not question her ability, nor the supernatural source of her speech (16:16). It is a negative case of divine mediation only because the source of the divine insights comes from a demonic source rather than a positive heavenly being of some sort (16:16-18).<sup>81</sup> This is the negative side (from the point of view of the narrator) of extraordinary insight or foresight. In summary, bold, extraordinary, and sometimes out and out miraculous speech demonstrates connection to the divine in the narrative world of

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<sup>78</sup>Acts 4:13 might present itself as an obvious exception to the "talented speaker" category but even here the opponents are impressed that these men, who for one reason or another demonstrate their lack of professional rhetorical education, seem capable of putting forward a bold compelling statement in their own defence.

<sup>79</sup>The cause of Herod's demise is said to be his failure to give the glory to God (οὐκ ἔδωκεν τὴν δόξαν τῷ θεῷ). This statement carries some surprising inferences. This might well imply that Herod's speech was indeed divinely inspired by God (the people thus being partially correct), but Herod failed to point this out and instead received the divine honours personally. Or, as seems a bit more likely, is it simply that Herod accepted the title of θεός from a crowd eager to gain his favour, and in this way he failed in his duty to properly honour God.

<sup>80</sup>One might fairly question the motives of those heaping divine honours on Herod as the preceding text suggests they are trying to curry favour with the king in an attempt to reopen food supplies for themselves (12:20). Be that as it may, there is still a suggestion within the story that an extraordinary speech might gain divine honours on the speaker or at least the given speech.

<sup>81</sup>While her mantic fortune-telling abilities are reported, the only speech reported by the narrator is her words in the presence of Paul—Οὗτοι οἱ ἄνθρωποι δούλοι τοῦ θεοῦ τοῦ ὑψίστου εἰσίν, οἵτινες καταγγέλλουσιν ὑμῖν ὁδὸν σωτηρίας (16:17). Trebilco and Klauck both suggest that Paul is irked by the lack of an article in front of ὁδός—that is, she is putting forward the idea that they are present *a* way to be saved rather than *the* way to be saved (Paul R. Trebilco, "Paul and Silas—Servants of the Most High God," in *JSNT* 36 [1989]: 51-73, Klauck, *Magie*, 82-83).

Acts. Whether listeners ultimately regard it as coming from a positive or negative supernatural source will, of course, be decided on a number of grounds which we shall look at more closely in our next section and our next chapter.

#### 4. Punitive Miracles

Before we leave the topic of intermediaries and miracle-working proper, there is one more item that needs clearing up. It is sometimes the case that positive or negative use of divine power (sometimes referred to as white or black magic) is seen as a boundary marker between magic and miracle.<sup>82</sup> This sort of dichotomy often results in unnecessary exculpation of the miracle-workers in Acts who perform punitive miracles, or conversely, simply putting forward the suggestion that these are a case of the miracle-worker operating as a magician.<sup>83</sup> Within the Acts narrative world, however, positive or negative wonders have the same currency, and these can be judged on the basis of personal ambition as easily as any other. In other words, this is NOT a criterion for distinguishing miracle-workers from magicians.

There are three cases of miracle-workers mediating divine power to harm individuals in Acts. The first troubling case is that of Ananias and Sapphira, apparently struck dead for the minor offense of not being completely honest in an act of generosity. Commentators have had various strategies for dealing with this text,<sup>84</sup> but

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<sup>82</sup>Kolenkow puts forward *maleficia* as a charge associated with magic accusations ("Problem," 107). However, in her conclusion she suggests what we are about to suggest, namely that not all "punitive miracles" are necessarily magic in the eyes of the Greco-Roman beholder, since along with proclaiming "the good he could do," the "man of power" could also proclaim "the divine *maleficia* he could set in motion" ("Problem," 110). Alexander Kazhdan suggests the positive and negative miracle-working as a possible criterion for Christians of the Byzantine period to distinguish divine miracles from demonic ones (79) only to be forced by numerous examples to abandon that criterion in favour of speaking of the ambiguity of the Byzantine mind since approved Christian miracle-workers also perform destructive miracles ("Holy and Unholy Miracle Workers" in *Byzantine Magic*, ed. H. Maguire [Washington: Dumbarton Oaks, 1995], 80-82)

<sup>83</sup>I. H. Marshall, discussing the cursing of Ananias and Sapphira ranks this "among the most difficult for the modern reader of Acts" with its portrayal of Peter as "a man of supernatural insight who is able to pronounce effective curses upon sinners" and as a whole "the story appears to present the working of the Spirit in almost magical fashion" (*Acts*, 110). Conzelmann on the same incident suggests that "the story derives from conceptions of corporate and magical power" (*Acts*, 38).

<sup>84</sup>Historical critics have recourse to options such as an untimely early death in the Christian community requiring some explanation which is then concocted (e.g., Barrett, *Acts*, 263-264), or viewing the whole incident as not a curse from God delivered through the apostle but some form of shock-induced death brought on by the exposure of sin (Dunn, *Acts*, 62-63; Witherington, *Acts*, 218) while nearly all admit the difficulty this story presents for the modern reader. Among the best



the account itself is relatively straightforward and reveals some interesting features of our narrator's world and worldview. The nature of the offense becomes apparent when one reads this story as beginning in 4:36 with the account of Barnabas's gift rather than 5:1. Here was an individual in the Christian community who had (or possibly after this event had) a reputation for his care and concern for other believers, hence the attention drawn to the name "Barnabas" (4:36). Assuming we are to read this account against the background of an honour/shame conscious culture, our narrator is implying that Ananias is looking for some sort of status, honour, or prestige as a result of mimicking the actions of Barnabas.<sup>85</sup> The problem is that Ananias will have to lie to gain his reputation because he is unwilling to part with the full sum he received for his property. As Peter makes clear in 5:4, it is not the partial generosity which is the problem, but the dishonesty. And to ensure there is no mistaking this is the case in *both* sudden deaths, our narrator informs us from the beginning that Sapphira is aware of the discrepancy between the real and claimed amount so that the reader can be sure of her intentional dishonesty in her later statement to Peter (5:2, 8).

While dishonesty is the offense, the more difficult question is, "To whom are Ananias and Sapphira being dishonest?" Peter suggests they have lied to the Holy Spirit (5:3), to God (5:4) and the Spirit of the Lord (5:9). This means that either in lying to Peter or in misrepresenting themselves to the community of believers, they have lied to the Holy Spirit. If we have correctly understood the motivation of the offense, that is, Ananias is looking for recognition as an extraordinarily generous member of the community, then the dishonesty is directed at the community. In Acts

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suggestion put forward by numerous commentators is simply that there is strong evidence even from the Pauline epistles (1 Cor 5:3-5 and 11:30) that the early church was not troubled by negative judgment operating through its community leaders. Johnson's rather unapologetic narrative reading of the incident as a whole within its literary context is in many ways preferable if our goal is understanding the narrative on its own terms (*Acts*, 89-93).

<sup>85</sup>Barrett's comment that "the ordering of the material is Luke's so that we cannot say that Ananias and Sapphira were motivated by a desire to share the good impression made by Barnabas" rather misses the point the writer of Acts is indeed making (*Acts*, 256; see further J. Roloff, *Die Apostelgeschichte* [Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1981], 93). Indeed, it is the very ordering of the material that suggests the motive for the dishonesty. Even pulling the story completely out of the Acts narrative context, one would be forced to suggest some such motive for the claim that *all* the proceeds were being handed over.

the Holy Spirit is at the core of the being of this community, responsible for its formation and its ongoing activities, and therefore lying to the community is lying to the Holy Spirit. How, then, does Peter fit in? As the chief representative of the community in many regards, including representing the community by receiving the gifts for its members, lying to Peter in this capacity is lying to the community. Furthermore, Peter is himself an extraordinary conduit of the Holy Spirit, a person capable of passing on the Holy Spirit (9:17), and given extraordinary powers by the Holy Spirit including the knowledge of Ananias' dishonesty. And, as the story develops, it is apparent that Peter is also an intermediary for acts of divine punishment.<sup>86</sup> Peter's inspired pronouncements bring immediate death.<sup>87</sup> The key question which thus remains is, why is the narrator not troubled by this latter power as the modern commentators clearly are?

Perhaps one of the key reasons is that our narrator believes Peter's motivation to be above suspicion in this episode. Peter is not acting out of personal advantage or vengeance, but purely as an agent of the Holy Spirit—both in his ability to spot the sin and his ability to pronounce divine judgment.<sup>88</sup> The sin is, after all, against the community and ultimately the Holy Spirit, not against Peter. Peter is merely functioning as an agent of both, not out of self-interest. As we will note below, Peter and Paul must at times play down their role in the performance of miracles and so avoid charges of operating out of personal ambition. It is possible that Peter's

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<sup>86</sup>In this regard Robert F. O'Toole is correct in suggesting that "these rule miracles of punishment primarily demonstrate that God and the Holy Spirit are working *through the apostles, especially Peter*, in the community"(italics added; "You Did Not Lie to Us [Human Beings] but to God' [Acts 5.4c]," in *Biblica* 76 [1995]: 185, see also 207). So also Lake and Cadbury who suggest that "the author probably means it to be understood that power went forth from Peter as an apostle inspired by the Holy Spirit and slew the offenders, just as the same power blinded Elymas and threatened damnation to Simon Magus" (51). Schille (148) and Conzelmann (*Acts*, 38) are perhaps somewhat "over the top" with their suggestion that this story paints Peter as a θεῖος ἄνθρωπος, but they are certainly correct in reading it as a story which says a good deal Peter's power as a mediator of divine power.

<sup>87</sup>Johnson's read of Peter's role as that of a powerful prophet is an excellent take on the story within its literary context (*Acts*, 92).

<sup>88</sup>This is indeed an example of Kolenkow's "man of power" who proclaims both the lack of personal advantage through miracle-working but is also capable of proclaiming he could set "divine maleficia...in motion," ("Problem," 110).

statement to Ananias in 5:4, οὐκ ἔψεύσω ἀνθρώποις ἀλλὰ τῷ θεῷ, functions in a similar way. And, as is evident in the sermons in Acts, our narrator is not overly troubled by God's divine right to judge and punish. With the issue of personal ambition to one side, this punitive miracle functions exactly as the positive miracles, it marks out the intermediary as an approved, powerful, and trustworthy agent of God.

Peter's subsequent cursing of Simon, therefore, ought to lay to rest any suggestion that our narrator would find punitive miracle-working offensive on the part of his approved intermediaries (8:18-24).<sup>89</sup> Much as with the Ananias and Sapphira incident, the offense is interpreted as being against the Holy Spirit, not the miracle-worker, even if the miracle-worker functions to mediate judgment on the offender. Certainly self-interest and ambition have no hold over our miracle-worker in the incident as portrayed because Peter is actually passing up money in cursing Simon. And Peter is marked out as a powerful intermediary because of his ability to curse, and, as Simon's response indicates, his ability to withdraw the curse (8:24).<sup>90</sup>

Finally, there are parallels in the blinding of Bar-Jesus by Paul. As the story is told, Bar-Jesus' offense is not opposing Paul so much as it is misleading the proconsul, whom Paul (presumably by the Spirit) is attempting to convert (13:10). Paul's miraculous curse is delivered by a Spirit-filled Paul (13:9) and functions much as any miracle performed elsewhere in Acts—it leads to faith in the message on the part of the observer (13:12).<sup>91</sup> And, much as our narrator remains untroubled by a God passing death sentences, the narrator is equally at ease with a God who uses temporary

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<sup>89</sup>This despite possible parallels to the language one finds in *PGM IV.1248-1249*. As E. Plümacher also rightly observes, Peter's curses have their fair share of biblical parallels as well (*Lukas als hellenistischer Schriftsteller: Studien zur Apostelgeschichte* [Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1972], 47).

<sup>90</sup>Indeed Conzelmann correctly interprets 18:24 as "document[ing] the powerlessness of the magician before the one who bears the Spirit" (*Acts*, 66) and regards 8:18-24 generally as "the first detailed example of the Lukan distinction between miracle and magic" (*Acts*, 65-66).

<sup>91</sup>Garrett's study on this incident further suggests that this particular miracle is capable of being defended on the grounds of the curse traditions within the revered Jewish Scriptures (i.e., it operates within an established religious framework; see below page #) as well as on the grounds that Paul's miracle-working power is greater than that of the magician (i.e., bigger is better) ("Light," 157-159).

blinding to serve his purposes (13:11; 9:8).<sup>92</sup>

These three examples ought to finally put to rest any notions that the nature of the miracle is a key criterion for distinguishing legitimate miracle-workers from illegitimate magicians within the Acts narrative world.<sup>93</sup> These punitive miracles function identically to the more positive healings and exorcisms. That stated, it is noteworthy that as a miracle-workers capable of mediating divine punishment, at no point do any miracle-workers in Acts call down judgment on their persecutors, which would certainly be a case of punitive miracles for selfish purposes.

## **5. Conclusion**

In terms of gaining power, the performance of miracles is both a sign of having "arrived" as an intermediary and a means of building one's reputation. Astounding deeds themselves do not a magician make, nor even destructive astonishing deeds. Indeed, if anything performing miracles within the Acts narrative world is validating tool, demonstrating the connection of the intermediary with the divine—and in this regard bigger is better and even extraordinary speech and punitive miracles can fulfill this positive function. The decision on whether a given intermediary is a legitimate or illegitimate purveyor of supernatural power will ultimately depend a range of criteria. Among the most important as we shall see is whether the fringe status which was cultivated from the start of these intermediaries' careers is properly maintained and personal ambition is kept in check. Performing the miraculous is a sure sign of being connected with divine power—what the miracle-worker ultimately does with that power is rather more decisive in a community's judgment on what sort of power that is.

### **D. Avoidance of Ambition**

So far we have noted the two characteristics of intermediaries which are tied to their rise to prominence as intermediaries—a withdrawal from typical societal

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<sup>92</sup>Part of the answer may well lie in the link to OT curse texts (Deut 28:28-29 in this case, Deut 29:18-20 in the case of Simon) as suggested by Garrett, *Demise*, 71, 82. Susan R. Garrett's study on this incident also hints that our "bigger is better" motif is also present here given that the miracle demonstrates "Paul must himself be invested with authority greater than Satan's", or rather, Satan's agent, Bar-Jesus ("Light," 159).

<sup>93</sup>On the consistent motif of the opponent of the intermediary in Greco-Roman biography see Bieler, 42-44.

structures and the performance of the miraculous. The former makes the given intermediary both a curious societal anomaly as well as relatively "safe" because they lie outside many of the power games which are played out within societal structures. The latter, as we have demonstrated, is a more overt power game with some strong implications for a given community's social order, as a reputation for mediating divine power may grow exponentially. What we want to discuss below is the means by which a given intermediary, rising to prominence and a position of power, was kept in check by a powerful cultural script.

We are suggesting, following Brown, that a given community will rely heavily on its observation of how a given intermediary handles the nearly limitless power at their disposal to determine what sort of divine power they are connected to. The potential adherents or supporters of a given intermediary must be assured that the intermediary is connected to the sort of divine power which does not reflect the worst aspects of socially ambitious behavior within the human community. The community demands that the intermediary to whom it offers allegiance not be overtly ambitious in their rise to a position of power, and the intermediary, if he or she wishes to be seen as connected with the right sort of divine power, must oblige. In what follows, we will deal with more direct examples of downplaying personal ambition. The successful and approved intermediary must ultimately avoid the use of divinely mediated power for personal advantage.

### **1. Downplaying and Dissipating the Power**

Within the narrative world of Acts, we find intermediaries regularly downplaying or dissipating their own potential power, especially within the miracle-stories in which the intermediaries deny divine or semi-divine status. Indeed it was the pattern of a narrator which keeps insisting on pointing out how very divine the miracle-worker's actions look to the observers, matched by equal insistence on the part of the characters that they were not divine or especially powerful which prompted this more extensive study of miracle-workers and magicians.

### a. Denying Divine Honours

There are three clear cases of miracle-workers refusing to accept the crowds' willingness to treat them as divine beings.<sup>94</sup> Oddly enough, two of these fit within the larger pattern of matching miracles performed by Peter and Paul, in this case healing long-term cripples. In the case of Peter's healing of the temple beggar, it may be an overstatement that the crowd believes Peter and John to be some divine or semi-divine beings, but clearly there is some element of overestimation that Peter feels the need to deny. As the crowd rushes toward the twosome with the healed beggar between them, Peter asks, ἡμῖν τί ἀτενίζετε ὡς ἰδίᾳ δυνάμει ἢ εὐσεβείᾳ πεποιηκόσιν τοῦ περιπατεῖν αὐτόν; (3:12).<sup>95</sup> The crowd's apparent assumption that the miraculous healing power came from Peter and John themselves is denied by Peter in favour of a description of the event so as to give credit to Jesus' name and the faith he offers which produces the healing (3:16). This carefully recorded modesty does not, however, imply that their roles as intermediaries were completely insignificant. For one thing, they have exercised the "faith" through which the miracle came (3:16). Later, asked by religious officials by what power they accomplished the healing, Peter's response is again framed in such a way as to remove any credit to themselves. Asked how they did this healing, their response is how it happened rather than how *they* did it (4:7-8). No reference is made to the agency of the apostles when Peter states, γνωστὸν ἔστω...ὅτι ἐν τῷ ὀνόματι Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ τοῦ Ναζωραίου..., ἐν τούτῳ οὗτος παρέστηκεν ἐνώπιον ὑμῶν ὑγιής (4:10). Again that does not necessarily imply a lack of agency on their part. After all, Peter describes their action as "an act of kindness" (εὐεργεσία) and the Sanhedrin's discussion behind

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<sup>94</sup>Klauck pulls these three together as well along with the case of Herod accepting divine honour ("With Paul," 103-104).

<sup>95</sup>The use of ἀτενίζω here is worth noting. While it may simply refer to an intense stare (Luke 22:56, Acts 11:6, 23:1) frequently it is an astonished stare at someone who is in some way unnatural (Luke 4:20, Acts 1:10, 6:15, 7:55, 10:4, 2 Cor 3:7, 3:13) or appears to be a form of "contact" between miracle-worker and the recipient of the miracle (Acts 3:4, 13:9, 14:9). In *PGM* IV. 556 and IV.711 the term is used in the context of epiphanies to describe both a conjured god staring at the magician and for the magician staring at a conjured god while giving orders. While one cannot speak with certainty given the limited evidence, the use of ἀτενίζω here might suggest that the crowds are viewing Peter and John as epiphanies of some sort.

closed doors carries on with the assumption that Peter and John are responsible for mediating the healing power of Jesus' name (4:16-21). The point not to be missed, however, is that the apostles have done all they can to deflect direct credit for the miracle.

When Peter visits Cornelius we are treated to another example of the intermediary's modesty. When Cornelius meets Peter at the door, he falls before him in some act of worship (πεσὼν ἐπὶ τοὺς πόδας προσεκύνησεν [10:25]). Peter certainly has read Cornelius's action as suggesting he is something more than an ordinary mortal. He informs Cornelius, ἐγὼ αὐτὸς ἄνθρωπός εἰμι (10:26). We, of course, have no way of knowing what Cornelius thought Peter may have been if not an ordinary ἄνθρωπος.

The most extraordinary case is Paul and Barnabas identified as Hermes and Zeus at Lystra (14:11ff.). Here they prepare full divine honours for the intermediaries. Not only were they prepared to sacrifice to them as gods, but Paul and Barnabas can hardly put a stop to the activities, so convinced are the good folk of Lystra. And Paul and Barnabas certainly demonstrate an all out effort to prevent the sacrifices. They tear their clothing, rush into the mob, and declare their humanity (ἡμεῖς ὁμοιοπαθεῖς ἐσμεν ὑμῖν ἄνθρωποι) and even with this our narrator informs us that they had difficulty (μόλις) preventing the sacrifice (14:18).

The narrator is an interesting voice at this point, insisting as he is that his intermediary heroes were so powerful and performed miracles so spectacular that they could be mistaken for divine *beings*. However, they were not ambitious sorts who accepted divine honours people were willing to give them. He has thus paid these intermediaries a double compliment, first in demonstrating their power, then in demonstrating their modesty.

#### **b. Accepting Divine Honours**

The modesty of the approved intermediaries has its counterpart in two characters who accept divine honours—Simon and Herod.<sup>96</sup> Not only does our

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<sup>96</sup>Klauck suggests a deliberate comparison is being drawn between Peter's reluctance to accept divine honours in 5:26 and 3:12 and Simon's exalted title (*Magie*, 46).

narrator label Simon as one who practises magic (μαγεύω), but he foregrounds the fact that Simon boasts that he is someone great (λέγων εἶναί τινα ἑαυτὸν μέγαν [8:9]). And, not only does he proclaim his greatness, but he allows the Samaritans to give him the title, ἡ δύναμις τοῦ θεοῦ ἡ καλουμένη Μεγάλη (8:10).<sup>97</sup> One suspects Simon is only too happy to have his intrinsic greatness (μέγας) acknowledged by the Samaritans.

Herod, presented as a consummate crowd-pleaser (12:3), delivers a speech in front of a crowd quite willing to play the adoring public (12:20-22). As we discussed above, his speech provokes the crowd to cry out that he (or at least his voice) is not human (ἄνθρωπος) but a god (θεός)(12:22). The narrator then blames his immediate demise at the hands of the angel of the Lord on his failure to deflect the praise to God (ἀνθ' ὧν οὐκ ἔδωκεν τὴν δόξαν τῷ θεῷ)(12:23).

These stories raise a number of questions which must be answered before continuing. The Herod incident demonstrates that our narrator's insistence that the intermediaries never accepted divine honours is not just based on a desire to present them as modest, but as a result of his theology in which there is only one true God. This story may well demonstrate what the narrator and the approved intermediaries believed would happen to them if they did accept divine honours. Self-deferential modesty is not just a quality sought out in intermediaries by the human social circles, but lack of ambition is also a necessary quality in the realm of the divine as well.

That forces us to ask another question, particularly in anticipation of this element appearing explicitly in *VA*, of whether there might not be an element of ambition in the realm of the divine in the episode involving the sons of Sceva and the demon in Acts 19:15-16. While the sons of Sceva are not claiming a divine title, it is possible their failed play for authority over this divine (albeit an evil demonic) being signifies an overly zealous "ambition in the realm of the gods"—a feature of the γόης in *VA*.<sup>98</sup> Indeed, a reader familiar with *PGM*-type exorcisms might even read their

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<sup>97</sup>Garrett likewise suggests that it is significant that "Simon does not repudiate the acclaim" (*Demise*, 67).

<sup>98</sup>See below page 173.



exorcism formula as an attempt to coerce the divine figure Jesus into carrying out their bidding in driving out the demon.<sup>99</sup> Their failure indicates Jesus did not show up on their behalf, despite their knowledge of his name.

One final question which requires answering is how one can claim communities are looking for self-deferential intermediaries when Samaria clearly accepts Simon. The Simon episode demonstrates a community quite willing to pay attention to a magician who both lays claim to *and accepts* exalted titles. Here it is necessary to invoke the distinctions we made in our introductory chapter. That is, there is a degree of inter group polemic and subjectivity in the approval and disapproval of intermediaries—we are simply arguing a shared set of criteria which was appropriated in forming and defending these subjective decisions. Various criteria could be called into play or ignored in a given case; that is the nature of polythetic classification. At any rate, one is suspicious whether Simon's followers would have had stories of their own which demonstrated his reluctance to gain power and influence (but here we venture beyond the bounds of Acts' narrative world).<sup>100</sup>

### c. The Apparent Exceptions

There are two apparent exceptions to the pattern of approved intermediaries demonstrating modesty when offered divine honours. The first is somewhat ambiguous, the second more troubling. When Paul and Silas remain in the Philippian prison following an earthquake which freed them, the jailer rushes in and falls trembling before Paul and Silas (ἐντρομος γενόμενος προσέπεσεν τῷ Παύλῳ καὶ [τῷ] Σιλῶ [16:29]). Marshall suggests that this is a case of the "jailer [giving]

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<sup>99</sup>Coercive rituals for gaining assistant daimons who assist in combating other daimons can be found in *PGM* I. 42-195 (note especially I.116). *PGM* IV.1227-64 is an example of a later exorcistic rite which actually makes use of the name "Jesus" within it and follows the usual pattern of compelling one god by means of another particularly through stacking names (so also *PGM* IV.3007-86).

<sup>100</sup>Garrett correctly states, "By no means may one assume that Simon would have accepted the terms 'magician' and 'magic' as designation for himself or his work" (*Demise*, 62). On the possible traditions and redactional elements in this whole account and particularly the source of the portrayal of Simon in this passage see D. A. Koch, "Geistbesitz, Geistverleihung und Wundermacht: Erwägungen zur Tradition und zur lukanischen Redaktion in Act 8, 5-25," in *ZNW* 77 (1986): 64-82, especially 80-82.

them the reverence due to divine agents."<sup>101</sup> However, unlike the Peter/Cornelius incident, the more explicitly religious term προσκυνέω is not used here, but rather the more general προσπίπτω.<sup>102</sup> The action is not elaborated on in any way, nor is its significance immediately apparent, as the next verse has the jailer bringing Paul and Silas out of prison. The jailer then addresses them as κύριοι, which need not in itself suggest anything beyond deep respect.<sup>103</sup> Klauck notes the difficulty with the jailer's apparent reverence as well and suggests that their response to being addressed as κύριοι by pointing to *the* κύριος is a counterpart here to Peter's denial of divine status when Cornelius falls at his feet.<sup>104</sup> In the end, any one of three scenarios remains possible for this incident: (1) falling before Paul and Silas had no overt religious significance but was simply the act of a trembling jailer overcome by the emotion of the moment, (2) falling before Paul and Silas was a devotional act of some sort, but their disavowal of any special divine status is simply ellipsed or implied in their response in this compact account, (3) falling before Paul and Silas was a devotional act which they accepted. Given that the narrator has already given us the Lystra account, as well as the incident between Peter and Cornelius, one must conclude that option three is very dubious, and the choice of terms for falling also rules against two and three. Ambiguous as it is, it neither aids nor damages our case.

The incident involving Paul on Malta also requires addressing in this regard. When the snake first attaches itself to Paul, the islanders are convinced he is a murderer being punished by Δίκη (28:4). When he remains unaffected, they change their minds and say he is a god (μεταβαλόμενοι ἔλεγον αὐτὸν εἶναι θεόν [28:6]). Based on a pattern of denying one's divinity, one would expect the narrator to report a speech by Paul correcting their conclusion. The narrator's failure to clarify

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<sup>101</sup>Acts, 273.

<sup>102</sup>Of the range of definitions offered by LSJ which could potentially fit this scene—"to fall upon," "meet with," "encounter," "to come suddenly upon," "to fall down at another's feet, prostrate oneself"—none, including the latter, has the overtly religious overtones of προσκυνέω.

<sup>103</sup>Cf. LSJ, "κύριος", B.I.2.

<sup>104</sup>Magie, 86.

this false perception is regarded by Haenchen and Conzelmann as an indication of a θεῖος ἄνηρ presentation of Paul by Luke.<sup>105</sup> However, this conclusion is only sustainable if one treats this text in complete isolation and one is convinced of a recognizable θεῖος ἄνηρ ideal type.<sup>106</sup>

Read within the confines of the existing narrative world a rather different picture emerges. First, the Lystra episode has not only established that Paul is unwilling to accept divine honours,<sup>107</sup> but other comparisons between that episode and this are noteworthy. In Lystra they are preparing to honour Paul with a sacrifice, but in this episode, we just have an expression of the opinion of the islanders without an expression of reverence or honour for Paul. Second, one senses that what is recorded is simply the musings of the islanders as they watch the episode take place, rather than a direct interaction between Paul and the Maltese inhabitants. The text explicitly states that they are talking amongst themselves when suggesting he is a murderer (πρὸς ἀλλήλους ἔλεγον [28:4]), and one assumes the same is the case later when they change their mind (μεταβαλόμενοι ἔλεγον [28:6]). These islanders are, after all, οἱ βάρβαροι according to 28:2, and hence, not Greek speakers, much the same as at Lystra where the misguided crowd speaks Λυκαονιστί (14:11).<sup>108</sup> In the latter case, Paul and Barnabas only become aware of the crowd's opinion when they discover a sacrifice is being prepared (14:12-14). Likewise here, only the narrator seems privy to the discussion by the local non-Greek speakers,<sup>109</sup> and as there is no visible honour

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<sup>105</sup>Haenchen, 716; Conzelmann, *Acts*, 223.

<sup>106</sup>See below page 149 and following.

<sup>107</sup>Klauck, *Magie*, 131.

<sup>108</sup>Bruce suggests that "Luke probably implies that only uncultured people like the Lystrans and Maltese—"barbarians," as he calls them—would think of Paul as a divine being (*Book*, 499). This is, of course, quite possible. However, it seems equally likely that a language barrier is being exploited by the narrator to tell a story concerning Paul and an audience which develops an overly-exalted opinion of the apostle. Since Paul is unaware of the discussion sweeping the crowd, he is exculpated of any responsibility for putting a quick stop to the nonsense. This is a variation, therefore, on the theme that the miracle-worker does such marvels as to be thought divine, while not suggesting that the miracle-worker actually is, thought themselves to be, or ever suggested they were divine.

<sup>109</sup>To ask how it is that the narrator knows the language of the barbarians and not Paul is to break the story-teller's spell and deny the use of the literary device of an omniscient narrator. Clearly

being paid to Paul, he carries on, seemingly unaware of the stir he has created.<sup>110</sup>

Third, the whole "feel" of this narrative is different from other miracle-stories in Acts, probably due the general narrative shift which takes place when one moves into the sea voyage section of Acts (27-28). Here the typical preaching/evangelizing activities of Paul give way to a Paul focused on his goal of getting to Rome, even if he as the prisoner must take charge of the voyage. Paul does what he can to move the voyage along but little else (a point we shall reiterate below when considering the healings on Malta). It fits, therefore, with our observation that Paul remains unaware of the Maltese opinion of him, because he is not interested in any sort of ongoing interaction with them for the sake of spreading the gospel. Even if he was aware, so long as no divine tribute is paid to him, he is interested only in getting along to Rome.

Finally, we need to point out that the miracle in this case is "passive." That is, Paul has not set the miracle in motion with some special word or action on his part. The incident would certainly be more damaging if Paul specifically performed a miracle and then failed to correct the islanders' opinion (in which case that would match the "sin" of Simon who specifically performs miracles to gain recognition as divine). This is a case of Paul experiencing divine protection and vindication and perhaps there is no need for him to justify this or explain its true significance. All of these mitigating factors at the very least neutralize this episode as damaging to our observation that the true intermediary is self-effacing when overly enthusiastic opinions are expressed concerning his or her divine nature.

#### **d. Conclusion**

The fascinating pattern in Acts of miracle-workers whose miraculous deeds are great enough to earn acclamation as divine beings matched by a fierce resolve to downplay these honours captures nicely the ironies and ambiguities of gaining power without being seen to desire personal advantage. The legitimate miracle-workers are

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a more historical-critical approach would need to answer that question and several lines of speculation from sheer invention to later translated reports are possible.

<sup>110</sup>Schreiber, who regards this episode for the most part as a Lukan invention (122-142), makes the astute observation that readers at this stage in the narrative will understand the folly of the islanders' view of Paul as a divine being (132-133, 148). Similarly Klauck, "With Paul," 105.

those who have a grand ability to perform miracles *and* are equally grandiose in their modesty. Illegitimate intermediaries, or magicians, are those who may well perform amazing feats, but they fail to deflect the advantages that accrue to them as a result. In the case of Simon and Herod, failure to deflect divine honours is a statement on their failure to exhibit the required modesty and to make unseemly claims in the realm of the divine.

## 2. The Danger of Wealth

One of the key indices of ambition on the part of an intermediary appears to be the accumulation of wealth. This would hardly be surprising if, as NT social science scholars are keen to point out, the Acts narrative world reflects a society in which wealth is a limited good and wealth gains not commensurate with one's social status were highly suspect.<sup>111</sup> Peter Brown's analysis of the loss of a check on ambition particularly with respect to wealth in Late Antiquity suggests a society that had traditionally been suspicious of independent individuals building personal fortunes.<sup>112</sup> We should expect, therefore, that positively evaluated intermediaries would remain disinterested in money, while illegitimate intermediaries would attempt to use the mediation of divine power to gain wealth.<sup>113</sup> While Acts does not provide the extensive evidence we will find in *VA*, the available evidence is enough for a scholar such as C. K. Barrett to conclude that the narrator is correlating illegitimate and legitimate expressions of spiritual power with wealth gains and avoidance of wealth.<sup>114</sup>

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<sup>111</sup>Bruce J. Malina, *The New Testament World: Insights from Cultural Anthropology*, rev. ed. (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1993), 103-107, and *Christian Origins and Cultural Anthropology: Practical Models for Biblical Interpretation* (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1986), 83-84.

<sup>112</sup>Brown, *Making*, 30-36.

<sup>113</sup>Weber links the success of prophets to their explicit avoidance of overtly gaining wealth through their activities (48). More broadly and only of sideline interest to our specific thesis, Kollmann offers the fascinating suggestion that the free healings and exorcisms on offer by the early churches' charismatic missionaries (as opposed to the considerably costly physicians, magicians, or incubation cults) were a prominent feature in attracting converts (378).

<sup>114</sup>C. K. Barrett, "Light on the Holy Spirit from Simon Magus (Acts 8, 4-25)" in *Les Actes de Apôtres. Traditions, rédaction, théologie*, ed. J. Kremer (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 1979), 281-295.

### a. Avoiding Wealth

There are suggestions within the Acts narrative that neither Peter nor Paul attempted to amass wealth through their miracle-working. The original apostles' attitude toward wealth generally is demonstrated from the outset by the first community under their teaching (2:42-47). Within this community, those with property sold their goods to support those with financial needs (2:44-45). But it is the conversation between Peter and the temple beggar which allows the narrator to make explicit that Peter and John are not amassing wealth with this scheme (3:6).<sup>115</sup> The role of Peter and the apostles in collecting and distributing the proceeds of property sales by the wealthier believers also suggests something of their detachment from wealth (4:32-5:11). They are the trustworthy leaders whose integrity is beyond question with regard to handling the proceeds for further distribution, as the incident with Ananias and Sapphira demonstrates. One assumes that the extreme demands of honesty within that story make it clear that Peter could hardly mediate a divine curse on Ananias and Sapphira's dishonesty without himself being completely free of guilt in this regard. While 6:1 suggests perhaps there have been problems with distribution, as the story progresses, two matters become apparent. First, the Twelve are clearly portrayed as the problem-solvers rather than a part of the problem when the issue of inequitable distribution is brought to their attention. And, second, the Twelve show themselves rather less than enthusiastic about their role in the wealth distribution ministry of the community (6:1-2).<sup>116</sup> It is not that they have a disregard for financial matters, but they are clearly happy to be rid of the responsibility of distributing wealth as it allows them to direct their full attention to their preferred task of prayer and

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<sup>115</sup>Barrett suggests that the apostles' statement on their lack of money indicates "there is no question of payment for the benefit they confer" ("Light," 289).

<sup>116</sup>That handling and distributing charity funds carried a perception of temptation toward dishonesty is obvious from John 12:6 and 13:29. The exact nature of what Peter means by διακονεῖν τροπέζαις is not entirely clear but given the difficulty has to do with distribution of supplies to widows, it most likely pertains to their role as sketched in 4:35 as collectors and distributors of aid for the poor (Bruce, *Acts*, 182; Barrett, *Acts*, 311). *Didache* 11.9 which allows a prophet to order a table in a prophetic trance (ὀρίζων τράπεζαν ἐν πνεύματι) but cannot eat from it is somewhat interesting in this regard.

"ministry of the Word" (ἡ διακονία τοῦ λόγου rather than διακονεῖν τραπέζαις [6:2-3]). Clearly the preaching and miracle-working Twelve as portrayed by the narrator are not obsessed with money, or specifically amassing wealth, in any way.

Handling charity funds is a task also entrusted to Paul (11:30, 24:17).<sup>117</sup> Furthermore there is a curious reference to Paul practising his trade in Corinth which offers at least one relevant interpretive possibility (18:3).<sup>118</sup> Besides being the first time Paul is portrayed as practising his trade,<sup>119</sup> this is also the first extended stay in a location other than his "home base" in Antioch.<sup>120</sup> Could we therefore conclude that

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<sup>117</sup>This latter reference, occurs in Paul's speech before Felix in which he states that his motivation for coming back to Jerusalem after several years was to bring gifts for the poor (ἐλεημοσύνας ποιήσων εἰς τὸ ἔθνος μου). While this could refer simply to almsgiving generally as a religious duty, given the previous charity trip to Jerusalem in chapter 11 and the possibility that Paul's collection for the Jerusalem church might be part of the shared extra-text (Rom 15:25-27, 2 Cor 9:1-5, Gal 2:10), it seems more likely this is supposed to refer to charity funds Paul is carrying from his church(es) to Jerusalem.

<sup>118</sup>Barrett suggests that "at 18,3 we learn that Paul, unlike the magi, did not make a living from his 'spiritual' work; instead he worked with his hands to support himself" ("Light," 290). L. C. A. Alexander rightly notes the matter-of-fact way in which Paul's manual labour is introduced and the contrast between this attitude towards manual labour and that of the Greek aristocratic disdain of "banausic" occupations ("Luke's Preface in the Context of Greek Preface-Writing," in *NovT* 28 [1986]: 70 and *The Preface to Luke's Gospel: Literary convention and social context in Luke 1.1-4 and Acts 1.1* (SNTSMS 78; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 177-178). Certainly Apollonius will not stoop to actual physical labour in his quest to distance himself from charges of self-advancement through his mediation of divine power. Here both the social class of the writer and perhaps even the religious background (the positive attitude towards physical labour exhibited by Jewish Torah scholars; see Bruce, *Acts*, 391-392) contributes to a distinction between intermediaries in the Christian and the Greco-Roman pagan framework.

<sup>119</sup>The syntax of 18:3 almost suggests that the reader is expected to know that Paul is a tentmaker with its first sentence in which it gives Paul's reason for staying with Aquila and Priscilla as διὰ τὸ ἁμότεχνον εἶναι. Then, as an afterthought it adds the phrase identifying "them" (i.e., Aquila and Priscilla) as σκηνοποιοὶ τῆ τέχνη. On the other hand, this could be a case of the narrator ensuring the narratee is familiar with this basic fact or reminding the narratee of a basic fact. Linking Paul's profession to Aquila and Priscilla's and then identifying the latter's profession allows one to ensure the "obvious" is not missed by the reader.

<sup>120</sup>This is largely based on the rather subjective criteria of narrative "impression." That is, up to this point the actual length of a given stop has either not been mentioned or been mentioned only with very general phrases (the reference to a year-long stay in Antioch with Barnabas [11:25] and the three weeks in Thessalonica [17:3] are the exception). But the constant movement from one location to the next, and stays which are measured in days (Philippi, 16:8) and weeks (Thessalonica, 17:3), give an impression of constant movement which would probably not involve stops of 18 months or more. This is the case even for his stay in Iconium which is a "considerable time" (ἱκανὸν... χρόνον διέτριψαν [14:3]). Furthermore, the text draws attention to the length of his stay in Corinth in that it treats it as a fulfillment of the Lord's vision that Paul will be protected in that city (18:9-11).

Paul is supporting himself through tent-making for his extended stay rather than through his preaching and miracle-working, and so remaining above suspicion as to his motivation?<sup>121</sup> At first glance, the suggestion in 18:5 that Paul gave up tent-making in favour of preaching when Silas and Timothy arrived would suggest this is not the case. However, this verse might also suggest that Paul can cease tent-making because Silas and Timothy are somehow providing for living expenses. In either scenario, Paul tent-making or Paul supported by his close disciples, Paul is not earning money from those he is preaching to.

This is also the impression left by the account of his other extended stay—Ephesus. Having already been introduced to his trade in chapter 18, when there is a reference to his σουδάριον ("kerchief") and σιμικίνθια ("kerchief" or "apron") which transmit his healing and exorcistic power in 19:12, it is natural to understand these as work-related bits of clothing.<sup>122</sup> The suspicion that Paul worked at a trade in Ephesus is backed up by a comment he then makes in the next chapter while talking to the Ephesian elders. Referring back to his time with them he states, αὐτοὶ γινώσκετε ὅτι ταῖς χρεῖαις μου καὶ τοῖς οὖσιν μετ' ἐμοῦ ὑπηρέτησαν αἱ χεῖρες αὐταὶ (20:34). Not only does the emphatic αἱ χεῖρες αὐταὶ remove all doubt that Paul himself engaged in manual labour in Ephesus, but it also suggests that he and his travelling companions supported one another through manual labour. This might shed light back on the Corinthian episode where Paul ceases working when Timothy and Silas arrive.

The real significance of the reference to Paul's manual labour in chapter 20 is not so much the fact of his working in Ephesus, but the point he is making when he brings this fact up. In an apology for his ministry before the Ephesian elders, he states that, ἀργυρίου ἢ χρυσοῦ ἢ ἱματισμοῦ οὐδενὸς ἐπεθύμησα (20:33). He

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<sup>121</sup>That this is in fact part of the historical Paul's motivation is clear from 1 Thess 2:9, 1 Cor 9:1-18, 2 Cor 11:7-12. The Paul of the Acts narrative, however, has rather similar words to the Ephesian elders in 20:33-35 and Ephesus is another extended stay within the Acts narrative.

<sup>122</sup>This is the suggestion of Bruce who translates the Latin transliterations "*sudaria* [as] 'sweat-rags,' kerchiefs worn on the head,...and *semicinctia*, 'aprons'" and then suggests that "both would be worn by Paul at his tent-making work" (*Acts*, 410). English glosses in sentence from LSJ.



believed his lack of desire for silver, gold, or clothing was proven by the fact that he engaged in manual labour to support himself and his colleagues (20:34). Implicit in this statement is the notion that to have had the Ephesians' support him during his time there could have led to suggestions that he engaged in his ministry to gain wealth. Paul's manual labour, therefore, particularly in locations where he spent more time, could well be read as a strategy to demonstrate lack of greed.<sup>123</sup>

#### b. Gaining Wealth

Peter and Paul's counterparts with regard to wealth are the much vilified Simon and the prophesying business of the Philippian slave girl and her owners. Curiously, in the case of Simon, there never is any direct reference to him actually selling his power and ability. However, everything about the narrator's characterization and the characters' dialogue suggests that Simon is indeed in the divine mediation business for the money (8:9-11, 18-23).<sup>124</sup> When Simon sees the spectacular results of the apostles' hand-laying rite, he offers to purchase not the reception of the Holy Spirit, but the ability to successfully perform the same rite they are engaged in (8:19).<sup>125</sup> The unstated assumption that the narrator clearly wishes us to draw is that Simon's attempt to purchase the "authority" or "power" (ἐξουσία) to endow others with the Holy Spirit is an investment which will find its return in selling the experience of the "filling of the Holy Spirit."<sup>126</sup> The contrast between Simon and Peter at this point is unmistakable. Here is Simon, hoping to purchase a "get-rich" magical act, opposite

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<sup>123</sup>So also C. K. Barrett who states with reference to this passage, "Paul's working with his own hands is more than enough to clear his reputation of the charge that he had performed the apostolic tasks for gain" ("Paul's Address to the Ephesian Elders," in *God's Christ and His People: Studies in Honour of Nils Alstrup Dahl*, ed. J. Jervell and W. A. Meeks [Oslo: Universitetsforlaget, 1977], 118).

<sup>124</sup>Klauck, "With Paul," 98. Barrett, *Acts*, 406, 413.

<sup>125</sup>A question which has yet to be fully explored is what precisely Simon expected in exchange for his money—a magic scroll with secret instructions, a secret initiation rite, a hand-laying ceremony which transmitted not just the Holy Spirit but additionally the ability to pass it along? The mention of magical scrolls in 19:19 certainly suggests these are a well known feature of this narrative world, but in a narrative full of hand-laying ceremonies, this could equally be likely.

<sup>126</sup>Barrett, *Acts*, 413 and "Light," 288. Garrett, *Demise*, 70. Klauck makes a further plausible suggestion that Simon recognizes the Holy Spirit as the miracle-working power behind Philip's healings and exorcisms and thus hopes his permanent possession will enhance his miracle-working powers generally (*Magie*, 31-32).

Peter, who not only refuses to sell and profit himself, but also lectures Simon on the evil of assuming one could purchase his divine gift. Peter even goes so far as to curse Simon for attempting to purchase his miracle-working power (8:20-23).

The case of the prophesying slave girl in Philippi leaves no doubt as to the greed factor in her mediation.<sup>127</sup> In the narrator's introductory statement concerning the slave girl, we are informed that her predictions of the future have earned a great deal for her owners (ἦτις ἐργασίαν πολλὴν παρεῖχεν τοῖς κυρίοις αὐτῆς μαντευομένη [16:16]). And, as if to remove all doubt as to the true motivation of the owners, when the slave girl is relieved of the invading pythonic spirit, it is the loss of potential earnings (ἐξῆλθεν ἡ ἐλπίς τῆς ἐργασίας αὐτῶν) which drives them to drag Paul and Silas before the authorities (16:19). The quest for wealth marks this case of false divine mediation.<sup>128</sup>

The case against the other negatively labelled intermediaries in Acts is not quite as direct, but certainly warrants mention. In Paul's denunciation of Bar Jesus, he labels him, among other things, as full of παντὸς δόλου καὶ πάσης βραδιουργίας (13:10). Barrett claims that βραδιουργία "may be a simple synonym of δόλος but probably adds the sense of fraud, of making money by deception and trading on credulity."<sup>129</sup> In Acts 19:17-19 the narrator suggests that the episode involving the sons of Sceva sparked the burning of magical scrolls. The actual monetary value of these scrolls may be mentioned only to point to their great number (19:19). However, it might also be the case that our narrator is pointing out the commercial angle in the sorcery trade. Since this is tied to the incident involving the Jewish exorcists, this might be an indirect indictment of the itinerant Jewish exorcists as traders in magical or

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<sup>127</sup>Barrett, "Light," 290.

<sup>128</sup>The story may also suggest that divine mediation for the sake of gaining a large profit might have been as unacceptable to the Philippians as to our narrator since the owners make no mention of lost profits when they bring Paul and Silas before the authorities (16:20-21). However, as we shall argue below, if one assumes that the owners are charging Paul and Silas with magical practices, loss of property would be typically assumed to be front and center and, in this case, simply elipsed by the narrator.

<sup>129</sup>Acts, 617.

exorcistic power.<sup>130</sup>

### **c. An Apparent Exception**

As with divine honours, Paul's experience in Malta appears to be the exception to the general principle of wealth avoidance. As the story is written, there seems to be a connection between Paul's miracle-working in 28:9 and the honours or gifts and supplies the whole party receives in 28:10, especially since 28:11 indicates that 28:10 is a narrative "flash forward." Had 28:10 come after the first sentence of verse 11, the direct connection between Paul's healings and the gifts would have been less obvious. Again, as we noted with regard to divine honours, reading the episode within the larger context of the narrative is critical to avoiding a misinterpretation.<sup>131</sup> First, as Klauck points out, the generosity of the islanders to all the stranded sailors (including Paul and his party) in every instance precedes their appreciation of Paul's miracle-working power.<sup>132</sup> Second, we have already suggested the whole tone of the narrative has changed at this point, and Paul is less the travelling preacher/miracle-worker, and more the miracle-worker extraordinaire focused solely on reaching Rome with his party. Third, while it is Paul doing the miracle-working, it is his whole party of companions (including the narrator) who are recipients of the gifts and supplies. Shipwrecked and so presumably in need of all sorts of things, Paul is taking charge once more of the expedition and salvaging the situation, simply doing what needs to be done to get to Rome. In this case receiving gifts and supplies as a result of having healed the Maltese sick is acceptable in light of their need and their mission. As we shall see below, this pragmatism when it comes to meeting the needs of travelling companions is matched by the austere Apollonius himself.

### **d. Conclusion**

That avoiding wealth is critical to a positive assessment as an intermediary in the narrative world of Acts is beyond question. Barrett's conclusion that Acts is

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<sup>130</sup>Barrett, "Light," 290.

<sup>131</sup>That is, of course, a misinterpretation from the perspective of cooperating with the narrator and his ideological perspective.

<sup>132</sup>Magie, 129-131.

deliberate in portraying its magicians as money hungry and the travelling apostles as uninterested in wealth makes good sense of the available evidence. Ambition is thus kept in check by a cultural script that will not allow an intermediary to reap personal wealth from their mediatorial activities if they want to maintain a semblance of legitimacy.

### E. Conclusion

The narrative world of Acts reveals a place in which Kolenkow's "problem of power" results in intermediaries both gaining power and avoiding magic accusations through the cultivation of a fringe status.<sup>133</sup> The means of gaining a reputation as a notable intermediary of divine power converge with criteria by which a given intermediary's legitimacy or illegitimacy is measured (albeit subjectively and in an ad hoc manner). We noted ways in which intermediaries in Acts cultivate an interstitial or fringe existence—their "desert" withdrawal of sorts. These included abandonment of livelihoods, constant travel, and a disregard for personal safety. That apparent disinterest in normal society and its functioning finds its reward in miracle-working, the sign of an intimate connection with the divine. Miracle-working was both a sign of power gained and a means of exponentially growing one's reputation as a powerful intermediary. But ultimately, power gained from life on the fringe is power which must remain on the fringe if it is to be accepted as legitimate. The withdrawal from the social network is a detachment that must be maintained. The two "checks" on ambition that we noted particularly in the Acts narrative were the humility demanded

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<sup>133</sup>Perhaps the finest summary of the themes we have presented under "Gaining Power" can be found in a body of literature spawned by the canonical Acts, namely the apocryphal Acts. In *The Acts of Thomas* 20, Thomas' new found Indian friends have this to say about the man:

He has neither built a palace, nor did he do anything of that which he promised to do, but he goes about in the cities and villages, and if he has anything he gives it to the poor, and teaches a new God, heals the sick, drives out demons, and performs many miracles. And we believe that he is a magician. But his acts of compassion and the cures done by him as a free gift, still more his simplicity and gentleness and fidelity, show that he is a just man, or an apostle of the new god, whom he preaches. For he continually fasts and prays and eats only bread with salt, and his drink is water, and he wears one coat, whether in warm weather or in cold, and he takes nothing from anyone but gives to others what he has.

Translation from J. K. Elliott, ed., *The Apocryphal New Testament* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993), 455.

of intermediaries whose miracle-working was such that it provoked divine honours and a studious avoidance of wealth through miracle-working.

The paradox of standing outside of societal power structures while offering access to an unlimited divine power source is clearly one which requires a careful script shared by the intermediary and the society wishing to avail itself of that power but requiring protection from it as well. For an intermediary to be judged a miracle-worker rather than a magician meant gaining power without being seen to desire to gain power. That is a tricky business, and as we shall see in our next chapter, only becomes more complicated as the intermediary's divine power bumps into other societal power structures. But it is a tricky business not just in narrative worlds crafted by Christian narrators, but equally a tight-rope affair in narrative worlds created by pagan authors.

### III. Gaining Power in *Life of Apollonius*

*VA*, like *Acts*, bears out Douglas' and Brown's observation that intermediaries often gain their power through withdrawal from everyday societal structures and that this fringe or interstitial existence is both a source of their power as well as a safeguard against abuse of their power.<sup>134</sup> The exercise of power thus gained becomes socially acceptable. As we shall see, there are also some differences between *VA* and *Acts* as well, in terms of emphases and the function of various social moves. The move from a monotheistic, albeit a reasonably well populated, divine realm in *Acts* to the polytheistic divine realm of *VA* tends to add a degree of complexity to any analysis of intermediaries. While the social moves are frequently similar, the language has changed considerably. Furthermore, *VA* offers more overt cases of magic accusations which allow a degree of precision in establishing the criteria for those judgments in a way that *Acts* does not. In examining the intermediary's rise to prominence and influence in *VA* we have the further advantage of a life story that goes from cradle to

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<sup>134</sup>David Potter draws a further parallel between the intermediary as diviner and cultic divination centres as both removed from the city (the latter physically the former "marked out from ordinary mortals by the peculiar qualities of their lifestyle")(Prophets and Emperors: Human and Divine Authority from Augustus to Theodosius [Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1994], 22).

grave. As we have done with Acts, in this section we will investigate how intermediaries in the narrative world of *VA* are expected to handle the potential and accrued power which exercise of their role brings. Our general headings remain the same. We will track the cultivation of a fringe status through withdrawal from ordered society and on to the sign of power gained—the performance of miracles, and then on to the maintenance of a fringe status through the avoidance of ambition. For the sake of ease of comparison, where possible, we shall follow the subheadings we used in analyzing Acts as well.

#### **A. Identifying the Intermediaries**

The intermediary who serves for our narrator as miracle-worker par excellence is of course Apollonius of Tyana, the subject of Philostratus' biography. It is regrettable for the sake of our study that *VA* does not have a convenient set of magicians such as the narrative of Acts offers as a counterpart. However, Apollonius, a miracle-worker in the narrator's judgment, is accused of operating as a magician frequently enough in *VA* that we will still be able to sketch the negative counterpart reasonably well within the narrative world of *VA*.

Like Acts, there are several characters which fall into our category of intermediary. The most notable are the Brahmans of India and particularly their leader Iarchus, who are the object of unabashed praise from both the narrator and Apollonius (3.13ff.). Thespesion and the Gymnosophists of Egypt probably fit our category of intermediary, and as positive examples as such, even though they are not held in nearly the same esteem as the Indian Brahmans by our narrator and Apollonius (6.6ff.). The Magi of Persia also receive a mixed review and surprisingly scant attention, although they could be placed in the category of positively evaluated intermediaries (1.26, 32). They serve in the role of professional priesthood and as such take on slightly different characteristics from intermediaries such as Apollonius who do not hold an official religious post or title. There is also the case of the priest of the underground shrine to Trophonius at Lebadea who receives a visitation from Trophonius himself to rebuke him for his shoddy treatment of Apollonius (8.19).

As one can see from the example of the priests, categorical certainty is elusive. Priests are certainly mediators of divine power in many cases, but frequently that is more a function of office than personality as is the case with Apollonius or Iarchus. Furthermore, as we shall see below, mediation of wisdom may in some cases be regarded as a form of divine mediation and highly praised philosophers, such as Phraotes the philosopher king of India, and severely criticized philosophers, such as Euphrates, in many ways exhibit many of the characterizations we are suggesting take place with miracle-workers and magicians (2.26; 1.13; 5.33, 39-40). Euphrates is a particularly interesting case. While he does exhibit characteristics which would be used to cast an intermediary as illegitimate, we cannot place him in the category of intermediary. Indeed, Euphrates attempts to denigrate Apollonius by intimating the latter's philosophy is one which claims to call upon the gods (τὴν...θεοκλυτεῖν φάσκουσιν), while his own is purely "natural" (τὴν...κατὰ φύσιν [5.37]). As we shall defend below, the title or role of "philosopher" can clearly be a role of divine mediation, as in Apollonius' case as we shall see below, or not, as in Euphrates' case.

As with Acts, our primary focus will be on the central character(s) of the narrative. In *VA* this means nearly all our material will have to do with Apollonius and our narrator's characterization of him. There is also sufficient material on Iarchus to allow us to confirm that we are picking up the key characteristics of miracle-workers. The remaining possibilities will be introduced where appropriate but not on a systematic basis. Finally, there are enough occasions where Apollonius is faced with charges of being a magician that we can sketch with relative certainty what a magician is expected to look like within the narrative world of *VA*.

## **B. Withdrawal from the Traditional Social Network**

Intentional social dislocation is much more evident in *VA* than in Acts. It is in Acts, as we demonstrated, but it does not receive the deliberate sort of attention that it does in *VA*. Furthermore, the function of certain social relocations shifts slightly. Our analysis of Acts (in light of Douglas and Brown) suggested that this fringe existence could serve two functions—it is a source of power and it is a means of making power

so gained safe because it limits the potential personal gains by the intermediary. Within Acts it is easier to find evidence for social withdrawal as a means by which the power or potential power of the intermediary is controlled. In *VA*, the power gained through the very act of withdrawal initially is more recognizable. No doubt this would hardly come as a surprise to those who have studied the rising popularity of asceticism and the power generated by ascetic behaviour in the early centuries C.E., and link the later date of Philostratus' writing with his narrative emphasis on Apollonius' asceticism.<sup>135</sup> Debate over observations such as this must await another study. In what follows we shall see that the abandonment of mainstream society, travel, and bold disregard for one's personal well-being all serve to place intermediaries, and particularly in this case Apollonius, on the fringe of society.

### 1. Abandoning Mainstream Society

Many of Apollonius' social moves particularly early in *VA* are best described as an abandonment of mainstream society or as an intentional upsetting of societal expectations for his social status. In doing so he may well be fulfilling another set of expectations, i.e., the ascetic intermediary, but clearly it is the exceptional status of such a move that sets it apart as distinctive and worth noting by the narrator.<sup>136</sup> According to our narrator, Apollonius came from a wealthy district, and furthermore, from one of the wealthiest families within that district (1.4). This emphasis on his family's wealth thus serves to heighten his later abandonment of his family wealth (1.13). Furthermore, the abandonment of his family's wealth is carefully cast in such a way as to show a detachment rather than contempt for wealth. Unlike other philosophers who left property to be taken over by flocks and goats (Anaxagoras) or threw their money into the sea (Crates), Apollonius uses his inheritance to reform his

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<sup>135</sup>On asceticism in Late Antiquity, especially as it might pertain to Apollonius, see Francis (xiii-xviii, 84-129), and more generally see Peter Brown (*The Body and Society: Men, Women and Sexual Renunciation in Early Christianity* [London: Faber and Faber, 1988]).

<sup>136</sup>Cox, 23-30. The irony and ambiguity of a deliberate loss or denial of wealth and power to gain another form of power is worth noting. So also is Anderson's comment that "those who began with considerable advantage, even if they gave up their material wealth, did not give up their education... [a]nd... were well equipped to mix in urban aristocracies or pick up and obtain pupils and patrons" (*Sage*, 43).



brother's behaviour (giving him half of his share so the brother will accept his advice) and the remainder is given to poor relatives, leaving himself only a tiny amount (1.13).

This "pleasant", bordering on "cheerful", abandonment is also present in his five year silence.<sup>137</sup> Our narrator reports that "his company was not without charm during the period of his silence; for he would maintain a conversation by the expression of his eyes, by gestures of his hand and nodding his head; nor did he strike men as gloomy or morose; for he retained his fondness for company and his cheerfulness" (1.14, Loeb). Other elements within these early chapters also point to the "cheerful" or "natural" ascetic motif.<sup>138</sup> His life-long avoidance of marriage and sexual intercourse with women was hardly a morose self-mortification but rather "by dint of virtue and temperance never even in his youth was... overcome" by that "mad and cruel master." Rather, even as a young man "in full enjoyment of his bodily vigour, he mastered and gained control of the maddening passion" (1.13, Loeb). As an adolescent, his whole move toward the rigorous philosophy of Pythagoreanism is hardly one pushed on him by father or teacher. Rather a path he discovers for himself and is self-motivated in his pursuit of it (1.7).

Why this motif of *cheerful* abandonment of societal expectations? Perhaps it demonstrates most clearly that Apollonius is being true to his very being in the unusual path he has chosen for himself. That is, the abandonment does not arise out of some sort of deliberate false humility that draws attention to one's humble state in order to gain status. If this is a society that rewards humble withdrawal, obviously the danger of false humility is high and indeed noted by Apollonius himself (2.37).<sup>139</sup> Or, perhaps, it is simply to suggest that Apollonius is not a dour anti-social monster who feels the need to inflict suffering on himself and so causes distress for those around him. Either

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<sup>137</sup>The five years' silence is, as has been noted frequently enough by interpreters of *VA*, a deliberate link with the life of Pythagoras (Knoles, 251; Iamblichus *Life of Pythagoras* 72, 94; Diogenes Laertius *Lives of the Eminent Philosophers* 8.10; Apuleius *Florida* 15; Aulus Gellius 1.9) and is in that regard both a self-abandoning ascetic move and an attempt to find legitimacy in an accepted religious tradition.

<sup>138</sup>On the "balanced" nature of Apollonius asceticism which does not spill over into anti-social Cynicism see Francis, 98 and Reitzenstein, *Wundererzählungen*, 43.

<sup>139</sup>Francis, 99.

way, the element of cheerfulness to his asceticism does have an endearing quality which enhances the impact of the abandonment of societal expectations.

Apollonius in various ways maintains his societal fringe status throughout his life (as we shall see in particular when we look at his avoidance of ambition). Mary Douglas' theory on society and the body would draw attention to his long philosopher's locks as an example of his body symbolizing his fringe status.<sup>140</sup> Whether symbolically linked in this way or not, his simple philosopher's appearance would mark out his withdrawal from mainstream society.<sup>141</sup> In Cox's analysis of divine philosophers, she makes a suggestion that fits well with both Douglas' theory of power on the fringe and Brown's hypothesis on ἀναχώρησις. She claims that outwardly visible asceticism is obviously a public relations tool, creating recognition and a reputation for the divine philosopher, but more than that,

the sage's physical withdrawal from the ways of the world is not just for the purpose of public relations; it is also a sign of his freedom. The more he retreats from the society around him, the freer he is from the passions that bog down and befuddle lesser minds. His spirit is liberated, and this gives him the rare ability to exercise his wisdom in communication with the gods.<sup>142</sup>

Certainly the power of that appearance is confirmed when one considers that Domitian has Apollonius' hair cut off as part of his persecution of the sage (7.34-35).<sup>143</sup> However, it is in an interaction with another emperor that the advantages of societal withdrawal become plain. In the midst of a speech in which he is encouraging Vespasian to serve as emperor, he declares that he is unconcerned with constitutional matters because his life is governed by the gods (ἔμοι πολιτείας μὲν οὐδεμιᾶς

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<sup>140</sup>Mary Douglas discusses expression of a social fringe status in bodily appearance in *Natural Symbols: Explorations in Cosmology* (The Cresset Press, 1970), 65-81. Prophets, another example of a fringe character, "tend to be shaggy, unkempt individuals. They express in their bodies the independence of social norms which their peripheral origins inspire in them" (*Natural*, 85).

<sup>141</sup>Cox notes that the "divine philosopher's asceticism...enables him to be identified publicly.....plac[ing] the philosopher in the public eye and advertises the value of his profession"(27-28).

<sup>142</sup>Cox, 31.

<sup>143</sup>It is also worth noting that the Brahmins long hair and distinctive dress is carefully described the narrator as well (3.15).

μέλει, ζῶ γὰρ ὑπὸ τοῖς θεοῖς [5.35]). Apollonius clearly sees himself as having an existence "outside of society" and thus capable of "neutral" political advice.<sup>144</sup> That is, he can safely exercise his powers of persuasion because there is no gain in it for him. Withdrawal from the affairs of society may have given him freedom for communion with the gods, but it has also offered him liberation to speak his mind in the affairs of human society and be heard as a objective voice. Therein lies the two-edged power of the withdrawal itself.

## 2. Travel

One of the key ways in which Apollonius maintains his fringe status is through constant travel. In Acts the constant movement of the intermediaries can be read as preventing an intermediary from gaining too great a stake in local affairs. That limitation of local gains, or at least the appearance thereof, also seems to play a role in the constant movement of Apollonius in *VA*. Deliberate attention is drawn to his perpetual short term residency in a number of locations in *VA*. Upon his return from the far east, *VA* Book 4 records his constant movement from one location to another around the Aegean Sea. In 4.23 the narrator reports how Apollonius goes about visiting all the various Greek temples. Even on those occasions where Apollonius did spend a greater amount of time in a given city such as Rome, he is reported to have continuously shifted his living quarters from one temple to another, a habit which did not go unnoticed (4.40). The narrator also mentions that during a winter spent in Athens, he stayed in all the temples (ἐν τοῖς Ἑλληνικοῖς ἱεροῖς πᾶσιν [5.20]). It certainly appears that the successful intermediary required a keen sense of not overstaying one's welcome (or perhaps leaving them while they still wanted more).

One might cite the Brahman intermediaries as an exception to the rule that intermediaries must travel to limit potential local gains. However, both the Brahmans of India and the Gymnosophists of Egypt exist in a location geographically separate from "civilization" proper. Apollonius, having visited the isolated hill settlement of the

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<sup>144</sup>Anderson links this "neutrality" in political affairs with our next theme—travel (*Philostratus*, 146).

Brahmans, describes them as "living upon the earth and yet not on it, and fortified without fortification, and possessing nothing, yet having the riches of all men" (3.15). While Apollonius gains non-resident social fringe status through constant travel, these intermediaries achieved it through withdrawal to a "non-place" which others must seek out to gain access to their mediatorial power. Constant travel or geographic separation both seem to function in *VA* as in Acts as a means of maintaining the initial social withdrawal and thus preventing suspicion of the intermediary as functioning so as to make local power or wealth gains.

But travel also takes on a much more positive function as well in *VA*. In both narratives the intermediaries' travel is often portrayed as compelled by the divine. Apollonius' first great journey to the Brahmans was itself a journey counselled by the gods, and he would not be dissuaded from the trip (1.18). Curiously both Acts and *VA* offer an account of an intermediary making a particular journey because they are "called" to do so in a vision (Paul by the "Macedonian man" in Acts 16:9-10 and Apollonius by the "large elderly woman" in *VA* 4.34).<sup>145</sup> Surely travel is somehow connected with their role as intermediaries of the divine. The intermediary and his companions always arrive in a new location with a divine sense of purpose. But more than that, the travelling intermediary brings with him an aura of the exotic having arrived back from (or originating from) the exotic lands on the edge of the civilized world.<sup>146</sup> This positive function is possibly there in Acts as well, but in *VA* this is front and center.

The narrative repeatedly affirms that many of Apollonius' travels are part of his ongoing quest for further wisdom.<sup>147</sup> King Phraotes, in a letter to Iarchus on

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<sup>145</sup>Petzke notes this as well without any comment on its significance (205).

<sup>146</sup>MacMullen, *Enemies*, 98-99.

<sup>147</sup>It may well be the case that the narrator is intentionally drawing parallels to the travels of Pythagoras, but this only strengthens our case by suggesting that an exotic sage is expected to be seen as a seasoned traveller who has acquired the wisdom which lies outside the normal boundaries of the "civilized world" (1.2; on Pythagoras' travels see Walter Burkert, *Lore and Science in Ancient Pythagoreanism*, trans. E. L. Minar [Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1972], 112). Bowie suggests that the travel narrative is simply an aspect of "romance novels" and so finds its way into Philostratus' intentional fiction on Apollonius ("Apollonius," 1664-1665). That, however, ignores the evidence within *VA* of the tradition of the travelling sage (1.2, 5.4). Anderson's defence of

Apollonius' behalf, states, "Apollonius, the wisest man, regards you as wiser than himself and he is coming to learn your 'goods'" (2.41).<sup>148</sup> This sentence itself catches the irony of the "wisest man" on a quest for those wiser than himself from whom he may learn. But even the wisest man seems capable of learning from the best, even if with all due modesty he himself instructs those from whom he learns as well (1.26; 3.40).<sup>149</sup> Clearly Apollonius hopes to become a wiser man through interaction with those whose company he seeks out (ἦν γὰρ ἡ συνουσία τῶν ἀνδρῶν σοφώτερόν με ἀποφήνη [1.40]). The sincerity of this quest is best exemplified in his humble request to Iarchus that he be taught all the wisdom of the Indian Brahmans (3.16). Indeed, he had a similar goal with the Magi (1.32) and the Egyptian Gymnosophists (6.18), but ended up learning considerably less from these two (1.26; 6.12, 6.20) as he did from the still more distant Brahmans (3.36). In his western journey the narrator specifically mentions altars in honour of Hercules the Theban. The narrator's aside on this divine hero—"in his devotion to wisdom he traversed the whole earth up to its limits"—has strong echoes in the life of Apollonius itself (5.4, Loeb). This might well suggest the narrator views the travels of Apollonius as befitting a figure which bridges heaven and earth.

If the goal of his distant journeys was wisdom, he was certainly successful in having that quest redound to his reputation, very much in the way we have suggested above. Apollonius returns to Ionia from India with something of a "mystic aura" about him. The narrator states that "when they saw the man in Ionia, arriving in Ephesus, not even tradesmen remained at their work, but were following him, being admirers—one of his wisdom, another his form, another his way of life, another his bearing, still

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Apollonius' travels as loosely historical is worth noting (*Philostratus*, 199-226) as indeed is his remark that "Egypt was a[n]...obligatory port of call on the holy man's grad tour...and any bona fide thaumaturge of the first century could have been expected to visit it" (*Philostratus*, 216).

<sup>148</sup> Ἀπολλώνιος ἀνὴρ σοφώτατος σαφωτέρους ὑμᾶς ἑαυτοῦ ἡγεῖται καὶ μαθησόμενος ἤκει τὰ ὑμέτερα.

<sup>149</sup>On the motif of a traveling quest for instructors necessitated because of the great intellectual capacities of the religious or philosophical superstar see Bieler, vol. 1, 38.

others everything alike" (4.1).<sup>150</sup> He is acknowledged by the major local oracles, and was himself something of a "mobile oracle," hailed by the Colophon oracle as one who "shared its peculiar wisdom" and offering advice to cities on "life in general as well as about the dedication of altars and images" (4.1, Loeb). His travels have clearly contributed to his rise to prominence as an intermediary.

But as we have come to expect, power gains are always a tricky business and it should hardly be surprising that the knowledge of the operation of divine power gained in his distant travels became suspect itself. We read in the opening description of Apollonius that it was these same trips which were used by his opponents as evidence that he was a magician (in a negative sense).<sup>151</sup> According to our narrator, "because he communicated with the Magi of Babylon and the Indian Brahmans and the Egyptian Gymnosophists, they believe him [to be] a magician and slander [him] as coercively crafty and evil" (1.2).<sup>152</sup> The potential status gain in the exotic quest for wisdom thus must be managed as carefully as miracles themselves, or they can easily be turned in favour of a magic accusation. We have already seen abandonment of mainstream society in favour of a non-settled existence as one strategy to contain these power gains. There are others as well.

### 3. Disregard for Personal Safety

While travel takes on a more significant dual role in *VA*, a bold disregard for personal safety by the approved intermediaries functioning both to add to the mystique of the intermediary and serving as a sign of non-ambition, is equally evident in both narratives. And in both cases it takes on the form of the intermediaries deliberately

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<sup>150</sup> Ἐπεὶ δὲ εἶδον τὸν ἄνδρα ἐν Ἰωνίᾳ παρελθόντα εἰς τὴν Ἐφεσον, οὐδὲ οἱ βάναιυσοι ἐτι πρὸς ταῖς ἐαυτῶν τέχναις ἦσαν, ἀλλ' ἠκολούθουν ὁ μὲν σοφίας, ὁ δὲ εἶδους, ὁ δὲ διαίτης, ὁ δὲ σχήματος, οἱ δὲ πάντων ὁμοῦ θαυμασταὶ ὄντες.

<sup>151</sup> As Bieler's study notes (perhaps unintentionally), the unsurpassed wisdom of a intermediary could well surround him with "eine Sphäre des Geheimnisvollen und Wunderbaren" but one which was "wie Chaldäer und Magier" (a clearly negative label in *VA*) (vol. 1, 37).

<sup>152</sup> ἐπειδὴ μάγοις Βαβυλωνίων καὶ Ἰνδῶν Βραχμᾶσι καὶ τοῖς ἐν Αἰγύπτῳ Γυμνοῖς συνεγένετο, μάγον ἡγοῦνται αὐτὸν καὶ διαβάλλουσιν ὡς βιάως σοφόν, κακῶς γινώσκοντες. On βιάως σοφόν see 6.10 where the phrase βιάων τέχνης is used in parallel with θαυμασιουργίας. On the translation "coercively crafty" see below page 171, footnote 232.

putting themselves in danger by speaking in such a way as to provoke opposition and deliberately walking into dangerous situations. Their personal disciples thus frequently function in a role of attempting to convince the intermediary to choose a safer course of action. It is a particularly effective way of expressing power and non-ambition simultaneously.

While there are a handful of cases where Apollonius checks his own speech or that of his friends to prevent accusations (4.44; 6.12; 7.27), the overwhelming picture in *VA* is one of Apollonius speaking his mind boldly, whatever the consequences.<sup>153</sup> Apollonius regularly speaks to the shortcomings of various civic centres. His experience upon his return to Ephesus from India is a classic example. His first discourse upon returning is delivered not in a "Socratic" tone but rather directly speaks to what they should and should not be doing as a community (4.2). He does this despite the possibility of the Ephesians changing their opinion of him (ὁ δὲ καίτοι μεταθεμένων τῶν Ἐφεσίων πρὸς αὐτὸν οὐκ ἤξιου περιορᾶν ταῦτα [4.2]). Likewise, he rebukes the Athenians for their effeminate dancing and their love of gladiator shows (4.21-22) and the Lacedaemonians likewise for their effeminate behaviour (4.27), both cities which held him in high regard. Alexandria receives his rebuke for its horse-racing rivalries (5.26).

While this boldness before whole communities has echoes in Acts (e.g., Paul in Lystra and before the Areopagus), intermediaries in both demonstrate bold speech primarily before kings and rulers who pose a direct threat to the intermediary. Domitian and Nero in particular meet with public scorn from Apollonius on numerous occasions (4.44; 7.4-8, 32-35). Even rulers who meet with his general approval such as Vespasian and the king of Babylon receive his corrective rebuke (1.38; 5.41). It is clear, furthermore, that this self-abandoning bold speech before powerful rulers, not only demonstrates lack of ambition but also positively enhances the intermediary's status. In Babylon he disturbs the king's underlings by threatening to flout the king if he finds him neither good nor honourable (1.28). However, his resolute speech, in

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<sup>153</sup>Billault, "Rhetoric," 232.

which he promises both to evaluate and enhance their king's virtues eventually brings about an enthusiastic response from these same men and he is pronounced a good advisor and one who will better their precious king (1.28). Likewise, the bold speech which causes him to be hated by the licentious people of Tarsus is later used on their behalf as he pleads their case for certain favours before Titus (6.34).

The importance of bold speech for a positive evaluation of a character like Apollonius, unconcerned with either reward or punishment, is further highlighted in two ways by the narrative. First there is the case of Euphrates' one positive act of bold speech before Vespasian, in which he counsels the victorious general not to become Emperor but rather to restore democracy (5.33). The narrator, who casts Euphrates as a false philosopher for his desire for wealth and reward,<sup>154</sup> carries through with his negative characterization by deliberately negating this one act of bold speech by suggesting it was provoked purely by Euphrates' jealousy of Apollonius' relationship with Vespasian and his subsequent desire to contradict Apollonius' advice (5.37).<sup>155</sup> The implication is that Euphrates' speech in favour of a position which did not flatter Vespasian would be seen as an event in his favour. Second, Apollonius' own caution and apparent lack of boldness in the face of Nero seems to create problems for the narrator. When Apollonius is not so outspoken as Demetrius over Nero's excesses, the narrator carefully adds that this was not motivated by fear (4.43). Later, the narrator mounts a full scale defence against those who suggest that Apollonius did not truly act in a bold fashion with respect to Nero (7.4). At the heart of the narrator's defence for Apollonius' apparent caution with Nero is in fact his later bold exploits in the face of

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<sup>154</sup>There is one exception in the text which hints at the narrator's own feelings about Euphrates which are not quite so vitriolic as Apollonius', allowing that while Euphrates' character may have been flawed, in at least this one case he would allow that Euphrates acted with proper good sense (5.39). Clearly the narrator is not entirely keen on an extended attack on Euphrates' character, but only mentions him and refutes him as is necessary to relate the life of Apollonius (5.39). This is clearly a case of an actual writer deliberately assuming the stance of a one-sided narrator to tell his story, as we know from Philostratus' *Lives of the Sophists* that he, in fact, held both Apollonius and Euphrates to blame for their unseemly conduct toward each other (7).

<sup>155</sup>According to the narrator, Euphrates "...aired these sentiments in favour of democracy, not because he really entertained them, but only by way of contradicting the opinions Apollonius held in regard to the empire" (5.37, Loeb). Later, Euphrates advice in favour of democracy is further shown to be a sham when he eagerly anticipates the rewards of Vespasian becoming Emperor, and is soundly mocked for this ironic behaviour by Apollonius (5.38).



Domitian who is painted as an even more fearsome foe (7.3-4).<sup>156</sup> Indeed, Apollonius' truly "detached" existence, unconcerned for neither his own home country nor his own life, is what enabled him to put aside flattering speeches in favour of open confrontation of the tyrannical master of all the sea and land (7.3).

#### 4. Conclusion

Acts and *VA* have a good deal in common in terms of their portrayal of the intermediary as one who engages in some form of withdrawal from normal social structures. The abandonment of livelihoods in Acts becomes an even more documented general withdrawal from mainstream society altogether at times in *VA*. In both travel functions to cultivate a fringe status, although in *VA* the emphasis falls more heavily on the positive gains made through travel rather than simply the manner in which it serves to protect local communities from overly ambitious intermediaries. Disregard for personal safety takes on a very similar look in both narratives. It is exemplified in both by bold speech before rulers and the need for the miracle-worker's associates to save the intermediary from their potentially dangerous selfless acts. Having gained power through withdrawal, that power is now expressed in miracle-working.

#### C. Performing the Miraculous

If the study of miracles in the book of Acts is hampered by a "theological-correctness" with regard to the evidentiary and faith-evoking role of miracles, in studying *VA* there are two minefields which must be cleared before we can take a fresh look at the miracles within the narrative. On the one hand, Apollonius is labelled a philosopher by the narrator and indeed, many of his miracles are chalked up by both narrator and Apollonius himself as an outworking of his σοφία. This could

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<sup>156</sup>There are instances as well under Domitian when Apollonius is presented as cautious. The narrator has strategies available here too to offset the perception of a lack of boldness. First Apollonius is presented as exhibiting concern for the safety of his political allies who would be threatened by his outspoken boldness (7.8). Second, when in prison and a secret informer is present, the narrator salvages Apollonius' boldness by pointing out the miraculous nature of his seeing through the informer and his witty response to the informer that he will not inform against him (for his attacks on the Emperor designed to draw out Apollonius' criticism) but save his attack for the Emperor's face (7.27).

potentially suggest that the narrator is promoting Apollonius as a "rational philosopher" capable of doing that which only appears miraculous on account of his advanced knowledge rather than an irrational magician. The distinction between miracle-worker and magician in this case is merely one of rationality and knowledge. On the other hand, Apollonius is also the star candidate for θεῖος ἄνηρ status. If Apollonius is a θεῖος ἄνηρ, how θεῖος is he exactly? Conceivably one could (and scholars have) suggested that the miracles performed by Apollonius point to his divinity, his status as a god on earth dispensing favours. Clearly both of these challenges must be met at the outset before we can formulate our construct of the function of miracles within the narrative world of *VA*. Once the deck is cleared of these two issues, what emerges from *VA* in terms of the function of miracles is remarkably similar to Acts. Performing miracles is both a sign of the intermediary having "arrived," that is it is a sign of power gained because it points to the intermediaries' connection to the divine realm, and also a means of exponentially gaining further recognition as a purveyor of divine power, even in their speech acts. In this regard bigger is better and even punitive miracles can have a positive influence.

### **1. Miracles and the Intermediary Status of Apollonius**

In identifying the intermediaries in *VA* at the start of this section, we simply asserted that Apollonius, even as a "philosopher" was an intermediary according to our definition of that term, that is he functioned as a character bridging the supernatural and natural realms, making the power of the heavenly realm available through him in the earthly realm. Clearly that is an assertion in need of a more elaborate defence. Furthermore, Apollonius has frequently been labelled a θεῖος ἄνηρ by biblical and classical scholars in this century. Surely the question of the relationship of our category of miracle-working intermediary to the scholarly construct known as the θεῖος ἄνηρ must be answered.

#### **a. σοφία and Miracle-Working**

An unfortunate dichotomy is occasionally observed between wisdom, understood as a rational human quest for understanding and control, and numinous,

non-rational attempts to gain knowledge or power, such as prophecy, divination, and other forms of "miracle-working".<sup>157</sup> Ultimately, it is a variation on the modern distinction between the secular and the religious spheres. Few scholars would argue that Greco-Roman Mediterraneans observed these distinctions with the same rigour we do in the modern West.<sup>158</sup> Rather, it is necessary to begin with the observation that "'wisdom' is an advantage admired and sought from time immemorial, but there are utterly different conceptions, from time to time, as to what it consists of, what it pertains to, and how it manifests itself."<sup>159</sup>

Given this fluidity in the term, how does this study construe the relationship between Apollonius' σοφία and his exercise of divine powers? Simply stated, within the narrative world of *VA*, wisdom is first and foremost an understanding of the operation and interaction of the human and divine spheres.<sup>160</sup> Perhaps this is best seen when Telesinus queries Apollonius concerning his wisdom by asking, τίς δὲ ἡ σοφία;, to which Apollonius responds, θειασμός...καὶ ὡς ἂν τις θεοῖς εὔχοιτο καὶ θύοι (4.40).<sup>161</sup> Later, in a private interview with Tigellinus, Apollonius explains "to what end he used his wisdom, and asserting that he used it

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<sup>157</sup>D. L. Tiede's study on charismatic miracle-workers, for example, draws a distinction between the rational intellectual philosopher and the miracle-working shaman, suggesting these are competing images of revered figures from the past (*The Charismatic Figure as Miracle Worker* [SBLDS 1; Missoula, Mont.: University of Montana, 1972]). For an excellent rebuttal of this hypothesis see Cox (30-34) and Gallagher (18-22)

<sup>158</sup>Even Tiede's thesis on competing images of rational philosopher and irrational shamanistic miracle-worker is forced to concede that these two actually come together in various historical persons such as Pythagoras and Empedocles (19-22). Anderson states that "by the first century AD, the philosophical schools were increasingly accommodating to one another, and inclined to varying degrees of eclecticism; and they could find ingenious ways of accommodating more popular and irrational strata of belief" (*Philostratus*, 136).

<sup>159</sup>Burkert, *Lore and Science*, 211.

<sup>160</sup>Burkert's work on Pythagoreanism suggests this observation on "wisdom" in the narrative world of *VA* is one which could find broader application (see below footnote 165). Written in the mid second century, Apuleius' work, *On the God of Socrates*, suggests that Socrates was a candidate as well for creating an image of the divinely literate sage. Apuleius claims that given Socrates was one on "whom the dignity of wisdom rendered similar to the most excellent divinity" (*quem cuivis amplissimo numini sapientiae dignitas coaequarat*), we ought not to be surprised that he exhibited an extraordinary awareness of and interaction with his personal daemon (understood as distinct divine being attached to each person for the duration of their life)(Latin text from Victor Bétolaud, *Oeuvres complètes d'Apulée* [Paris: Garnier Frères, 1873], 135; English translation from Apuleius, *On the God of Socrates*, trans. Thomas Taylor [n.p.: The Alexandrian Press, 1984 (reprint)], 28).

<sup>161</sup>Literally, "A divination even as to how one ought to pray and sacrifice to the gods."

both to know the gods and to understand human affairs" (4.44).<sup>162</sup> Apollonius, in offering advice on a lawsuit in the Indian court, states that the gods themselves διδύασι δὲ τοῖς...φιλοσοφοῦσι διαγιγνώσκειν εὖ τὰ θεῖά τε καὶ τὰ ἀνθρώπεια (2.39). Perhaps both Nero and Domitian are more justified in suspecting philosophers of being meddlesome *diviners* within the narrative world of *VA* than a first reading might suggest (περίεργον αὐτῶ χρηῖμα οἱ φιλοσοφοῦντες ἐφαίνοντο καὶ μαντικὴν συσκιάζοντες [4.35, see also 7.20]).<sup>163</sup>

Ironically, it is this understanding of wisdom as numinous knowledge that most closely ties Apollonius—the self-proclaimed neo-Pythagorean—with the philosopher he most reveres.<sup>164</sup> Burkert claims that,

...when, from the first century B.C. on, people once more came forward to declare themselves Pythagoreans, their most noticeable characteristic is that they are seeking (or even, as for example in the case of Apollonius of Tyana, claiming to possess) a superhuman, divine wisdom. And it may be that in this very point—not in details of doctrine but in the claim to possess divine knowledge—we are most likely to find an element of its real origin, in the influence of Pythagoras of Samos.<sup>165</sup>

If Burkert is correct that σοφία is an advantage manifesting itself in diverse ways in diverse context, the picture of the expert in σοφία, the πιλόσοφος, which we discover in *VA* is perhaps best described by Patricia Cox:

[T]he philosopher was not simply a passive figure, content to occupy a saintly periphery in ancient society. He was a man with a mission, a mission that was central to life in Late Antiquity: to communicate the

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<sup>162</sup> Ἐφ' ὃ τι τῇ σοφίᾳ χρῶτο, ἐφασκέ τε αὐτῇ χρῆσθαι ἐπὶ τε τὸ θεοῦς γιγνώσκειν ἐπὶ τε τὸ ἀνθρώπων ξυνεῖναι.

<sup>163</sup>This is, of course, simply a negative categorization of an intermediary. The political threat which came from characters who fit into the overlapping categories of philosophers, magicians, and diviners is well described by MacMullen (*Enemies*, 46-162).

<sup>164</sup>MacMullen identifies Pythagoreanism particularly as the philosophical school responsible for philosophy degenerating (with all the value-laden nuance of that word intact) into quasi-religious mystical and magical practices (*Ibid.*, viii, 95-127). Lagrange, commenting on Philostratus' presentation of the Neo-Pythagorean Apollonius states, "La philosophie elle-même était devenue une piété" (18).

<sup>165</sup>Walter Burkert, *Lore and Science*, 96, 146. See especially pages 120-192 for his evidence and argument in favour of this interpretation of the Pythagoras traditions. The source and influence of "shamanistic" practices on characters such as Pythagoras and Empedocles is put forward by Dodds in *Greeks*, 140ff.

divine, and to protect from the demonic. By the first century A.D., the philosopher—whether he was a roving preacher, a magician-prophet, or an acknowledged leader of a particular school of thought—had become a holy man in the eyes of his fellows, and his prestige was such that admirers were able to make extravagant claims for his abilities.<sup>166</sup>

Within the narrative world of *VA*, Apollonius is just such a φιλόσοφος who claims "a 'wisdom' that comprehends equally and without differentiation the divine and the earthly, the rational and the religious—the lore of one who 'knows more' than ordinary men."<sup>167</sup> Indeed, given that one could establish this as a rather broad pattern within the Greco-Roman world generally, Tiede's tradition-history hypothesis of two distinct traditions or "memories" of Apollonius—that of the philosopher and that of the charismatic miracle-worker which only come together at a relatively late stage—collapses rather completely.<sup>168</sup> Apollonius as φιλόσοφος clearly fits well within our paradigm of intermediary, that is, one who bridges the gap between the human and divine spheres, making divine power available to people around him or her.<sup>169</sup> And in this regard, Apollonius as φιλόσοφος and Peter and Paul as ἀπόστολοι function in very similar ways.

That Apollonius' wisdom is as much as anything a knowledge of divine matters can be seen particularly in the most frequent miracle one finds in *VA*—that of foreknowledge or extraordinary insight into the lives of individuals apparently unknown to the intermediary.<sup>170</sup> The extraordinary insight is usually chalked up to the

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<sup>166</sup>Cox, 19. Bieler (following Reitzenstein) suggests that by the second century BCE philosophy was a religious matter and the philosopher had become a prophet (vol. 1, 2). R. Reitzenstein, *Hellenistic Mystery-Religions: Their Basic Ideas and Significance*, trans. J. E. Seely (Pittsburgh: Pickwick Press, 1978), 5-7; from German *Die hellenistischen Mysterienreligionen*, 3rd ed. (1927), 4-5. Reitzenstein's own portrait of the active holy man of this era can be found in 25-26 (either language).

<sup>167</sup>This description applied to Pythagoras is equally applicable to Apollonius (*Lore and Science*, 189-190).

<sup>168</sup>Tiede, 23-29. Ultimately our case is not affected by one's decision regarding Tiede's thesis since our case is built on the story of Apollonius as it stands in its "final form" in Philostratus' narrative.

<sup>169</sup>Cox states that "biographies like Philostratus' *Life of Apollonius of Tyana*...serve an old typological interest, the traditional sage of philosophy[, b]ut this venerable figure had been transformed by the religious temper of the times and was endowed with specific qualities and talents linking him to divinity" (xiv). E. R. Dodds, *Pagan*, 92-94.

<sup>170</sup>See for example 1.33-36, 4.4, 4.6, 4.18, 4.24, 5.11, 5.18, 5.24, 5.30, 5.42, 6.3, 6.5, 6.32, 6.43, 7.9, 7.10, 8.26, 8.27-28. Petzke, 172.

"wisdom" of the intermediary, but it is perfectly clear that this is to be understood as "wisdom with respect to divine matters" or "supernatural insight", bringing divine insight to bear on a situation, not an extraordinary use of a merely human faculty. The discourses between Apollonius and the Brahmans present an excellent example of this. The Brahmans claim that they demonstrate their wisdom to visitors by offering a complete description of their visitors upon their arrival (ἡμῖν δὲ σοφίας ἐπίδειξιν πρώτην ἔχει τὸ μὴ ἀγνοῆσαι τὸν ἤκοντα) and promptly offer up a description of Apollonius complete with details of persons and events of which they had no prior knowledge (3.16). Earlier, after a similar display of prescience by a messenger of the Brahmans, Apollonius declares that they have come upon men who are absolutely wise (σοφούς ἀτεχνῶς) because "they seem to have the gift of foreknowledge" (εἰκάσι γὰρ προγιγνώσκειν [3.12, Loeb]). If foreknowledge is a display of "wisdom", the discourse between Apollonius and the Brahmans makes it equally clear that this "foreknowledge wisdom" is an act of divine mediation. In 3.42 Iarchus states that the foretelling sage is, as it were, a walking, talking Delphic oracle:

We foresee of our unaided selves and foretell to others things which they know not yet. This I regard as the gift of one thoroughly blessed and endowed with the same mysterious power as the Delphic Apollo. Now the ritual insists that those who visit a shrine with a view to obtaining a response, must purify themselves first, otherwise they will be told to "depart from the temple." Consequently I consider that one who would foresee events must be healthy in himself, and must not have his soul stained with any sort of defilement nor his character scarred with the wounds of any sins; so he will pronounce his predictions with purity, because he will understand himself and the sacred tripod in his breast, and with ever louder and clearer tone and truer import will he utter his oracles (3.42, Loeb).

The equation could not be clearer—whatever else wisdom is, it is not just the exercise of the human faculty of reason, it is also the mediation of the insights of the gods themselves.<sup>171</sup>

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<sup>171</sup>Petzke correctly points out that *VA* offers two perspectives on the role of the gods in prescience: "Einmal wird die Rolle der Götter sehr hoch eingeschätzt (z.B. IV, 44; V, 7.12.37; VI, 32 und VII, 10), andererseits kann das Vorauswissen als die Fähigkeit der reinen Seele bezeichnet werden, die durch eine bestimmte asketische Lebenshaltung jeder Weise erlangen kann (I, 2; II, 36f; III, 42; VI, 11.13; vor allem VIII, 5 und VIII, 7, 9 bei der Verteidigung). Wird auf der einen Seite die mehr passive Seite des Wahrsagers und sein Angewiesensein auf die Götter betont, so steht auf der

The opening sentence of 8.27 certainly confirms the mediatorial nature of this internal sacred tripod. In 8.26 Apollonius has, in the middle of a speech in Ephesus, "seen" the assassination of Domitian in Rome exactly as it happened and announced it to the crowd. When the runners arrive with news of the events in Rome and it matches Apollonius' words, Philostratus describes these as "witnesses to the wisdom of the man" (μάρτυρες τῆς σοφίας τοῦ ἀνδρός). Within the same sentence Philostratus states that because the runners' details matched those of Apollonius' outburst "they thus held that the gods revealed each of these things to the man in [his] discourse".<sup>172</sup> Apollonius' σοφία in this case is, as it is on numerous occasions, the outworking of his intimate relationship with the gods.<sup>173</sup> Apollonius himself seems to say this when asked about his proven ability to predict future events. He claims that he is not a prophet (μάντις) who operates μαντικῆ (presumably the passive voice of the oracular prophet) "but rather [operates] by the wisdom which God reveals to wise men" (4.44).<sup>174</sup> Apollonius miracle-working by "wisdom" clearly falls within our conceptual framework of a mediation of the divine, and Apollonius the philosopher fits rather neatly into our category of intermediary.

#### b. The Ever-Vexing θεῖος ἄνηρ

Much of what one could say concerning the vexing question of the θεῖος ἄνηρ falls fortunately outside the concern of our thesis. The debate, as the more recent works on the issue demonstrate, is largely a form-critical one. That is, the scholars occupying the nether regions mid-way between NT studies and classics which bandy this term about are fundamentally concerned with whether there is a

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anderen Seite die durch aktive Übung erworbene Fähigkeit des Weisen im Vordergrund" (173). However, it is worth noting that the "pure soul" and "ascetic lifestyle" which he claims allow his foretelling of the plague of Ephesus are a part of his inherited "divine wisdom" from Pythagoras (8.7.9; see below page 286, footnote 56).

<sup>172</sup>Οὕτως εἶχεν, ὡς οἱ θεοὶ τούτων ἕκαστα διαλεγόμενω τῷ ἀνδρὶ ἀνέφαινον.

<sup>173</sup>We could have used 4.1 to make our case. Here the oracles at Colophon, Didyma and Pergamum announced that Apollonius shared its "wisdom" (κοινωνὸν τῆς ἑαυτοῦ σοφίας). However in this case it is less certain whether Apollonius is functioning as the oracular tripod or the god himself, as the oracular god sends many clients seeking health to Apollonius.

<sup>174</sup>Σοφία δὲ μᾶλλον, ἣν θεὸς φαίνει σοφοῖς ἀδράσιν.

recognisable literary creature known as the θεῖος ἄνθρωπος. And, if this being exists, can one draw up a list of characteristics of this creature, and when one does so, are you left with a distinctly *Hellenistic* creature which explains the socio-cultural origins of θεῖος ἄνθρωπος type stories of Jesus in the canonical gospels. This remains the sometimes unspoken agenda behind most studies of divine men.<sup>175</sup> It is important to point this out because so many secondary sources on *VA* are concerned with this form-critical issue.

Recent works have not been particularly favourable to the whole θεῖος ἄνθρωπος hypothesis as it has been articulated by NT scholars throughout the central part of this century. Both Barry Blackburn and D. S. Du Toit have reviewed the data and the assertions and have called into question many if not all of the previous "conclusions" on a recognisable Greco-Roman θεῖος ἄνθρωπος literary type which has a formative influence on the NT traditions.<sup>176</sup> Ideally, one would like to put this debate completely to one side for the purposes of our study but that is not quite possible. First, it might well be suggested that our very study is attempting in a round about fashion to create a new list of characteristics for a Hellenistic θεῖος ἄνθρωπος, or worse, recycling an existing list of characteristics. To this charge we can only respond that the characteristics of a θεῖος ἄνθρωπος as a *literary Weberian ideal type* has been thoroughly fleshed out by Ludwig Bieler's *ΘΕΙΟΣ ΑΝΘΡΩΠΟΣ*, and as such has been rightly defended by Gallagher.<sup>177</sup> Our interests, however, diverge considerably from this folklore analysis whatever the overlaps may suggest. Our interest is not in a literary ideal type but rather the uncovering of cultural scripts which are laid out within Greco-Roman narratives in the exchanges between narrator and narratee and between characters.

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<sup>175</sup>Enough recent "history of scholarship" on the θεῖος ἄνθρωπος concept and its application in NT scholarship are available making a repeat of this material unnecessary. See Gallagher, 1-40, esp. 27, and Blackburn, *Theios*, 2-10.

<sup>176</sup>D. S. Du Toit, *THEIOS ANTHROPOS: Zur Verwendung von θεῖος ἄνθρωπος und sinnverwandten Ausdrücken in der Literatur der Kaiserzeit* (WUNT 2.91; Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr, 1997).

<sup>177</sup>Gallagher correctly states that Bieler's interest was in a Platonic ideal type which is not a historical description but an construct collating and simplifying the diverse data which could then be used as a comparative tool with actual expressions of this type, both to spot similarities and differences with this much flattened folkloric character type (10-18).



Second, we must address the issue of θεῖος ἄνηρ scholarship on account of our chosen terminology. The danger is that this study could well become bogged down in the theological and linguistic propriety of speaking of a divine figure as an "intermediary" (that is someone who mediates spiritual power from the "supernatural realm" to the "natural" realm) when one might more properly speak of a divine being who is himself a source of divine power.<sup>178</sup> In simplified terms, is Apollonius a god dispensing favours of his own free will, or an intermediary who offers access to divine power—a bridge between the mundane and earthly and the extraordinary and supernatural realms?<sup>179</sup>

Cox, for instance, will argue on the basis of a miraculous birth story that Philostratus' *VA* is a biography which fits the category of philosopher as some truly divine being or "son of God," rather than merely "godlike."<sup>180</sup> Cox's twofold classification is, however, problematic as her discussion of the miraculous birth motif itself demonstrates. The three cases she cites in favour of this as an indicator of divine status are all marked by a distinct ambiguity in their birth narrative—a feature Cox herself admits.<sup>181</sup> While Cox's classification is more subtle and certainly preferable to that offered by Tiede (philosopher versus miracle-worker), when she reintroduces miracles as the provenance of the "divine" rather than "god-like" sages, the whole structure bends to the breaking point.<sup>182</sup> Rather, the notion of a "'scale' of divinity

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<sup>178</sup>An example of this debate within the discussions under the rubric of the term θεῖος ἄνηρ particularly as it applies to Apollonius see Smith and Hadas and a response to their assertions in H. C. Kee's "Aretalogy and Gospel," in *JBL* 92 (1973): 404-407. C. H. Talbert, "The Concept of Immortals in Mediterranean Antiquity," in *JBL* 94 (1975): 419-436, especially 427-432 with respect to Apollonius as divine man and immortal in *VA*. See also the discussion in Gallagher, 22-25.

<sup>179</sup>Francis faces this question and concludes that "Philostratus, while clearly portraying Apollonius to be extraordinary, is careful not to make him a god, or a son of a god, but an unusually gifted *man*" (121).

<sup>180</sup>Cox, 34.

<sup>181</sup>The three birth narratives include Philostratus *Life of Apollonius*, Porphyry *Life of Pythagoras*, and Iamblicus *Pythagorean Life*. They are all notably Pythagorean and here one needs a greater degree of sensitivity to the effect a philosophy of reincarnation might play in the presentation of the philosopher. The ambiguity, however, calls into serious question whether it was the birth narrative which was to clench the fact of divinity for these characters.

<sup>182</sup>Cox, 43. Even if one temporarily grants Cox the point that Philostratus is portraying Apollonius as a divine being in his wonder-working, the biography itself has at least one individual in

along which a given man might be located" seems to be a more productive model. However, her claim that "biographies...were not concerned to slide their heroes up and down but rather to establish precise ranking on the scale" simply doesn't match the evidence of *VA*.<sup>183</sup> While we shall see that the narrator of *VA* clearly wishes to push Apollonius up that scale, there really is little evidence that the location on that scale is anywhere near "precise," nor especially that one ends up with a truly "divine" character (in the sense of being one god among the other gods).<sup>184</sup> Du Toit's reading of the lexical and contextual evidence and his conclusion that Philostratus is definitely *not* presenting Apollonius as ontologically divine is particularly convincing.<sup>185</sup> Our interests, however, do not lie in making a definitive statement on the whole θεῖος ἄνθρωπος debate, either for or against this as a useful "type" by which one can evaluate various manifestations nor whether the use of the term implies a specific ontological category for the person so designated. What is clear in the debates is that the lack of a clear status for individuals who are described (or in many cases simply look like other individuals described) as θεῖος ἄνθρωπος indicates we are free to determine on grounds other than this title the nature of Apollonius' miracle-working and its function within the narrative world of *VA*.

### c. Toward a Social Description of Apollonius' Status

Given that the θεῖος ἄνθρωπος title does not provide guidance on Apollonius' status, the question of the function of his miracle-working also remains unanswered. After all, in Acts the acclamation of Paul and Barnabas as Zeus and Hermes in Lystra (Acts 14:8-18) and the reaction to Paul's survival of a snake bite in Malta (Acts 28:6) suggest that there is distinct interpretive possibility that within that narrative world—

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it who is certainly NOT to be understood in that category who nevertheless work miracles—Thespision (*Life of Apollonius* 6.10).

<sup>183</sup>Cox, 34, no. 81.

<sup>184</sup>See below our discussion on denying divine honours. Cox's own discussion of *VA* demonstrates that while Philostratus was clear about what Apollonius was not ("magician, nor a 'sage of an illegitimate kind,' nor a false prophet") he was more than a bit elusive with regard to what he then was, and she is forced to admit that "Apollonius' true nature is never really classified adequately" (38-39). On the ambiguous status of Apollonius in Philostratus' narrative see also Flinterman, 63.

<sup>185</sup>276-320.

namely that working miracles proclaims the divinity of the miracle-worker. The narrator of Acts naturally finds this interpretation objectionable (albeit flattering), but he presents it nonetheless as a possible interpretation on the part of pagans in the world he is describing.<sup>186</sup> The natural question one must raise is whether the narrator in *VA* is trying to prove to the narratee that Apollonius has some divine status on the basis of his miracle-working ability.<sup>187</sup> Clearly some decision must be reached on the narrator's take on Apollonius' status if we are to address properly the function of miracles.

An adaptation of Cox's scale, without her insistence of a precise ranking, is one way forward. If one set up a continuum which had at one extreme a completely passive act of divine mediation, such as some possession trance where the god or goddess simply uses an ordinary human body to communicate a message, and on the other extreme a full blown manifestation of a divine figure with a human appearance, Apollonius, as presented and promoted by Philostratus, would fall somewhere between these two extremes.<sup>188</sup> On the one hand there are statements in the introduction of the biography that Proteus announces to Apollonius' mother that the child she will bear is Proteus himself, while later in the narrative opponents such as Tigellinus and Domitian are convinced they are dealing with a δαίμων (1.4; 4.44). These sort of statements suggest Apollonius belongs on the "divine" extreme on the continuum. On the other hand, there are passages such as 8.27 which we discussed above which seem to fit the

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<sup>186</sup>Schreiber assumes that while a Hellenistic reader of Acts might well see a character such as Paul as comparable to a pagan "divine man," Luke always interprets Paul's miracles as mediating the power of God. Even the miracles which have "ein magischer Klang oder ein scheinbar den Wundertäter vergöttlichende Tendenz innewohnt" are differentiated by their emphasis on Paul as merely mediating the true miracle-working power—God himself (151). Thus Schreiber concludes that it is not Luke's intent to present Paul as a "theios aner," presumably because a "theios aner" as per the "Vorstellung in Hellenismus" would highlight the miracle-working power as originating with the human miracle-worker rather than simply mediating the power of a God working through them (152). The extent to which characters which in the past have been assigned to the nebulous category of Hellenistic "divine man" produce miracles from their own power is itself open to debate.

<sup>187</sup>Lagrange speaks of the "point le plus délicat, ses [Apollonius'] rapports avec la divinité. On se demande si Philostrate n'a pas entendu faire passer Apollonios pour un dieu envoyé pour le salut des hommes" (16).

<sup>188</sup>Besides this being the overall sense of the biography, there are hints of this continuum and Apollonius place on it in statements such as that which Apollonius makes in 4.44. There he claims he is not a μάντις operating on the basis of μαντικός is most likely a reference to the passive oracular prophecy in which the person is simply a channel for the direct speech of the gods, but rather he claims he is a wise man of the sort to whom God reveals his wisdom.

opposite extreme of the continuum. The most sensible way forward is to postulate that our narrator is promoting Apollonius (and other highly favoured intermediaries such as the Brahmans)<sup>189</sup> as a being who falls somewhere between these two extremes. This tension is captured by the fact that while Apollonius grows in his "wisdom" through his interaction with the Brahmans (3.36), he is predisposed to comprehending the "internal tripod" because of the αἰθήρ in his being (ἐν τῇ ψυχῇ φέρων αἰθέρα [3.42]).

In this regard it is worth noting M. J. Lagrange's observations on F. C. Conybeare's Loeb translation in 8.7.7. Apollonius is describing what sort of figure it would take to sort out a universe of "undisciplined souls" (Loeb). He states, ἀλλὰ δεῖ ἀνδρός, ὃς ἐπιμελήσεται τοῦ περὶ αὐτὰς κόσμου, θεὸς ὑπὸ σοφίας ἦκων. Conybeare translates the last phrase as "a god sent down by wisdom." Lagrange asserts this is a mistranslation, implying that this leads to the false conclusion that Apollonius is to be considered a god sent to earth for humanity's good, and suggests interpreting the words as "devenu dieu par sagesse."<sup>190</sup> In fact, strictly within the limits of grammar and the lexical range of ἦκω either are possible. However, within the context of the immediate argument and the work as a whole, Lagrange's reading is clearly the better option. Apollonius is a human figure who, in the words of our narrator, ὑπὲρ πάντα τὰ ἐν τῇ γῆ καὶ τὸ ἀγχοῦ θεῶν...ἐγένετο (1.5).

That stated, the most promising way forward for our study is to put strict ontological concerns aside and rather describe Apollonius socially. Apollonius is someone who moves in two social circles. On the one hand he seems to discourse freely with the gods and, as one who interacts in this heavenly social circle,<sup>191</sup> he both

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<sup>189</sup>Apollonius describes these Brahmans as οἱ θεοὶ τε καὶ σοφοὶ ἄνδρες (3.29).

<sup>190</sup>Lagrange, 16.

<sup>191</sup>See for instance 4.40, "I like to live in such temples as are not too closely shut up, and none of the gods object to my presence, for they invite me to share their habitation." See also 4.44 where he describes his prescience as coming from a revelatory wisdom from God, which God bestows on wise men. Pythagoras, who is clearly the model for Philostratus' presentation of Apollonius, Neo-Pythagorean, is described as having "social intercourse (σύνειμι) with the gods and [that he] learnt from them the conditions under which they take pleasure in men or are disgusted, and on this intercourse he based his account of nature" (Loeb)(1.1). The god Trophonius at Lebadea is rather pleased that Apollonius approaches him dressed as a philosopher rather than in the sacred robes

understands the operation of the heavenly realm and is favoured with knowledge originating from that sphere.<sup>192</sup> On the other hand, he is human and thus moves in very earthly social circles as well.<sup>193</sup> Ultimately, whatever Apollonius is ontologically, on a social level he is the link between these two realms.<sup>194</sup> The divine power and wisdom available in Apollonius in the earthly realm is made possible by the access he has had and continues to have to the heavenly realm. Hence one can correctly identify Apollonius as θεός or δαίμων as he does mingle with the heavenly crowd without implying that all his divine power and wisdom is self-originating. The fact that the intermediaries of *VA* are spoken of in these rather more exalted terms than those of Acts is most likely attributable to the fluidity permitted by a polytheistic (occasionally spilling over into pantheistic) religious culture in *VA* as opposed to the greater linguistic rigor imposed by Judeo-Christian monotheism in Acts.

## 2. The Function of Miracles in *Life of Apollonius*

Given Apollonius' status as one who has a unique access to the heavenly realm, the obvious function of miracles in *VA* is strikingly similar to that of Acts. In Acts, miracles confirm the divine favour or approval of the miracle-worker and his message and clearly demonstrate that the intermediary is connected to a divine power source where his miracle-working power and his message ultimately originate. In *VA* the narrator is likewise hoping to demonstrate that Apollonius was a purveyor of divine

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which would imply that Apollonius functions socially as a philosopher rather than as a simple suppliant in his interaction with certain gods (8.19). The non-Philostratean *Epistles of Apollonius* resonate with a similar notion when Apollonius writing to Euphrates claims that in conversing with a Pythagorean one will acquire γνῶσιν θεῶν, οὐ δόξαν, εἶδησιν δαιμόνων, οὐχὶ πίστιν, φιλίαν ἑκατέρων (52).

<sup>192</sup>Vespasian states, "Wherefore from you, O Apollonius, I myself cast my ship's cable, for they say you have the greatest apprehension of the gods" (φασὶ γὰρ πλεῖστά σε τῶν θεῶν αἰσθάνεσθαι [5.29]).

<sup>193</sup>This intermediate position is apparent from the outset when the narrator declares that gods revealed at his birth how ὑπὲρ πάντα τὰ ἐν τῇ γῆ καὶ τὸ ἀγχοῦ θεῶν καὶ ὑπὲρ ὅσα ὄψεσθαι ὁ ἀνὴρ ἐγένετο ("the man would become even as great as this: [rising] above all earthly things and nearing the gods" [1.5]).

<sup>194</sup>In 4.44 Apollonius claims his wisdom is applied both "to know the gods and to understand humans," and furthermore that his extraordinary displays of knowledge were as a result of the wisdom "which God reveals to wise men." MacMullen suggests this pattern of a teacher claiming a divine interview of some sort as the authority for their teaching was a widespread phenomena in the Roman Imperial world, *Enemies*, 106.

power and wisdom. Performing extraordinary displays of divine power and wisdom was the sign that the intermediary was connected with the realm of the gods and making their power available in the earthly realm. This fact can be seen in the passages cited above where Apollonius' miracle-working is associated with his "wisdom," that is his unique knowledge and connection with the gods. But oddly enough this fact is most evident when the narrator declares that Apollonius' miracle-working was possible as a result of δαιμόνια and not γοητεία (5.12, 7.10). Assuming the narrator has established the legitimacy of Apollonius as a miracle-worker (and on the grounds for that more anon), his miracles thus point to his close association with the divine. Both narratives demonstrate the connection of the intermediary with the divine through miracle-working.

In Acts, the miracle-working is also closely linked with the message delivered by the intermediary. That is, in working a miracle, the intermediary gains a platform for himself as a messenger with a divine message.<sup>195</sup> Is this also true of *VA*?<sup>196</sup> The explicit statements linking miracle-working with subsequent faith in the miracle-worker's message which one finds in Acts (e.g., 8:6, 13:12) are absent from *VA*, but the implicit linking of the two is evident.<sup>197</sup> The Brahmins, it seemed, certainly knew the value of greeting those who came seeking their wisdom with a miraculous display before sharing their particular views on heaven, earth, and everything in-between (3.16).<sup>198</sup> It is Apollonius, however, who presents us with the closest comparison with

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<sup>195</sup>Reitzenstein affirms that the connection we have seen in Acts between miracle-working and message propagation is one which is found beyond the bounds of early Christianity with his observation that those spreading Oriental cults in the Hellenistic era "represent[ed] themselves as priests and prophets and validate[d] their proclamation by means of the ecstatic spirit of their discourse and by means of prediction and miracle" (*Mystery-Religions*, 25).

<sup>196</sup>Gallagher rightly criticizes the implicit assumption that the connection between miracle and propaganda can always be assumed (28). In our two case studies, however, the case can clearly be made for the propagandist value of the miracle-working, whether or not the miracle-workers consciously intended them to serve in that capacity.

<sup>197</sup>Petzke suggests that the explicit combination of miracle and teaching one finds in the NT can also be found in *VA* 4.24 (181). However, the revealing and rebuking of an ἐμπουσία is not seized upon as an occasion to present Neo-Pythagorean philosophy to a gathered crowd the way one might expect based on Acts. Clearly, however, this miracle becomes a large building block in a larger reputation which allows Apollonius his teaching platform.

<sup>198</sup>The Egyptian Gymnosophists, incapable of even discerning the untruth of the malicious rumor concerning Apollonius, are rather less successful in convincing Apollonius they have a

Acts. He is presented by our narrator as a social and religious reformer, calling cities to return to their traditional roots and spreading his neo-Pythagorean theology of bloodless sacrifice to the gods.<sup>199</sup> Given that his miracle-working is a function of his "wisdom" (understood as a unique relationship to the sphere of the divine) it is not too great a leap to suppose that it is Apollonius' reputation as a miracle-worker which contributes to his success as civic moralizer and cultic reformer. Upon Apollonius' first visit to Rome, Telesinus asks Apollonius the nature of his wisdom, to which Apollonius responds that his wisdom is a "divination which even includes how someone might pray and sacrifice to the gods" (4.40). Telesinus then recognizes Apollonius based on "what he had heard about him earlier." Given evidence elsewhere in *VA* that it was the miracle-stories of Apollonius which were most widespread,<sup>200</sup> one must assume that Telesinus is engaging Apollonius in a religious dialogue with the knowledge that Apollonius has demonstrated his right to speak for the gods through his astonishing miracle-working.<sup>201</sup> In the end Telesinus gives Apollonius the right to visit all the Roman temples with written instructions that the priests are to adopt his reforms. Likewise, it is not surprising that one to whom the miraculous salvation of cities was attributed should be given the right to make pronouncements on civic affairs.<sup>202</sup>

Finally, in discussing the function of miracles in Acts, we noted that in so far as miracles are *the sign* that the intermediary is connected to divine power, or has access

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worthwhile wisdom, and the contrast between the Egyptians and the Brahmans is one drawn by Apollonius himself (6.13).

<sup>199</sup>3.41, 3.58, 4.2-3, 4.21-24, 4.40, 5.25. Apollonius does appear to be a philosopher who is indeed a "man with a mission" as Cox puts it (19).

<sup>200</sup>Philostratus claims that Apollonius' exposure of Menippus' bride as an εμπουσῶν is the best known story concerning Apollonius (4.25). Tigellinus' first question of Apollonius in his investigation is how he refuted τοὺς δαίμονας...καὶ τὰς τῶν εἰδώλων φαντασίας, a clear indication that he was best known for his exorcisms (4.44).

<sup>201</sup>It is worth noting in advance of our next section another element in this story. Apollonius claims to offer inspired advice on how to pray and sacrifice to the gods, Telesinus calls to mind the things he has heard about Apollonius, then Apollonius drops a line in which he claims that he prays that the wise would continue in poverty, *and then* Telesinus writes instructions for the Roman priests to adopt his reforms. That is, the miracle-working has given him a platform for his cultic reform, but his embrace of poverty has made his power display socially acceptable and desirable (*VA* 4.40).

<sup>202</sup>4.4, 4.6, 4.10, 6.41.

to divine knowledge and power, bigger is better. The more impressive the display of divine power, the greater the positive status-building effect on the intermediary. This does not quite hold in *VA* to the same extent, but the overall effect of the narrative does move in that direction. Contrary to typical assessments of the Philostratean redaction,<sup>203</sup> our narrator does not seem in the least intimidated to report all the miracles he has received concerning Apollonius. Furthermore, he reports Apollonius succeeding in miracle-working where others have failed (6.27) and on more than one occasion the miracle has an above and beyond the expected aspect to it (4.3-4). The most spectacular healing miracles are reserved for the sages who receive the highest regard by the narrator's most reliable character Apollonius—the Brahmins (3.38-39). However, in at least one key miracle, resuscitating the apparently dead bride, he retreats into a more conventional role of a narrator who remains critically "distant" from his reports of the miraculous.<sup>204</sup> In this case the narrator claims that he is not certain whether or not the young woman was truly dead or not (4.45). Anderson suggests that Philostratus has intentionally "toned down" the miraculous character of Apollonius' deeds to prevent the charge of γοητεία.<sup>205</sup> However, even here in either case he has reported a truly extraordinary event. While being a τερατολογῶν is still considered an insult in the narrative world of *VA*,<sup>206</sup> our narrator would certainly not see Apollonius or himself as such, nor does he particularly fear treading close to that line. The reason for the narrator's boldness in reporting Apollonius' miracle-working will become apparent in our next section on avoiding ambition. The narrator is certain that his narrative as a whole will demonstrate that Apollonius was capable of miracle-working and particularly foretelling the future (προγιγνώσκω) by divine visitation

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<sup>203</sup>To cite but one example, Anderson, *Philostratus*, 138-140, 143.

<sup>204</sup>Alexander, "Fact," 383-385. Robert M. Grant suggests that these "mild expressions of scepticism leave Philostratus free to describe the levitation of the Brahmins and their miraculous covering from rain and sun, [etc.]" (*Miracle and Natural Law in Graeco-Roman and Early Christian Thought* [Amsterdam: North-Holland Publishing, 1952], 74-75).

<sup>205</sup>*Philostratus*, 137-139.

<sup>206</sup>3.32, 4.4, 5.13, 6.11.



(δαίμονία) rather than as a result of Apollonius being a magician (γόης [5.12]).<sup>207</sup>

If Philostratus hesitates in his paradoxography through recourse to a φασί formula or such device, it is not because great miracles will result in magic accusations as Anderson suggests, but his own credibility or objectivity as a narrator in a historical narrative will be lost.<sup>208</sup>

### 3. Building a Reputation

As we noted in Acts, nothing breeds success in miracle-working so much as success. That is, miracle-working not only lends credibility to the intermediaries' social or religious "agenda," their authority as speakers for the will of the gods, it is an activity that builds on itself. It is Apollonius' miracle-working reputation which goes before him,<sup>209</sup> and often creates the conditions for further miracle-working. On more than one occasion the narrator leaves clues that Apollonius is perhaps best known as an exorcist. The narrator claims that the defeat of the ἔμπουσα or λάμια in Greece is the "best known story of Apollonius" (4.25). Furthermore, when Tigellinus interrogates Apollonius privately, his first reported question is in regard to Apollonius' exorcisms (4.44). Apollonius clearly has a reputation which precedes him based on his successful miracle-working.

The effects of this growing reputation have the same "crowd-gathering" result one can find in the narrative world of Acts. When Apollonius decides to sail in late autumn, he is actually forced to move to a larger vessel, as a considerable crowd wishes to sail with the man they consider master of the winter storms, fire and the

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<sup>207</sup>7.10 also uses the term δαίμονίως to describe how Apollonius is aware of Domitian's summons before it actually arrives.

<sup>208</sup>This of course follows the advice of Lucian *How to Write History* 60. On the whole issue of history as both fact and fiction and authorial projection within that mix see especially Alexander, "Fact." Scholars such as Morton Smith who hold to a decline in rationality and a rise in stories about religious "supermen" in the Antonine era would no doubt chalk up Philostratus' miracle reporting to this general trend ("Prolegomena," 181-184).

<sup>209</sup>Knoles makes the fascinating observation that the miracle stories lying as they do in the "grassroots" memory of the holy man demonstrate his effect on people (not just his literary biographer) and this popular enthusiasm suggests two things. First, "the holy man exists more as a human being than as a literary figure and...it is primarily the least 'historical' of the holy man's activities—his miracles—which emphasize his humanity" (270).

greatest danger (4.13).<sup>210</sup> In Alexandria crowds gather to gaze upon the disembarking Apollonius, and they look upon him "as if equal to a god" and made way for him through the narrow streets "like a priest carrying sacred objects" (5.24).<sup>211</sup> The crowd having gathered on the basis of his reputation is immediately rewarded with an impressive display of Apollonius' wisdom as he delays the execution of a man who is released when a rider approaches to announce he has been wrongfully convicted and is to be spared (5.24). Successful miracle-working feeds on itself as crowds gather around the miracle-worker to experience further miracles through the intermediary.

Not surprisingly, "miraculous" interaction with powerful figures like the emperor have some of the greatest reputation building potential (and these are themselves a product of an existing reputation). In Tarsus Apollonius in his typical brash display of wisdom successfully appeals to Titus to grant certain favours to the city. This action alone moves him from the status of bothersome civic critic to overnight hero of the city (6.34). While one might quibble over whether the Tarsus episode is truly a display of the miraculous, this is not an issue in Apollonius' escape from the clutches of Domitian which our narrator and every character in the narrative regard as nothing short of miraculous.<sup>212</sup> Apollonius' presence at Olympia following reports of his demise under Domitian brings crowds out to Olympia to see him (8.15). The concluding sentence of 8.15 captures the cultural script in a rather succinct fashion. The crowds come close to worshipping him when they hear the spectacular details of the escape from Domitian's court (i.e., others spread reputation-building reports) and regard him as divine (θεῖος) because Apollonius *himself* does not make a big deal about the escape (i.e., he is not self-promoting)(8.15). In a cultural context in which one needs to build a reputation without seeming to desire one, it is imperative

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<sup>210</sup>Petzke notes the parallel between the safe passage of Paul's fellow travellers in Acts 27:24 and this text in *VA*, 176, 178.

<sup>211</sup>θεῶ ἴσα ἀπέβλεπον καὶ διεχώρουν τῶν στενωπῶν, ὡσπερ τοῖς φέρουσι τὰ ἱερά.

<sup>212</sup>The contrast between the miraculous character of Apollonius' escape from Domitian and the reputation-building power of that episode and the matter-of-fact reporting of Paul's escapes from death, especially in Acts 14:19-20 is remarkable, and somewhat inexplicable (although 28:6 might be cited as an exception).

that one has persons such as the man whom Apollonius directs towards hidden treasure going about "hymning the praises of the sage" (6.39, Loeb).

#### 4. Intermediaries as 'Inspired' Speakers

Since so much of Apollonius' miracle-working in *VA* is related to prescient speech, it may well be redundant to treat Apollonius' speech in a separate category as we did with Acts. However, even apart from Apollonius' demonstration of foreknowledge in his speech, there are other parallels in terms of the characterization of the speech of intermediaries in Acts and *VA* that special attention needs to be drawn to this feature. As with Acts, in *VA* there is enough said about Apollonius and his speaking style and abilities that one is rightly suspicious that this is a critical component in the cultural script for intermediaries in this narrative world as well.<sup>213</sup> In both narratives, the speech of the intermediaries has both an extraordinary element, knowledge of foreign languages<sup>214</sup> and speaking ability apart from education, and an authoritative element, which seems to come from intimate knowledge of the will of the gods.<sup>215</sup> The narrator reports that Apollonius spoke a perfect Attic dialect even as a child (1.7).<sup>216</sup> Later, Apollonius declares an ability to understand all human languages without having studied any of them, and indeed, human silence (1.19). Animal languages, however, are something he learned from the Arabs (1.20). The ability to understand foreign languages is perhaps a bit of an overstatement even from the perspective of the narrator, for while Apollonius astounds the border satrap with his ability to understand him without the need of an interpreter (1.21), later Apollonius is

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<sup>213</sup>Petzke, 167-168.

<sup>214</sup>In this case I am reading the glossalalia of Acts 2 as instances of intermediaries speaking foreign languages they would not be expected to know since the foreigners visiting Jerusalem are surprised that the apostles are speaking in their language (2:7-8). Apollonius, of course, does not speak foreign languages as a intermediary but he does apparently understand them (1.19).

<sup>215</sup>Alain Billault states, "Divine acquaintance is fundamental to Apollonius' life, and this is where his authority comes from. Therefore, he never hesitates; his categorical style of talking signifies the divine origin of his words ("Rhetoric," 231).

<sup>216</sup>On this as a literary motif involving the holy man's childhood in which education seems superfluous see Cox, 21-23.

portrayed as using interpreters (2.23-27, 3.28, 3.31).<sup>217</sup> Not only is Apollonius' speech extraordinary in terms of his abilities to understand foreign languages, but his speech has therapeutic powers, as his discourse on the soul renews the health of a king (1.38).<sup>218</sup>

Besides this extraordinary element, Apollonius' speech is also consistently portrayed as uniquely authoritative.<sup>219</sup> Early on in the story the narrator summarizes Apollonius' speaking style as follows:

The literary style (λόγων ἰδέαν) which he cultivated was not dithyrambic or tumid or swollen with poetical words, nor again was it far-fetched and full of affected Atticisms....Neither did he indulge in subtleties, nor spin out his discourses; nor did anyone ever hear him dissembling in an ironical way, nor addressing to his audience methodical arguments; but when he conversed he would assume an oracular manner (ὥσπερ ἐκ τρίποδος) and use the expressions, "I know," or "It is my opinion," or, "Where are you drifting to?" or, "You must know." And his sentences were short and crisp, and his words were telling and closely fitted to the things he spoke of, and his words had a ring about them as of the dooms delivered by a sceptred king (ὥσπερ ἀπὸ σκήπτρου θεμιστευόμενα) (1.17, Loeb).

Likewise, in 4.2 the narrator reports that Apollonius' speech to the Ephesians was not delivered "in a Socratic tone" (ὥσπερ οἱ Σωκρατικοί) but rather was an impassioned plea (ἀποσπουδάζω) in which he chided them for their taste for light entertainment rather than philosophical pursuits (4.2). Apollonius' ability to give a clear interpretation with very specific advice to a suppliant at the Asclepion in 1.9 suggests that in fact it is his knowledge of the affairs of the gods that permits him clear

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<sup>217</sup>It is not certain whether he needs these merely for speaking or also for understanding what is said to him, so *perhaps* the narrator is consistent in his portrayal of Apollonius as understanding all languages, but not necessarily being able to speak them. Of course, given free reign on speculation, one might well suspect that the historical Apollonius could have been one of those individuals who simply has a knack for understanding foreign speakers using a smattering of knowledge of foreign languages and picking up the necessary non-verbal communication clues. Having met and travelled with individuals like this personally, I can attest to the awe-inspiring effect this has.

<sup>218</sup>For an interesting take on the connection between speech, that is rhetoric, and magic, particularly as it expressed itself in Apollonius and on into the Second Sophistic see Jacqueline de Romilly, *Magic and Rhetoric in Ancient Greece* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1975), 76-85.

<sup>219</sup>Billault, "Rhetoric," 227, 231.

and authoritative speech, rather than speaking in riddles.<sup>220</sup> Speaking boldly and confidently on matters of worship and morality thus was an aspect of gaining and demonstrating power as an intermediary.

### 5. 'Punitive' Miracles

When we looked at Acts and the punitive miracles performed by positively evaluated intermediaries, we mentioned the distinction often drawn between miracle and magic—good supernatural deeds are miracles, evil performed by supernatural means are magic. Our conclusion was that in Acts positive or negative wonders have the same currency, and these can be judged on the basis of personal ambition as easily as any other. In other words, this is NOT a criterion for distinguishing miracle-workers from magicians. Does the same hold true for *VA*?

As we noted in Acts, particularly in Peter's temple healing, miracles are defended on the ground that they are an act of compassion or salvation for the individual involved (Acts 4:9), and one could easily argue for the philanthropic nature of most of the miracles performed by the apostles in Acts. That same philanthropic element can be detected in the acts of divine mediation reported in *VA*.<sup>221</sup> Apollonius receives a visitation by a god in a dream in order to help the exiled Eretrians (1.23-24). The Brahman's miracles carried out during Apollonius' visit are all of a helpful nature to the suppliants (3.38-39) as are Apollonius' various healings and exorcisms (4.11, 20, 25, 45, 6.43). In language which could almost be used in Acts, Iarchus declares that Apollonius, as one who delights in divination, "both become[s] divine by it and *contribute[s] to the salvation of humanity*" (3.42).<sup>222</sup> This former phrase in this

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<sup>220</sup>There are, of course, also cases in *VA* where Apollonius' predictions are given more as mantic riddles, such as his prediction of Nero's incompleting project to cut a canal through the Isthmus with the words, "This neck of land shall be cut through or rather it shall not be cut" (4.24), or his prediction of Nero's brush with death by lightning strike which was predicted by his words, "There shall be some great event and there shall not be" (4.41) or his prediction that "many Thebans" would hold the throne after Nero was deposed (5.11). In these cases it is worth noting that the narrator seeks to demonstrate just how absolutely accurate the riddle was, thus neutralizing the appearance of a general statement which could be cast in whatever fashion the events turned out to be.

<sup>221</sup>Cox characterizes the divine philosopher as one "credited with a real sympathy and concern for the welfare of his fellows" in late antique biographies, 23.

<sup>222</sup>Οἱ μαντικῆ...χαίροντες...θεῖοί τε ὑπ' αὐτῆς γίνονται καὶ πρὸς σωτηρίαν ἀνθρώπων πράττουσι.

statement, however, captures the curious irony that the miracle-worker who operates on behalf of others actually succeeds best at raising his own stature as a legitimate intermediary. Not surprisingly then, Apollonius' divine mediation is also the means by which numerous cities in the Aegean region are saved from plague and earthquake (4.4, 6, 10). One might well argue that the narrator is being rather deliberate in his portrayal of this aspect of Apollonius' miracle-working, as the best known miracle by Apollonius, the defeat of the ἔμπουσα or λάμια in Corinth, is reported in detail by the narrator to correct the ignorance of those unaware that Apollonius did this *for Menippus* (4.25).

The troubling issue is really not so much whether most of the miracle-workers of *VA* perform acts of divine mediation in order to help or save unfortunate individuals, as whether that is a definitive criterion distinguishing miracle-worker from magician in the cultural milieu of the narrative world. Clearly the narrators and characters of both *VA* and *Acts* delight in the philanthropic nature of most of the miracle-workers' supernatural acts and one might argue that there is a correlation between positively evaluated intermediaries and the positive nature of their mediation. However, one should *not* push that further and suggest the corollary is that a positive act of mediation is proof positive of a status of miracle-worker, while a negative act of mediation is solid evidence of a negative status as magician. The evidence in both *Acts* (as we have already seen) and *VA* rule against this secondary conclusion.

There are three strands of evidence within the narrative world of *VA* in particular which are worth noting in this regard—several cases of "neutral" supernatural acts by miracle-workers, attempts at "positive" acts of saving miracles by magicians, and incidents that border on punitive acts of divine power mediation. First, there are cases of what could be loosely labelled "neutral" supernatural acts by Apollonius, that is, a miraculous "event" of which one would be hard pressed to see how it serves any purpose beyond simply pointing to the extraordinary nature of the intermediary. One particular example which stands out because of its relationship with a similar incident in *Acts* is that of bilocation—Apollonius is swept off to Ephesus

instantaneously from Smyrna (4.10), much as Philip simply disappears then reappears elsewhere following his conversation with the Ethiopian (Acts 8:39-40). Other examples of "neutral" miracles would include cases in which Apollonius exhibits knowledge of events in which that extraordinary insight only serves to demonstrate Apollonius' divine wisdom rather than any obvious practical function: predicting the cutting of the Isthmus by Nero (4.24, 5.7) and the presence of "many Thebans" on the throne after Nero (5.11), awareness of the burning of the temple of Zeus in Rome while in Egypt (5.30), and prescient of Nerva's short reign (8.27). Thus, it is not axiomatic that all wonders performed by approved intermediaries must have an overtly philanthropic element to be considered legitimate acts of divine mediation.

Furthermore, there are non-approved intermediaries who are going about attempting to perform acts of salvation. We have already seen in Acts that even successful exorcists are not necessarily legitimate miracle-workers. In *VA*, one has a counterpart in a group of Egyptians and Chaldeans who are offering to save the cities on the "left side" of the Hellespont from earthquakes. While they seem to be offering a positive divine service, clearly within the context of the narrative, they are non-legitimate purveyors of divine power (6.31). Attempting to provide a societal "good," therefore, is not a guarantee of approval as an intermediary.

And, *VA* also hints that hostile or punitive divine mediation may also be regarded as a legitimate act of divine mediation. While *VA* does not offer some of the overt cases of punitive miracles which Acts does, there is at least one case which suggests that punitive miracles are not outside the bounds of legitimacy for approved intermediaries in this narrative world either. When Domitian is assassinated by Stephanus and a body guard after a bloody struggle, in faraway Ephesus Apollonius is in the middle of a public discourse. As the events transpire in Rome, Apollonius halts his speech, looks down on the ground, advances three or four steps, then cries, "Strike the tyrant, strike!" The narrator suggests it was οὐχ ὡσπερ ἐκ κατόπτρου τινὸς εἰδωλον ἀληθείας ἔλκων, ἀλλ' αὐτὰ ὁρῶν καὶ ξυλλαμβάνειν δοκῶν τὰ δρώμενα (8.26). This last comment that it is as if Apollonius is a part of the

Roman drama itself suggest that one might conclude that in a sense he is miraculously participating in the assassination at a distance, encouraging the actual assassinations as if he were really there.<sup>223</sup> If this is the case, there seems to be room within the narrative world of *VA* for a punitive act of divine mediation. While it is worth noting that Acts has more specific cases of this sort of behaviour, positively assessed punitive mediation is not absent from *VA*.

## 6. Conclusion

Again there is considerable overlap between Acts and *VA* in terms of the function of miracles. Once the problematic θεῖος ἀνὴρ presuppositions are put to one side and one appreciates the overtly religious nature of σοφία in *VA*, the miracles in *VA* demonstrate the connection of the intermediary with the divine realm. The miracles thus enhance confidence in the intermediary's message and even the authoritative speech of the miracle-worker becomes a form of divine mediation. Ultimately success in miracle-working tends to breed further success, and so miracle-working is not just a sign of power gained but a means of further potential gains. As in Acts, philanthropic miracles are highlighted, but that does not imply that punitive miracles are thus indicators of magic. Ultimately the test of whether the fringe character capable of performing miracles is doing so as an illegitimate magician or legitimate miracle-worker will depend less on the nature of the miracle itself, and much more on their ability to maintain their avoidance of ambition.

### D. Avoidance of Ambition

In our discussion of the avoidance of ambition in Acts, we suggested that the narrator pays his preferred intermediaries a double compliment by showing both that their miracles were of such magnitude so that crowds viewed the intermediaries as gods themselves and that the miracle-workers were humble enough to deny this

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<sup>223</sup>Certainly the power of this incident is testified to by the fact that this is the only incident in Apollonius' life for which we have secondary evidence in Greco-Roman historiography (Cassius Dio *Roman History* 67.18). Jackson argues that if the incident is true, Apollonius must surely have been a co-conspirator since if one discounts the existence of telepathy one is left with sheer luck or insider knowledge of the impending assassination attempt)(29-30). This explanation, however it may or may not convince historically, will not do in terms of the narrative which uses this event to point out the supernatural wisdom exercised by Apollonius.



honour. This "manoeuvre"—that is a striking power display linked with equally striking humility—can also be found in *VA*. Here the "avoidance of ambition" feature takes on a number of forms including outright denials of divine honours as in Acts (although some differences will emerge here), as well as very explicit legitimation of the intermediaries through avoidance of wealth. As we also noted with Acts, there are one or two episodes which on the surface contradict the equation between avoiding divine titles and wealth and miracle-workers and accepting divine titles and wealth on the part of magicians. These will be dealt with separately. Also in line with Acts is the lack of personal ambition on the part of intermediaries as perhaps the most critical feature in their acceptance by the communities in which they operate.

### **1. Downplaying and Dissipating Power**

In the past, scholars have noted that Philostratus' *VA* seems to offer a rather ambiguous status for Apollonius which matches neither the negative category of magician he is placed in by his opponents nor does he fit the miracle-worker category of his more exuberant followers.<sup>224</sup> While Gallagher may well be correct in concluding that Philostratus' narrative "leaves room for a diversity of opinion...within the positive spectrum of evaluations," part of the perceived ambiguity arises from self-deprecating statements by Apollonius himself.<sup>225</sup> However, if one allows for a separate voice for the narrator and characters, even ideologically ideal and trustworthy characters like Apollonius, these moments of self-deprecation can then be understood as a part of the socio-cultural script expected of a legitimate intermediary. These statements represent Apollonius' response within the framework of an existing socio-cultural script, not necessarily a clear expression of the implied author's take on Apollonius. As should be abundantly clear by now, greater reputation, influence and power may well await those who are seen to deny these advantages.

#### **a. A Humble Self-Presentation**

The power of combining incredible miraculous power and self-effacing humility

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<sup>224</sup>J. Z. Smith, "Good News is No News: Aretalogy and the Gospel," in *Map is Not Territory* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1978), 193. Gallagher, 161-162.

<sup>225</sup>Gallagher, 163.

is nowhere more evident than in the report of Apollonius' return to Greece following a successful "escape" from Domitian's court. Crowds flock to Olympia to see the conquering hero upon his successful defence before Domitian. Our narrator describes the interaction between the Greeks and Apollonius as follows:

On the one hand to the ones questioning in what manner he had escaped the tyrant, neither did he deem it necessary to declare the vulgar but simply stated that he had presented a defence and had escaped. But when many arrived from Italy, they proclaimed the events in the courtroom, the Greeks were disposed almost to worship him, believing [him to be] a divine man because of this most of all—he never presented anything concerning these matters in a boast (8.15).<sup>226</sup>

The logic is inescapable. The Greeks are willing to come close to worshipping Apollonius on the basis of the miracle as told to them by the arriving Italians, but what pushes them to the point of believing Apollonius to be a divine man is the fact that he himself never boastfully recounted the tale of his incredible escape. The miracle itself is status-building, but the miracle coupled with a humble self-effacing presentation makes the miracle all the more spectacular and status enhancing.

There are other examples of Apollonius' humble self-presentation. The narrator reports that he walks with his eyes to the ground, a habit he picked up while still a young man (1.10). Apollonius wins his unruly brother over to good behaviour through his suggestion that his brother correct him if he do anything wrong (1.13). He remains silent on his remarkable night meeting with Achilles and only relates the story when pressed by his followers and then he prefaces his story with εἰ μὴ ἀλαζονεύεσθαι δόκω, πάντα εἰρησεται—"Only if I will not appear to swagger will I tell all" (4.15). Apollonius is presented by the narrator as one who, within the constraints of his need to reform city and civic cults, does his best to follow his motto of "Be unnoticed in living, and if that cannot be, be unnoticed in departing life" (8.28).

This humble self-presentation is also exhibited in the philanthropic tendencies

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<sup>226</sup>Πρὸς μὲν δὴ τοὺς ἐρωτῶντας, ὅτω τρόπῳ διαφύγοι τὸν τύραννον, οὐδὲν φέτο δεῖν φορτικὸν φράζειν, ἀλλ' ἀπολελογησθαί τε ἔφασκε καὶ σεσῶσθαι, πολλῶν δ' ἐξ Ἰταλίας ἠκόντων, οἱ ἐκήρυττον τὰ ἐν τῷ δικαστηρίῳ, διέκειτο μὲν ἡ Ἑλλάς οὐ πόρρω τοῦ προσκυνεῖν αὐτόν, θεῖον ἡγούμενοι ἄνδρα δι' αὐτὸ μάλιστα τὸ μηδ' ἐς κόμπου μηδένα ὑπὲρ αὐτῶν καθίστασθαι.

the narrator attributes to Apollonius. He is a man who is noted for not holding a grudge nor given to pettiness. In his discourses with Thespesion the gymnosophist, he willingly concedes their argument on a particular topic despite their poor treatment of him (6.22). He intercedes on behalf of Tarsus before Titus despite earlier harangues against the city (6.34). Indeed his reputation grows to the point that when Apollonius does reproach a rival, accusing him of parricide, he is apparently completely above suspicion that he is stooping to personal abuse to score points on his opposition (4.26).

### b. Denying Divine Honours

We saw in Acts a striking pattern in which intermediaries performed a miraculous act, were acclaimed or seen as some sort of divine figures after which the intermediaries denied the honour of this status. While a definite pattern such as this cannot not be found in *VA*, there are a number of locations within the narrative that one could argue to be instances of Apollonius deliberately avoiding being revered as a god in his role as intermediary. The Brahmans likewise seem intent on avoiding any hint of personal ambition in their miracle-working.

While the *narrator* clearly presents Apollonius as, in some sense anyway, more than simply another human with extraordinary talent, equating Apollonius first with Proteus then claiming he was actually greater than Proteus as one who knows events beforehand (1.4),<sup>227</sup> on the other hand, *Apollonius* will not openly accept some divine designation.<sup>228</sup> While the country folk around Tyana claim Apollonius is a child of Zeus (παῖδα τοῦ Διὸς), Apollonius prefers to call himself the child of Apollonius (ὁ δ' ἀνὴρ Ἀπολλωνίου ἑαυτὸν καλεῖ [1.6]). The incident which most follows the Acts' script of being offered a divine status followed by rejection of that by the

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<sup>227</sup>While the portents surrounding his actual birth are reported at "arm's length" in 1.5 with the introductory λέγεται, the interaction between Apollonius' mother and Proteus in 1.4 are narrated in a more straightforward fashion without any critical distancing.

<sup>228</sup>Contra Brenk who, after suggesting that "Apollonius uses both daimonology and demonology to manipulate and intimidate others," states that Apollonius "intimates—or Philostratus suggests for him—that he himself is a *daimon*—something which possibly no Greek sage claimed for himself in a human incarnation" ("Demonology," 2138). Brenk's observation fails in two regards, first by failing to see the rhetorical effect of the narrator, but not the key character, claiming daimonic status for that character, and second, because there are in fact sages *within the narrative world of VA* which claim this for themselves (8.7.6-8).

intermediary is the exchange between Domitian and Apollonius. Domitian is so taken with Apollonius' appearance that in his surprise he declares him a δαίμων.

Apollonius responds by chiding Domitian for failing to distinguish between humans and gods (7.32).

Perhaps the most telling statement in this regard, however, is Apollonius' response to the Lacedaemonians' wish to honour him with a theophany on top of the many civic honours they have heaped on him.<sup>229</sup> Apollonius dissuades them from this "so that he might not provoke envy" (...ἀπήγαγεν αὐτοὺς τῶν τοιούτων, ὡς μὴ φθονοῖτο [4.31]). The tension of being offered extraordinary honour and the accompanying danger of accepting that honour, are well captured in that incident. The fact that our narrator reports both the public acclamation and the intermediary's refusal demonstrates our premise that for all the nuanced differences one will find between the narrative world of Acts and *VA* on this point, at a basic level there are nearly identical cultural scripts in place.

Even the Brahmans face the perennial hazard of wonder working—that some will conclude that the intermediary is performing miracles for personal ambition. The narrator in passing along Damis' reports of the Brahmans states that their act of levitation was "not [simply] for the sake of wonder-working, for this [sort] of ambition these men renounce" (3.15).<sup>230</sup> Rather, this levitation should be interpreted as a necessary aspect of their sun worship, performed as an offering to the Sun God (ὡς πρόσφορα τῷ θεῷ πράττοντας). The term παραιτέομαι would seem to suggest a vigorous oral denunciation of the notion that their miracles should be

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<sup>229</sup>Francis understands θεοφάνια αὐτῷ ἄξουσι as a desire by the Lacedaemonians "to celebrate him as a god" (121). This would fit well with our contention that the legitimate intermediary is spectacular enough to be honoured as a god but declines this honour. However, the theophany might also read as some festival in Apollonius' honour in which the images of the gods are revealed (see LSJ ad. loc.). In this latter case, Apollonius' denial that it would provoke envy rather than that it was inappropriate to honour him, a human, as a god falls more in line with this distinction elsewhere in *VA*.

<sup>230</sup>Οὐ θαυματοποιίας ἕνεκα, τὸ γὰρ φιλότιμον τοῦτο παραιτεῖσθαι τοὺς ἄδρας.

understood as an act to enhance their own status.<sup>231</sup> Clearly the narrator in reporting this fact is anticipating precisely what the Brahmans anticipated in their miracle-working—they will be construed as personally ambitious. The denunciation of ambition and the legitimation of the miracle in this case are based on the fact that the miracle is their act of worship of the gods rather than an act to evoke worship of themselves from others.

The Gymnosophists, functioning as they do as intermediaries of divine wisdom (albeit second rate intermediaries by the narrator's and Apollonius' judgment), claim to avoid possible charges of being ambitious "miracle-mongers" by showing a marked preference for asceticism rather than miracle-workers (6.10). Thespesion, in an effort to counter Apollonius' excessive praise of the Brahmans' miraculous pomp and pageantry, himself produces a miracle on the spot (causing a tree to greet Apollonius), only to decry miracle-working in favour of asceticism. Thespesion is then reported as saying that besides an ascetic diet, the true sage will particularly avoid the vices of desire and envy. The truth, states Thespesion, does not require θαυματουργίας τε καὶ βιαίου τέχνης ("wonder-working and the coercive craft"). The latter expression is significant in that Thespesion suggests that the naked sages, unlike the Brahmans, do not force nature to do the unnatural under normal circumstances (and as we shall see in the next section forcing the unnatural is part of the magic accusation).<sup>232</sup> Ironically, Thespesion must engage in the very act of θαυματουργίας τε καὶ βιαίου τέχνης to make his point, i.e., they have the same power to do what the Brahmans do, but are avoiding ambition and envy by abstaining from utilizing that power. Abstention only has meaning if non-abstention is

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<sup>231</sup>The Loeb translation of "disdain" fails to capture this oral response element implicit in the full range of possible translations offered by LSJ, all of which imply some form of communication, not simply a disposition.

<sup>232</sup>More recent editions of LSJ have added βίαιος τέχνη to the definition of βίαιος, suggesting this refers to magic while the adverbial form βιάως with σοφός can be glossed as a wizard. However the only citation on the noun is *VA* 1.33 and on the latter *VA* 1.2. While the editors of LSJ are no doubt correct that this is what Philostratus is trying to say, this may well suggest that the expression is hardly standard and that original readers may well have heard it as we have translated it—"the coercive craft"—and understood immediately by this (because of a particular understanding of magic) that Philostratus is casting a creative synonym for "magic."

a real possibility, otherwise Thespion risks simply appearing impotent. The irony is rich.

Ironically as well, Apollonius himself is praised by the narrator for his circumspect use of divine power with respect to the Brahmans. In a chapter dedicated to stating clearly that Apollonius was not a γόης, the narrator states that "while on the one hand he praised [the Brahmans' ability to miraculously move objects], on other hand he did not regard [himself] worthy to desire [it for himself]" (5.12).<sup>233</sup> Both Apollonius and the narrator regard the Brahman miraculous display as legitimate miracle-working, not magic, but Apollonius' unwillingness to practise the impressive displays of the Brahmans counts in his favour in the face of magic accusations. Like Thespion, for all his displays of power, Apollonius (at least from the perspective of his supporters) is not ambitiously seeking power and recognition.

### **c. Accusations Against Legitimate Intermediaries**

We shall deal with formal accusations and defence by intermediaries in *VA* in our chapter on defending power. However, to appreciate fully the dynamic involved in the denial (or non-denial) of divine honours, we must examine two features of the larger accusation against Apollonius and other intermediaries, namely the charge that they accepted divine titles and that they were overly ambitious in the realm of the gods. This is particularly the case given that Apollonius' designation of Iarchas, Phraotes, and indeed even himself as a θεός would appear to undermine our case that legitimate intermediaries deny divine honours. Furthermore, as our discussion of θεῖος ἄνηρ scholarship noted, there are lingering questions on what status the narrator is portraying Apollonius as having. Finally, there is strong evidence that aspiring to exercise divine prerogatives is a charge that is thrown at magicians in *VA* and this is worth paying special attention to as it brings us back to the original notion of magic as manipulative and coercive

#### **i. Accepting Divine Titles**

Both Iarchus and Apollonius are portrayed by the narrator as accepting the

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<sup>233</sup> Ἄλλ' ἐπήγει μὲν, ζηλοῦν δ' οὐκ ἔχτιου.

designation *θέος*; indeed the Brahmans refer to themselves as such (3.18; 8.6). But does that render our observation that true miracle-workers turn down and avoid titles of exalted status, particularly divine titles, null and void? Even a cursory inspection shows this is not the case. The Brahmans accept the designation of *θέος* on the grounds that they are "good humans" (*ἀγαθοὶ ἄνθρωποι* [3.18]). Apollonius claims the same for himself when accused by the emperor of being honoured as a *θέος* (8.6). Clearly the status of "god" is not to be thought of as some ontological status, but rather a compliment paid to one of exemplary character.<sup>234</sup> Indeed, it is precisely their good and wise *character*, not their miracle-working power which qualifies these individuals for this title. That this is clearly Apollonius' perspective is evident in 7.32 where he chides the Emperor for failing to distinguish between humans and *δαίμονες*, establishing that this is a distinction he wishes to maintain.<sup>235</sup> However, he then concedes that he regards Iarchas and Phraotes as "the only human beings that I regard as gods and meriting such a title."<sup>236</sup> While he denies a divine designation of *δαίμων* for himself, on the basis of their character (as the narrative has made clear to this point), he will allow the honorific title of *θέος* to be applied to these two individuals (neither of which are here to either accept or deny the honour). Rather than undermine our observation that legitimate miracle-workers must be seen to deflect divine honours, this redefinition of the title *θέος* actually confirms our case by throwing emphasis back onto character as the key distinguishing trait of the miracle-worker worthy of honour.<sup>237</sup>

## ii. Ambition in the Realm of the Gods

Aside from possible or actual accusations of accepting divine titles, there are

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<sup>234</sup>DuToit, 292-300.

<sup>235</sup>For a thorough survey on Philostratus' use of *δαίμων* and related terms see Jacques Puiggali, "La démonologie de Philostrate," in *RSPT* 67 (1983): 117-130.

<sup>236</sup> Ἐγὼ μόνους ἀνθρώπων θεοὺς τε ἡγοῦμαι καὶ ἀχίους τῆς ἐπωνυμίας ταύτης.

<sup>237</sup>This redefinition of terms is somewhat akin to the manoeuvre in magic accusations in which the accused will accept the title of *μάγος* but then immediately define it in terms of the legitimate Persian priesthood where the term originates (*Epistles of Apollonius* 16-17; Apuleius *Apologia* 25-26). Bieler, vol. 1, 84-85.

also indirect accusations of exercising divine prerogatives thrown at Apollonius which are designed to cast him as a γόης. When Euphrates sends his agent to the Gymnosophists to destroy Apollonius' reputation even before arriving, the agent states that Apollonius regards himself even more highly than the Indian sages whom he will constantly praise, and that he is capable of manipulating sun, heaven, and earth. According to the agent, Apollonius will "concede nothing to the sun or heaven or earth" but rather claim "to move and hold these and rearrange them wherever he desires" (6.7).<sup>238</sup> This combination of high self-regard and overstepping natural lines of authority by juggling fate is telling, and indeed, at this point in the narrative it is obvious that this is a magic accusation.

If we go back to 5.12, there we find the narrator defending Apollonius from the charge of being a γόης. Here γόητες are described as individuals who, through various means such as torture of phantoms, barbaric sacrifices, incantations or anointings, claim to alter that which is decreed by fate (μεταποιεῖν φασὶ τὰ εἰμαρμένα). According to the narrator, however, Apollonius followed the dictates of the Fates, and merely foretold what the gods revealed to him (ὁ δὲ εἶπετο μὲν τοῖς ἐκ Μοιρῶν, προὔλεγε δέ, ὡς ἀνάγκη γενέσθαι αὐτά, προεγίνωσκε δὲ οὐ γοητεύων, ἀλλ' ἐξ ὧν οἱ θεοὶ ἔφαινον). Clearly a γόης is one who fails to submit properly to the authority of the Fates but rather makes illegitimate attempts to manipulate destiny. It would appear to be a case of ambition in the realm of the gods. Euphrates' agent thus is claiming that Apollonius is a γόης making an illegitimate claim to divine authority or status by manipulating rather than submitting to sun, heaven and earth. Our narrator, of course, rebuts these charges strenuously. While the incidents with the sons of Sceva in Acts 19 hints that an illegitimate striving for authority in the realm of the gods is characteristic of magicians, in *VA* there is no doubt that this is the case.

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<sup>238</sup>The larger clause is, οὐς ἐν λόγῳ παντὶ αἶρει, μυρίας δὲ ἐλέγξεις ἐπ' αὐτοὺς συνεσκευάσθαι, ξυγχωρεῖν τε οὔτε ἡλίῳ οὐδὲν οὔτε οὐρανῷ καὶ γῆ, κινεῖν γὰρ καὶ ὀχεῖν αὐτὸς ταῦτα καὶ μετατάττειν οἱ βούλεται.



## 2. The Danger of Wealth

While the evidence in Acts concerning the danger of wealth gains for an intermediary attempting to maintain some social legitimacy is more indirect, in *VA* the evidence is overwhelming. As we stated earlier, it was the abandonment of wealth which earned Apollonius greater stature as an intermediary. Maintaining that detachment from wealth is something which the narrator uses extensively to reinforce the legitimacy of Apollonius' mediatorial activity.<sup>239</sup>

### a. Avoiding Wealth

Apollonius has numerous opportunities to demonstrate his detachment from wealth in his first journey eastward. The temptation to gain enormous gifts from ridiculously wealthy kings who are over-awed by Apollonius and his divine wisdom is constant. The first offer comes from a satrap in a post on the Babylonian border who offers Apollonius ten handfuls of gold, which Apollonius immediately refuses (1.21). Indeed he even refuses the offer of simple vegetarian food for his journey until he is told the wild herbs are inedible (1.21). The narrator notes that Apollonius completely failed to notice and appreciate the opulent wealth of the Babylonian court (1.30). Again the tension between gaining power and not appearing ambitious is evident. Apollonius is seen to consort with the politically powerful and indeed to impress them, but unlike so many surrounding the king in his court, Apollonius is not there for personal gain. Hence when the Babylonian king offers Apollonius ten gifts, Damis correctly worries that Apollonius will refuse these gifts, given his constant prayer that the gods "grant [him] to have little and to want nothing" (1.33).<sup>240</sup> As it turns out, upon being offered the ten gifts, Apollonius uses his leverage with the king to gain justice for the Eretrians (1.38) and asks for nothing for himself. Clearly Apollonius has

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<sup>239</sup>Petzke, 169. In an unexpected burst in an otherwise evenly argued article, B. F. Harris himself engages in the defence of Apollonius from the attacks of Lucian by declaring that Lucian was mistaken if he thought that Apollonius engaged in "such commercialized trickery as Alexander's" (196).

<sup>240</sup>There is a fascinating contrast between this prayer and the "grant me what I deserve" prayer (4.40) and a prayer to Apollonius' most favoured god, Helios, in *PGM* III.494-501: "Hear me in every ritual which [I perform], and grant all the [petitions] of my prayer completely, because I know your signs, [symbols and] forms, who you are each hour and what your name is."

gained power in the Babylonian court, but he has not turned that into a personal wealth gain. Later, a boorish king visiting the Brahmans at the same time as Apollonius offers to send Apollonius back to Greece "an object of envy" (ζηλωτός [3.33]). Of course, becoming an object of envy through association with kings is exactly what Apollonius must avoid.

Perhaps the most telling statement on wealth avoidance in *VA* comes from the narrator in describing Apollonius' socializing patterns during his stay in several Roman temples. According to the narrator, Apollonius' discourses on religion meet with broad approval because his speeches are public affairs for general audiences and he is not seen to prevail at the doors of the rich or busy himself with the powerful (4.41).<sup>241</sup> Clearly avoidance of wealth was a trait expected of legitimate intermediaries.

Later in the narrative there is an example of a miracle itself resulting in immediate monetary reward. Upon raising the apparently dead bride, the relatives wish to offer Apollonius 150,000 sesterces. Apollonius, however, immediately passes the money on to the young bride as a dowry (4.45). While miracle-working could make Apollonius wealthy, he intentionally avoids gaining wealth.

### **b. Gaining Wealth**

Apollonius' nemesis, Euphrates, is constantly upbraided by Apollonius for offering his philosophical services in exchange for wealth. While in Philostratus' *Lives of the Sophists* both men are singled out for carrying on with an unseemly battle, in *VA* the narrator is clearly on the side of Apollonius.<sup>242</sup> He characterizes Euphrates as the model of philosopher's greed while Apollonius is the epitome of philosophical self-restraint and austerity. While Euphrates does not fit our definition of an intermediary, as a pseudophilosopher he receives the same sort of negative characterization a magician might receive in *VA*'s narrative world. Indeed, the immediate suspicion sudden wealth gains brought is evident in the story told to Apollonius by a fellow inmate in Caesar's prison (7.23).

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<sup>241</sup> Διὰ τὸ σπουδάζεσθαι τε δημοσίᾳ λέγεσθαι τε ἐς πάντας, οὐδὲ γὰρ θύραις ἐπεπόλαζεν, οὐδὲ ἐτρίβετο περὶ τοὺς δυνατοὺς (4.41).

<sup>242</sup> Philostratus *Lives of the Sophists* 7. Philostratus *Life of Apollonius* 1.13, 5.38.

But there is even clearer evidence of the wealth gains as characteristic of illegitimate intermediaries in the story of the Egyptians and Chaldeans who come to the rescue of the cities of Hellespont (6.41). Following earthquakes, certain Egyptians and Chaldeans began to tour the cities of the Hellespont collecting ten talents for a sacrifice to Earth and Poseidon. Until the money was placed in the bank, they refused to offer the necessary sacrifice and indeed they seem to have met with some success in gaining funds. Apollonius then takes it upon himself to visit these same cities and banish these individuals on the grounds that "they had been making treasure on other's misfortunes." Apollonius himself divines the true causes of the earthquakes and offers the necessary sacrifices at a small cost (δραπάνη μικρῶ). Clearly the narrator wishes the reader to classify the Egyptians and Chaldeans in this case as γόητες, as one of those who "exact vast sums of money from them for all this, and yet do nothing to help them at all" (7.39, Loeb).<sup>243</sup> The attempt to play the role of intermediary in this case is spoiled by their greed.

### c. Apparent Exceptions

Just as in Acts we found apparent exceptions to the rule that legitimate intermediaries are portrayed as always turning down rewards, so also in *VA* we find exceptions as well. Again, the narrator's portrayal of the exceptions mitigates for the most part any aspersions cast on the intermediary by the acceptance of gifts. Apollonius, for instance, accepts linen clothes and a gem from Phraotes, the Indian king. However, in this case the linen clothes allow Apollonius to dress in the pure dress of the ancient peoples of Attica and the gemstone is one he recognizes as possessing some divine virtue. In light of the fact that he has had a pile of wealth poured out at his feet and this is all he walks away with, this hardly impugns his reputation for austerity and wealth avoidance. Furthermore, his companions also help themselves to some gemstones, in their case for a future dedication to the gods upon their return home (2.40). Later Apollonius will also accept seven rings from Iarchus and wears one for each day of the week. This gift too, like the gemstone from

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<sup>243</sup>Χρήματα μὲν αὐτοῦς λαμπρὰ ὑπὲρ τούτων πράττονται, ξυνδράωσι δὲ οὐδέν.

Phraotes, has religious significance for Apollonius (3.41).

Perhaps the most interesting story in this regard, however, is that of Apollonius receiving a thousand drachmas from the temple of Zeus at Olympia (8.17). Again, the way the story is narrated hardly allows for the conclusion to be drawn that Apollonius is growing rich through his association with these temples. First, by the time we reach this story in the narrative, Apollonius' reputation for disdaining wealth is so entrenched, it can hardly be impugned with this account. Second, the request for money originates with Damis, not with Apollonius. Third, Apollonius does not demand the money outright but will only take it if the priest does not think Zeus will be overly annoyed. Fourth, the priest is willing to give Apollonius far more than he requests, suggesting his request is hardly odious. Finally, the whole matter is thus cast as Zeus himself deciding whether Apollonius can have these funds. Apollonius is portrayed as someone who has the right to collect money from temples but only ever does so on this occasion. Clearly the story does not contradict the principle that legitimate intermediaries avoid wealth gain through their activities.

### **3. Conclusion**

The existence on the fringe of society which lies at the source of the intermediaries' power in the narrative world of *VA* must be maintained if a given intermediary is to gain acceptance as a miracle-worker by the communities he interacts with rather than marginalization as a magician. To adapt Mary Douglas' language, the power from the interstitial location becomes a source of danger when the mediator of that power moves out of that fringe existence and competes for wealth and status within ordered society. Avoiding ambition is demanded of intermediaries in *VA* in much the same way it is in Acts. While the narrator flatters his approved miracle-workers with potential divine titles and great wealth because of their impressive mediatorial activities, he also pays them the ultimate compliment by noting their refusal of personal gains. Apollonius' humble self-presentation which marks him out from his early adulthood carries on into his career as miracle-worker extraordinaire. He is not ambitious either in gaining status or wealth in human society nor in the realm of the

gods. If he was, he surely would be rightly labelled a γόης.

### **E. Conclusion**

The ambiguities and tensions of gaining power without seeking to desire it which we noted was the intermediaries' lot in Acts is also very evident in *VA*. In *VA*, societal withdrawal plays a considerable role in establishing the credentials of the intermediary as we saw in the case of Apollonius, the Brahmans, and the Gymnosophists. But for Apollonius travel also functioned to provide mystique and a "check" on potential power gains. His bold disregard for his personal well-being further demonstrated his disconnection with notions of personal advancement. The miracles performed by intermediaries in *VA* were a sign of having "arrived" as an intermediary, that a character such as Apollonius had a unique "wisdom"—that is, a unique connection and understanding of the divine realm. Even Apollonius' authoritative speech became a form of divine mediation. But rather than reap the potential rewards of this miracle-working power, legitimate intermediaries in *VA* are expected and applauded for avoiding personal ambition. Illegitimate intermediaries are those who openly accept divine honours and exchange divine power for wealth gains—they are overly ambitious in both divine and human society. The overlap with the Acts narrative world in this regard is remarkable.

### **IV. Conclusion**

Both Mary Douglas and Peter Brown's work suggested that there was remarkable "alternative" power to be found on the fringes and interstices of societal structures. Peter Brown particularly drew attention to withdrawal as one means of the Late Antique Holy Man discovering that power. That power can be found in a fringe existence in our two narratives can certainly be demonstrated. Intermediaries who exhibit interstitial inarticulate power certainly cultivated a fringe status through abandoning livelihoods in Acts or abandoning societal expectations in *VA*; extensive travel which kept local power gains in check in both Acts and *VA* and which served an even more positive status building role in *VA*; and ultimately a detachment from issues of personal safety and survival. The ultimate expression of this fringe-based or

"outsider" power is expressed in the mediation of the divine in miraculous speech and acts. These intermediaries were connected with a potentially unlimited divine power source. But the very means of gaining power also keeps this power in check. Intermediaries granted miracle-worker status by our narrators deflect the status, divine honour, and wealth that their miracle-working could bring. Intermediaries denigrated as magicians fail precisely at this point. Their ambition is unseemly, their interest in honour and wealth obvious, and indeed their ambition in human social circles is mirrored by an ambition in the realm of the gods. The list of criteria by which intermediaries are cast and portrayed as miracle-workers or magicians and the social context in which these criteria function are beginning to take shape.

## Chapter 4

### Intersecting Power

#### I. Introduction

While intermediaries may attempt, successfully or unsuccessfully, to maintain a "fringe" status, it is inevitable that the exercise of their mediated divine power will at some point intersect with the power structures of the communities in which they operate.<sup>1</sup> Peter Brown has claimed that when inarticulate power such as a holy man possesses meets the articulate power of established society one can "expect to find the sorcerer," the illegitimate purveyor of divine power.<sup>2</sup> That would suggest that exploring the strategies which the intermediary and the "institutional" authorities employ in an attempt to define the relationship between various types of power will be especially useful in helping us to understand how an intermediary came to be assigned positive or negative titles. In Chapter Three we looked at ways in which the intermediary stands deliberately outside the power struggles within the ancient face-to-face society; this section explores the dynamic of the intermediary within the power structures of this society.

The striking ambiguity and inherent tension of gaining power while not being seen as overtly ambitious is a state of affairs that also marks the intersection of the intermediary's divine power and other forms of authority and power within everyday society. The specific relationships we shall explore are chosen on the basis of some minimal overlap between the two narratives in each of these areas. In both, key intermediaries attempt to attach themselves in some manner to local religious communities or cults. And in both, these attempts meet with success and failure. Our task, then, is to explore why this is the case. Furthermore, intermediaries themselves

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<sup>1</sup>This is inevitable in a society in which "holiness did carry a pre-eminence and an influence that might be difficult to attain in any other way" (Anderson, *Sage*, 50).

<sup>2</sup>"Sorcery," 21-22.

frequently form some sort of community around themselves, and it is worth noting the dynamics of community leadership which may or may not ultimately rest in the hands of the founding intermediary. Finally, in both narratives political power structures offer a mixed reception to the intermediaries' brand of "outsider" power. What is most apparent in both Acts and *VA* is that where the intermediary's power intersects with that of established or even new religious communities or with political power structures, one does find Brown's "sorcerer." Or, to use our terms, it is here that the ever-subjective criteria for distinguishing miracle-workers and magicians can be found in action.

## **II. Intersecting Power in Acts**

### **A. Intersecting Established Religious Communities and Cults**

To the extent that our intermediary is an entrepreneur providing a connection to divine power, one would assume such an individual is, to press the free market terminology, a competitor with other sources of divine power, such as more established community-based religions and the institutions built up around these religions.<sup>3</sup> This is part of, but not the complete picture painted by the operation of intermediaries in both Acts and *VA*. Rather, the relationship is considerably more complex, with balancing acts which resemble those utilized by the intermediary to gain power.<sup>4</sup> In what follows, we want to explore the ways in which intermediaries make strategic use of community-based religious organizations, and the sort of response these offer in return. This section, perhaps more than any other, bears out Anderson's observation that the holy man "is in some sense[s] an individualist adventurer against a background of familiar religious and intellectual forces, and each is at least potentially

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<sup>3</sup>Burkert, for example, sees the individual charismatic specialist as too subversive for the developed community or *πόλις* which has created an safer institutional religion with a carefully structured priesthood ("ΓΟΗΣ," 52-54).

<sup>4</sup>Flinterman characterizes the situation as follows: "In the case of charismatic sages and miracle-workers like Apollonius, one can point to the tension between such figures and the institutionalized cults. Sages and miracle-workers probably made regular attempts to use existing shrines as their seat of operations, and they were sometimes successful; at the same time, their claim to a special relationship with the divine could be regarded as a threat to the position of the institutionalized cults"(61).



capable of being seen in more than one way."<sup>5</sup>

As we shall see below, intermediaries within Acts offer innovative means of accessing the divine, but they do so within a largely traditional religious framework. The religious traditions to which they attempt to attach themselves offer credibility and a justification for their beliefs and activities.<sup>6</sup> However, in the case of the Christian intermediaries, the message offered seriously pushes the boundaries of these institutions. Within Acts (and curiously within *VA*), the message itself is concerned with redefining the means by which ordinary religious participants access the divine. And, naturally, the messengers themselves provide a threat to established religious community leadership. The intermediary, therefore, needs the community-based religion for a credible starting point while at the same time extending beyond or pushing the boundaries of that very structure. The response from the religious community is inevitably mixed. As the social power base of the intermediary grows, the intermediary's assumption that he is offering a natural extension or correction of the community-based religion is increasingly questioned by those who hold power within the institutions of these community-based religions.

In this case the decision as to whether a given intermediary is an approved miracle-worker or a disapproved magician has a good deal to do with how one views the power shift that inevitably takes place. As is the case in gaining power, the focus remains on how the intermediary uses the power at his disposal which plays a key role in the community members' evaluation of the intermediary.

## **1. Attempts to Tie into Religious Institutions**

### **a. The Miracle-Workers within Judaism and Paganism**

It is a near scholarly consensus that Luke, within Acts, is attempting to present

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<sup>5</sup>Anderson, *Sage*, 38. Anderson's work suggests that Paul, for instance, fits among those holy men who "might wish to 'revise' or extend the worship of existing deities" (*Sage*, 55, see also 131ff.). As we shall see, Apollonius would fit this description as well.

<sup>6</sup>MacMullen describes this dynamic of the intermediary both integrating old religious forms while spinning out new ones with his description of the Alexander of Abonoteichus cult as "so cleverly compounded of the old, though indeed the old could and did yield a dozen further inventions, distortions, contaminations, and unpredictable, passing alliances in the realm of religious ideas" (*Enemies*, 119).

Christians and Christianity as the true heirs of the Jewish religious heritage, and particularly as the true recipients of the Hebrew Bible prophetic promises.<sup>7</sup> It is not surprising, therefore, that the narrator presents the intermediaries in our text as attempting to locate themselves ideologically within the Jewish scriptural tradition and to locate themselves physically within Jewish worship space. It is, after all, the words and actions of these characters within the text which have given rise to the notion that our "real" author is attempting the "Christians as real Jews" apologetic.<sup>8</sup>

From Peter's first address to the Jerusalem Jews to Paul's final address to the Roman Jews, the miracle-workers in Acts tie their message and identity to the Jewish scriptures. They may be religious innovators, but they do not begin by operating in a vacuum. In Peter's Pentecost sermon, the language miracle is explained using the words of Joel 2:28-32, while other scriptures are invoked to defend the rest of the message of a miracle-working resurrected Messiah (2:14-40). Miracle-working in the name of Jesus is explained and defended using scriptural quotations after the temple healing by Peter and John (3:12-26; 4:8-12). Stephen's defence before the Sanhedrin is a virtual Hebrew Bible history course (7:2-53). Peter appeals to the prophets in his address to Cornelius' household (10:43). Paul's first recorded address at the synagogue in Pisidian Antioch likewise is both Hebrew Bible history and quotations (13:16-41) and this is presented as his usual preaching pattern (17:2, 11) right to the very end (28:23-28).

There are other practices which reflect an attempt on the part of the miracle-

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<sup>7</sup>C. H. Talbert, *Reading Acts: A Literary and Theological Commentary on the Acts of the Apostles* (New York: Crossroad, 1997), 3-4; and "Promise and Fulfillment in Lucan Theology," in *Luke-Acts: New Perspectives from the Society of Biblical Literature Seminar*, ed. C. H. Talbert (New York: Crossroad, 1984), 91-103; D. Bock, "Scripture and the Realization of God's Promises," in *Witness to the Gospel: The Theology of Acts*, ed. I. H. Marshall and D. Peterson (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1998), 41-62.

<sup>8</sup>Haenchen, 100-103. Powell, *Acts*, 15-16. Usually related to this reading of Acts is the notion that Luke is trying to pass off Christianity as a harmless and licit Judaism which ought to receive the protection (or at least not be feared by) the Roman empire. However, if it was the goal of the writer of Luke-Acts to present Christianity as a benign Judaism, he has been extraordinarily incompetent. Far more plausible is the reading of the evidence offered by Cassidy (*Society*, 145-157). It is most surprising that Anderson adopts the "Luke as domesticater" line of reasoning given he is approaching the work with an eye to the holy man (*Sage*, 162). He fails to notice the anti-Roman critique which lies on the very surface of the text of Luke-Acts in the interactions between the holy men and Roman authorities—precisely where one finds conflict in other accounts of holy men.

workers to associate themselves with the established community-based religion. Given the dichotomy which some scholars draw between the temple (holiness of place) and holy man (holiness of person) it is worth noting that the relationship both here in Acts and as we shall see again in *VA* is somewhat more complex than sheer competition.<sup>9</sup> Peter and John are going into the temple for the set "time of prayer" when they meet the temple beggar (3:1). It is at Solomon's Colonnade in the temple where Peter defends their actions and where the believers continue to meet (3:11; 5:12) and the apostles preach in the temple courts after their miraculous prison escape, following the instructions of the angel (5:20, 25). Paul, for his part, participates in some of the Jewish rites, including circumcision for his half-Jewish entourage member (16:1-3) and Nazirite vows (18:18?; 21:23-24, 26).<sup>10</sup> And, most importantly, he begins his preaching in each new city, whenever possible, at the local synagogue or, as is the case in Philippi, the local place of prayer (9:20; 13:5; 13:14; 14:1; 16:13; 17:1; 17:10; 17:17; 18:4; 18:19; 19:8).

To some extent, Paul functions in a parallel fashion in a purely pagan context. Here, on one of two occasions, he couches his teaching in terms of respected pagan traditions. The speech in Lystra is suited to a pagan context, but not strictly an

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<sup>9</sup>Brown's statement that "the emergence of the holy man at the expense of the temple marks the end of the classical world" (*World*, 102) could be construed as drawing a strict distinction and competitive relationship between temple and holy man and indeed J. Z. Smith's use of Brown in this regard moves in that direction ("Temple and Magician"). Anderson suggests that the distinction can be a hindrance to interpreting the Greco-Roman era as if "holiness in pagan antiquity... [is] presented as a holiness of place rather than person" and goes on to suggest that Alexander of Abonouteichos stands as an example of holiness of person becoming holiness of place with the construction of a shrine (*Sage*, 32). We are actually suggesting the reverse is also sometimes true, that is the holy person seeks (successfully or unsuccessfully) validation from the holy place.

<sup>10</sup>Scholarly objections that the historical Paul would never have participated in Jewish rites such as these prevail. These are rather "Lucan fiction designed to show Paul was a loyal Jewish Christian" (Marshall, 300). Haenchen, for instance, sees in the circumcision episode an "unreliable tradition" which favoured Luke's "pet theory that the Pharisee Paul strictly observed the law, and came into conflict with Judaism only through his proclamation of the resurrection," while the clearly confused "Nazirite" vow of 18:18 was there to demonstrate "Paul was still a Jew of exemplary devotion to the law" (480-482, 545-546). Richard N. Longenecker, on the other hand, is convinced that the Paul of the epistles could have done these (*Paul, Apostle of Liberty: The Origin and Nature of Paul's Christianity* [Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1964], 245-263). Whether he was or not, the point we are making is confirmed by the commentators—Paul's participation in these activities appear to be an attempt to demonstrate Paul is an active participant in the Judaism of his day.

attempt to use pagan religious themes to present a message.<sup>11</sup> Ironically, in this case it is not the intermediaries attempting to tie into local religious traditions, but rather locals placing the miracle-workers within their own pagan religious framework instead (14:11-13).<sup>12</sup> That is, the Lystrans' acceptance of these two intermediaries is a result of their assumption that they are a manifestation of their local gods, that they belong in the local established religious institution.<sup>13</sup> A better example of a parallel situation to Paul's synagogue preaching is his speech to the Areopagus. Here he does make use of pagan poets to support of his claims (17:28) and presents his message as an elucidation of their existing worship of the "unknown god" (17:23).

#### **b. "Magicians" within Judaism and Paganism**

At least three of the four negatively labelled intermediaries in Acts appear to be making claims to legitimacy within an established religious framework. We must count Simon out in this case, simply on the grounds of a lack of narrative detail in terms of his claims.<sup>14</sup> The narrator leaves clues that in the case of Bar-Jesus and the seven sons of Sceva, however, some claim to Judaic legitimacy is made while the slave girl in Philippi may also have made claims to be functioning within an acceptable pagan framework.

The narrator describes Bar-Jesus as "a magician," further qualified as "a Jewish false prophet" (ἄνδρα τινὰ μάγον ψευδοπροφήτην Ἰουδαῖον [13:6]).<sup>15</sup> Our

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<sup>11</sup>The Lystra speech presented to avert the sacrifice in honour of Paul and Barnabas is, as Martin Dibelius points out, "preached completely in Old Testament style" (*Studies in the Acts of the Apostles*, trans. H. Greeven [London: SCM Press, 1956], 71).

<sup>12</sup>In this case the possible connection between the Lystrian acclamation of Paul and Barnabas as Hermes and Zeus with the popular account of the visit of these two gods in veiled human form to this location in the mythological past is particularly fascinating. The story itself is recounted in Ovid *Metamorphoses* 8.620-724 while additional evidence is conveniently gathered by Bruce (*Acts*, 321-322).

<sup>13</sup>Noteworthy too is how quickly they changed their opinion of the two following their refusal to play the role of Zeus and Hermes and the instigation of the Jews from surrounding towns (14:14-19).

<sup>14</sup>It is worth noting, however, that according to second century traditions, Simon does indeed place himself within Christian, Jewish, and Greek religious frameworks (*Irenaeus Against Heresies* 1.23.1-4).

<sup>15</sup>On this particular translation (Ἰουδαῖον as qualifying ψευδοπροφήτην) see Lake and Cadbury, 143.

narrator clearly does not expect us to believe that Bar-Jesus went about calling himself by these titles, but like Simon was known by a title other than μάγος (7:10). Rather, it would be reasonable to assume that Bar-Jesus was claiming to be a legitimate προφήτης Ἰουδαῖος. The characterization of Bar-Jesus suggests rather strongly that our narrator rejects this claim. But in rejecting the claim, the narrator hints, at the very least, the existence of the claim to legitimacy as a Jewish prophet by Bar-Jesus.

An even stronger case can be made for Sceva and his seven sons. Here the narrator claims that Sceva is a Jewish high priest (τινος Σκευᾶ Ἰουδαίου ἀρχιερέως [19:14]). Most interpreters make the assumption that Sceva himself is somehow connected to his sons' enterprise and furthermore, claims to Jewish priesthood, especially high priesthood, is a part of these exorcists' advertising platform.<sup>16</sup> The claim that Sceva is a "high priest" has been problematic from the first interpreters onward judging from textual variation at this point.<sup>17</sup> Did Luke actually believe Sceva was a Jewish high priest or did he intend for this claim to be read as spurious? This question is not insignificant, only unanswerable for the most part. Much depends on the confidence one has in Luke's understanding of the Jewish cult of his day generally and the degree to which he believed his readers able to spot this as a fraudulent claim. A narrative reading offers only two possibilities. Either Sceva was a Jewish high priest within the Acts narrative world or Sceva made a fraudulent claim to be a Jewish high priest within the Acts narrative world.<sup>18</sup> In either case, assuming that the sons are functioning under the auspices of the father, Sceva's sons are operating, or at least attempting to be seen to operate, within a legitimate Jewish religious framework. Given that their failure results in the burning of magical texts (19:17-19),

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<sup>16</sup>See for example Lake and Cadbury, 241; Haenchen, 565; Conzelmann, *Acts*, 164; Bruce, *Acts*, 411; Marshall, *Acts*, 311; Witherington, *Acts*, 581.

<sup>17</sup>The Western text (D) read ἱερέως instead of the more improbably ἀρχιερέως at this point (see further Lake and Cadbury, 241).

<sup>18</sup>Historical-critical readings would nuance these and offer other alternatives in addition to these: Luke mistakenly took a fraudulent claim on the part of Sceva at face value, or there actually was a "Sceva" unknown to us by this name who was a high priest and whose seven sons travelled Asia Minor performing exorcisms, or Luke simply invented this character *ex nihilo* and in doing so simply demonstrated ignorance of the contemporary Jewish cult, or Luke is the victim of an embellished tradition and likewise fails to understand the contemporary Jewish cult, etc. (see above footnote 16).

our narrator obviously rejects their claims to legitimacy and instead locates them within the realm of "magic."

Finally, there is the case of the Philippian slave girl. Here we simply want to draw attention to the term *πύθωνα* in 16:16. In 16:16 the narrator describes the slave girl as a *παιδίσκη* *τινὰ ἔχουσαν πνεῦμα πύθωνα*. Technically, this could be translated as "a certain slave girl having a spirit—a Python", "a certain slave girl having a pythonic spirit," or "a certain slave girl, a pythoness, having a spirit."<sup>19</sup> The phrase from Plutarch equating the *πύθων* with the *ἐγγαστρίμυθος* or "prophetic ventriloquist" would suggest the term refers to the girl herself and thus *πύθωνα* is in apposition with *παιδίσκη*.<sup>20</sup> However, as Bruce suggests, word order and later church writers stand against this translation. Klutz rightly points out that the other option for an appositional reading—*πνεῦμα*—is problematic given that our earliest evidence for *πύθων* as a title for a demon of divination is the much later Pseudo-Clementine *Homilies* 9.16, itself influenced by this text.<sup>21</sup> Klutz concludes, therefore, that the "least objectionable interpretation" is to understand *πύθωνα* modifying *πνεῦμα* adjectivally—"a pythonic spirit".

But why describe the spirit as *πύθωνα*? Robert F. O'Toole suggests that "the exotic quality of *pythōn* possession enhances the literary appeal of the passage."<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>19</sup>These three options are laid out and thoroughly evaluated by Klutz (171-173). The first option is chosen by Marshall (*Acts*, 268) and J. W. van Henten who likewise regards *πύθων* as standing in apposition to *πνεῦμα* ("Python," in *Dictionary of Deities and Demons in the Bible*, ed. K. van der Toorn and B. Becking and P. W. van der Horst [Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1995]), 1264-1265). Lake and Cadbury translate the text in accordance with the second option, but in their commentary make the statement, "This Python was convinced that she was inspired," which would suggest the last option (192). Schille's German translation suggest the second adjectival reading with its one word translation—*Wahrsagegeist*. Bruce's commentary on the Greek text opts for an appositional reading as well (*Acts*, 360) but his NICNT translation follows our second, adjectival option in (*Book*, 312). On this issue and other background on the term see E. Langton, *Essentials of Demonology* (London: Epworth Press, 1949), 177-179.

<sup>20</sup>Lamprias states, "...ὡσπερ τοὺς ἐγγαστριμύθους, Εἰρυκλέας πάλαι νυνὶ δὲ Πύθωνας προσαγορευομένους" (Plutarch *The Obsolescence of Oracles* 414e. See also BAGD, ad. loc.)

<sup>21</sup>Klutz, 171-172. See also W. Foerster, "πύθων" in TDNT, vol. 6, 917-20. The Clementine text reads *καὶ πύθωνες μαντεύονται, ἀλλ' ὑφ' ἡμῶν ὡς δαίμονες ὀρκιζόμενοι φυγαδεύονται*.

<sup>22</sup>Robert F. O'Toole, "Slave Girl at Philippi," *ABD*, vol. VI, 58.

Clearly by Plutarch's day free-lance mantics who spoke prophecies with unusual or abnormal voices had been linked to the activity of the Delphic oracle and the Pythia who spoke her official oracles there.<sup>23</sup> That would open the possibility that an intermediary like the slave girl could potentially be seeking legitimation through associating their activities with that of the Delphic oracle (even if the inspiring δαίμων is not necessarily understood to be Apollo himself but rather a lesser being).<sup>24</sup> Certainly Plutarch does speak of cases in which traveling mantics of this sort use oracular shrines to ply their trade—again suggesting legitimation of the intermediary through some association with an oracular site or shrine itself.<sup>25</sup> However, if by the mid-first century πύθων as applied to these odd-speaking mantics was a purely generic term, any sort of legitimizing function would be lost. It may, however, point back to an earlier era in which it did serve precisely that legitimizing function. Our narrator, of course, rejects not only the legitimacy of the slave girl's prophecy, but any pagan framework which might offer it credibility. Indeed, one might suggest that the narrator would like nothing better than for the reader to make the association between the slave girl's demonic assistant and the greatest of the Greek oracular sites!

## 2. Acceptance

That the narrator should approve of those who accept his heroes and vilify the detractors is hardly an earth-shattering observation. Terms like devout (εὐλαβής [8:2]), intelligent (συνετός [13:7]), prominent (πρῶτος [17:4] and εὐσχήμων [17:12]), and noble (εὐγενής [17:11]) are used to describe those who accept these intermediaries. Is it possible to get beyond these simple value judgments to find a thread which ties those accepting these intermediaries together? In Acts, the narrator

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<sup>23</sup>Foerster, 919. Langton, 177-178. H. C. Kee *To Every Nation Under Heaven: The Acts of the Apostles* (Harrisburg: Trinity Press International, 1997), 195-197. Van Henten suggests that this passage "can be interpreted against the background of the semantic development of Pythōn. The Delphic dragon himself became a mantic animal... and lent his name to predicting demons" (1264).

<sup>24</sup>Lamprias argues in Plutarch's *The Obsolescence of Oracles* that it is demi-gods, not gods, who inspire ventriloquists. The statement itself suggests there are those who hold to full fledged gods as the voices mediated by the "belly-talkers" (414.e).

<sup>25</sup>Plutarch *The Oracles at Delphi* 407c. D. E. Aune, *Prophecy in Early Christianity and the Ancient Mediterranean World* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1983), 42.

has left only enough clues to offer tempting possibilities rather than definitive answers.

We suggested above that the intermediaries in Acts attempted to frame their activities within a traditional community-based religious framework of some sort. Our question really is, who was willing to "buy this"? Who could endure this stretching of the boundaries of the community-based religion? A surprising variety of persons is the initial answer, but the prominence of certain types is worth noting. The group which has rightly received the most amount of attention are the Gentiles identified by Luke as "God-fearers" (φοβούμενοι τὸν θεόν or σεβόμενοι [τὸν θεόν]). While there has been a good deal of debate over the historical referent,<sup>26</sup> the narrative itself is rather straightforward in its characterization of the Diaspora synagogue as a place where both Jews and Gentile worshippers of the Jewish God could be found (13:16, 50; 14:1; 16:14; 17:4, 12, 17; 18:4). Both Peter and Paul find this group most willing to accept their message (10:1-48; 13:48; 14:1; 16:14; 17:4, 12, 18:6-7). Indeed, if Levinskaya's reading of the literary and extra-textual data is correct, potential success with Gentile "God-fearers" who were a strong advantage for the minority Jewish communities of the Diaspora actually led to heightened conflict between the traveling Christian preachers and Jewish community leaders.<sup>27</sup>

There are perhaps a good number of reasons for the "God-fearers" to accept Peter and Paul's message. Our image of the intermediary as one who cultivates a fringe status offers at least one factor to consider. These "God-fearers," like the miracle-worker himself, are hybrids of a sort, existing in a transitory state in which they have one foot inside and one outside the local religious community. They are not fully Jewish, nor fully Gentile. The intermediaries such as Peter and Paul both offer a corresponding identity (assuming like attracts like in this case) as well as the possibility of a fully integrated identity. Simplified, it seems plausible that someone who has taken a half-step out of their existing identity would be willing to take another half-step

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<sup>26</sup>Among the most thorough recent treatments of the subject is by I. Levinskaya in *The Book of Acts in Its First Century Setting*, vol. 5, *Diaspora Setting* (Carlisle: Paternoster Press, 1996), 51-126. See also K. Lake, "Proselytes and God-Fearers," in *BC*, vol. 5 (1933), 74-96.

<sup>27</sup>120-126.



to a new identity.<sup>28</sup> As the "outside-insider" the intermediary makes this possible. They are willing to accept that the boundary-stretching message of the intermediary has a divine source. Cornelius, following the double vision with Peter, states upon Peter's arrival, πάντες ἡμεῖς ἐνώπιον τοῦ θεοῦ πάρεσμεν ἀκοῦσαι πάντα τὰ προστεταγμένα σοι ὑπὸ τοῦ κυρίου (10:33). In the most extensive description of Paul's preaching and the specific responses in Acts, we are informed that it was specifically the message of Gentile inclusion which provoked the positive response from this segment of the synagogue (13:46-48). It is, however, hardly surprising that religious innovation meets acceptance from those who are likely to benefit the most.

This rather simple explanation could be applied to another group as well—the "prominent" women who are noted as converts in several of the cities Paul visits.<sup>29</sup> While in Pisidian Antioch the "God-fearing women of high standing" (τὰς σεβομένας γυναῖκας τὰς εὐσχήμονας [13:50]) persecute Paul and Barnabas at the insistence of the local Jews, elsewhere, particularly in Macedonia, these women form an apparently significant element among those who accept the intermediaries teaching (16:14-16; 17:4; 17:12).<sup>30</sup> In Athens and Corinth specific women are mentioned among the converts (Damaris in Athens [17:34] and Priscilla in Corinth [18:2]). We cannot be certain, of course, as to why certain individuals receive mention

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<sup>28</sup>Wayne Meeks suggests "status inconsistency" in a number of contexts as contributing to a willingness to convert to Christianity (*The First Urban Christians: The Social World of the Apostle Paul* [New Haven: Yale University Press, 1983], esp. 22-23, 72-73).

<sup>29</sup>Anderson suggest that "a recurrent figure [in the holy man's]...clientele is the often well-to-do woman patron" (*Sage*, 117). It is noteworthy that many of the cases he cites in evidence are cases of Christian (or heretical Christian) holy men, especially as in our study this feature is absent from the pagan *VA*. Judith M. Lieu rightly warns against accepting too easily the correlation between new religious movements in Christianity and Judaism and women and particularly explanations which consciously or unconsciously invoke the inherently experiential religious "nature" of women or the presume these movements were inherently emancipatory to otherwise oppressed women ("The 'Attraction of Women' in/to Early Judaism and Christianity: Gender and the Politics of Conversion," in *JSNT* 78 [1998]: 5-22). What is particularly noteworthy of Acts, however, and unstated by Lieu (esp. 16-17), is that Acts is not a polemic against Christianity and so denigration by association (i.e., women with new religious movements) does not apply in our case.

<sup>30</sup>D. W. J. Gill, "Acts and the Urban Élites," in *The Book of Acts in Its First Century Setting*, vol. 2, *Graeco-Roman Setting*, ed. D. W. J. Gill and C. Gempf (Carlisle: Paternoster Press, 1994), 114-147.

in Acts, but it is plausible to assume these are mentioned because of the significant role they were to play within the Christian community or the ongoing mission of the intermediaries. This narrative effect is reinforced by Lydia's role as host in Philippi (16:15, 40) and Priscilla's role (shared with her husband) as Paul's host in Corinth (18:2-3), traveling companion to Ephesus (18:18-19), and instructor of Apollos (18:26). Earlier in the text we were introduced to Sapphira involved in the sale of property and the donation of its proceeds for the Christian community (5:1-10). Tabitha is also a wealthy woman heavily involved in charity work (9:36-39).

The significant role these wealthy female converts play within the newly formed Christian community may suggest some of their motivations for acceptance of these itinerant miracle-working messengers.<sup>31</sup> While it is far from certain exactly what sort of power and influence women could legitimately wield in the first century Mediterranean world (clearly a shared extra-textual element within the Acts narrative), if one assumes there were at least some limitations in certain contexts, the following scenario becomes plausible.<sup>32</sup> Women of high social status could well have

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<sup>31</sup>Ivoni Richter Reimer's work supports our contention that women would find the newly formed Christian community a place to participate as full members as few other Greco-Roman communities offered (*Women in the Acts of the Apostles: A Feminist Liberation Perspective*, trans. L. M. Maloney [Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1995]). However, she also contends that Luke's explicit reference to women of *high standing* in Macedonia and Greece indicates that these were exceptional cases rather than the normal pattern (246-248). She also mentions the case of prominent women in Pisidian Antioch who are key to expelling the travelling intermediaries (243-244). Curiously, Paul R. Trebilco's study on Asia Minor suggest that women in that region in both Jewish and Gentile social worlds may well have had unique opportunities to fill official offices there unlike anywhere else in the Greco-Roman world (*Jewish Communities in Asia Minor* [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991], 104-126). It is easy to rush to the conclusion that prominent women were more likely to see new opportunities within the Christian community in Macedonia and Greece than women in Asia Minor—that would certainly fit the picture Luke paints. However, if anything, Trebilco's study demonstrates how difficult it is to really determine the status of women anywhere in the Greco-Roman world and that generalizations are sure to fail repeatedly. Lieu's speculation on women taking advantage of the ambiguities of a new religious movement to negotiate a role for themselves is not that distant from our speculation on a symbiotic relationship between intermediary and prominent women (20-21).

<sup>32</sup>B. Witherington III suggests that women in Asia Minor and Macedonia already had considerable personal, property, educational, and political rights ("Women [NT]" in *ABD*, vol. 6, 958). However, he further points out that imported oriental religions like the Isis cult did much to raise many women to prominence. If this is the case, Christianity, as offered by the likes of Paul was not unique in attracting and raising the prospects for prominent women on the rise. Meeks suggests that the Isis cult, in which "the equality of women was stressed [,]...allowed considerably more freedom for women to hold office alongside men than did the older state cults" (*Urban*, 25). Trebilco's study cuts both ways in this argument. On the one hand preconceived notions about women unable to hold any official positions within Jewish or Greco-Roman society are dissolved by the

experienced a leveling off in terms of the amount of power and influence they could gain within Greco-Roman society.<sup>33</sup> The intermediary offered a sideways move to gain a new sort of autonomy or authority.<sup>34</sup> First, they can enter into a symbiotic relationship with the miracle-worker. They lend him status and support through patronage and association, and the miracle-worker lends them access to a divine power source.<sup>35</sup> Second, within this new relationship comes a new community in which they are permitted to play a leading role.

While it might be argued that Acts itself does not provide enough evidence for this scenario, if one includes the data from Luke, it is precisely this sort of symbiotic relationship which emerges. In Luke 8:2-3 we are informed that within Jesus' entourage were women who were beneficiaries of Jesus' healing power (access to a divine power source) who were financially supporting Jesus and the disciples out of their own wealth. Not only does this support point to their relatively high social status, but the narrator's remark that Joanna was the wife of Herod's steward would confirm this. If we bring this extra-textual knowledge to the text, the bits of data in the Acts narrative fit in quite well.

As for the remaining converts, it is hard to establish any sort of pattern which might shed light on the intermediary and those who chose to accept their activities and teaching. It might be argued that many of the original converts in Jerusalem were poor. This would seem to be the implication of texts which emphasize care (or neglect) for the poorer members of the Jerusalem Christian community (e.g., 2:45, 4:34, 6:1, 11:29-30, 24:17). This is another case of a more traditional historical-

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evidence in Asia Minor while the accidental nature of inscriptional survival may further erode our confidence for drawing any conclusions while on the other hand his study may suggest Asia Minor as an aberration within the larger Greco-Roman world in this regard (*Jewish Communities*, 104-126).

<sup>33</sup>For an excellent discussion of the status of women as cross-referenced to class see J. A. Arlandson, *Women, Class and Society in Early Christianity: Models from Luke-Acts* (Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson Publishers, 1997), 14-150.

<sup>34</sup>Note particularly W. Meeks, *Urban*, 23-25, 70-71. See also Reimer, *Women*, esp. 208-219.

<sup>35</sup>Anderson moves in this direction with his comment that "some of the clients will themselves have doubled as patrons of their holy men, in return for spiritual services rendered" (*Sage*, 120).

critical approach offering us additional data, as we could bring in texts such as Gal 2:10, and even suggest that the priests in Acts 6:7 who joined were among the poor of Judea. But if we accept that within the limits of our narrative there is a strong suggestion that there were many poor converts in Jerusalem, we can further speculate as to the reasons why they might find these intermediaries' religious innovations acceptable. The simplest explanation is that the poor had little to lose and much to gain in connecting with the intermediary. The temple beggar story may well be paradigmatic in this regard, as Peter and John offer access to divine healing power at the temple gate for no cost (and presumably they never did charge as they themselves were poor)(3:1-7, esp. 6).

What do we do then with the remaining converts—the wealthy members of the Jerusalem community, Judean priests, the high ranking Gentile men, and Diaspora Jews, all of whom are among those who accepted the claims of these intermediaries?<sup>36</sup> Perhaps all we can suggest within the limitations of our narrative is that among any group there are always those more open to innovation than others, more open to accept the claims of an intermediary who plays the role exceptionally well, and more anxious to experience direct mediation of divine power than other members of the group. What is striking, however, is how frequently approved intermediaries meet with success where non-approved intermediaries have previously met with success as well—Samaria (8:4-10), the court of Sergius Paulus (8:6-12), and Ephesus (19:13). Openness to religious virtuosi, it seems, is not merely limited to openness to specifically *Christian* intermediaries.

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<sup>36</sup>Wengst's suggestion that Luke-Acts is a pro-Roman document in which there is stress laid on "prominent people in high positions becom[ing] members of the church" suffers from the same flaw which afflicts his entire analysis of the Lukan text—it is hopelessly one-sided in its treatment of the evidence (101). Among the most problematic of Wengst's claims are that Luke's two volumes are laying claim to being high brow literature with its preface and dedication (see contra L. C. A. Alexander, *Preface*, 189); his suggestion that Luke is keen to shift blame for Jesus' death from the Romans to the Jews, which controls his remaining interpretations of any conflicts involving Christians, Jews, and Romans (see contra R. E. Brown, *The Death of the Messiah* [London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1994], 8); and his claim that Luke "almost completely leaves aside the corruptness and violent character of Roman rule" (contra—Pilate's execution of Jesus despite his belief in his innocence [Luke 23:13-25], the apotheosis of Jesus and the death of a king who would claim to be a god [Luke 24:51, Acts 12:21-23], a beating without trial in a Roman colony [16:22], Gallio who allows a spontaneous beating in his court [18:17], and Felix who leaves him in prison waiting for a bribe [24:26]).

### **3. Rejection**

While the defining character trait of those accepting the intermediary is difficult to pin down precisely in Acts, characterization is rather more obvious when it comes to rejection. More often than not, the opposition to the intermediary from members of the local religious community comes as a result of the clash of the potential power of the intermediary—who is connected to a potentially limitless divine power source—and the existing holders of power and status within the local religious community. Our narrator makes it clear on a number of occasions that objections to the approved intermediaries in Acts were driven by "jealousy" or "greed." Key groups or individuals realized that the gains made by the intermediaries were at their expense. This is particularly the case with Jewish leadership, whom our narrator frequently characterizes as envious of the success of the miracle-workers.

The motive behind the Sanhedrin's initial arrest of Peter and John given by the narrator is that they were disturbed by both the teaching of the people and the proclamation of resurrection from the dead in Jesus (4:2). While one might suggest that certain members of the Sanhedrin do not appreciate Peter and John usurping teaching duties, clearly at the heart of their consternation is the content of the teaching. The boundary stretching message is bound to meet with disapproval in this case, even if backed by an astonishing miracle, because the message casts the Sanhedrin as the villain. After all, Peter, in defending his actions to the Sanhedrin, lays the blame for the crucifixion of Jesus on their doorstep (4:10). If they are now vindicating Jesus by miracle-working in his name, this reflects rather poorly on the judgment of the Sanhedrin. If Peter and John continue to work miracles and teach in Jesus' name, this can only clash with the interests of the Sanhedrin. They therefore command them to quit speaking to anyone "in Jesus' name" (4:17).

This interpretation of the Sanhedrin's opposition as self-interest is underscored by the frequent characterization of Jewish opposition as motivated by jealousy hereafter. When further miracle-working prompts the next arrest, our narrator describes the Sadducean high priest and his associates as filled with jealousy

(ἐπλήσθησαν ζήλου [5:17]).<sup>37</sup> The next two plots against miracle-workers—Stephen in Jerusalem (6:8-12) and Paul in Damascus (9:22-23)—are the result of rhetorical victories on the part of these intermediaries over those who opposed them within the local synagogue. The suggestion in both is that the intermediary is winning the day, presumably in a contest for the hearts and minds of those attending the synagogue who are not vehemently opposed to them. At least this is what seems to be the case in Damascus, where the narrator states that Paul μᾶλλον ἐνεδυναμοῦτο (9:22). It is not a great leap to suggest that if Paul grew "more powerful," this was matched by a decline in the power and authority held by his opponents within the synagogue. It is, however, the episode at Pisidian Antioch which clinches the narrator's characterization of the opponents of the intermediaries. Here the preaching of Paul brings out a large crowd to the synagogue the following Sabbath. The narrator states that when the Jews see this crowd, they were filled with "jealousy" (ιδόντες δὲ οἱ Ἰουδαῖοι τοὺς ὄχλους ἐπλήσθησαν ζήλου [13:45]). "Jealousy" is also cited as a motive at Thessalonica (17:5).

Obviously the opponents do not view themselves as motivated simply by jealousy. Their willingness to travel in pursuit of the intermediaries and their adherents suggests that they saw themselves as opponents of the religious innovation offered by the intermediaries, not simply as opponents of the intermediaries themselves (9:1-2; 14:19; 17:13). The charges before Gallio in Corinth in 18:12 that Paul was persuading persons to worship God "contrary to the Law" (παρὰ τὸν νόμον) better represent the perspective of the opponents as portrayed by our narrator. This observation simply establishes the pattern of behavior as we have laid out above. The intermediary

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<sup>37</sup>It is tempting to follow Seland's suggestion that ζῆλος ought to be understood as "zealous for the Law" or "zealous for God" (58 no. 137, 171). However, without a modifier for ζῆλος, we are left with the passage to provide the motive for this zeal, and the most obvious object of jealousy would be the rising popularity of the apostles as miracle-workers (5:12-16) (cf. Bruce, *Acts*, 170; Haenchen, 248). If one would allow for ζῆλος to be understood as "zeal for the Law" (which we can safely speculate would have been the perspective of the Saducean party on itself), then the logic is simply that they find the religious innovations of the apostles unacceptable and as guardians of the sacred traditions, they must act against the growing influence of the apostles among the people. In either scenario, the miracle-workers' activities are an affront to the chief priest and his associates—a challenge which must be met.

attempts to operate within the confines of a local religious community, albeit stretching the boundaries considerably with his claims to divine power and wisdom. The community offers a two-fold response, some accepting, but others, out of concern for the immediate and unchecked growth of the intermediary's popularity, will reject the religious innovation offered. Their opposition arises from both personal loss of power and influence and concern for their religious traditions. It is probably best simply to allow these to stand together rather than to untangle the two and prioritize one or the other.

In this regard, Paul's speech before the Areopagus needs a second look. It is true that this speech is "appropriate" to the context. As we noted above, it represents an attempt by Paul to tie his message into the religious and philosophical traditions of those listening within the Areopagus.<sup>38</sup> However, this is only partially correct. It is also the case that Paul and his message are shown to be an oddity to the philosophers of the Areopagus. The Epicurean and Stoic philosophers misunderstand his street preaching (17:18), charging him, curiously enough, with the advocacy of foreign gods (δαίμονια). This charge and the quasi-judicial setting of his speech before (at?) the Areopagus certainly contains echoes of the Socrates story.<sup>39</sup> Paul's teaching is strange to them (ξενίζω [17:20]), and his ability to have them understand him is less than

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<sup>38</sup>On this see particularly Tannehill (210-220) and Bruce (*Book*, 333-342).

<sup>39</sup>Scholars are divided on whether ἐπὶ τὸν Ἀρειοῦ Πάγον (17:19) refers to Paul being taken before the Council of the Areopagus or whether it simply refers to the location of Mar's Hill (H. M. Martin, "Areopagus," in *ABD* 1, 371). For strong arguments favouring the former see Lake and Cadbury (212-213), Tannehill (216-217), and especially Talbert (*Reading*, 160). The case in favour of this incident having Socratic and thus perhaps even judicial overtones is put forward by L. C. A. Alexander ("Acts and Ancient Intellectual Biography," in *The Book of Acts In Its First Century Setting*, vol. 1, *The Book of Acts in Its Ancient Literary Setting*, ed. B. W. Winter and A. D. Clarke [Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1993], 59); Klauck (*Magie*, 91); Witherington (*Acts*, 514-517); Talbert (*Reading*, 160); B. Winter, who favours the context of an initial hearing rather than a formal trial ("On Introducing Gods to Athens: An Alternative Reading of Acts 17.18-20," in *TynBul* 47 [1996]: 71-90); H. Conzelmann ("The Address of Paul on the Areopagus" in *Studies in Luke-Acts*, ed. L. E. Keck and J. L. Martyn [New York: Abingdon Press, 1966], 219-220) and Sandnes (20-25), who argue for Socratic but not judicial overtones (20-25), while M. L. Soards argues for a judicial context but deliberative rhetoric (*The Speeches in Acts: Their Content, Context, and Concerns* [Louisville: Westminster/John Knox Press], 96). The ancient texts which speak of Socrates being charged with promoting foreign gods include Xenophon *Memorabilia* 1.1-5, Plato *The Apology of Socrates* 24b-c, Diogenes Laertius *Lives of the Eminent Philosophers* 2.24. The latter includes the Aeropagus as the scene for a philosopher's trial on a number of occasions (Diogenes Laertius *Lives* 2.101, 2.116, 7.169).

successful in the marketplace—at least that would seem to be the implication from the philosophers' reaction to him (Τί ἂν θέλοι ὁ σπερμολόγος οὗτος λέγειν; [17:18]). Try as he might, Paul has great difficulty in finding acceptance among the members of the Areopagus for a *resurrected* divinely appointed judge (17:31-32), clearly a sticking point in the marketplace as well (17:17).<sup>40</sup> Much as is the case with Jewish synagogue adherents, the boundary stretching of the intermediary goes too far for many. It is simply too strange, too different from their traditions to be acceptable. The attempt on the part of the intermediary to portray himself as a natural extension of the local community-based religious tradition largely fails here, much as it does in the synagogues. Lack of a spectacular success here probably accounts for the lack of aggressive opposition.

Such is not the case in Ephesus, where the success of Paul's activities results in financial loss for those who have a vested interest in the local Artemis cult (19:23-27). Here too we have a blending of self-interest and a defence of the local religious traditions (19:26-27). In Philippi, the narrator makes it quite clear that the charges of religious deviance are motivated entirely from financial considerations (16:19-20). Persistently in Acts, those who have the most to lose in terms of their status within the local religious community are those most willing to oppose the intermediary and the religious innovation they are promoting. And at many points, our narrator seems to be suggesting that the opposition is based as much on protecting personal status as ideological considerations.

Unfortunately, our narrative does not give us any good example of intermediaries rejected within the Christian religious community. Various historical-critical arguments have been put forward for viewing Simon or Bar Jesus as

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<sup>40</sup>Sandnes argues that the Areopagus speech as an example of rhetorical *insinuatio*, that is, Paul is deliberately vague in a Socratic fashion so as to invite further questioning and that the reaction of the latter group in 17:32 who requests a further hearing is a form of success (23-25; see also Tannehill, 220). Even if one accepts this line of reasoning (which is interesting but perhaps overly subtle), Paul has called for repentance and the reaction is either mockery or deferring, and indeed, the summary in 17:34 reports only a very few Athenian converts.



intermediaries having direct links to Christianity,<sup>41</sup> and one might even include the itinerant Sons of Sceva.<sup>42</sup> The narrative of Acts itself, within this scheme, then becomes a polemic against these intermediaries within the Christian community. However, within the narrative Simon and Bar Jesus are both portrayed as operating within a particular locale before "the Word" arrives. Furthermore, claims that any of these represent some historical Christian characters are simply too tendentious to be of much value here as meaningful extra-text.

One could, perhaps, see Paul as an intermediary who faces a rejection within community based Christian groups. The teachers who traveled from Jerusalem to Antioch create trouble and controversy for Paul by disagreeing with his innovations in his ministry among Gentiles. They are reasserting the centrality of the law of Moses and its regulations (15:1-2, 5), contradicting Paul's practice of accepting Gentiles apart from circumcision (presumably)<sup>43</sup>—a practice he later defends on the grounds of miracle-working accompanying his circumcision-free message (15:4, 12). While in this incident the balance of power tips in favour of the intermediary, when Paul travels to Jerusalem in Acts 21:17ff., his reputation as a religious innovator has created trouble for him even before his arrival. As a result, his status as full-fledged participant in the local religious institution is tested by requesting he fund purification rites (21:22-26). The role of the intermediary within their own newly formed community is a nuanced balancing act in its own right and it is to this dynamic that we shall shortly turn.

#### **4. Conclusion**

The balancing act required of the intermediary in gaining power is one which continues to be played out when the rising power of the intermediary intersects with

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<sup>41</sup>Klaus Berger, "Propaganda und Gegenpropaganda im Frühen Christentum: Simon Magus als Gestalt des Samaritanischen Christentums," in *Religious Propaganda and Missionary Competition in the New Testament World*, ed. L. Bormann and K. Del Tredici and A. Standhartinger (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1994), 313-317.

<sup>42</sup>This was first suggested to me by Todd Klutz.

<sup>43</sup>Actually, to this point the text has never put this message on the lips of Paul. The closest one comes to a message which states outright, "Gentiles are saved apart from circumcision" (in Acts 15:1 we must simply assume that this is the position of Paul and Barnabas for the statement by the Jerusalem teachers to cause a dispute) is in the Peter and Cornelius episode and the Jerusalem debate which arises from it (10:45-48, 11:15-18).

the institutional community-based religions. The intermediary typically attempts to pass off his or her activity and teaching as a natural or acceptable extension of the beliefs and values of the local religious community. Many factors play into the decision as to whether the local religious community will permit the intermediary and the power he or she represents to operate within this framework. The pattern one would expect is the one played out in the narrative of Acts. Those who stand on the fringes of this community, or those who may have a lot to gain in entering into a symbiotic relationship with the intermediary appear most willing to accept the intermediary as a legitimate purveyor of divine power and wisdom. Those who will lose status and power are the likely opponents of the intermediary. Again, this is an oversimplification of an undoubtedly more complex process, but this basic framework is there in the Acts narrative world. Once again we see the intermediary must engage in complex posturing activities, being the outsider and insider simultaneously. It should hardly be surprising that in a cultural game as delicate as this, the intermediary will lose as often as he or she wins.

#### **B. Intermediaries Within Their Own Community**

Acts suggests that the incoming intermediary with their "outsider" power could expect a mixed response from existing religious communities which it interacted with and from which the intermediary sought legitimation. But what of the power structures within the newly constituted communities formed around the intermediary. The miracle-workers of Acts, after all, frequently have associates who travel with them and in many cases, leave behind new religious communities in their wake. How do these individuals, convinced as they are at some point of the legitimacy of their miracle-worker, relate to this divine power broker and what does this tell us about the social tensions within which the intermediary operates? The answer suggested by Acts is that traveling companions frequently serve as deferential assistants carrying out the wishes and meeting various needs of their miracle-working leader. A different scenario, however, plays out within the Christian communities which are "home" to the miracle-workers and even within the Christian communities which they themselves

establish. Here the miracle-worker is not guaranteed absolute power but must engage in the same sort of insider/outsider cultural script we have already noted above.

### 1. Traveling Companions

The first observation to be made when considering the miracle-workers of Acts and their entourage is that both Peter and Paul actually begin their activities as mediators of divine power in partnership with a fellow intermediary. Peter and John are a fixed pair in the two major incidents involving mediation of divine power in Acts (3:1-4:23, 8:14-25). Likewise too, Paul and Barnabas are sent as a pair from Antioch on their first major journey—although here we have an assistant tagging along (13:4-5). The narrative in both cases, however, has the partnership dissolve after initial successes and in any case, tends to highlight one partner over the other in terms of prominence. Peter is the one narrated as the miracle-worker and spokesperson (3:4-8, 12ff.; 4:8ff., 5:29ff.; 8:18ff.), while Paul is the subject whenever actual speeches or miracles are reported on that first extended journey shared with Barnabas (13:9-12; 13:16-45; 14:8-12). Strikingly in both the case of Peter and John's shared trip to Samaria and Paul and Barnabas' first major voyage together, they are sent out as emissaries of some sort apparently under the authority of a larger local community to which they ultimately report back (8:14, 25; 13:1-3, 14:27-28). This would seem to suggest that while respected as powerful mediators of divine power, these individuals did not necessarily exercise a form of autocratic power within the communities that they might properly call "home." It would further suggest that partnerships of the sort Jesus created in Luke 10:1-17 which were commissioned to heal, exorcise demons and preach about the kingdom of God were actually an early pattern for the miracle-workers' early phase of ministry—at least that is the portrayal within the Acts narrative world. The sons of Sceva would be another case of some sort of partnership among intermediaries, although in this case it is a "family business" as it were and that no doubt has dynamics all its own.<sup>44</sup>

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<sup>44</sup>The text of Acts does not offer us another famous partnership—Simon and Helen. His female traveling companion of second century fame does not appear in our text (Irenaeus *Against Heresies* 1.23.2-3; *Clementine Homilies* 2.25; on Simon's post-Lukan career see R. P. Casey, "Simon Magus," in *BC*, vol. 5 (1933), 151-163).

In the case of the legitimate miracle-workers, one has to say partnership is an "early" pattern in their ministry. In both the cases of Peter and John, ascendancy of one partner over the other soon becomes independent operation by the miracle-worker—or rather, a solo intermediary with a group of traveling assistants. While we do not know how or why the Peter and John partnership dissolved, when Peter does travel (aside from the Samaritan journey) he is operating by himself, although accompanied by an entourage of sorts certainly when he travels to Caesarea (10:45, 11:12). Here Peter's leadership is rather obvious as these circumcised believers accompany him into a Gentile's house. In the case of Paul it is following a dispute precisely over traveling assistants, Barnabas and Paul part company. The narrative indicates that after this Paul's traveling companions are disciples and assistants rather than full fledged partners. John Mark is, after all, referred to as a ὑπηρέτης (13:5) and as Silas is his replacement, presumably this is his role as well (16:37-40).<sup>45</sup> Timothy and Erastus are referred to as δύο τῶν διακονούντων αὐτῷ (19:22). As his trusted helpers, he has the right to send or take them where he sees fit (16:10; 17:15; 19:22) and to expect loyalty (15:38).

The narrative suggests certain manifest functions for these traveling assistants. We have already mentioned that Paul's assistants may have financially supported him (18:5), although clearly this support was mutual (20:34). Members of Paul's entourage also serve as his representatives within the religious communities he establishes.<sup>46</sup> Paul leaves Timothy and Silas in Berea when he is forced to leave, presumably to shore up the successes he has had in Berea (17:14). The narrator is an interesting possibility in this regard as well. While Vernon K. Robbins contends that the "we" are merely a literary device for narrating sea voyages, ancient readers seem rather to have read it

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<sup>45</sup>One might argue that Silas is Barnabas' replacement, especially given the joint imprisonment in Philippi in 16:19-40. However, 17:14-15 and 18:5 clearly put Silas in a role more akin to that of Timothy—assistants who carry on working in areas too hot for the miracle-worker and providing for the miracle-worker so they can devote themselves to other tasks.

<sup>46</sup>The epistolary tradition explicitly confirms what the Acts narrative implies in this regard (e.g., 1 Cor 16:10-11, 2 Cor 8:16-24; Phil 2:19-30; 1 Thess 3:2, 3:6).

more naturally than that.<sup>47</sup> Whatever the "we" may imply on a source critical level, as a narrative one is left with the distinct impression that the narrator mysteriously joins the entourage in Troas in 16:10, is apparently absent after Philippi only to reappear in Philippi in 20:5 give a distinct narrative impression of being left in Philippi. It too is a location in which Paul has also been successful both in establishing a community and in engendering life-threatening opposition. Assistants can also be sent in advance of Paul presumably to conduct some sort of business on his behalf or to prepare for his arrival as is the case in 19:22 where Timothy and Erastus are sent to Macedonia while he remains in Asia a little while longer or 20:13-14 where assistants sail ahead and have a boat ready for Paul on his arrival. As we will shortly note, *VA* will also offer us examples of the intermediary's entourage representing and caring for the basic needs of the intermediary.

The entourage also serves some more latent functions. We have already noted that Paul's disciples (which in some texts may include both local followers and traveling companions), rescue and dissuade the intermediary in threatening situations (9:25; 14:20; 21:12). In Ephesus, two traveling companions actually share in the danger in place of the intermediary (19:29). As we suggested above, this allows the intermediary both to be bold (by bravely offering to face danger) and to survive with his honour intact (by being dissuaded by well-intentioned followers). There are other tempting possibilities with respect to the latent function of these traveling assistants. Assistants could, after all, spread the praises of the intermediary and so serve as a

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<sup>47</sup>Vernon K. Robbins ("By Land and By Sea: The We-Passages and Ancient Sea Voyages," in *Perspectives on Luke-Acts*, ed. C.H. Talbert [Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1978], 215-242) has been rightly questioned by S. E. Porter who provides a closer investigation of each of the alleged parallels cited from Greco-Roman sources ("Excursus: The 'We' Passages," in *The Book of Acts in Its First Century Setting*, vol. 2, *Graeco-Roman Setting*, eds. D. W. J. Gill and C. Gempf [Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1994], 545-574. Whether a literary fiction to give the impression of a first hand account (as suggested by H. Conzelmann and A. Lindemann (*Interpreting the New Testament: An Introduction to the Principles and Methods of N.T. Exegesis*, trans. S. S. Schatzmann [Peabody: Hendrickson, 1988; from 8th revised ed., 1985], 240-241) or something more substantial than that, clearly from a narrative perspective the effect is to place the narrator of Acts proper among Paul's traveling companions.

mobile "propaganda" machine for an otherwise self-effacing miracle-worker.<sup>48</sup>

Regular traveling companions or other accompanying disciples could serve as a sort of critical mass of the "convinced" whose presence could attract a larger following—a feature of early Christianity suggested by Meeks.<sup>49</sup> The evidence on these two fronts, however, is lacking within the text of Acts itself.

Overall, the picture of the power relationship between intermediary and entourage is one of the intermediary setting the agenda and directing affairs, while the entourage fulfill the tasks of administrative assistants. At times they cared for physical needs and traveling plans, protecting the intermediary from their own lack of self-preservation instincts, and representing the intermediary in communities left behind. Clearly loyalty was a virtue demanded of a traveling assistant by Paul at least (15:38). The lines of authority seem apparent.

## **2. Local Communities**

The image of the intermediary as directing affairs among his fellow travellers is not the picture of the type of authority that apostles such as Peter and Paul typically carry within local religious communities of which they are a part or which they are responsible for creating. The relationship is far more tenuous and subtle. We have already suggested that both Peter and Paul at some stage serve as emissaries of their local community in their mediatorial activities, and as such feel the need to report back (8:14, 25; 13:1-3, 14:27-28). Peter is certainly a founding leader of the Jerusalem community (along with the other apostles proper) and its initial spokesperson (1:15-22; 2:14-41; 5:1-11). This leadership, however, is marked by a distinct "democratic" element. That is, problems are identified and addressed by the leading apostles or by Peter, but the problem-solving itself is remarkably democratic with the assembly selecting candidates for various leadership functions (1:21-23; 6:1-6). Peter's summary curse of Ananias and Sapphira would be the obvious exception. However, later in

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<sup>48</sup>The public relations function of the entourage is suggested by Anderson, *Sage*, 114-115. An excellent example of this not mentioned by Anderson can be found in Lucian's *Peregrinus* where a disciple sings the praises of Peregrinus before his self-immolation (3-6).

<sup>49</sup>*Urban*, 27.

Acts, following Peter's travels, it becomes apparent that leadership of the Jerusalem community has passed into other hands and that even a powerful miracle-worker like Peter is accountable and must convince this body of the correctness of his mediatorial actions (11:1-18; 15:7-11).<sup>50</sup> Clearly James, who is not presented as a miracle-worker and would presumably, on the basis of shared extra-text, be understood to be not the James of the Twelve but the brother of Jesus, is the lead spokesperson for the "apostles and elders" who direct affairs in Jerusalem (12:17; 15:13-21; 21:18).<sup>51</sup>

Paul likewise does not operate as the leading community figure in Antioch, the Christian community in which he spends the greatest amount of time. He does clearly play a strong ministry role as teacher and probably prophet as well (11:25-26; 13:1). However, he is one among others and serves as a church representative rather than a church leader in being sent by the Antiochan church first to Jerusalem and later on his first journey with fellow Antiochian worker, Barnabas (11:30, 13:1-3). As new Christian communities are founded, Acts portrays Paul and Barnabas as appointing leaders for these fledgling bodies (14:23) which would suggest their authority over them. Indeed, they revisit these communities in order to see how they are doing and to strengthen and encourage them (14:21-22, 15:36, 15:41, 16:1-5; 18:23, 20:2-3) and one might suspect retaining or reasserting some influence over them. However, in the only real picture we have of Paul subsequently interacting with the elders he has presumably been instrumental in appointing offers a striking surprise (20:17-35). Rhetorical considerations aside, Paul's tone is hardly that of one who controlled or directed the affairs of the elders. In 20:28 Paul credits the Holy Spirit with making

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<sup>50</sup>Joseph B. Tyson, "The Emerging Church and the Problem of Authority in Acts," in *Interpretation* 42 (April 1988): 132-145.

<sup>51</sup>Acts 12:2 rules out the most obvious "James" within the Luke-Acts corpus—James the brother of John. The other two "James" in Luke-Acts—James the son of Alphaeus and James the father of Judas (Luke 6:15; Acts 1:13) can be ruled out on the grounds that the latter is simply a name to differentiate the two "Judas's" and the former fits the narrator's pattern of carefully distinguishing identical names in the lists of the twelve and later with John Mark, sometime traveller with Paul and Barnabas (Luke 15:37). The lack of formal introduction or explanation of this character gives the distinct impression that he is expected to be well-known to the narratee with knowledge of some of the events narrated (Luke 1:4). Galatians 1-2, of course, confirms that James, the brother of Jesus, was well-known in early Christian circles as the leader of the Jerusalem church. Galatians 1-2 also confirms the implicit claims in Acts that it is James who ultimately runs the show in Jerusalem, not Peter.

them the overseers of the flock (which does not, however, rule out the possibility that Paul spoke for the Holy Spirit on the matter). In his closing remarks in which he warns them of the difficulties ahead, he launches a strong defence of his and his companions activities among them. He is very much to one side of these elders, not their director, and even feels it necessary to defend his ministry to them. Even without the epistolary tradition, one can surmise from the Acts narrative world itself that Paul's ongoing authority within a self-sustaining community was short-lived in his absence.

One might have recourse to Weberian explanations at this point—charismatic control gives way to more formalized and routinized channels of leadership.<sup>52</sup> Peter and Paul the charismatic tradition-shapers have given way to groups of elders and leaders like James the peace-keeping administrator primarily concerned with correct interpretation and application of the scriptural tradition (15:13-21). Our framework, however, offers another possible interpretive angle. The way in which the intermediaries' role in leadership is short-lived is indicative of the tensions in which the intermediary operates. On the one hand, they need to connect themselves in some way with the local religious community. In the Acts narrative world this is largely unsuccessful within the sphere of the Jewish synagogue. As a result, a new community is formed which is willing to accept the intermediary. If our intermediary wishes to continue to be the outsider/insider to avoid charges of ambition while remaining an effective intermediary, carrying on in the role of local community leader would be impossible.

In Acts this problem is solved by the intermediaries constantly traveling. It is striking that James as the Jerusalem leader follows on the heels of Peter's travels around Judea (9:32-10:48). One could also speculate that within a local Christian community a new religious "orthodoxy" could gel rather quickly, and that intermediaries arriving on the scene or those attempting to remain within the

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<sup>52</sup>For an excellent application of Weberian notions of the routinization of charisma and the exercise of authority in the primitive church see Bengt Holmberg, *Paul and Power: The Structure of Authority in the Primitive Church as Reflected in the Pauline Epistles* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1978), 161-192.



community could potentially split this new community much as they did the synagogue. Acts 21:20-25, in which an intermediary is requested to pass an "orthodoxy" test, suggests that the new community rapidly prepares to defend itself from the potentially limitless power of the intermediary in much the same way as the more established religious communities of the Acts narrative world. The fact that the intermediary submits to the test, demonstrates their own realization of the power of a local community to regulate their behaviour. The intermediary's power to regulate the affairs of their traveling companions is not a power which extends to self-sustaining local religious communities which they themselves establish. The cultural script played out in the synagogues appears to be one played out in the Christian community as well.

### **C. Crossing Paths with Political Authorities**

It is artificial to divide the spheres of religion and politics as we have in this section. However, it is still a useful exercise, especially given that within Acts itself there are occasions where characters on the "political" side of our divide draw similar distinctions (18:14-16, 25:18-20). Naturally, the Sanhedrin in Jerusalem represents both, and as such we have dealt with the interaction of the intermediaries and Sanhedrin above. What remains to be investigated, therefore, is the reaction intermediaries evoked from the Greco-Roman political authorities who show up relatively frequently as characters in Acts.<sup>53</sup> What is noteworthy in this case is how little interest the political powers within Acts have in the miracle-workers.<sup>54</sup> The intersection of the intermediaries' power and that of the political authority hardly registers sparks when compared with that of intermediary and local religious community. In its own way, however, Acts bears out Anderson's observation that

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<sup>53</sup>The politically subversive nature of "religious" virtuosi in the Roman Empire, be they labelled "philosopher" or "magician", has been firmly established by MacMullen's *Enemies* and his study alone warrants an investigation into the collision of the intermediary's power with that of the Roman political order.

<sup>54</sup>This may be an overstatement in light of Paul's arrests and trials in Acts. However, as we shall note below, Paul ends up in civic courts usually as a result of community members taking offense at his activities and it is the ensuing ruckus which brings about the intervention of the political authorities.

"holy men...could expect a mixed reception from authority."<sup>55</sup> For political figures, the intermediary in Acts represents a potentially advantageous power and diversion, a figure from a religious ghetto of no consequence, or a threat to the peace, stability and good reputation of a civic centre. Again, ambiguities and tensions run high whenever mediators of divine power cross paths with centres of political power within the narrative world of Acts.

### 1. Positive Interest

The first Greco-Roman political figure who takes an active interest in our intermediaries is Sergius Paulus on the island of Crete (13:6-7). As Graham Anderson's study of Holy Men points out, it should be of no surprise that we find a character like Bar Jesus in the company of this political leader.<sup>56</sup> His interest in the religiously innovative and potentially powerful is expressed both by the presence of Bar Jesus and by his desire to hear Paul and Barnabas when they arrive at Paphos. In the end, he can hardly be disappointed with the result of inviting the two miracle-workers as Paul performs the astonishing feat of blinding his court μάγος (13:8-12). The curious political leader as a character is one the narrator has already presented Luke 23:8 where Herod is keen to meet Jesus and have him perform a miraculous sign for him.<sup>57</sup> As we have already noted, Paul, despite capturing the approval of Sergius Paulus, does not remain and become his new court wizard.

It is difficult to infer much about the motivation for Sergius Paulus' interest in Paul beyond that of curiosity. However, the presence of a prophetic figure already within his court suggests the possibility put forward by Anderson that an intermediary with access to divine knowledge and power served the security interests of political

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<sup>55</sup>Anderson, *Sage*, 166.

<sup>56</sup>Anderson, *Sage*, 151-162. So also Reitzenstein (*Mystery-Religions*, 26) and Klauck ("With Paul," 96-97). Also interesting in this regard is Josephus' mention of a Jewish Cypriot magician named Simon, a friend of Felix the procurator of Judea, sent by him to Drusilla to convince her to divorce her husband and marry him (*Ant.* 20.142).

<sup>57</sup>In this regard it is regrettable that Luke does not include the stories along the lines of Herod's fascination with John the Baptist recorded in Mark 6:20 or Herod's interview with the Magi in Matthew 2:1-8. The latter is cited by Anderson as an example of "the convergence of leisure, curiosity and security" which would expose political leaders to "the advice of holy men, soothsayers, or the like" (*Sage*, 156).

leaders.<sup>58</sup> Political ambition was fraught with dangers on all sides, and any advantage was worth pursuing.<sup>59</sup> In this case, divine power as mediated by the religious virtuoso became an ally to earthly political power. This must remain, however, firmly within the realm of the speculative with regard to the Acts narrative world.

In Acts 19:31, the narrator informs us that Paul has friends among the "Asiarchs." The title itself has generated considerable scholarly interest, particularly the issue of whether it is anachronistic and what exactly was the actual role or duty of an Ἀσιάρχης.<sup>60</sup> The latter question is of more interest to our study than the former, particularly given that the debate centers on whether the title "is synonymous with *archiereus* of Asia, or high-priest of the imperial cult in the province."<sup>61</sup> R. A. Kearsley puts forward a strong case to the contrary, based on growing epigraphic evidence, in which he claims that Asiarchs held a fixed term office in which their duties "fell within the sphere of civic administration."<sup>62</sup> It does make some difference to our understanding of the significance of Paul's friends among the Asiarchs as to whether they represent the provincial imperial cult, or are simply members of the Ephesian aristocracy.<sup>63</sup> If one assumes that Kearsley is correct, and the latter is the case, we have another case of a positive interest in miracle-workers by political leaders.

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<sup>58</sup>*Sage*, 153-157.

<sup>59</sup>It is precisely within this sphere that one can account for the popularity of the *PGM* variety of magic among the aristocratic classes. See above page 6 no. 16.

<sup>60</sup>This particular issue has been well addressed this century beginning with Lily R. Taylor ("The Asiarchs," in *BC*, vol. 5 [1933], 256-262), A. N. Sherwin-White (*Roman Society and Roman Law in the New Testament* [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1963], 89f.), Haenchen (574, 578), Bruce (Acts, 418; Book 376-377), and more recently by R. A. Kearsley ("Appendix: The Asiarchs," in *The Book of Acts in Its First Century Setting*, vol. 2, *Graeco-Roman Setting*, ed. D. W. J. Gill and C. Gempf [Carlisle: Paternoster Press, 1994], 363-376).

<sup>61</sup>Kearsley, "Asiarchs," 366.

<sup>62</sup>Kearsley, "Asiarch," 365-366.

<sup>63</sup>As Haenchen states, "That these men elected for the promotion of the imperial cult were 'personally well disposed to the resolute enemy of the gods' (so Bauernfeind 234) is highly unlikely" (*Acts*, 574 ft. 1). In rather typical fashion, Haenchen is brutal in dissecting this account—unfairly so in this case. Given that Asiarchs in his opinion had the "duty of advancing the cult of Caesar," he describes their attitudes as "incomprehensible," asking questions such as, "Do they all then react in the same manner? Or do they immediately call a council?" (576). Whatever the historically factual elements in the account, our narrator is not quite so clumsy as Haenchen suggests. The text never suggests that all the Asiarchs had an abiding interest in Paul but only that τινὲς...τῶν Ἀσιαρχῶν, who happened to be friends with Paul went out of their way to warn Paul.

Those who would argue that Luke is an apology designed to demonstrate the respectability of Christianity within a Roman imperial framework read this simply as another expression of this theme.<sup>64</sup> This may (or *may not*) be the case, but for our purposes it does represent interest shown in an intermediary by Greco-Roman political figures. A political figure favourably disposed toward an intermediary and using their influence to dissuade the miracle-worker from a potentially dangerous course of action is a motif that can be found in *VA* as well. The text does not suggest how they came to be favourably disposed towards him, but perhaps a symbiotic relationship of the sort we argued applied to influential women may be at work here.<sup>65</sup> Given that Paul's reputation as a miracle-worker seems to have flourished particularly well in Ephesus, our suggestions of an exchange of access to differing sorts of power is at the very least possible.

How, then, does Paul the friend of Asiarchs in Ephesus differ from Bar Jesus associate of Sergius Paulus? Is our miracle-worker not in danger of moving into the category of magician by associating with the influential and powerful? Could one not construe this as an overt grab for power, wealth, and influence? The simple answer is yes. Miracle-workers, if successful, will ultimately gain large amounts of ascribed status and become associated in some way with persons in power. Once again, the criterion is very subjective, and, as we have also stated, the balance between gaining power and shunning ambition is always a delicate one. Surely the narrator would reject any such characterization and indeed has inserted enough material to the contrary within the Ephesian account. Paul is, after all, quite willing to deny self-interest and face a mob as well as being willing to move on from Ephesus (19:30, 20:1), both of which we have cited as examples of behaviour designed to avoid charges of ambition.

Anderson, commenting on holy men, states that "someone of such wide and

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<sup>64</sup>None more so that Wengst, 102. On the problematic character of Wengst's entire analysis of Luke-Acts in this regard see above footnote 36.

<sup>65</sup>See page 191 above. One might suggest rather more cynically that the Asiarchs are in this case protecting their own interests in not having an individual they have associated with in some fashion become the centre of a public disturbance!

often esoteric interests and experience is likely to be a source of curiosity and diversion to an emperor."<sup>66</sup> While in the cases of Sergius Paulus and the Asiarch the motivation of curiosity and diversion may be a factor in the interest shown in the intermediary, this certainly seems to be the case in some of the appearances Paul makes before rulers in the course of his imprisonment. Felix, for example, sends for Paul to hear a personal discourse about faith in Jesus, although he cuts it short when he the message becomes too frightening for him (24:24-25). One might chalk up subsequent personal hearings as motivated by curiosity and a need for philosophical diversion were it not for the narrator's insistence that Felix's ongoing interest was motivated by a desire for a bribe (24:26). Herod Agrippa demonstrates a similar curiosity according to 25:22 where he requests to hear Paul personally. While the next day Festus proclaims that the reason for the hearing is to have Agrippa aid in the specification of the charges (25:26), the narrator has already informed us that Agrippa actually requested the hearing and, furthermore no charge is ever formulated by Agrippa following the hearing.<sup>67</sup>

Finally, there is the case of Publius, the "leading man of the island" (τῷ πρώτῳ τῆς νήσου) of Malta, who entertains Paul and his friends for three days following their shipwreck (28:7). Bruce rather aptly asks, "Is Paul's status being enhanced by his being the guest for three days of the 'first man of the Maltese'?"<sup>68</sup> The answer is no doubt in the affirmative; however, the question which remains pertinent here is the motivation for Publius' hospitality. At this point in the narrative Paul has a considerably enhanced reputation both among his former shipmates and guards, all of

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<sup>66</sup>Anderson, *Sage*, 157.

<sup>67</sup>Upon the conclusion of the discourse by Paul, they merely discuss the fact that there is no case against him, and indeed, the narrative suggests that Paul is sent to Rome without any official charges against him. Arguably this is a specification of the charges, however, Agrippa's personal request (25:22), the nature of the Pauline discourse (26:1-23), the banter between Paul, Festus, and Agrippa (26:24-29), and the failure to come up with any definitive charges (26:30-32) all suggest that it was more a diversion for Agrippa and Festus than an official court proceeding. Despite Festus's claim that to send a prisoner without specific charges was unreasonable, the narrative leaves the impression this was the case. Paul's comments in 28:18-21 certainly point in this direction. If the Jews from Judea fail to arrive in Jerusalem to press their complaint before Caesar, there seems to be no case against him. Whether this is historically accurate or not is moot as our interest lies within the narrative world.

<sup>68</sup>Bruce, *Acts*, 533.

whom made it to shore safely as Paul had predicted (27:21-26, 33-34, 44), and among the islanders who witnessed him surviving the snake bite (28:6). Did either of these reach the ears of Publius who exhibited the curiosity of Sergius Paulus and brought the miracle-worker into his house? Are we to think that he invited Paul with the hope of having his father cured (28:8)? It is certainly the case that a symbiotic relationship between miracle-worker and public official is played out in the story, whatever the motivations of the parties. Paul, as Bruce suggests, gains an enhanced status as the guest of Publius, while Publius, for his part, gains access to divine power with Paul's subsequent healing of his father.

It is unfortunate that interaction between "rogue" intermediaries (as defined by the narrator) and political figures aside from Bar Jesus are absent from Acts. Perhaps all one can point to in this regard is the note that Simon received the attention of everyone, ἀπὸ μικροῦ ἕως μεγάλου (8:10). One cannot put too much weight on one element of a hyperbolic merism which may simply convey the notion that Simon's following was widespread. However, even as a passing remark this statement does suggest that Simon's activities have attracted positive attention from every sector of society. Presumably this would include those likely designated as the μεγάλοι—community leaders and local political figures of some sort or other high status individuals.<sup>69</sup> One could be more certain if one had the sort of account of Simon one has in the *Acts of Peter* where he resides at the house of a senator in Rome and with a wealthy, highly regarded woman in Judea.<sup>70</sup> Even as it is, however, it does establish that within the Acts narrative world, interest in intermediaries is not limited to any particular socio-economic class.

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<sup>69</sup>Lake and Cadbury rightly point out the LXX origins of this expression, where ἀπὸ μικροῦ ἕως μεγάλου is frequently used to translate the Hebrew expression לִיְתָר־וְעַד־יְטָרָה (90-91). The specific reference of the two halves of this merism vary from context to context, occasionally suggesting the notion of "young and old" (e.g., Gen 19:11, 1 Sam 5:9) while at other times the notion of societal status "low and high" (e.g., Jer 49:1, 8 [LXX]/ 42:1, 8 [BHS]; Jdt 13:4; 1 Macc 5:45; Bar 1:4), and frequently it is extremely difficult to determine which is in view (e.g., Jer 6:13). Bolstering a reading of "from low to high status" is the other occurrence of the "more idiomatic Greek construction" of 26:22 (μικρῶ τε καὶ μεγάλῳ) where the context clearly calls for this understanding of the phrase (Bruce, *Acts*, 218).

<sup>70</sup>*Acts Pet.* 8, 17.

## **2. Disinterest**

Positive interest in Paul as demonstrated by Sergius Paulus, the Asiarchs, Felix, Agrippa, and Publius indicates at least some political figures were intrigued by the "outsider" power an intermediary like Paul possessed. Gallio, on the other hand, was completely disinterested (18:12-17). Paul was simply too much of an "outsider" to be an "inside" threat to Gallio and his interests, nor one might imagine, did he see much potential gain from Paul's form of divine mediation. From Gallio's perspective at least, no intersection of power had taken place (although the narrator might well dispute that particular conclusion). The charge Paul faces, as we shall see below, is a common enough one faced by other intermediaries in Acts—that of religious deviance (18:13). Gallio, however, clearly believes he could safely ignore a religious innovator who operated, as far as he could gather from the nature of the charges and the identity of those bringing charges, only within a Jewish minority group. The closing scene only confirms Gallio's aloof nature and perhaps his utter disregard for matters involving Jews as Sosthenes the synagogue ruler is beaten within the confines of the court itself. Paul's power, whatever it was, clearly operated in a sphere Gallio saw detached from his own.

## **3. Opposition**

Besides strong interest and complete indifference, another option within the Acts narrative world is opposition to the intermediary by political figures. That is, the intermediary's "outsider" power and influence threaten the stasis of existing "insider" power.

The first good example is Herod and his persecution of James and Peter in Acts 12. The initial motivation for his persecution is unclear, the text simply stating his desire to persecute the church as a fact (12:1). The events which follow suggest that the narrator saw in this persecution an attempt by Herod to please the Judeans or at least the Jerusalem populace by persecuting a group which must have grown increasingly unpopular. F. F. Bruce suggests the possibility that the apostles specifically had grown unpopular as a result of increasing fraternization with Gentiles,

particularly in the case of Peter.<sup>71</sup> The literary context of Acts 12 would suggest this as well since the lead up to Peter's arrest includes back to back accounts of Jewish believers converting and cohabiting with Gentiles, with a story of opposition from Jerusalem Jewish Christians sandwiched in between. Whatever the reason for the increasing unpopularity, it does not stretch the boundaries of the narrative to suggest that Herod's initial motivation is an attempt to please "the Jews" and when his first attempt to do so meets with success, he repeats his action (12:3).<sup>72</sup> Certainly the arrest of Peter is motivated by the popular response to his execution of James (12:3). This characterization of Herod as a "people-pleaser" is only reinforced by the episode involving his crowd-pleasing behavior in Caesarea (12:19b-23). Herod the "witch-hunter" finds new-found popularity playing that role. The political figure here makes a status gain with his interaction with the intermediary, but in this case by playing on the religious opposition the intermediary evokes with his uncompromising stance and innovation, and using that opposition to fuel his own popularity.

Frequently in Acts, opposition comes from leading Gentile community figures as a result of the activity of the local or nearby Jewish community, whose opposition to the intermediaries has already been commented on above (13:50; 14:2,5; 14:19; 17:5-8; 17:3). The first two examples are perhaps the only legitimate ones, as the remaining three are more cases of local Jews inciting whole crowds rather than leading political figures. However, Acts 17:6-8 does provide some vital clues for these two cases. At Pisidian Antioch and Iconium, the synagogue Jews who are portrayed as jealous of the success of Paul and Barnabas, "incite" the leading citizens to persecute these intermediaries (...παρώτρυναν...καὶ ἐπήγειραν διωγμὸν [13:50]; ...ἐπήγειραν καὶ ἐκάκωσαν τὰς ψυχὰς τῶν ἐθνῶν κατὰ τῶν ἀδελφῶν [14:2]). Unfortunately, the precise Jewish strategy in goading the leading civic figures to expel Paul and Barnabas is not narrated. Acts 17:6-8, however, fills in this information gap.

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<sup>71</sup>Bruce, *Book*, 233-234.

<sup>72</sup>It could, of course, also be the case that the popularity of the apostles in certain segments of the population might be the initial motivation as well—this led to the demise of a rather well-known intermediary by the name of John the Baptist at the hands of a Herodian ruler (Josephus *Ant.* 18.118-119).



Here the jealous synagogue Jews label them as political revolutionaries who have unsettled the Empire (in a political sense),<sup>73</sup> are proclaiming a king other than Caesar, and have been welcomed into the house of a Thessalonian. The Jews in this case incite Gentile opposition by claiming that these are anti-Roman revolutionaries and that any community which welcomes them is only bringing trouble upon itself.<sup>74</sup> This fits well with the city clerk's speech in Ephesus where he attempts to quell a riot by referring to the possible repercussions by outside forces (19:40).<sup>75</sup> City officials are keen not to draw any undue attention on themselves from the Romans, particularly by failing to expel revolutionaries. The socially disruptive nature of the intermediaries and the threat they represented to particular interested parties within a given community, who in turn portrayed them as politically subversive, was enough to provoke opposition from Gentile community leaders whose personal interests were served in maintaining good Roman peace.

It noteworthy in this regard that in Philippi the charges against Paul and Silas

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<sup>73</sup>The actual phrase is οἱ τὴν οἰκουμένην ἀναστατώσαντες οὗτοι (literally - "these are the ones unsettling the inhabited world"). We are suggesting ἀναστατώω (narrowly "to unsettle, upset" [LSJ]) has the sense of political unrest for three reasons: (1) οἰκουμένη, while strictly means "the inhabited world", most frequently refers in Roman times to the Roman empire itself (LSJ, BAGD); (2) the intermediaries are further charged with breaking Caesar's decrees and proclaiming Jesus king instead (Acts 17:7); (3) the only other use of this term in Acts, which is found in 21:38, is a clear reference to seditious behaviour.

<sup>74</sup>Sherwin-White argues that as Thessalonica was a *civitas libera*, the anti-Caesar charge "was not strictly relevant in the court of a free city which lay outside the Roman jurisdiction; hence the city magistrates were not compelled to take serious action" (96). However, just before this statement, Sherwin-White suggests the Jews "energetic action...might have been inspired by the knowledge that the hands of the city authorities, unlike those of Ephesus, were not directly under Roman control" (96). The argument is less than compelling. On the one hand they are taking advantage of local authority, but on the other making completely the wrong sort of case to compel the local authorities to take action. More compelling is the notion that the anti-Caesar case is one which *is effective* because even a free city would be careful to guard its privileges which could be undermined by harbouring seditious itinerants. If Sherwin-White has correctly guessed that Jason "is giving security for the good behavior of his guests, and hence hastens to dispatch Paul and Silas out of the way to Beroea, where the jurisdiction of the magistrates of Thessalonica was not valid" (95-96), the "light" sentence is accounted for. Jason is after all not the treasonous rebel, just the host, who gets off with a bond and a promise to rid the city of this *potential* problem. The Thessalonian authorities have dealt with a threat to local freedom quietly and efficiently.

<sup>75</sup>One might also cite the fear of the στρατηγοὶ in Philippi over failing to follow correct Roman procedure (16:38-39) and the similar fear exhibited by the Roman commanders in Jerusalem (22:29) as evidence that political authorities carry a lingering dread over potential failures to live up to Roman expectations. Sherwin-White confirms the city clerk had good reasons to fear disturbing the Romans who already had a policy of suspending civic assemblies (84-85).

which result in a beating and imprisonment from the local magistrates (οἱ στρατηγοὶ) is that of promoting un-Roman practices—as we shall argue below engaging in banned magical practices (16:20-23).<sup>76</sup> For these local political leaders, the intermediaries represent a pernicious foreign religious influence to their "Rome away from Rome".<sup>77</sup> If one makes the reasonable assumption that the exorcism is common knowledge, is it also possible that fear of their magical powers is a motivating factor as well? Marshall goes so far as to suggest that "the magistrates may possibly have feared that such prisoners, who had displayed supernatural powers, needed to be guarded especially carefully."<sup>78</sup> The Western text suggest this interpretive spin as well with its fascinating addition concerning the earthquake scaring the magistrates into sending officers to the prison to release the pair.<sup>79</sup> However, if one remains within the bounds of the critical (in this case Alexandrian) text of Acts, the evidence is not conclusive. What is absolutely certain is that the magistrates see before them two Jewish intermediaries who are promoting un-Roman behavior and threatening the peace and good name of their Roman colony.

What must be noted is that we have no clear cut cases of intermediaries being

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<sup>76</sup>On the precise nature of the charge, see the extended discussion below on page 258.

<sup>77</sup>The narrator has deliberately drawn attention to the "Romanness" of Philippi with his identification of Philippi as a Roman colony in 16:12; the mention of practices which, in the words of Paul's accusers, are not permitted "for us, being Romans" (16:21); and a controversy involving the beating and imprisonment of Roman citizens without a trial (16:37-39). As Sherwin-White notes, other Roman colonies (Pisidian Antioch and Lystra) previously visited by Paul are not identified as such (95).

<sup>78</sup>Marshall, *Acts*, 271. R. Reitzenstein's suggestion that the apostles' hymn singing is intended to create a "magical" release would be fascinating in this regard (*Wundererzählungen*, 121). The magistrates fearing the magical power of the two exorcists bind them hand and foot but their power is still accessible to them on account of their magical singing which creates an earthquake escape. Lake and Cadbury reject this suggestion in an extended critique (196-197) but Marshall curiously reopens the possibility of this sort of interpretation with his suggestion that "the fact that the other prisoners heard them is perhaps meant to convey the point that they would then regard the miraculous release which followed as an answer to the missionaries' prayer to God" (*Acts*, 271). However, given other references to apostles rejoicing after suffering persecution (5:41), this text reads more along the lines of Peter's prison escape in 12:7-17 where the prison break is most unexpected. At any rate, the earthquake (even if it is in response to their efficacious hymn-singing) plays no role in their subsequent release anyway as they willingly remain prisoners until the magistrates order them to leave (16:35-36).

<sup>79</sup>Acts 16:35 of D reads ἡμέρας δὲ γενομένης συνῆλθον οἱ στρατηγοὶ ἐπὶ τὸ αὐτὸ εἰς τὴν ἀγορὰν καὶ ἀναμνησθέντες τὸν σεισμόν τὸν γεγονότα ἐφοβήθησαν καὶ ἀπέστειλαν τοὺς βαβδούχους....

opposed by political authorities because they posed a *direct* threat to themselves.<sup>80</sup> Indeed, there is surprisingly little interaction between Paul and local and Imperial governing bodies as compared to *VA*. Our intermediaries are clearly more inclined to remain within religious spheres of influence, and thus, the only political figures with whom they seem to constantly tangle, those with whom their power intersects so as to create friction, are the religio-political figures in Jerusalem. And, in many cases, trouble with local civic rulers is portrayed as being brought about by local synagogue figures. However, in its own limited way, the narrative world of Acts does confirm that the intermediaries "outsider" power could and did conflict at times with political leaders who were stake holders in "insider" power.

#### 4. Conclusion

A close examination of the when, how, and why of the crossing of paths of intermediaries and political authorities in Acts offers the following observations. First, it is those who have the most to lose in the intermediaries' rising popularity and power who are instrumental in creating opposition between political authorities and the intermediary rather than opposition arising from Greco-Roman political authorities themselves. Political authorities in Acts rarely feel directly threatened by the intermediaries. In fact, we noted that on a number of occasions, political authorities were positively curious (perhaps in a self-interested way) in these mediators of divine wisdom and power. On the other hand, the intermediaries, particularly if they had made enemies through their mediatorial activities and their religious boundary stretching agenda, could also be construed as a public nuisance bordering on seditious and harmful to the reputation of civic centres keen on appeasing Rome. The case of Philippi is the closest one comes to Greco-Roman officials themselves being fearful or disdaining the activities of the intermediaries themselves—although here it needs to be noted that it is the slave girl owner's loss and their complaint which brings Paul and Silas to the attention of the local magistrates. The overall impression left by the

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<sup>80</sup>We have already suggested the possibility that the intermediary, if perceived to be a political revolutionary as is the case in 17:6-8, could be an *indirect* threat to the local political authorities because it could taint the reputation of the city itself, and with it, the local government.

narrative of Acts with respect to intermediaries and political authorities is one in which intermediaries are perceived as both a positive source of power and a threat.

However, as we shall see when we look at *VA*, both positive and negative interaction is on a much smaller, more tempered, scale in Acts as compared to Philostratus' *VA*.

#### **D. Conclusion**

Our exploration of the intersection of the intermediary with their "outsider" power and established societal structures certainly bears out Peter Brown's description of Mediterranean towns as taut "face-to-face" societies.<sup>81</sup> The intermediary sought out legitimation within existing religious structures of one form or another within these towns—in Acts that usually takes the form of the Jewish community and its synagogue. The existing religious community, however, frequently offered a mixed response. Ultimately, some members of those religious communities found in the intermediary a mediation of divine power that suited their purposes rather well, while other sought vigorously to maintain the status quo of their religious community and its power structures. Curiously, even the communities that eventually formed around the intermediaries themselves soon found a need to control intermediaries with their potentially unlimited outside power source. It is conflicts created within these smaller religious communities such as synagogues that eventually spilled over, or frequently "upward", which created opposition from political authorities for the intermediaries of Acts. Political authorities themselves found the intermediaries in some cases fascinating and occasionally diverting but in other cases intolerable disturbers of the peace and simply troublesome. The general impression left by Acts is of a tense society which is simultaneously intrigued and troubled by the mediated divine power offered by its religious virtuosi.

### **III. Intersecting Power in *Life of Apollonius***

While Apollonius and other intermediaries in *VA* attempt to maintain a somewhat disinterested "fringe" status with regard to societal hierarchies, it is inevitable that they, like the intermediaries of Acts, ultimately find the power they have

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<sup>81</sup>See above page 62.

gained as intermediaries intersects with existing societal power structures.<sup>82</sup> Certainly many of the strategies employed by the intermediary and the "institutional" authorities resonate with those we noted in Acts. Of course there are differences as well and these must also be given some attention if we are to be fair in our dissection of the narrative world of *VA*. As with Acts we are forced to make an artificial division between more religiously oriented forms of institutional power, such as temples and priests, and more politically oriented forms of institutional power, such as civic assemblies, kings and the Emperor.<sup>83</sup>

#### **A. Intersecting Established Religious Communities and Cults**

As with Acts, one might well expect that the intermediary represents a competitor to community-based religious institutions as a provider of access to divine power. That is, this is a simple case of holy man versus temple.<sup>84</sup> However, the relationship between the two turned out to be rather more complex than that in Acts, and as we shall see, *VA* offers a picture of that relationship that is even more intriguing.<sup>85</sup> If there are opposing forces at work which require balancing to successfully gain power without appearing to desire power, equally there are opposing forces at work in the relationship between intermediary and a local religious establishment. As in Acts, the intermediary carries with him a redefinition of existing religious practices even as he seeks the legitimizing power of these institutions.<sup>86</sup> Both

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<sup>82</sup>Anderson, commenting on Apollonius makes the generalization that "we expect the sage as a matter of course to have his professional quarrels with disciples, official religion and secular authority" (*Philostratus*, 144).

<sup>83</sup>For an example and assertion of the interrelatedness of the spheres of religion and politics with Pythagoreanism and Greek society generally see Burkert, *Lore and Science*, 119.

<sup>84</sup>Brown, *World*, 102. Smith, "Temple," 186-189.

<sup>85</sup>Within the Greco-Roman world generally one can find many instances of a complex relationship involving both competition and cooperation or co-dependence between holy man and temple (on the latter see especially Potter, 38-40). So also Flinterman, 61.

<sup>86</sup>Bowie argues rather strongly that Apollonius never visited temples ("Apollonius," 1688-1670). However, as he is forced to admit, Philostratus himself claims ἱερόα as sources for his biography (1.2; Bowie, "Apollonius," 1688). This would suggest rather strongly that there were at least *some* temples which believed it was in their interests to preserve the memory of a visit by the sage. Lack of corroborating evidence from the major temple sites and other writers on temples is hardly compelling counter-evidence given this truly is "selective and random" as Bowie himself admits (1689). Given we are working entirely in the subjective realm of probabilities, is it really plausible that a charismatic holy man would have no contact with any temples, and if he did visit,

parties have something to gain and something to lose as their interests intersect and the resulting relationship varies considerably. While Potter is certainly correct in stating that "the priests of [community] cults were guardians of tradition and social order....[and] such people were not innovators,"<sup>87</sup> the narrative of *VA* suggest a somewhat broader range of possibilities for the ensuing relationship between innovative intermediary and the traditional community cult.<sup>88</sup> One can certainly state at the outset that in *VA* the resulting relationship is more frequently successful for both parties than is typically the case in Acts. Certainly the judgment on whether a particular purveyor of divine power is a legitimate miracle-worker or an illegitimate magician depends to a large extent on the dynamics at play here.

### **1. Attempts to Tie into Religious Institutions**

We suggested in our examination of Acts that the legitimate intermediaries within that narrative world attempted to demonstrate their connection with established religious institutions both ideologically and physically. That is, even as they are religious innovators, they are so within a particular socio-religious framework. Within the narrative world of *VA*, one finds that the narrator goes some way towards placing Apollonius within a traditional ideological framework through direct narrative intrusions, as well as the character Apollonius himself is seen to locate himself ideologically and physically within the sphere of rather traditional Greco-Roman

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would have nothing to say about the rites and state of affairs in a given shrine? One needs only look at the example of Alexander of Abonuteichos to see a more plausible relationship between holy man and shrine than that offered by Bowie (*Lucian Alexander the False Prophet*).

<sup>87</sup>Potter, 7.

<sup>88</sup>Francis strongly hints that this is due to the domesticating influence of Philostratus upon the historical figure of Apollonius (or at least the Apollonius of the *Epistles*) whose religious innovation and critique was far more thoroughgoing than that suggest by *VA* (109-11). Similar suggestions are made, of course for Luke's version of Paul versus the self-portrait in the Pauline epistles (e.g., Haenchen, 112-116, 479-482). While our interest here remains squarely focussed on the Apollonius of the narrative world of *VA* and thus immune from Francis' critique, it is worth considering that in both case the epistles (assuming they are genuine) reflect a self-portrait as painted in the midst of conflict and with a one-sided rhetorical flourish which may be no closer to "reality" than the picture offered by outsider observation. Certainly the evidence that Apollonius' memory was kept alive by temples he apparently visited (*VA* 1.2) and the evidence that Paul remained in Jewish circles to the point of accepting their punishments (1 Cor 11:24) suggests some sort of intimate connection between holy man and religious establishment.

paganism.<sup>89</sup>

One need only read the opening chapters of *VA* to realize our narrator is attempting to legitimate the mediatorial activities of Apollonius by casting him as a second Pythagoras and even bringing Empedocles to mind (1.1).<sup>90</sup> These are traditional heroes whom the narrator hopes will lend legitimacy to the otherwise unusual teachings and activities of Apollonius. The very next chapter confirms that indeed this is a part of the narrator's strategy to sell Apollonius as a legitimate purveyor of divine power rather than a μάγος or γόης (1.2). Democritus, Socrates, and even Anaxagoras are pulled in from the past to demonstrate the legitimacy of Apollonius' activities. He concludes his comparison of Apollonius with these ancient heroes with the following comparison:

Even though these [feats of prediction] are attributed to the wisdom of Anaxagoras, they rob Apollonius [of the claim] that he predicted by wisdom and [instead] say that he did these things by magic arts (1.2).<sup>91</sup>

Associating Apollonius with these traditional figures from the past is a key component in the narrator's strategy to convince the narratee that Apollonius is not a magician but a legitimate miracle-worker.<sup>92</sup> Legitimacy for an intermediary must be found in some form of traditional religious or philosophical framework.<sup>93</sup>

Curiously, Apollonius' career as an intermediary begins in a temple. Indeed, as

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<sup>89</sup>Petzke puts Apollonius' temple-based activities alongside Jesus' synagogue-based and Jerusalem Temple-based activities, although without commenting on the significance, 169-170. MacMullen, reflecting on the success of another intermediary—Alexander of Abonuteichos, claims that "people could repair to his cult because it was so cleverly compounded of the old, though indeed the old could and did yield a dozen further inventions, distortions, contaminations, and unpredictable, passing alliances in the realm of religious ideas" (*Enemies*, 119). Anderson speaks of the "opportunity [in the early Empire well known for its archaising tendencies] for holy men to concern themselves with what we might term religious archaeology" (*Sage*, 55).

<sup>90</sup>Gallagher, 159. Francis, 96-97.

<sup>91</sup>καὶ σοφία ταῦτα τοῦ Αναξαγόρου προστιθέντες ἀφαιροῦνται τὸν Ἀπολλώνιον τὸ κατὰ σοφίαν προγιγνώσκειν καὶ φασιν, ὡς μάγῳ τέχνη ταῦτ' ἐπραττεν.

<sup>92</sup>Talbert, "Biographies," 1640. Gallagher occasionally mentions the link to the past sought by apologists and propagandists of θεῖος ἄνηρ to legitimize his teaching and activity but fails to draw any significance from this (e.g., 87-89, 112-113, 115).

<sup>93</sup>One can trace this form of resolving the tension between religious innovation and reform and Greek philosophical tradition and cult in the life and tradition of Pythagoras as presented by Burkert (*Lore and Science*, 120-217, especially 141, 182, 187, 190-191, 217).

soon as he reaches early adulthood and begins his life of austerity, becoming a vegetarian, wearing linen and letting his hair grow long, he moves into the local Asclepion (1.8). He is there neither as suppliant nor priest, but rather as a sort of "junior" partner to Asclepius himself. Through the local priest Asclepius declares that he is pleased to have Apollonius witnessing his cures, and later Asclepius (in a vision) sends a suppliant to Apollonius to be cured (1.8-9). In an exchange between Apollonius and a suppliant at the Asclepion who comes to Apollonius for advice, Apollonius is declared to be the "guest" (ξένος), the "servant" (θεράπων not δοῦλος) and the "companion" (ἑταῖρος) of Asclepius (1.12). Clearly Apollonius functions neither as completely independent of the Asclepius cult nor in a subservient role, but rather he and the cult function in tandem. What we have here is a human mediator of divine power functioning alongside the framework of traditional temple-based mediation of divine power. And as we shall see below, both benefit from this arrangement.<sup>94</sup> Apollonius is an intermediary who begins and ends his career as a holy man living in a temple and in between manages to live in shrines from one end of the οἰκουμένη to the other (1.16, 5.5, 5.7, 5.20 8.15, 8.19, 8.30).

Just as Paul begins his visit to each new location by attending the local synagogue, so in *VA*, Apollonius initially gravitates to the local temple and begins by discoursing on cultic matters.<sup>95</sup> Upon arrival at the Persian court he begins by joining the King and the Magi in their cultic activity, although he chooses to worship in his unique bloodless fashion and departs when the animal victims are slaughtered (1.29-31). Likewise he joins the Brahmans in their worship immediately upon arrival (3.16). On his trip back from India he makes a stop over in Paphos where the narrator reports that he marvelled at the local temple to Aphrodite and offered instruction to the local priests on temple ritual (3.58) Upon arriving back in Ephesus, his first speech is from the temple platform (4.2). From Ephesus, he travels to Pergamum where he offers

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<sup>94</sup>If one wants to draw an analogy from the modern business context, this is the sort of "competition" one finds in a shopping mall in which the stores are technically rivals but also realize the mutual benefits for existing side-by-side as they end up drawing and sharing clientele together.

<sup>95</sup>On the historicity of this picture see note 86.



advice to suppliants at the Asclepion so they could obtain positive dreams for healing (4.11). When he lands at Crete, stopping there on account of a vision which instructed his visit, he visits the various shrines and ultimately ends up at the Asclepion at Leben and delivers speeches there (4.34). There are further general references to Apollonius' various visitations to shrines both in Greece and Rome (4.23, 4.40).

Perhaps the most interesting case for our study is Apollonius' visit to Athens, which, like the Acts account, draws attention to the religious devotion of the Athenians (4.19).<sup>96</sup> Just as Paul uses the religious devotion of the Athenians to announce his religious agenda, so Apollonius, observing the devotion of the Athenians, chooses for his first discourse when and how best to offer sacrifices, libations, and prayers for each of the gods. But even more importantly for our case is the fact that the narrator claims Apollonius chose this topic with an eye to defending himself from the blasphemous charges of the Eleusian hierophant who declared Apollonius was unclean with respect to divine affairs (τὰ δαιμόνια μὴ καθαρὸν εἶναι). This would clearly support our contention that the intermediary in tying into the local religious establishment is seeking to gain legitimacy within the local religious scene.

## 2. Acceptance

On the whole Apollonius has far more success integrating his own unique brand of divine mediation with local established religious institutions than do the wandering apostles of Acts. He tends to have an especially good relationship with the numerous Asclepions which dot the landscape of *VA*'s narrative world (1.8, 4.1, 4.11, 4.34). The reason for widespread acceptance seems to be the mutually advantageous relationship which developed between Apollonius and the temples where he stayed. The crowds flocked to the Asclepion where Apollonius first lived (1.8). The local temple thus profited from Apollonius' presence. Likewise in Rome he is given the authority to enter any temple and enact reforms as he sees fit (4.40). One can hardly imagine local temple priests pleased with this development until one notes that people flocked to any

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<sup>96</sup>In 6.3 we also get reference to the altar to the unknown god in Athens which is cited here as in Acts 17:22-23 as a sign of their devotion to the gods. Summarizing and putting to rest any hypothesis on some direct literary connection between the two is Petzke, 199-200.

temple he stayed at in hope of some sort of blessing (4.41). The same phenomenon accompanies his stay at the temple of Zeus at Olympia (8.15). It seems any temple which had Apollonius in its precincts could expect an increased level of traffic.

Furthermore, since Apollonius himself promoted traditional rituals, even if he excluded animal sacrifices as appropriate,<sup>97</sup> he stood within the interests of local established temple cults.

The portrait of the miracle workers from Acts suggested that the intermediaries were particularly effective at gaining acceptance and a following from at least two groups, Gentile God-fearers and women.<sup>98</sup> In Apollonius it is rather more difficult to find a common thread among those attracted to Apollonius as an intermediary.<sup>99</sup> In Antioch his lecturing in public creates "converts" among the unrefined masses (ἐπέστρεφεν ἐς ἑαυτὸν ἀνθρώπους ἀμουσοτάτους [1.17]) and in Ephesus even tradesmen follow him about (4.1). However, priests and kings are also portrayed as his eager followers and listeners (e.g., 1.29-40, 2.23-41, 4.24, 5.28-36). For the most part his most enthusiastic following is portrayed as young men, clearly from reasonably well-to-do backgrounds, seeking a philosophical mentor or a religious pilgrimage.

Damis the Assyrian who is Apollonius' most faithful companion is the most obvious example, although there are hints in the texts that he is somewhat representative of the others who join Apollonius in his travels as his students. Apollonius is wandering about Nineveh and, according to the narrator, understands the local images and statues better than the local priests and prophets and presumably shares his superior knowledge without any report about how well this was received.

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<sup>97</sup>On this point see below page 232.

<sup>98</sup>Francis rightly follows Petzke in noting the minimal appearance of women (and then in typically negative roles) in *VA* (Francis, 102; Petzke, 224). However as Francis notes in passing without speculating on the significance, *VA* was commissioned by a woman, Julia Domna (102 no. 69). This would be a case of a prominent woman taking a strong interest in a holy man as we find in Acts, in this case, however, one long dead.

<sup>99</sup>Petzke's presentation of Apollonius' followers suggests a strong parallel to the presentation of Jesus and his followers in the gospels (182-183). However, these parallels are not quite so obvious in Acts.

According to the narrator, Damis admires the sage (unlike the local priests and prophets?) and has a desire to travel (ὄς ἀγασθεὶς αὐτὸν καὶ ζηλώσας τῆς ὁδοῦ [1.19]). Likewise, Nilus is a young independent thinker among the naked sages who immediately admires Apollonius and the wisdom he brings from India and joins him in his travels rather than remaining with the Gymnosophists (6.12, 14-17, 22). When Apollonius arrives at Athens just in time for the Eleusinian rites, he is mobbed by a group of young students about to set off to meet him (4.17) and by the initiates in the Eleusinian procession (4.18). Later in his life, after having successfully defended himself before Domitian, upon his return to Greece the narrator informs us that "all the students (ὁμιλητῆς) came to him from Ionia, who were called ' Ἀπολλωνιεύους in Hellas, and uniting with those already there, they became a group of youth (νεότης) worthy to be marvelled at for their large number and their passion for philosophy" (8.21). The text also hints at the social status of many of these immediate followers as Damis once presided over a household with servants (2.11) and other members of his entourage brought personal slaves (4.34). The sort of relationship that develops between Apollonius and these sorts of followers will be explored below. For now it is simply worth noting the obvious—it is young men ready for religious and philosophical adventures and experiences who are most drawn to Apollonius.<sup>100</sup> This may well be a truism or stereotype, but then this is a study which is most interested *in stereotypes*. As we shall see in the next section, local established religious institutions while frequently positive to Apollonius in the end offer a more mixed reception.

As an aside, it is worth addressing the issue of why it is that Apollonius frequently meets with more success in tying himself in with a local established religious institution than do the legitimate intermediaries of Acts, particularly as this seems to run contra to the temple versus the holy man dichotomy. On a historical critical level, one might simply suggest that the pattern of widespread acceptance of Apollonius by temple cults is simply a product of Philostratus' apologetic strategy which required him

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<sup>100</sup>Note that in Lebadea it is his group of young male followers (τῶν ξυνακολουθούντων νέων) who break open the entrance to the Trophonius oracle for their master (8.19).

to present Apollonius as more successful than he actually was.<sup>101</sup> Even if this is the case, one is still led to puzzle then over the reports of failure which are still included as we shall note below. Moving from the historical critical level to a more narrative level, pagan temples of the sort we find in *VA*'s narrative world operate more as "businesses", one dispenser of religious goods among others within a larger community. The synagogue of Acts, on the other hand, would view themselves as a "community", a group unified by a particular worldview. Furthermore Greco-Roman polytheism rooted in cultic praxis of the sort we find in *VA* allows a somewhat more diverse range of possibilities than would the Jewish monotheism of Acts rooted in ideological correctness,<sup>102</sup> especially as the latter had a minority status in which preserving identity was of critical concern. Perhaps too, in the competitive world of Greco-Roman religion, the legitimacy of the local cult itself is at stake, and an outside, well-known holy man could offer a sort of unbiased credible testimonial.<sup>103</sup> The narrator claims that among the various sources he drew on for his portrait of Apollonius were accounts given by "the temples whose-long neglected and decayed rites he restored" (1.2 Loeb).<sup>104</sup> This would suggest that Apollonius' presence was a boon to temples in need of some sort of revitalization (in the form of returning to the most antique rites) to spark new interest in them, or at the very least, these temples found it advantageous to pass on the memory of Apollonius' reforming presence among them.<sup>105</sup> Of course,

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<sup>101</sup>Petzke makes the observation that Apollonius' harshest anti-temple rhetoric is to be found in his letters (*Epistles* 65) suggesting perhaps a slightly more antagonistic relationship between holy man and temple than is portrayed in *VA* (208). This evidence stands even if, as Bowie suggests, the letter is a fiction, as it would then contain a popular memory of a holy man somewhat toned down in the biography ("Apollonius," 1691).

<sup>102</sup>Bowersock, *Fiction*, 121-122. Martin P. Nilsson, *Greek Piety*, trans. H. J. Rose (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 1969 [from 1948 Swedish edition]), 1-19. Walter Burkert, *Greek Religion*, trans. J. Raffan (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1985; German original 1977), 248-249.

<sup>103</sup>Curiously in Lebadea the concern seems that the local shrine will not get a stamp of approval by Apollonius and this seems to be the motivation for shunning him (8.19).

<sup>104</sup>Given that established shrines counted on "the reputation of antiquity...[to] draw visitors" (Potter, 13), it is not surprising that Apollonius' "innovations" were cast as nothing of the sort but rather a return to the truly "antique" rites themselves.

<sup>105</sup>For a fascinating example of a *modern* author defending Apollonius' cultic reformational activities on the grounds that he is returning them to their authentic and truly spiritual ancient roots see Mead, 93-94.

Apollonius does not always meet with success either and it is to his failure to find acceptance in the local religious establishment that we now turn.

### 3. Rejection

There are cases in *VA* in which the report of Apollonius' attempt to reform local cults are "one-sided." That is, Apollonius' opinion on the need for reform is cited, but the actual response on the part of the local priesthood is not. The silence in some cases is more than suspicious. In Antioch, for instance, Apollonius does spend his time in various temples and for the most part offers a good deal of unsolicited advice to the local priests on their various rites (1.16). Near the end of the account Apollonius is portrayed as holding conversations on the gods after morning prayers, but here it is clearly his companions who circle about him eager for his wisdom (1.16). Furthermore, there is an unmitigated criticism levelled against the people of Antioch and a detractor's comment is also cited (1.16-17). At the end of the account, the narrator suggests that it was many of the most common folk (ἀμουσοτάτος) who were converted (1.17). Are we to assume from this that, in fact, the priests of the various temples were less than receptive to Apollonius' advice on their sacred rites? As it turns out, even his seven close followers are ultimately abandoned before he travels on to Nineveh (1.18). The timing of this particular incident may, in that case, be noteworthy as it occurs early in the career of Apollonius and well before he travels to India and Egypt. Is this a case of an intermediary without the necessary reputation to succeed in these reformation activities?

Likewise, when Apollonius travels to Nineveh his apparently "superior" understanding of the local images is not reported as meeting with any acceptance from the local priests and prophets. When Damis attaches himself to Apollonius, he is eager to leave town (1.19). Nothing suggests any success at reforming local religious institutions. By not registering their response directly, but simply narrating Apollonius' corrective, the narrator may well be suggesting that the local priesthood was less than excited by Apollonius' announcement of cultic reform.

In Egypt the negative response on the part of the priesthood is in fact recorded.

Despite the overwhelmingly positive response of the populace of Upper Egypt to Apollonius, whose reputation went before him, and the open invitation to visit their "customary places" (φοιτῆσαι αὐτὸν ἐς τὰ ἤθη τὰ αὐτῶν ἠύχοντο [5.24]), at least one priest takes offence at Apollonius' presumption to correct his sacrificial rites. The priest in this case is indignant that Apollonius would think to alter *Egyptian* rites (5.25). The Loeb translation reads that Apollonius "rebuked and silenced the Egyptian, showing that he was ignorant of religion" (5.26). The Greek text, however, simply suggests that Apollonius reproved (ἐπικόπτω) the Egyptian, and, *in the narrator's opinion* demonstrated his ignorance in divine matters.<sup>106</sup> Whether he was successful in converting or even silencing the man is another matter.

In Ephesus, Apollonius meets with marked indifference and dismissal. As a plague approaches Ephesus, Apollonius speaks in a menacing fashion against it and constantly visits local temples trying to avert it. His hearers, however, dismiss his words as nothing more than τεραταλογία<sup>107</sup> and pay no attention (προσέχω)<sup>108</sup> to him (4.4). Clearly one possible response to a claim of divine foresight accompanied by words and actions designed to avert the still invisible threat was to dismiss it all as the ranting of an attention-seeker. The intermediary was neither miracle-worker nor magician in this case but simply a harmless teller (and enactor) of tall tales. When actual disaster strikes, both the Ephesians and other cities were rather more prepared to seriously entertain these "rantings" (4.10, 6.41).

Apollonius also meets with outright rejection from the priest overseeing the Eleusinian mysteries (4.18). The priest charges that Apollonius is a γόης and "a man unclean with respect to realm of the divine" (ἀνθρώπῳ μὴ καθαρῷ τὰ

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<sup>106</sup>Τούτοις ἐπέκοπτε τὸν Αἰγύπτιον ὡς ἀμαθῆ τῶν θείων.

<sup>107</sup>This is clearly a derogatory term in *VA* is clear from its use in the contexts of 3.32, 5.13 and 6.11.

<sup>108</sup>While not a "technical term" per se, this work is used to describe the attentive and spell-bound audience of the intermediary in Acts (Acts 8:6, 8:10-11, 16:14). Note also 5.18 where Apollonius suggests a change of ship and προσέχοντος...οὐδενὸς τῷ λόγῳ πλήν γιγνωσκόντων τὸν ἄνδρα with the result that those who failed to pay attention to him end up in a sinking ship while his companions arrive at their destination safely.

δαιμόνια).<sup>109</sup> The Eleusinian hierophant clearly has labelled Apollonius on the negative end of the spectrum of intermediaries.<sup>110</sup> One man's miracle-worker is another's magician. But the more fascinating question is why this is the case here, since other priestly figures in *VA* do not hold the hierophant's opinion. Indeed the hierophant's successor does not regard Apollonius as a magician and initiates Apollonius into the mysteries (5.19). The narrator does not explicate the motives of the hierophant, only counters his charges. However, the narrative itself offers some interesting possibilities in terms of motivation (beyond the priest simply having an inexplicable personal dislike for Apollonius).

When Apollonius arrives in Athens, he is mobbed by the Eleusinian initiates. The narrator reports that they were neglecting the mystery, finding it more preferable to spend time with Apollonius than returning home perfected (from the Eleusinian rites)(4.18). It is only when Apollonius finally urges them on and declares he will join them that they carry on to the temple. However, at this point the hierophant declares he will not initiate Apollonius, declaring he is a magician and impure. Apollonius responds that the hierophant should not initiate him because he, Apollonius that is, knows more about the rites than the hierophant.<sup>111</sup> The relationship between

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<sup>109</sup> Mead's reading of this sentence, that the hierophant "refused to admit our philosopher on the ground that...no one could be initiated who was tainted by intercourse with evil entities (δαιμόνια)" is appealing on the grounds that it would offer an equivalent to the sort of magic accusations levelled in the Luke 11:15 and offer a demonology which would have echoes in Luke 4:14's πνεῦμα δαιμονίου ἀκαθάρτου. However, μὴ καθαρῶ is clearly modifying ἀνθρώπῳ while τὰ δαιμόνια offers a good deal of additional difficulties. First, it is not clear whether it is the accusative plural of δαιμόνιον ("inferior divine being; demon") or δαιμόνιος ("of or belonging to a δαίμων") which is being used here. Second, even if one chooses one or the other, δαίμων in *VA*, unlike the gospels and Acts, is typically a generic term for divine beings which can be either good (e.g., 1.18) or evil (e.g., 4.20). In the end we are following the drift of the Loeb translation ("a man who dabbled in impure rites") except that we are specifying that it is the man who is impure and we are leaving τὰ δαιμόνια as general as possible. Having done so one now hears echoes of the charge given at the Eleusinian mysteries that those who "are not of pure hands and speak an incomprehensible tongue" should be excluded (M. C. Howatson and I. Chilvers, ed., *Oxford Companion to Classical Literature* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), 360; Burkert, *Greek Religion*, 286-287).

<sup>110</sup> Bieler, vol. 1, 84.

<sup>111</sup> The suggestion by G. M. Lee that this response demonstrates that Apollonius knew Jesus' response to John the Baptist as per Matt 3:14-15 borders on ridiculous, and any other useful parallels between the texts disintegrate since the relationship between Apollonius and the hierophant and Jesus and John the Baptist are diametrically opposed ("Had Apollonius of Tyana read St. Mark?" in *Symbolae Osloenses* 48 [1973]: 115-116).

Apollonius and the hierophant is clearly one of competition. Apollonius is simply more popular than the rites and his presence is an unwelcome distraction. Negatively put, the hierophant is jealous and indignant at the both the distraction and the suggestion that Apollonius' mediation of divine power is somehow superior to what he has on offer. Furthermore, as hierophant of one of the best attended mysteries in Athens, he hardly needed the legitimation of a wandering holy man from Tyana, however popular. When the crowd of gathered initiates clearly disapprove of his exclusion of the popular holy man from Tyana, he is forced to retreat from his stand and renders a new judgment on Apollonius' character.<sup>112</sup> The dynamics of competition and the need for a cult to be sensitive (and even take advantage of) popular opinion concerning wandering holy men is clearly displayed by this incident.

One might well conclude that other long standing temple cults of Antioch, Nineveh, and Alexandria, like the Eluesinian mystery cult, did not feel the need for approval from a wandering intermediary. The rather more eclectic Asclepiions seemed more capable of accommodating an intermediary like Apollonius as the rites varied greatly from one individual to the next. Indeed, highly individual rituals were are key component in the cult. Perhaps one could *tentatively* propose that local temples with a long-standing and well-known formal tradition would be less likely to respond favourably to a reforming intermediary like Apollonius than temples which were less well known or had a more informal ritual tradition (like the Asclepiions). Obviously one would need studies beyond the evidence offered within the narrative world of *VA* for this to become a working hypothesis.

There is one further case of rejection which suggests that we are on the right track in terms of the relationships that could exist between travelling intermediary and a local religious institution. When Apollonius travels with an entourage to Lebadea to visit the cavern which offered oracles from Trophonius, he is refused entry (1.19). They inform the crowds (which came with Apollonius?) that they will never permit a

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<sup>112</sup>The narrative clearly indicates that it is the public discontent over his decision which provokes the hierophant's new opinion on Apollonius as a sage rather than a magician (4.18).



γόης like Apollonius to critically examine (ἐλέγχω) their oracle. However, they attempt to dissuade Apollonius privately by informing him that the oracles are actually given by unmentionable and unclean women (ἀποφράδας καὶ οὐ καθαρὰς).

What game are the Lebadean priests playing at? What do they hope to accomplish by this strategy?

First, they announce to the masses that they believe Apollonius to be a magician who will not be allowed to enter their oracle for the purpose of denigrating it. Second, they privately tell Apollonius that their oracle is a fraud. It seems likely that the strategy (assuming there is one) is to get Apollonius to repeat their apparent "confession" and thus trick him into playing the role of γόης as detractor of the local shrine, an accusation they have already planted with the crowds. A wandering intermediary, therefore, is expected to critique (or as we have seen critique while endorsing) the local established religious institution. However, in doing so, the intermediary might well fall into the category of γόης if the local established institution rejects him entirely.<sup>113</sup> All is not always well with the temple/holy man relationship when there are competing interests at stake. The Lebadean oracle, like the Eleusinian mysteries, is well enough established in local popular tradition and religion not to need the endorsement of the man from Tyana<sup>114</sup>—but then it seems it does not wish to have him critique its method of operation either.<sup>115</sup> If we are correct that the γόης is critic of the local shrine, then it is not without consequence that this is exactly what Apollonius is narrated as *not doing in this very case*. That is, rather than critique the oracle Apollonius spends the day recounting its origins and character and thus Apollonius is being portrayed as *not fulfilling* this cultural script of γόης as detractor.

Apollonius enters the oracle secretly by night and at this stage the priests are

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<sup>113</sup>Apollonius' later defence that he is not a γόης because he discoursed publicly in temples does suggest that the cultural expectation is that illegitimate intermediaries and temples do not mix (8.7.2).

<sup>114</sup>Curiously, the Lebadean oracle claimed a visit by an ancient Pythagorean named Parmiscus (Burkert, *Lore and Science*, 154).

<sup>115</sup>Indeed, David Potter working from Pausanias description of a Lebadean consultation argues the entire structure of rites was designed to only allow those who were likely to offer a very positive report to enter the oracle (43-45; Pausanias *Descriptions of Greece* 9.39.1-9.40.1)

recipients of a vision from Trophonius which changes their attitude to Apollonius entirely. It is, of course, unfair to the narrative and the priests themselves to suggest that their radical shift in policy is forced by Apollonius' positive appraisal of the oracle and his entry against their wishes, but certainly they have everything to gain in this new stance. In the next chapter it seems the people of Lebadea certainly have kept the story of Apollonius' entry into the oracle alive and well and one can only imagine its value as propaganda for the shrine (8.20). Both parties in the end make positive gains. Apollonius has a stamp of approval from Trophonius himself for his Pythagorean philosophy (8.19) while the shrine had a well known testimonial which will serve them well (8.20).

In addition to issues of rivalry for power, Flinterman suggests that Apollonius' disapproval of animal sacrifices may also be an element in priestly rejection of the sage. As with the Jewish preaching intermediaries of Acts who push the boundaries of the established religious framework to far for the likes of some, so Apollonius' cultic reform measures were simply too radical. That Apollonius was noted for his emphasis on bloodless sacrifice is well documented in the narrative<sup>116</sup> and it is noteworthy that his insistence on bloodless sacrifice was part of his admonition of the Egyptian priest mentioned above (5.25). Given that "the community was dependent on [sacrifices of meat and wine by the urban elites] not only for its material prosperity, but also for the maintenance of a harmonious relation with the gods," it is hardly surprising that priests in major community shrines would not appreciate Apollonius' message. Flinterman rightly concludes that "to condemn sacrifices was thus more than an expression of religious non-conformism: it was an attack on a practice which played a key role in the legitimation of the social and political order."<sup>117</sup> On the other hand, the narrative also attests an Apollonius who is willing to hold a double standard of an ideal pattern of behaviour for himself, and conceding less than ideal forms of behaviour, including

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<sup>116</sup>On Pythagorean philosophy which he adhered to not allowing him to sacrifice animals see 1.1, 8.7.4, 8.7.10, 8.7.12. On his promoting sacrifice reform of some sort (presumably bloodless sacrifices would be the only legitimate ones) see 3.41, 4.40, 4.19.

<sup>117</sup>Flinterman, 62.

blood sacrifice for others (1.31).<sup>118</sup> The possibility of Apollonius' message, not just the messenger, as subverting existing power structures is interesting and plausible, but conclusive evidence is hard to find in the narrative itself.

#### **4. Conclusion**

The model of "temple versus holy man" model clearly needs some adjustment as it applies to the narrative world of *VA*. As we noted with Acts, the intermediaries with their "outsider" power seek legitimacy within the structures of traditional religious ideology and by locating themselves physically within established religious cults and communities. While they are clearly in a boundary-stretching or reforming role, those who ultimately approve of the intermediary as a miracle-worker rather than a magician, are those who implicitly accept that they are legitimately within the framework of established religious institutions. As with Acts, in many cases there are individuals associated with the established religious cults and communities who may have something to gain through the intermediary's activities. In *VA* this frequently comes in the form of a renewed popularity in the temple frequented or visited by Apollonius. However, established religious cults and communities may also reject the intermediary, and in the case of two very well known and established cult sites, the priestly authorities label the intermediary as a magician. Perhaps too there are cases in which the religious innovations preached by the intermediary are simply too disruptive to find broad acceptance. The intersection of intermediary and established religious cult or community is thus a quest for legitimacy which may or may not work out in the intermediary's favour. In *VA* it frequently works in Apollonius' favour, in Acts the reverse predominates.

#### **B. Intermediaries Within Their Own Community**

In our investigation of intermediaries and their relationship to the communities which spring up around them in Acts we made two key observations. First, intermediaries, at least the positive ones, frequently were accompanied by traveling

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<sup>118</sup>It is also possible that among the rites he declines to alter in any way in Cnidus would be blood sacrifices (6.40). His lack of complete dogmatism on the matter for non-Pythagoreans is also demonstrated by his willingness to live in a shrine in which animals sacrifices are performed (1.10).

companions whose constant presence facilitated and enhanced the functioning of the intermediary. That is, they represented and protected the intermediary and so enhanced the detached quality of the intermediary. The second key observation was that as local communities formed around intermediaries like Peter and Paul, the charismatic authority of the intermediary rapidly became replaced by a more formal local leadership, and the intermediaries themselves soon lived in the same insider/outsider tension with these as with other religious institutions (such as synagogues).

When we investigate these sorts of "community" dynamics in *VA*, we are immediately faced with the fact that the intermediaries of *VA* do not for the most part have the sort of new local communities form around them the way they do in Acts. Any points of similarity in that regard will, therefore, be minimal. What is obvious, however, from the text of *VA* is that the entourage functions in a surprisingly similar fashion in both texts. *VA* will also make explicit some of the features which we suggested for the Acts' travelling companions but could not fully demonstrate from the text, such as functioning as promoters of an otherwise public relations shy intermediary.

### **1. Traveling Companions**

Apollonius' world travels begin in Antioch and it is here we find the first reference to a group of "companions" (ὁμιλητής or ἑταῖρος [1.16]). His first "attempt" at creating an entourage fails rather badly. When he wishes to move on to Babylon and beyond, they all advise him against it and he cheerfully and congenially abandons them (1.18). His next stop in Nineveh turns out to be more successful in this regard as it is here that he picks up his most faithful life-long travelling companion, Damis (1.19).<sup>119</sup> One could be forgiven assuming Apollonius' travelling party to India is merely a twosome given that Damis is the only dialogue partner for Apollonius for

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<sup>119</sup>While Anderson is suspicious of the historical validity of Damis, he will suggest (as we do) that "the data are at least valid in showing the sort of qualities a close associate of a sage might be conceived as likely to possess" (*Sage*, 115).

most of this trip.<sup>120</sup> However, if one pays slightly more attention to the text, a larger group of companions lurks in the shadowy background, referred to on occasion even if never given a voice in the narrative (not entirely unlike travelling companions in Acts).<sup>121</sup>

In Babylon, the first significant stop after Nineveh, we are told that Damis *and the companions* all follow Apollonius' lead in refusing monetary gifts from the King (1.40). Later, it is a plural number of attendants (τοὺς ὄπαδούς) to whom Apollonius concedes wine-drinking as abstinence has not particularly profited them (2.7). "Damis and his companions" (οἱ ἀμφὶ τὸν Δάμιν) accept gems from King Phraotes to sacrifice later in Attica while Apollonius' followers or attendants (ὄπαδούς ἀνδρὸς θείου) are commended by the King to the Brahmans (2.40). Subsequently in the narrative the entourage is slightly more obvious with additional names and occasional numbers of companions being cited (4.11, 4.37, 5.43). While it is fascinating to track the ebb and flow of this background group, more useful for our study is the relationship of entourage to intermediary and the role they play for him.

The relationship of Apollonius to his entourage is, perhaps, exactly what one would expect between philosopher/teacher and student.<sup>122</sup> The student is permitted questions and sometimes offered explanations and answers, but for the most part it is a gentle dictatorship in which the followers voluntarily submit to Apollonius' instructions.<sup>123</sup> When Apollonius, without a word, leaps across to a passing ship, they

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<sup>120</sup>Indeed I assumed this on my first reading of the story.

<sup>121</sup>The nearly constant accompaniment of a travelling entourage would seem to undermine Shiner's suggestion that Apollonius embodies "the ideal of the wise man as a lone hero rather than a member of a community" (125). Apollonius may not have a *localized* community, but a constant travelling community of students does exist.

<sup>122</sup>On ancient Hellenistic education generally see H. I. Marrou (*A History of Education in Antiquity*, trans. G. Lamb [London: Sheed & Ward, 1956]) and L. C. A. Alexander ("Schools, Hellenistic," in *ABD*, vol. 5, 1005-1010).

<sup>123</sup>V. K. Robbins offers an interesting analysis of the Apollonius-Damis relationship in which he suggests a progressive development in the teacher-student relationship (*Jesus the Teacher: A Socio-Rhetorical Interpretation of Mark* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1984; Paperback edition, 1992), 147-155). Robbins is correct in citing some form of progress in Damis relationship with Apollonius (e.g., 7.38) even if the evidence will not bear the weight of his four stage structure. After all, Damis begins with awe and a not fully comprehending willingness to follow Apollonius and ends with this as well (1.19; 7.38; 8.28). Knoles, however, rightly points out the warmth of the friendship between Apollonius and Damis as portrayed by the narrator and highlights this rather different from

all follow "for it was an essential part of their philosophical discipline to imitate his every word and action" (5.21, Loeb). Furthermore, Apollonius holds the right to summarily dismiss a disciple as he does with Antisthenes who, apparently, is objectionable to Achilles because of his Trojan ancestry and his constant praise of Hector (4.12). Antisthenes departs immediately, although "against his will" (ἄκων)(4.13). The voluntary nature of the relationship is not lost on either Apollonius or his companions. They have chosen to attach themselves to Apollonius and if they depart, Apollonius bids them farewell rather cheerfully (1.18, 4.17, 4.37, 5.43, 6.12).<sup>124</sup>

Apollonius refers to the companions *and their slaves* as his κοινός, which offers up all sorts of interesting possibilities in terms of neo-Pythagorean "schools" which may or may not have imitated the legendary Pythagorean philosophical commune (4.34).<sup>125</sup> Later, the narrator describes the river boats carrying Apollonius and his entourage across the Nile to see the various sites as a θεωρίς, a sacred ship carrying the θεωροί, the religious spectators, ambassadors, or pilgrims (5.43). The overall impression is of a mobile philosophical or religious school.<sup>126</sup>

The function of Apollonius' entourage (in terms of the intermediary at the

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the Gospel accounts of the master-disciple relationship (149-155). The same could be said of *VA* and Acts.

<sup>124</sup>In this regard it is worth noting that Paul and Barnabas have very different ideas about the significance of one of their attendants' "departures" when they argue about taking John Mark on a subsequent journey (Acts 15:37-39). Shiner suggests the failure of his followers in difficult times is a literary theme which enhances Apollonius' own courage (133) and later comments that the reader of *VA* is can remain unconcerned about the fickle nature of the servants because "the readers of the *Life of Apollonius* are not expected to have the same intense commitment to Apollonius that the Christian readers of Mark have to Jesus" (135).

<sup>125</sup>Aulus Gellius *Attic Nights* 1.9. Meeks, 83. Alexander, "Schools," 1007-1008.

<sup>126</sup>Talbert's observation that "a philosophical school in antiquity was often a religious community," and Hadas and Smith's comment that "the later schools of philosophy were all organized as cults, with the teacher as the responsible leader" suggest strongly that our treating Apollonius' philosophical "school" as religious community as well is hardly inappropriate (Talbert, "Biographies," 1646; M. Hadas and M. Smith, *Heroes and Gods*, 44). See also Anderson, *Philostratus*, 125. Particularly interesting in any comparative work such as this thesis is L. C. A. Alexander's suggestion that the overlap between early Christian community and philosophical school can be explored both in noting how the Christian community had characteristics of the school but also in noting how *the school had characteristics of a religious community* ("Paul and the Hellenistic Schools: The Evidence of Galen," in *Paul in His Hellenistic Context*, ed. E. Pedersen [Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1994], 60-83).

center) is quite similar to that of the companions of the apostles in Acts. His companions are his trusted couriers when he is afraid of his letters betraying his friends in high places (7.8). The companions can also be left at a particular locale to carry on the task initiated by the intermediary or to represent the intermediary. Apollonius decides to leave Menippus behind to watch his rival Euphrates (5.43). This particular task is interesting as we are later told that the task of disputing with Euphrates is handled entirely by his students while he engages in the task of philosophical training of his disciples (6.28).<sup>127</sup> This would suggest that the intermediary's entourage plays a particular role which allows the intermediary to carry out their existence in a manner that appears aloof and uninterested in matters of personal ambition or material well-being.<sup>128</sup> That is, Apollonius does not personally have to answer the claims of his rivals because his companions do. In Egypt it is Damis and Timasion who take it upon themselves to get to the bottom of the poor reception offered Apollonius by the Gymnosophists (6.9). Apollonius can thus appear to be "uninterested" in his own reputation. In a round about manner, Apollonius himself does this when he defends the Brahmans rather than himself before the Gymnosophists.<sup>129</sup>

So too, one suspects that the entourage plays the role of promoter for the intermediary who cannot appear to be self-promoting. His traveling companions are, after all, often the only witnesses of his miracles of prescience and presumably those

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<sup>127</sup>W. T. Shiner's suggests that 6.28 is problematic logically with its suggestion that Apollonius leaves disputing with Euphrates to Menippus and Nilus since he is too busy training Nilus to carry on the disputes himself. She concludes, "Unfortunately this leaves Apollonius instructing Nilus [and] one suspects this is the point in Moreagenes' narrative where Apollonius defeated Euphrates by magic and that Philostratus, in his eagerness to deny the account, has not bothered with the niceties of logic" (*Follow Me! Disciples in Markan Rhetoric* [Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1995]), 112). However, the logical problem is eliminated by the fact that two different students are dealing with Euphrates (i.e., Menippus engages Euphrates as Nilus studies at Apollonius' feet) and when one eliminates the causal link to the final clause (i.e., while Apollonius busies himself with Nilus' training, there is no hint that this is the reason for not engaging Euphrates). As for the deleted account of a magical duel with Euphrates, that remains only a fascinating but completely unsubstantiated bit of speculation.

<sup>128</sup>The sentiments found in *Epistles of Apollonius* (10) suggests that discoursing with single students rather than large public lectures (clearly the typical setting in which one would denounce a rival) is seen as a clear indicator that one is not seeking personal glory in discoursing (δόξης ἥρωων ὦν).

<sup>129</sup>In his own words: "Well, in defence of myself I do not mean to say anything, for I am content to be what the Indians think me; but I will not allow them to be attacked" (6.11).

who relate these accounts to the larger public (6.3).<sup>130</sup>

Likewise, Apollonius can often maintain an indifference to material needs on account of the fact that his followers ensure adequate provisions. When Apollonius is asked whether he requires fresh camels for his journey by King Phraotes, he remains silent, but Damis speaks up and reveals the dreadful condition of their camels. Damis suggests that Apollonius is blissfully unaware of their real travelling needs (2.40). The intermediary is thus allowed indifference to material matters even as these are provided by the diligent entourage.

One can note a very similar phenomenon with the intermediary's self-abandonment in the face of life-threatening danger. As in Acts, in *VA* we are told that the followers of the intermediary attempt to dissuade the intermediary from a dangerous course of action. The effect of this is two-fold. First, the intermediary can appear to be bold without actually following through with the life-threatening course of action. Or, the intermediary can follow through with the intended course of action and appear even more bold to have done so despite the cries of his entourage (4.11). In 1.33 one has a delightful combination of both material needs and personal safety taken care of by the entourage. When Apollonius is offered ten gifts by the King of Babylon, Damis is genuinely concerned that Apollonius will refuse to accept the gifts given Apollonius' *τρόπος* and his regular prayer that he would have little and want nothing (1.33). Damis attempts to persuade Apollonius to accept the gifts both to prevent affronting the King in whose power they remain under (personal safety) and because they need provisions to carry on their journey (material needs)(1.33). Apollonius initially refuses but in the end does partially accept both gifts and provisions for the journey without compromising his non-greedy character (1.35, 1.40).

## 2. Local Communities

As we suggested above, since Apollonius does not found local communities in the same way the Apostles of Acts do, the observations and comparisons in this case

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<sup>130</sup>Indeed, "Damis" and "Luke" are "followers" who even as "sources" or "narrators" continue the task of promoting their philosopher/intermediary.



are rather limited. The Brahman and Gymnosophists would be examples of intermediaries with a small local community around them.<sup>131</sup> However, as we have already suggested, since these two groups actually inhabit a "nowhere land" geographically, really they are more akin to the intermediaries with an entourage who shift from one location to the next. The intermediary-entourage pattern of relationship with the intermediary holding absolute sway but the followers capable of leaving whenever they choose is evident among the Gymnosophists as well. Apollonius treads rather lightly when "stealing" a student, Nilus, from the Gymnosophists, respecting Thespasion's authority over the young man, but also accepting Nilus' right to voluntarily associate with himself rather than the Gymnosophists (6.14-17, 22).<sup>132</sup>

Like Paul, Apollonius does spend extended periods of time in one place, teaching and training those who would buy into his particular philosophical outlook. The two years spent in Greece with a group of students from Ionia and local youth does nearly form a sort of "local community" of the sort one finds the legitimate intermediaries of Acts forming (8.21, Acts 19:9-10). However, when the two years are up, the narrative suggests that this group (or at least some portion of it) travels with him back to Ionia (8.24). Again, this group functions more as an entourage gathered around the intermediary than a self-sustained local community.<sup>133</sup> It is only after the sage's death that one has a hint of a local community that carries on in his name (8.31).<sup>134</sup> The pattern in Acts, then, of the legitimate intermediary establishing local communities in which they at first exercise authority but later find themselves subject to more formalized leadership in those same communities is not a pattern one finds in *VA*.

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<sup>131</sup>Shiner, 121.

<sup>132</sup>Shiner suggests that the presence of Nilus as well as and Mennipus, ex-pupil of Apollonius' well known companion Demetrius (4.25), and Demetrius himself among Apollonius followers is designed to cast Apollonius in the role of "star professor" in the competition for "the best students...in the philosophical and rhetorical schools contemporary with Philostratus" (119). If so, Apollonius is a rather modest thief of students with no overt desire to gain a large following.

<sup>133</sup>Shiner contrasts the highly structured Pythagorean school with the complete lack of any apparent structure among Apollonius' students (124).

<sup>134</sup>But note the opposite opinion of Shiner, 120.

### C. Crossing Paths with Political Authorities

Pliny describes first century Romans, including Caesar himself, as "being always on the look-out for something big, something adequate to move a god, or rather to impose its will on his divinity".<sup>135</sup> If Pliny is accurate, one should hardly be surprised with the constant interest both for good and ill shown a powerful intermediary like Apollonius. Anderson's observation that a holy man with access to divine knowledge and power served the security interests of political leaders in the dangerous waters of political ambition holds absolutely true in *VA*.<sup>136</sup> David Potter's research particularly points to prescience or divining fate as the key service these men offered ambitious political figures—and, indeed, this is Apollonius' specialty.<sup>137</sup> Of course, here too we find the constant social tensions within which the intermediary must operate. On the one hand the intermediary is the outsider who can offer apparently disinterested neutral advice from the gods themselves. On the other, the intermediary as soon as he crosses paths with political figures, be it on good or bad terms, becomes part of the constant play for power itself and the intermediary's access to divine knowledge and power is something to be feared or used.

There are rather clear differences between the intermediaries in Acts and *VA* with respect to political authorities, and this is perhaps demonstrated by the absence of the heading of "Disinterest" below as it appeared in our discussion of political authorities in Acts. While in Acts the sphere of power and influence in which the intermediaries moved and operated fell outside the interests of certain political authorities, in *VA* this is never the case.<sup>138</sup> Indeed what we shall discover is that what

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<sup>135</sup>Pliny *Natural History* 28.4. See further examples of emperors' interaction with prophets and holy men in Potter, 16-17.

<sup>136</sup>Anderson, *Sage*, 153-157.

<sup>137</sup>On both the emperors' use of and fear of divination see Potter, 146-182.

<sup>138</sup>For an excellent study on the extent to which the interaction between Apollonius and the Roman emperors both in terms of "philosopher versus monarch" and "philosopher as royal counselor" is Philostratean invention can be found in Flinterman, 129-230. Using *Lives of the Sophists* as a gauge of Philostratus' mindset on matters political, Flinterman concludes both elements have their source in Neo-Pythagorean texts (the pseudepigraphic Damis source in his construal), traditional Greek writings, and "historiographical and politico-biographical literature on the emperors from the first century" (236-239). While this does not bode well for the historicity of the interaction between

is implicit in the relationship between intermediaries and political authorities in the narrative of Acts, becomes explicit in the narrative of *VA*. We begin first, then, with the positive interactions between intermediaries and political authorities.

### 1. Interest

*VA* provides offers two key suggestions as to why political authorities take a positive interest in the words and deeds of intermediaries.<sup>139</sup> First, intermediaries who gain power in the fashion as we described above—that is, demonstrating connection to the divine without apparent personal ambition, indeed overtly denying personal ambition—are the consummate outsiders who will offer honest advice to political authorities. That is, an ascetic holy man has, as it were, nothing to lose nor any overt desire to make gains.<sup>140</sup> This allows an extraordinary level of honesty and frankness from the intermediary which was, no doubt, utterly lacking among those who typically surrounded the ambitious political figure. When Apollonius arrives in Babylon, it is his unwillingness to kiss the golden image of the king which draws attention to himself. However, following his explanation of his actions, he is hailed as a "good man" whose presence as a royal advisor will improve their king, despite (or perhaps because of) his ongoing refusal to pay homage to the image of the king (1.27-28). Indeed as it turns out Apollonius does end up serving as short-term advisor to the king of Babylon and, although polite, is consistently frank and honest with the king (1.27-1.40). Later in

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Apollonius and the emperors, it does suggest that the portrait painted by Philostratus is not an exclusively *third century* portrayal of interaction between emperor and intermediary.

<sup>139</sup>Again, whether or not Bowie is correct in writing off all contact between Apollonius and the Roman Emperors as pure fiction invented by Philostratus ("Apollonius," 1660, 1690), the portrayal of the social dynamics that would be involved in a relationship between intermediary and ruler stand on its own. There is enough evidence of other holy men who come in contact with Imperial rulers that suggest the notion of some relationship between a Emperor and a intermediary is not simply one found in fictional literature (Josephus *Ant.* 8.46, *War* 3.399-408, 4.622-629; *PGM* 4.244-255, 4.2446-2455; Suetonius *Lives of the Caesars* 8.5.1-7; Tacitus *Histories* 2.78; Dio Cassius *Roman History* 55.31.2-3, 67.16). As Anderson states, "we need a more flexible view of historical 'importance' itself than is usually applied to relations between religious figures and Imperial officials: there was room for soothsayers in the rise and fall of the Flavians" (*Philostratus*, 191).

<sup>140</sup>Billault lays out a convincing analysis of Apollonius' relationship with the Roman emperors along these lines in "Un sage," 23-32. Billault suggests that Philostratus consistently portrays Apollonius as fulfilling the philosophic ideal of being ruled only by the gods and not by the emperors and thus there is a consistency which underlies his stingy praise, his disregard, and his bold opposition to the various emperors in *VA*.

India Apollonius' polite yet bold disputation with an obnoxious king visiting the Brahmans lands him an unwelcome invitation to join the king's court for a while (3.31-33).

We have already covered the many cases of "boldness" before political authorities which demonstrate Apollonius' detachment from the power games these rulers play. The narrator himself suggests that the "true touchstone of men who philosophize" is observed in their conduct under despotism (7.1).<sup>141</sup> However, the narrative also explicitly ties this bold "detachment" to the intermediary's effectiveness as a political advisor. Apollonius declares his "outsider" status before Vespasian when he states, "Civic governments are of no concern to me, for I live under the gods" (ἔμοι πολιτείας μὲν οὐδεμιᾶς μέλει, ζῶ γὰρ ὑπὸ τοῖς θεοῖς [5.35]).<sup>142</sup> When Titus asks Apollonius for advice, Apollonius assigns his former companion, Demetrius the Cynic, as Titus' lifelong advisor.<sup>143</sup> When Titus queries Demetrius' wisdom, Apollonius replies that it is "bold speech [παρρησία] and the truth and to be driven by no one, for it is the power of the Cynic" (6.31). Apollonius states that Demetrius will be *the dog* who barks not only at Titus' opponents when they do wrong, but will bark at Titus himself when he goes astray (6.31). Clearly societal detachment which led to παρρησία was part of the attraction intermediaries held for political authorities.

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<sup>141</sup>Apollonius himself considers this a βᾶσανος as well and is quite happy when fear of opposition in Rome reduces his companions from a party of 34 to a party of 8 (4.37). See also Baillault ("Un sage," 27-28) and Anderson (*Sage*, 157).

<sup>142</sup>Ironically, in what follows Apollonius demonstrates his deep involvement in the affairs of human governance, including deposing Nero, despite his apparent lack of interest in this area. This does not undermine our point so much as point to the ambiguities and tensions within which intermediaries operate. Baillault also notes the ambiguity surrounding Apollonius' relationship to Nero generally ("Un sage," 25-27).

<sup>143</sup>Bowie suggests that a relationship between Apollonius the possible Pythagorean and Demetrius the Cynic is not in the least historically plausible in the first century ("Apollonius," 1657-1659), but a later picture invented by Philostratus in the third century when the Pythagorean "Apollonius and the Stoic Musonius [and the] Cynic Demetrius...are simply prominent figures in the philosophical tradition, not representatives of rival schools" ("Apollonius," 1674). Bowie suggests an "implacable hostility of Cynics to the [Flavian] régime" and notes Demetrius' banishment in the year Apollonius supposedly introduced him to Titus (1659). However, the narrative of *VA* itself suggests Demetrius' angry *barking* may well be too much for the Emperor, since Apollonius suggests leaving his anger behind in his advisory role to Titus (6.33). Historical or not, Demetrius of the narrative is perhaps closer to Demetrius of other sources than Bowie will allow (see MacMullen, *Enemies*, 61-62).

However, as important as an honest voice was in the midst of fawning courtiers, it is primarily the second feature of intermediaries which created interest for ambitious political authorities—knowledge of will of the gods and fate. An intermediary like Apollonius had a reputation for being able to interpret portents and foresee what lay ahead. As we shall see below, it is this feature which most attracts the politically ambitious to the intermediary.

If these are the two primary reason that political authorities were attracted to the intermediaries, one can further categorize the nature of the relationship between intermediary and ruler into two broad types. First, there are those who take an interest in Apollonius out of a sort of philosophical curiosity or perhaps even as a diversion. This would characterize the relationships he builds with kings in his Eastern travels earlier in his career. Earlier we noted Anderson's aptly description of "the convergence of leisure, curiosity and security" which exposed political leaders to "the advice of holy men, soothsayers, or the like."<sup>144</sup> Leisure and philosophical curiosity seem to have initially motivated the friendships that develop between Apollonius and these Eastern kings. The Babylonian king had already been made aware of Apollonius' reputation through his own brother who had seen him in Antioch and so took a strong interest in this unusual individual (1.31). However, Apollonius' reply suggests that matters of "security" follow close on the heels of leisure and curiosity when he states, "I cannot...become...a companion in drinking or an associate in idleness and luxury; but if you have problems of conduct that are difficult and hard to settle, I will furnish you with solutions, for I not only know matters of practice and duty, but I even know them beforehand" (1.32). And, indeed, much of Apollonius' advice has to do with matters of state security (1.37-38). When it comes to the Philosopher-King of India, Phraotes, the relationship is one of a mutual admiration society. Apollonius' Neo-Pythagoreanism seems to fit well with this King bent on moderation in everything and eager in philosophical disputes (2.26 especially but see also 2.27-40). Curiously there is a sense in which Apollonius can live out an ascetic lifestyle which Phraotes admires

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<sup>144</sup>See above page 210 (*Sage*, 156).

and desires but cannot participate in because of his royal position (2.37).<sup>145</sup>

Even with Vespasian, who as we shall see below clearly consults Apollonius because of his prescience into affairs of state, there is a hint that simple fascination with the intermediary is a part of the relationship.<sup>146</sup> The narrator informs us that "Apollonius the emperor not merely loved for his own sake, but was ever ready to listen to his accounts of antiquity, to his descriptions of the Indian Phraotes, and to his graphic stories of the rivers of India, and of the animals that inhabit it; above all to the forecasts and revelations imparted to him by the gods concerning the future of the empire" (5.37, Loeb).

As we noted with the Babylonian King and as this comment indicates, curiosity and leisure as the basis for a relationship between intermediary and political authority are typically superseded by the possibility of gaining power through the intermediary's insights into the affairs of the gods and knowledge of fate itself. The Brahmans of India, for instance, appear to receive regular visits from royalty<sup>147</sup> and here philosophical discussion ultimately leads to discussing matters of state (3.26-33).<sup>148</sup> When Vespasian arrives in Egypt clearly a contender for the Roman throne, Apollonius unlike the rest of the philosophers and schools does not go out to meet him, but rather waits in a temple until he is specifically sought out by Vespasian (5.27).<sup>149</sup> Apollonius

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<sup>145</sup>Apollonius advice to Phraotes that following his example in ascetic rigour and severity would create problems for Phraotes as king, since it would be "beneath [his] august station and it might be construed by the envious as due to pride" (2.37) is noteworthy and benefits from the perspective brought to it by Francis' thesis on ascetism as a "subversive virtue" (99, 107). Billault suggests a similar dynamic in Apollonius advice to Vespasian to take on the role of emperor rather than create a republic: "Vespasian n'est pas un philosophe, mais un homme de pouvoir engagé dans un action dangereuse...[et] il faut être réaliste" ("Un sage," 30).

<sup>146</sup>Anderson suggests a "convergence of leisure, curiosity and security" that exposed the emperor to holy men (*Sage*, 156). Certainly the first two seem to converge at this point in *VA*.

<sup>147</sup>The Brahmans too have a way of maintaining a sort of "detachment" which prevents self-interested entanglement in political affairs with rules such as those which restrict any king's visit to one day (3.34).

<sup>148</sup>Shiner suggests that both the Magi and Brahmans "are shown in the role of institutionalized advisers to kings" in an effort by Philostratus to suggest Roman rulers should avail themselves of the advice of philosophers and sophists (121).

<sup>149</sup>On the apparent dubious historicity of this event see Bowie, "Apollonius," 1660-1662. Whether Vespasian actually met with the historical man of Tyana is perhaps improbable or simply beyond the ability of historians to determine, the tradition surrounding Vespasian's visit to Egypt is soaked in divine mediatorial stories confirming his kingship. Vespasian himself apparently procured

plays the detached intermediary (knowing full well Vespasian wishes to speak to him given an earlier summons to meet with him in Jerusalem which he refused)<sup>150</sup> and so it is Vespasian who goes to the temple to consult with Apollonius, addressing Apollonius "as if making a prayer to him" (5.27-28). Vespasian's reason for consulting Apollonius is immediately apparent. Harboring ambitions to take the Roman throne Vespasian declares, "From you, Apollonius, I myself cast the ship's cable, for they say you have the greatest apprehension of the gods" (5.29). When Apollonius blesses his bid for the throne,<sup>151</sup> Vespasian is absolutely set on his course of action because, as Conybeare translates it, he was "convinced by Apollonius' words that his future was stable and assured to him by heaven" (5.30, Loeb).<sup>152</sup>

Apollonius is also invited by the governor of Baetica to engage in a secret conversation which Damis guessed concerned a plot against Nero (5.10).<sup>153</sup> Again, an ambitious political authority found an intermediary like Apollonius a useful "advisor" in hatching a potentially dangerous plot. Indeed the narrator states that Apollonius' "forecast" (προγιγνώσκων) on the fate of Nero had allowed Vindex, an anti-Neronian ruler, to have a neighboring ally in the governor of Baetica (5.10). Clearly what the governor of Baetica wanted from Apollonius was to know the fate of Nero and any subsequent plot against Nero that he himself might become involved in.

Titus, likewise, is most interested in Apollonius' divine ability to warn him about his enemies as he becomes ruler as well as warn him about what manner of death is to befall him. Apollonius swears by the Sun that he had intended to inform Titus on

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a healing in a Serapeum along with stories of visions involving bilocation (Tacitus *Hist.* 2.78, 4. 81-82; Suetonius *Lives* 8.5.6-7), while in Josephus' story it is Josephus himself who plays the role of diviner of fate over Vespasian's bid to rule the Roman Empire (*War* 4.622-629 [so also Suetonius *Lives* 8.5.6]). The point is that Apollonius aside, taking over a kingdom was risky business which required all the divine confirmation one could muster. A prospective ambitious ruler seeking out one who apparently knew the will of the gods is hardly an implausible picture (Jackson, 27-29).

<sup>150</sup>Billault, "Un sage," 29-30.

<sup>151</sup>On this Apollonius' advice in this regard see Billault, "Un sage," 30.

<sup>152</sup>This translation is rather loose and expansive but captures the sense of the following Greek text (in context) quite well: ἀλλ' ὡς βεβαίων τε καὶ αὐτῷ καθωμολογημένων εἶχετο δι' ἃ ἤκουσεν.

<sup>153</sup>Jackson strongly suggests this event is not beyond the bounds of historical plausibility (26-27, 29).

these two matters anyway. The answer comes with "oracle-like" ambiguity which requires post hoc interpretation to demonstrate its accuracy (6.32). Likewise he offers advice and encouragement to Nerva as he is prescient that he will take the throne after Domitian (7.8-9). Nerva later asks him to serve as his advisor, but in this case he declines because of the short life left for both of them, although he does send advice in a letter (8.28).

As bold as Apollonius is portrayed in places, one also gets a sense in the narrative that he is equally aware of the precarious position he is in as advisor from the gods to powerful political authorities. When there is a heavenly portent involving the darkening of the sun, which all seem to agree indicated a coming revolution, the governor of Hellas summoned Apollonius on account of the fact that he had heard that Apollonius had a wisdom concerning divine matters (ἀκούω σε...Απολλώνιε, σοφὸν εἶναι τὰ δαιμόνια [8.23]). To this Apollonius asks if the governor has also heard that he has a wisdom into human affairs as well (ἀνθρώπεια). When the governor acknowledges he has, Apollonius suggest that human wisdom in this case suggests "one ought not to be curious about the will of the gods" (μὴ πολυπραγμόνει θεῶν βουλάς). The gist of the conversation seems to suggest that Apollonius knows only too well exactly what the portent signals but this is a case where discretion is the better part of valour. There is acute danger for both Apollonius and the governor of Hellas to explore this matter further, because it all concerns the fall of Domitian, the present Emperor. When the governor of Hellas insists on Apollonius assuaging his fears, Apollonius assures him by rather ambiguously suggesting that light must follow a night like this. The value of an intermediary with insight such as Apollonius to political authorities in the frightful business of ambitious Roman politics is obvious. The danger of the intermediary entering this relationship is equally clear, and as we shall see below, was life-threatening. The intermediary gave access to heavenly power to those keen on earthly power. The intermediary, while playing the part of disinterested ascetic, actually gained an ability to shape the earthly political affairs of the day and, no doubt, gained new heights in their reputation.



There is one more aspect of positive interest in the intermediary by political authorities which we must explore, even if in just a cursory fashion, and that is the relationship that develops between Apollonius and the civic governments of Greek cities.<sup>154</sup> Apollonius typically has both praise and admonition for the general moral and civic "climate" of the Greek cities he visits (4.2, 4.21-22, 4.27, 4.31, 5.20, 5.26 [Alexandria]). Both Athens and Sparta send official delegations requesting a visit or his presence in their assembly. On both occasions he refuses on the grounds, in the case of Athens because of their addiction to gladiatorial shows, in the case of Sparta for their effeminate displays, both of which he soundly rebukes (4.22, 4.27). We are not told of the response of Athens, but the Ephors of Sparta do in fact reinstate the ancient rigour of Sparta after Apollonius' letter of rebuke which prompts an appropriately "laconic" follow-up letter of praise from Apollonius (4.27).<sup>155</sup> In nearly every case, Apollonius' rebuke and praise centers on these cities' maintenance of their ancient traditions and one can only assume that a call to return to the ancient ideal would have met with both approval and disapproval by factions within local civic government.<sup>156</sup>

But why would any of these cities have an interest in an intermediary like Apollonius? The answer perhaps lies in two incidents which suggest that Apollonius is playing the role of Peter Brown's Late Antique Holy Man—that of patron, an intermediary between a local community and the Roman powers that be and an outside

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<sup>154</sup>It is worth noting that this is one feature of Philostratus' portrayal of Apollonius that Bowie will allow to stand as possibly historical ("Apollonius," 1690). On the plausible relationship between holy man and city generally see Anderson, *Sage*, 102-108.

<sup>155</sup>Note also 4.31 where the Lacedaemonians having flocked to see Apollonius at Olympia are visited by Apollonius so they might ask advice from him and again the advice is for the Spartans to display their traditional courageous virtues.

<sup>156</sup>Bowie states that he is "reluctant to attribute to the historical Cappadocian" the sage's "Hellenising postures" ("Apollonius," 1680). However, as he points out, this feature is prominent in the collection of letters attributed to Apollonius (1680-81; *Epistles* 34, 63, 65-67, 71-72). Given the letters are either genuine or pseudepigraphical productions attempting to enhance Apollonius' reputation, it follows that rootedness in the glorious past is a feature expected of legitimate intermediary. Anderson provides a particularly good defence of both the letters and the antiquarian nature of Apollonius' wisdom as rooted in authentic tradition (*Philostratus*, 142, 185-186). A mystic philosopher like Peregrinus also is recorded as having carried on correspondence with various cities (Lucian *Peregrinus* 18).

source of power who could restore harmony in a community.<sup>157</sup> In Tarsus, having made himself odious by his constant harangue on their moral slackness, he becomes a local hero when he steps forward and with a rebuke to Titus ensures that a request they have made to his father is immediately granted (4.34). The existing relationship between Apollonius and Vespasian is clearly what has made it possible for Apollonius to play a "patron-like" role for the city of Tarsus. In Sparta Apollonius is sought out to solve a dispute over how best to respond to a critical letter from the Emperor and wisely counsels moderation (4.33). In Antioch he steps forward to offer an interpretation of a recent earthquake which unites two quarrelling factions within the city (4.38). In Ionia, Apollonius' witty criticism of Domitian's edict to cease the planting of vineyards and favouring the destruction of existing vineyards emboldens the Ionians to send a delegation to Domitian to ask for a repeal of his law (4.42). The most compelling conclusion is that Apollonius does represent an outside source of "power" for these local communities, a power gained through withdrawal, non-ambition, and miraculous display, but ultimately a power which operated within existing societal power structures. It is a power which could revitalize cities by some form of return to the "good old days," restore harmony, or could aid them in their relationship with Roman Imperial authority.

## 2. Opposition

The outspoken boldness and ability to divine fate which so attracts powerful and ambitious political authorities to intermediaries like Apollonius and the Brahmins are likewise the features of these characters which provokes opposition between intermediary and political authority. Nero's hatred of philosophers is based on his belief that the philosopher's cloak is merely a cover for the divining art (μαντικὴν συσκιάζοντες [4.35]). Apollonius states it rather more positively when he suggests, "Let him [that is one disposed to dread Nero] know that the quality of inspiring fear

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<sup>157</sup>"Rise and Function," 87. Anderson suggests that Apollonius does indeed possess many of the traits of Peter Brown's Syrian holy men and in particular "an accumulation of local 'successes' [allows] such men [to] serve as ombudsmen...settling local disputes between neighbours"(*Philostratus*, 146).

really belongs to those who are devoted to temperance and wisdom, because they are sure of divine succour" (4.38, Loeb).<sup>158</sup> One can begin to appreciate the fear that motivates opposition from the likes of Nero and Domitian when one looks at the interaction between Apollonius and Tigellinus, Nero's enforcer in Rome. Tigellinus, having expelled Apollonius' companion Demetrius for his outspoken opposition to a bathhouse Nero sponsored, has Apollonius followed and spied upon in the hopes of overhearing similar anti-Neronian rhetoric (4.42). However, an eclipse with a thunderclap causes Apollonius to utter the prophecy that "something great will happen and will not happen." Three days later when Nero is nearly killed by lightning, this prophecy is seen as fulfilled. Tigellinus, hearing this story, now begins to dread Apollonius, fearing that if he makes a move against Apollonius "some unseen evil" (κακόν τι ἀφανές) might befall him, because Apollonius is wise in divine affairs (ὡς σοφοῦ τὰ δαιμόνια [4.43]). It seems that one who could predict the future was also one believed to have other sorts of access to divine power which could be used in a proactive fashion. However, Tigellinus does eventually arrest Apollonius when he makes an overt statement against Nero. Here, however, Tigellinus exhibits the sort of curiosity about Apollonius and his power one expects of those taking a more positive interest in him. In the end, confronted by Apollonius' boldness and his claims to divine power, Tigellinus releases him for he is cautious about fighting a god (ὡσπερ θεομαχεῖν φυλαττόμενος). Tigellinus' parting words to Apollonius are, "Go wherever you please, for you are too powerful for me to rule" (4.44).<sup>159</sup>

When Apollonius begins to predict the end of Nero and the "many Thebans" who would hold the throne after him (5.11, 5.13), and indeed, is consulted by an anti-Neronian governor (5.10), the narrator feels the need to insert a chapter defending

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<sup>158</sup> ἴστω τὸ μὲν φοβερὸν ἐκείνοις ὑπάρχον, ὅσοι περ ἂν σωφροσύνης τε καὶ σοφίας ἀπτῶνται, τούτοις γὰρ καὶ τὰ παρὰ τῶν θεῶν εὖ ἔχει.

<sup>159</sup> χῶρει...οἱ βούλει, σὺ γὰρ κρείττων ἢ ὑπ' ἐμοῦ ἀρχεσθαι. Billault makes a remark on this chapter in passing that is fascinating given our general conclusions regarding the legitimate intermediary as someone with impressive miracle-working power but thoroughly restrained self interest: "[Tigellinus] reconnaît sa subordination à un autre pouvoir qui ne tire pas gloire de ce succès" ("Un sage," 26).

Apollonius from the suggestion that these predictions are a case of γοητεία (5.12). The defence, which we shall look at in more detail below, involves distinguishing between divining fate through a revelation from the gods and manipulating fate, and demonstrating his non-ambition by his refusal to inquire into the telekinetic powers of the Brahmans. Clearly, however, one emperor's "spiritual advisor" was another's evil magical opponent. As elsewhere there is a combination of criteria being applied here in determining whether the intermediary involved in political affairs is a miracle-worker or magician. On the one hand there is the matter of allegiance (Vespasian and Titus regard him positively and he supports them; Nero and Domitian regard him negatively and he opposes them)<sup>160</sup> but on the other hand, the narrator believes he can extricate his mediatorial hero from magic accusations by pointing out his non-ambition.

We have already covered a good deal of ground concerning the relationship between Apollonius and Domitian, and will explore Domitian's charges against him below, so there is no need to repeat it here. Suffice it to say that Domitian's opposition to Apollonius, and indeed his apparent fear, is played out in his accusation that Apollonius sacrificed a boy to divine the future of the Emperor and so emboldened his opponent Nerva (7.20). The intermediary's access to the divine, seen primarily in their ability to know the future and the will of the gods, was a power that could be used against an Emperor as easily as it could be used in favour of an Emperor, or especially, an aspiring Emperor. In this case Apollonius' great reputation works both for and against him. His reputation for access to the divine results in his inclusion in conspiracies of the highest order against the ruling Emperor, but that same reputation also makes him a chief suspect (7.4-7.9). His reputation for access to heavenly power thus results in his arrest in Rome, but that same reputation creates fear in Domitian when he is on trial and he thus escapes unmolested (7.32, 8.5).<sup>161</sup> It is worth noting,

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<sup>160</sup>There is no claim being made here as to which comes first, admiration and respect from the Emperor or support/opposition from Apollonius.

<sup>161</sup>It is difficult to know exactly what provokes Domitian's loss of nerve during Apollonius' trial, but after boldly responding to the first three charges he sets out, with Domitian himself cutting him short for fear of being accused of his own crimes, Domitian simply falls apart. He pauses unusually long and then appears as one whose head was swimming (ἄλιγγιῶντι) and completely botches his last question, allowing Apollonius to score points with the crowd and an acquittal follows

however, that it is precisely becoming entangled in the political power structures of the Roman Empire that provokes the negative label of "magician" against Apollonius. His outsider status and "outside power source" are, ironically enough, immediately compromised when they begin to intersect and operate within the existing societal power grid. As we have seen time and again, the ambiguities and tensions within which intermediaries must operate if they are to maintain a legitimate status are ever present.

A comparison with Acts in this regard is worthwhile. Obviously Apollonius moves in rather more exalted circles of political power more frequently than do the intermediaries of Acts, and this accounts for the considerable differences between the two narratives. For instance, in *VA* Apollonius is, at times, a direct, personal threat to political authorities while we concluded that the apostles in Acts are more typically indirect threats to political authorities whose interests lie in local tranquillity and appeasement of Rome. However, in the few cases of opposition from political authorities we noted in Acts, disturbing Roman peace and order and proclaiming someone else to be Caesar were a part of the charges brought (Acts 16:20-23, 17:6-8). In both narratives there is clearly something about the power the intermediary has access to and makes available that makes them a potential threat to existing Roman power structures. Perhaps it is hardly surprising that outspoken bold individuals with a mystical aura about them, unafraid of death and with apparently little to lose or gain, should be seen as a threat to a power structure built on compliance through often

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immediately (8.5). Later the narrator reports Domitian was so rattled by Apollonius that he forgot the details of cases which followed his interaction with Apollonius (8.8-9). The narrator also reports before Apollonius defence that Domitian will not permit him to wear an amulet or bring in a book or papers, which one can only assume points to his fear of some form of magic being used by the defendant in the courtroom (8.3). Within the framework of the narrative, one can only assume that Domitian, like Tigellinus (4.44), in the presence of this charismatic and bold intermediary, with their reputation for access to divine power, senses the intermediary is simply too powerful and threatening for them to oppose. Indeed Domitian in his first meeting with Apollonius, like Tigellinus, suggests Apollonius is a daimon (7.32). There is perhaps an ironic truth, or perhaps some psychological power, in Apollonius' maxim that if he were a magician (γόης) they would not be able to hold him (7.17). Indeed both Domitian and Tigellinus end up fearing holding him and thus are incapable of doing so because they believe him to be so powerful a magician. Damis' concern that Domitian was incapable of "being amazed" (or perhaps "panic-stricken"—ἐκπλήσσω) by Apollonius turns out to be unfounded (7.22).

forceful coercion. On this point both narratives seem to agree.

#### **D. Conclusion**

*VA* parallels many of the observations we made in Acts regarding the intersection of the intermediary's power with that of established religious and political power structures. The temple and the holy man, it appears, are not simply competing venues for access to the divine. Both established religious cults and communities and the intermediary offer something to the other and both represent a danger to the other. Apollonius seeks out legitimation in local cults and through associating himself with revered traditions in a manner not unlike that of the apostles in Acts. If legitimation is the reward, a magic accusation is the punishment for a failed attempt. In *VA* a holy man like Apollonius can offer a local cult a certain popularity and increased traffic. The relationship, therefore, can be reciprocal. However, certain well known established religious cults and communities appear less willing to share their glory with the likes of Apollonius nor should we be surprised that established cults do not welcome the outside voice of correction. It seems the only place an intermediary like Apollonius holds complete sway is among his own companions. They, of course, have the option simply to leave if they no longer approve of their religious hero or find his demands too high. *VA* does not, unfortunately, offer us a strong parallel to Acts' Christian communities who must then interact with the intermediaries who founded them. Among political authorities too one finds the intermediary as both threat and appealing source of power. To the extent that an intermediary like Apollonius may be an unquantifiable factor in machinations against a political authority he is labelled a magician. On the other hand, Apollonius may likewise be courted as a fascinating "outsider" who speaks his mind and may well have unique access to the plans and wishes of the gods themselves—an advantage any ambitious political figure might desire.

#### **IV. Conclusion**

We began this chapter on the intersection of the divine power mediated by our religious virtuosi and the articulate power structures of established society with

Brown's observation that here one would "expect to find the sorcerer."<sup>162</sup> In both narratives we began specifically with the intersection of the intermediary with more established forms of access to the gods and religious life. The intermediary's quest for legitimacy within these established religious frameworks which met with both success and failure clearly lies near the core of the distinction between miracle-worker and magician. But the intermediary on a quest for this legitimacy, seeking a community in which to offer their unique access to the divine is not just being tested by an abstract religious ideology, but rather is bumping into communities whose social structure and social stasis are seriously threatened by the potentially unlimited "outsider" power of the intermediary. The tension between wanting access to the divine on offer by the intermediary and the recognition of the danger in offering legitimacy to the intermediary corresponds to the gaining-power-without-being-seen-to-be-ambitious move by the successful intermediary which we explored in our last chapter. Of course, it is not just the intermediary who is a threat—that would be to fail to take seriously the "other" social world. Rather, the disruptive and overly ambitious intermediary is a threat because the divine they offer access to is itself malevolent—either because the gods mediated are themselves evil or because they are being manipulated to an evil end. Here then is the "sorcerer" Brown speaks of. Of course, as our investigation of political authorities demonstrated, individual rulers themselves experienced what these various religious communities experienced—both an attraction to the power on offer by the intermediary and a threat to their persons or at least to the peace of their domain. The criteria for distinguishing between miracle-worker and magician are not simply an abstracted list, but surely correspond to this most ambiguous of social scripts. The miracle-worker who finds legitimacy within an established religious framework—be it their own community or one they are attempting both to enter and reform—this is the miracle-worker who is consulted by the powerful and is sought out by the community. Ultimately this is the intermediary who is capable of both

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<sup>162</sup>"Sorcery," 21-22.

demonstrating great mediatorial power and simultaneously appearing uninterested in personal power gains.



## Chapter 5

### Defending Power

#### I. Introduction

Both Acts and Apollonius close with extended defensive discourses by miracle-working intermediaries.<sup>1</sup> The narrators in both texts have done us a huge favour in this regard. The charges which they record against their miracle-working heroes and the defences they record in their favour go a considerable way towards refining the criteria distinguishing miracle-workers and magicians which we have already gathered in these two narratives. It is here too that the shared values of the characters of Acts and *VA* with respect to mediators of divine power become most apparent. Our procedure here will be very straightforward. We shall begin in both narratives by listing the charges against the miracle workers. These include in the case of Acts formal accusations against Peter, Stephen, and Paul. In the case of *VA* we shall note not just formal accusations but also informal public accusations against Apollonius presupposed by the narrator, informal accusations against the Brahmins, as well as actual charges brought against Apollonius. In each case, having laid out and characterized the nature of these charges, we shall investigate the responses to each of these charges by the characters themselves in the case of Acts and Apollonius, as well as defences offered by the narrator on Apollonius' behalf and Apollonius' defence of the Brahmins. Once we have heard both the nature of the charges faced by intermediaries and the various defensive strategies on their behalf, we shall be in a far stronger position to posit in broad terms the criteria which these two narratives portray as distinguishing miracle-workers from magicians.

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<sup>1</sup>This literary feature ironically goes unmentioned by F. R. M. Hitchcock in "The Trials of St. Paul and Apollonius" as he is too busy comparing the trials of Apollonius before Nero and Domitian with Paul's trial which is hinted at in the Pastoral epistles (*Hermathena* 75 [1950]: 24-34).

## II. Defending Power in Acts

### A. The Charges Against Miracles-Workers

Neither of the narrators for Acts or *VA* is reticent to report the sorts of accusations faced by the miracle-working heroes. While scholars have typically read these accounts as suppressing unfavourable details and particularly unsavory accusations, one must keep in mind Juvenal's satirical statement that "nowadays no astrologer has credit unless he has been imprisoned in some distant camp, with chains clanking on either arm; none believe in his powers unless he has been condemned and all but put to death, having just contrived to get deported to a Cyclad, or to escape at last from the diminutive Seriphos."<sup>2</sup> The presence of accusations such as these do not seem to trouble the narrator of Luke-Acts in the least—in Luke 11:15 Jesus is accused of mediating dark Satanic power in his exorcistic ministry.<sup>3</sup> This is, of course, a bonus for our study as it allows us to see how the narrator's legitimate intermediaries would be construed by less favourable parties.

#### 1. Peter (and John)

First, Peter and John are charged with speaking the name of Jesus to the populace of Jerusalem (4:7, 17-18; 5:28, 40). When they are seized by the Sanhedrin, the question asked of them is by what power or name they performed the healing of the cripple at the temple gate ( Ἐν ποίᾳ δυνάμει ἢ ἐν ποίῳ ὀνόματι ἐποιήσατε τοῦτο ὑμεῖς; [4:7]). Garrett suggests that Luke and his early readers would have recognized the similarity between Peter's use of "Jesus' name" and the practice popularly associated with "magicians" of using the "daimons of persons who had died or who were killed violently" to perform feats. She concludes that "Luke probably imagines that the officials supposed a demonic or diabolical agent to be at

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<sup>2</sup>*Satire* 6.560-564 (Loeb).

<sup>3</sup>Garrett in commenting on Acts 8 goes so far as to conclude that "Luke actually *capitalizes on the outward similarity of Christian signs and magic*, constructing his narrative so as to suggest that Simon mistook the former for the latter" (italics original, *Demise*, 77).

work."<sup>4</sup> When Peter answers, "Jesus Christ," and the Sanhedrin's response is to ban them from further speaking this name to anyone, it is certainly obvious that they do not regard miracle-working done in the name of Jesus as a legitimate mediation of divine power. They order them to cease speaking this name, presumably in either teaching or miracle-working. The subsequent arrest, then, is on the grounds that they have failed to obey this order (5:28). Their activity is a violation of the Sanhedrin's authority both in their disobedience to their direct orders and in their teaching which, in promoting Jesus, implicates the Sanhedrin in the death of God's Messiah (4:10, 5:28). Suspicion about the source of the divine power collides with issues of political power and subversion.

Second, Peter later faces accusations from the Jerusalem believers following his visit to Cornelius. The "circumcised believers" in Jerusalem accuse him of breaking Jewish purity laws by entering a Gentile's house and eating with Gentiles (11:2). Within the Acts narrative world, all of the major miracle-workers, with the exception of Philip, are at some point charged with breaking Torah regulations.

## 2. Stephen

Stephen faces a group of charges, all of which are serious violations, and particularly violations of Torah. In 6:11, certain individuals are persuaded to state that Stephen has been heard blaspheming God and Moses (λαλοῦντος ῥήματα βλάσφημα εἰς Μωϋσῆν καὶ τὸν θεόν). This is likely to be read as a generalization of the specific accusations made in 6:13-14, where the false witnesses claim Stephen has spoken against the temple and Torah. This is further fleshed out by the γάρ clause of v. 14. According to the witnesses, he has claimed that Jesus would destroy the temple and change the "customs Moses handed down to us" (τὰ ἔθη ἃ παρέδωκεν ἡμῖν Μωϋσῆς), presumably Torah. It is worth noting that while Stephen is charged with changing establishment ἔθη here, Paul and Silas will later be charged with promoting un-Roman ἔθη (16:21). Basically, the charge is that of

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<sup>4</sup>Garrett, *Demise*, 66. On the use of Jesus' name in the context of the NT and Greco-Roman magic see Silva New, "Note XI. The Name, Baptism, and the Laying on of Hands," in *BC*, vol. 5 (1933), esp. 121-134.

desecrating the two most sacred institutions of these Jerusalem Jews—Torah and the temple.

### 3. Paul (and Silas)

Paul, given the context in which he operates, faces charges from both Gentiles and Jews. In Philippi, following the successful exorcism of a slave girl, the owners claim that Paul and Silas ἐκταράσσουσιν ἡμῶν τὴν πόλιν, 'Ιουδαῖοι ὑπάρχοντες, καὶ καταγγέλλουσιν ἔθνη ἃ οὐκ ἔξεστιν ἡμῖν παραδέχεσθαι οὐδὲ ποιεῖν 'Ρωμαίοις οὖσιν (16:20-21). This charge is typically translated along the lines of "These men are disturbing our city; they are Jews and are advocating customs that are not lawful for us as Romans to adopt or observe" (NRSV). The assumption most commentators make is that the slave owners are charging Paul and Silas with disturbing the peace and attempting to proselytize Romans into the Jewish faith.<sup>5</sup> However, as Sherwin-White and other commentators since his publication have pointed out, this is not quite the simple solution it first appears. Regulations banning Jewish proselytism and the enforcement of any such ban, or even more general bans on foreign cults, are not typical of first century Roman law and society, with some notable exceptions we shall mention below.<sup>6</sup> While the term ἔθος in five of the six other uses in Acts clearly refers to Mosaic regulations<sup>7</sup> the specific context of this phrase suggests that there are other possibilities.

Problematizing the entire account is the unreliability of the slave owners as characters in the text. Their dishonesty has already been displayed in their desire to get rich at the expense of their demonically possessed slave. Furthermore, their true motivation—loss of potential profit—is apparently absent in the charge, a fact which leads to suspicions as to their reliability in formulating their charge. Assuming that they are not above deliberate misrepresentation, are we to understand that they are

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<sup>5</sup>Brian Rapske, *The Book of Acts in Its First Century Setting*, vol. 3, *Paul in Roman Custody* (Carlisle: Paternoster Press, 1994), 118; Conzelmann, *Acts*, 131-132; Bruce, *Acts*, 362; Witherington, *Acts*, 496; Neil, 184; Lake and Cadbury, 195; Marshall, *Acts*, 270; Sherwin-White, 78-83.

<sup>6</sup>Sherwin-White, 79-82.

<sup>7</sup>Acts 6:14; 15:1; 21:21; 26:3; 28:17. Acts 25:16 is a reference to Roman legal customs.

knowingly misrepresenting Paul and Silas as Jewish proselytizers who are preaching circumcision and an anti-social monotheism? Or do they simply assume that as itinerant Jewish teachers/preachers, they must be teaching abhorrent Jewish practices such as circumcision, odd dietary regulations, and a decidedly anti-social monotheism?<sup>8</sup> Or is it possible these two men are simply charging them with promoting a foreign cult and throwing in their Jewishness to play on anti-Semitic sentiments among Romans? Whichever line one follows in this case, the charge is fundamentally that of being religious deviants and persuading others to join in their "un-Roman" behaviour. But behind each of these questions lies the assumption that the slave owners are upset with the *teaching* of the two.

However, if one assumes that the *exorcism*, being a public event, is known to all parties present and that it is this deed which is at the heart of the accusation (and is not being masked by slave owners who wish their true motivation to remain hidden) another more intriguing possibility emerges. Gerd Lüdemann surmises that the accusations of the slave owners must be redactional because "the charges mentioned in v. 20f. have nothing to do with Paul's exorcism."<sup>9</sup> But from a narrative critical perspective, one would assume some sort of connection. Craig de Vos has recently argued that lying behind these charges in Acts 16 is a historical charge of magic.<sup>10</sup> The argument is convincing, but the question remains whether one can legitimately suggest this reading from a narrative critical perspective, especially given de Vos's suggestion that Lukan redaction has altered the charges to mask the original magic accusation within the present text. Once one allows that the exorcism is a publicly known event, the other evidence within the narrative world of Acts (and minimal extra-text) falls into place to give the slave owners' charge all the markings of a "magic accusation."

In discussing Acts 16:20-21, Sherwin-White points out that the "alien cults"

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<sup>8</sup>On the negative Jewish associations the insertion of 'Ιουδαῖοι ὑπάρχοντες see the excellent summary of Rapske, 118.

<sup>9</sup>180.

<sup>10</sup>Craig de Vos, "Finding a Charge that Fits: The Accusation against Paul and Silas at Philippi (Acts 16:19-21)," originally presented to the Biblical Studies Research Seminar at Flinders University, Oct 16, 1997, forthcoming in *JSNT*.

which regularly meet with enforced bans in the first century are the "Druids, Magicians, and devotees of Isis."<sup>11</sup> Furthermore, the famed Twelve Tables banned harmful incantations (*malum carmen*) used to magically steal the harvest of a neighbor, and personal damage of person or property usually lay at the heart of magic accusations.<sup>12</sup> As de Vos points out, claims by some scholars that the slave owners constructed these charges because claims against Paul's exorcism and property damage would not stand up in court fail to adequately deal with the first century Roman context in which this story is placed.<sup>13</sup> Matters of divine possession and loss of property are precisely matters which are taken up in Apuleius' court defence against magic accusations in the *Apologia*.<sup>14</sup> There is really little reason for the slave owners to mask their financial motivation for dragging Paul before the magistrates.

De Vos offers one further piece of extra-textual data which completes our puzzle—"the Jews were perceived to be magicians by many Romans, and exorcism was probably the main type of magic associated with Jews in this period."<sup>15</sup> These contextual data can be found explicitly within the boundaries of the Acts narrative world itself. In the Jewish Diaspora of Acts one finds Bar Jesus in Cyprus (13:6) and the itinerant Jewish exorcists (19:13) clearly labelled as magicians by the narrator at

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<sup>11</sup>79-80, 82.

<sup>12</sup>On the twelve tables see Graf, 41-43; MacMullen, 124-125; on the ongoing relevance and use of the Twelve Tables in Imperial Rome see Apuleius *Apologia* 47; on the typical association of loss of property and magic accusations see also Graf 43-88.

<sup>13</sup>De Vos particularly takes apart Haenchen (who suggests exorcism is not a charge to hold up in court, 499-500) and Rapske (who suggests that they could not claim property damage for the slave, 116) for their "ethnocentric anachronism" on this point particularly.

<sup>14</sup>Apuleius *Apologia* especially 42, 48, 90. On the property angle in Apuleius generally see Graf, 65-88.

<sup>15</sup>De Vos' conclusion here is hardly controversial and support for it can be found in Matt 12:27, Josephus *Ant.* 8.45-49, 20.142; Juvenal *Satire* 6.542-547; Apuleius *Apology* 90; Lucian *The Lover of Lies* 16 (perhaps not a Jewish exorcism per se, but a Syrian from *Palestine* performing an exorcism); and Celsus' perspective recorded in Origen *Contra Celsum* 1.26. See also Goodenough (153-295), Gager (134-161), P. S. Alexander ("Incantations and Books of Magic," in *The History of the Jewish People in the Age of Jesus Christ (175 B.C. - A.D. 135)*, vol. 3, ed. E. Schürer, revised and ed. G. Vermes and F. Millar and M. Goodman [Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1986], 342-379), Klauck ("With Paul," 96 and *Magie*, 61-62); and John M. G. Barclay (*Jews in the Mediterranean Diaspora* [Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1996], 119-123). See on this point especially Lyons and Reimer, 16-22.

least (19:17-19). Exorcism, of course, was not by default "magic"<sup>16</sup> but, as our study will suggest, exorcisms with particular social consequences could well be construed as magic. The reference to "being Jewish," therefore, in the context of an exorcism, could just as easily be intended to evoke the image of the itinerant Jewish magician as it could evoke notions of the unusual Jewish practices of circumcision, dietary code, and monotheism. Furthermore, with καταγγέλλω one has a such a broad range of possible meanings (from *transmit* to *prescribe* to *encourage*)<sup>17</sup> that it is not necessary to limit the sentence to the pedagogical "teaching customs" but could be just as easily be construed as "encouraging" or "disclosing customs."<sup>18</sup> The customs (ἔθος) which Paul is thus accused of promoting are economically disruptive magical practices, which as the two slave owners correctly point out is illegal for Romans to practise in any way, shape or form.

What is in the text beyond any shadow of doubt is a charge of promoting or engaging in some sort of Jewish practices which are unacceptable to good Romans. They are religious innovators who are well beyond the pale of the acceptable, who have succeeded in being socially disruptive and subversive. Paul's miracle working success caused financial loss to the slave owners and charges of religious deviance—most likely "magic" proper—follow.

If in chapter 16 we have a case of Romans accusing Paul and Silas of being unacceptable "Jews," in chapter 17 we have a case of Jews accusing Paul and Silas of being unacceptable "Romans." In 17:5-9, a group of jealous Jews form, and presumably lead, a mob consisting of marketplace riffraff to Jason's house where they hope to find Paul and Silas. Undaunted by their absence, they seize their hosts and drag them before the πολιτάρχαι of the city. Jason's absent guests are charged with spreading sedition across the empire (τὴν οἰκουμένην ἀναστατώσαντες οὗτοι

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<sup>16</sup>Vespasian views a Jewish exorcist in action in Josephus and finds little objectionable in the exorcism (Josephus *Ant.* 8.46-49).

<sup>17</sup>See LSJ, ad. loc.

<sup>18</sup>"Disclosing" is suggested by de Vos.

[17:6]).<sup>19</sup> Specifically, they are "doing what is contrary to Caesar's decree" (ἀπέναντι τῶν δογμάτων Καίσαρος πράσσουσι) by claiming someone else is king, namely Jesus (17:7).<sup>20</sup> Their message is being construed as treasonous by a group eager to be rid of them.

In Corinth Paul is charged by a Jewish contingent with persuading people to "worship God [in ways] contrary to the law" (παρὰ τὸν νόμον ἀναπείθει...τοὺς ἀνθρώπους σέβεσθαι τὸν θεόν [18:13]). Two interpretive possibilities present themselves. The generic term τοὺς ἀνθρώπους rather than a more specific self-reference by the Jews might well suggest that the Jews were attempting to convince Gallio that Paul was attempting to promote an illegitimate cult among Jews *and, more importantly*, Gentiles. Perhaps part of their strategy was to demonstrate to Gallio that Paul's preaching fell outside the bounds of Judaism which had been afforded a protected status by Claudius. The other possibility is that the Jews are trying to convince Gallio that Paul is undermining the local Jewish community with his preaching and as a community with some status they deserve protection from him.<sup>21</sup> Either way the charge is one of religious deviance, whether that is understood as a wholesale religious deviance or simply as a deviance within the bounds of Judaism at Corinth. If the former, it would be very similar to the charges faced at Philippi (although with the considerable variation that he is certainly not identified by his accusers in this case as Jewish). If the latter, it is a precursor to the charges Paul ultimately faces in Jerusalem.

In Ephesus we have the only other accusation from the Gentile sector leveled at

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<sup>19</sup>See above page 215, note 73.

<sup>20</sup>Sherwin-White finds this set of accusations the most "garbled" and "obscure" within the Acts narrative (96, 101) without explaining his confusion. Assuming one is not attempting to match a specific decree of Caesar with the accusation of "proclaiming another king," the charges make good sense as they stand.

<sup>21</sup>Sherwin-White quite correctly argues that the protection for Jewish religious practices, especially as one finds it in Josephus, was largely designed to protect Jewish communities from action against them by Greek city governments (102-103). Josephus *Ant.* 14.185-267; 19.278-291. If one presumes this was the common understanding of the Imperial edict, it would be puzzling why a Jewish group would be portrayed as presenting a case which they clearly could not win, given they are portrayed elsewhere as attempting to formulate charges in such a way that the Roman authorities will take notice.



Paul. As in Philippi, it is financially motivated (19:24-27). Paul's success as a powerful miracle-working missionary has led the populace of the city away from the worship of Artemis, especially as it involves hand-made images of the divine being (19:26). As such, his activity threatens to undermine the silversmith trade in Artemis shrines and discredit both the Ephesian temple of Artemis and the world-wide worship of the goddess herself (19:27). According to Demetrius, Paul has seriously dishonoured the most important community cult.

In Jerusalem Paul faces charges which are similar to those faced by Stephen. In 21:28 the Asian crowd in the Jerusalem temple claims Paul teaches against the Jews, the Mosaic law, and the Temple to everyone everywhere. Furthermore, he has desecrated the temple by bringing his Greek friends in with him (κεκοίνωκεν τὸν ἅγιον τόπον τοῦτον). We hear of no charges when Paul stands before the Sanhedrin in 23:1-10, but in 23:28-29 we learn that they have accused him of some breach of Mosaic law.

When the lawyer Tertullus brings his accusations against Paul before Felix, the charges shift somewhat.<sup>22</sup> Tertullus characterizes him as a plague (λοιμός), "a term with sinister implications, not excluding a hint of treason."<sup>23</sup> He then sets out three accusations. Paul has been stirring up riots among all the Jews of the Empire (κινουῦντα στάσεις πᾶσιν τοῖς Ἰουδαίοις τοῖς κατὰ τὴν οἰκουμένην), he is the ringleader of the Nazarene sect (πρωτοστάτην τε τῆς τῶν Ναζωραίων αἰρέσεως) and, more concretely, he attempted to profane the Temple (ὅς καὶ τὸ ἱερόν ἐπέειρασεν βεβηλῶσαι [24:5-6]). The Jewish officials here are presented as well aware of the Roman attitude toward matters strictly related to Jewish law

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<sup>22</sup>For a detailed analysis of the structure and nature of the charges see especially Witherington, *Acts*, 702-708.

<sup>23</sup>Bruce, *Book*, 439. Marshall is correct in pointing out that "if the metaphor were still alive, the implication would be that Paul's influence was infectious," although he is more inclined to see λοιμός as simply imply Paul was a "public nuisance" (Acts, 375). Bruce argues this on the basis of Claudius' letter to the Alexandrians in which νόσος (plague) is used to describe seditious Jewish behaviour (*Book*, 439, ft. 8). If Bruce's analogy holds, it would strongly suggest the metaphor may still have some life in it ever here. Sherwin-White actually argues for direct dependence of the Acts account on the Claudian accusations (51-52). Lake and Cadbury suggest the term is used "to create the right atmosphere—Paul was a political, not a theological offender" (298).

(which the narrator has already revealed with the Gallio incident and Lysias letter [18:14-15; 23:29]). The charges, therefore, have unmistakable political overtones along with the more religiously-based charge of desecrating the Jerusalem Temple. This latter charge was, however, not a debate over Jewish law per se but concerned with their right to execute those who desecrated the Temple as had been recognized by the Romans.<sup>24</sup> Paul's defence, which we shall examine more closely below, suggests that he was equally aware that accusations which fell strictly within the realm of the interpretation of Torah would be ignored by the Romans. He denies stirring up riots and desecrating the Temple but will admit to his declared belief concerning resurrection from the dead (24:10-21). If Tertullus is attempting to paint a picture of Paul as political subversive rather than merely religiously deviant, Paul's defence is to deny being politically subversive but admit religious "deviance." Later unspecified charges seem to be along the same lines as Paul responds to their πολλὰ καὶ βαρέα αἰτιώματα with a declaration that he has not committed any wrong against the Jewish law, the temple, or Caesar (25:7-8).

#### **4. Conclusion**

The first charges faced by the miracle-workers of Acts are a result of their success as miracle-workers. While the narrator implies successful miracle working lies behind two, perhaps three, further charges, Stephen in Jerusalem, Paul and Silas in Philippi, and quite possibly Paul in Ephesus, the charges in each of these cases are specifically that of more general religious deviance of one sort or another. Indeed, as we have argued above, the accusation in Philippi may well be a magic accusation proper from a Roman perspective. More specifically, the accusers defend the established religious institutions from the apparent assault from the free-lance mediator of divine power. In the other cases, there is a mixture of religious and political charges, especially in those cases where the Jews attempt to enlist Gentile authorities to rid themselves of Paul. Here the charges move toward anti-Roman seditious

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<sup>24</sup>Philo *On the Embassy to Gaius* 212. Josephus *Ant.* 15:417. Bruce, *Acts*, 476. Johnson, *Acts*, 381.

behavior, particularly provoking riots and disturbing the peace of various communities across the Empire.

It is worth noting in passing at least that many of the features of the accusations against miracle-workers have been noted in previous studies on magic. Graf, for example, argues that gathering for worship activities was a display and magic was seen as the antithesis of traditional corporate worship with its individual engaged in rites which reversed the normal practice of community cults.<sup>25</sup> This is, of course, particularly evident in the charges of child murder for the sake of divination made against Apollonius which we shall look at shortly. MacMullen has pointed out that magic could be construed as an invisible mysterious threat to government figures.<sup>26</sup> Potter has suggested temple desecration is associated with magic accusations in the Greco-Roman world.<sup>27</sup> One also has the "false prophet" tradition within Judaism which no doubt is part of the equation here as well. The false prophet, who clearly was believed to have some powers of divine mediation as his or her legitimate counterpart, stood not only in opposition to Torah regulations, but was quintessentially someone who led others into breaking Torah (Deut 13:1-5; 18:20-22). It is not a large leap to suppose that intermediaries, whose speaking and miracle-working activities are very much in the mould of Hebrew Bible prophets, would be cast by their opponents as "false prophets," leading the faithful astray.<sup>28</sup> The text itself assumes that to speak of a "false prophet" and a "magician" is one and the same thing—after all Bar Jesus is given both titles (13:6). All this suggests that the charges faced by our intermediaries are precisely the sort which in other contexts have been seen to swirl about magicians generally. There is clearly a stereotypical element to these charges and that serves our

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<sup>25</sup>Graf, *Magic*, 213, 229-232. Burkert, "ΓΟΗΣ," 52-54. Theissen, *Miracle Stories*, 238-242.

<sup>26</sup>MacMullen, *Enemies*, 95-162, esp. 131.

<sup>27</sup>Potter includes this in a list of what was considered inherently "unnatural" and associated with magic accusations in the Greco-Roman world (8).

<sup>28</sup>Note Stephen's speech in which he casts Jesus (and himself?) as a rejected worker of signs and wonders, with powerful speech and actions - a "prophet like Moses" (Deut 18:18, Acts 7:37) - rejected by the Sanhedrin which must, if Stephen regards himself and Jesus as prophets, regard them as false prophets.

purposes rather well.

## **B. The Defence by the Intermediary**

Within the various defence speeches by the legitimate intermediaries in Acts one finds many of the themes which we have already outlined in the cultural scripts which mark the interplay between intermediary and society and its various institutions. As with the accusations, we shall deal with these in a character by character basis in the order in which they appear in the text.

### **1. Peter**

When Peter is asked by the Sanhedrin by what power or name he and John accomplished the healing of the temple beggar, his first defensive strategy is to characterize his actions in his own way. Peter states that they are being asked to account for "an act of kindness" (εὐεργεσία [4:9]). The display of power in Jesus' name was not for their own benefit, but for the benefit of a poor cripple begging at the temple gate. Peter does identify the source of divine power behind the healing, but in doing so, he carefully ties the identity of Jesus to Psalm 118:22 (4:10-12). Peter has, therefore, attempted to attach his activity and the source of his divine power into the established corpus of religious authority. He may be pushing the boundary, but he wants to be seen as offering a self-evident extension of the accepted community religion. Peter's closing words to the Sanhedrin that he and John must obey God rather than the Sanhedrin form the opening words in their next encounter (4:19; 5:29). As persons convinced that they are legitimately connected to the divine, they are free to exhibit a deliberate disinterest in the threats of their opponents. In the second defence as in the first, they are so detached from self-interest, that they are free to hurl the accusation at their captors that the Sanhedrin killed God's savior (4:10; 5:30). To sum up, their self-presentation includes (1) a characterization of their powerful mediation of divine power as a selfless act of kindness, (2) presenting themselves as fearless and unconcerned for themselves in the face of persecution, and (3) deliberately tying their message and activity into the established texts of the local religious community.

Peter's defence before the Jewish believers in Jerusalem who accuse him of breaking the Jewish purity code in entering Cornelius' house has already been discussed above in looking at the functions of miracles in Acts.<sup>29</sup> His defence is to point to the visions and miraculous power which accompanies and directs this apparently inappropriate behavior. As we suggested above, this sort of defence underscores the legitimizing functions miracles play in the Acts narrative world. Furthermore, the double vision and divine coincidences motif along with the language miracle validates the "bigger is better" principle with regard to miraculous displays in Acts.

## **2. Stephen**

Stephen's defence before the Sanhedrin is fundamentally an extended version of Peter's method of defence. Basically, Stephen casts himself as the one in line with the established religious beliefs, goes on the offensive, and suggests his accusers are those who represent the real enemies of the faithful (7:2-53). While "Jesus" is never mentioned in the defence, it is clear that Stephen is defending the Jesus he preaches by equating him with the "prophet like Moses" promised by Moses long ago (7:37), a prophet who was rejected just as all the prophets of Israel were rejected by the "forefathers" of the Sanhedrin (7:51). One might even suggest that Stephen is casting himself as a rejected prophet in line with the historical precedent. The narrator certainly is transforming him into a "Moses-like" character with a transformed face and a vision of God (6:15, 55). What is beyond doubt is that Stephen refuses to consider his own safety and protection to the end in the face of a furious persecutor (7:54-59), and, in an extraordinary display of selflessness, refuses to be spiteful of his persecutors (7:60). The appeal to orthodoxy, the bold speech, and the selflessness are all features which mark the intermediary approved by our narrator. These are features we have already discussed in chapters three and four.

## **3. Paul**

Given the overwhelming number of scholars who proceed with the notion that

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<sup>29</sup>See above page 102.

the author of Acts is smoothing over divisions within the early church,<sup>30</sup> it is perhaps unexpected that Paul's first extended speech on his own behalf comes about before the Ephesian elders, not in a court scene. Acts 20:18-35 is nothing short of an apology for his own efforts among the Ephesian believers. Several features of the "careful" intermediary can be found in this passage. He begins by characterizing himself as a paradigm of humility (20:18-19). His preaching was not for his own sake but in order to help them (20:20). Relatively unconcerned for his own safety but rather driven by the Spirit and his mission, he is planning to go on to Jerusalem despite the divine warnings he is receiving concerning his reception (20:22-24). Whatever else the phrase that he will never see them again indicates for the dating of Acts or the chronology of Paul,<sup>31</sup> within the Acts narrative world, this does seem to be a premonition of impending death (20:25, 38). The speech comes to a climax with Paul's declaration that he never coveted anyone's money or clothing and that he supported himself and his travelling companions with manual labour (20:33). The reference to labour clearly functions to forestall any claims that Paul was growing rich by his miracle-working and preaching activities.<sup>32</sup> Since at no time is this charge ever specifically raised against Paul, one can only conclude that this is an extra-textual allusion with two possible sources. Either the implied readers already are aware of these charges laid against Paul specifically<sup>33</sup> or, and this is a preferable option given our reading strategy, this was a typical or stock accusation a wandering intermediary

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<sup>30</sup>Haenchen, 264-269.

<sup>31</sup>All commentators who debate the implications of this text for Pauline chronology or Luke's actual knowledge of Paul's life concede implicitly or explicitly that the text does seem clear that Paul believes he will not live to return (Bruce, *Acts*, 433, *Book*, 391; Marshall, *Acts*, 332-333; Lake and Cadbury, 261; Haenchen, 592, 597). Assuming Paul's desire to travel to Spain is not a part of the extra-textual data for Acts and his pattern of continually revisiting churches he has planted has been established by this point in the text, this can only be read as a premonition of a death which will prevent his return.

<sup>32</sup>Contra J. Lambrecht who regards these statements as exhortation by example rather than self-defence ("Paul's Farewell-Address at Miletus" in *Les Actes des Apôtres: Traditions, rédaction, théologie*, ed. J. Kremer [Leuven: Leuven University Press, 1979], 315-316). More accurate is Barrett's suggestion that it is both "in the interests of Paul's own reputation as a man free from covetousness... [and] also as an example to the ministry of the next generation" ("Address," 116).

<sup>33</sup>For example, one could adduce evidence for this from a mirror reading of 1 Thess 2:5-9. See also Barrett, "Light," 290.

would likely face. These words on supporting himself rather than taking money then leads to his concluding words in which he claims that he has practised what he preached, "It is more blessed to give than to receive" (20:35). Clearly the defence is one which, among other things, seeks to demonstrate his avoidance of wealth and an ambitious climb in status.

Paul's speech before the rioting crowd from the steps of the barracks highlights the case we already made above concerning the intermediaries' attempt to cast their religious message at least partially within the traditional religious framework. They are knowingly pushing the boundaries perhaps, but they want to be seen as fundamentally "orthodox" in some sense. When the boundaries are being pushed, it is precisely at this point that the intermediary claims extraordinary communication with the divine to justify the questionable extension. Within this first speech, Paul points to his exemplary Jewish roots, which include training in the Law under Gamaliel and a zeal which went so far as to persecute followers of "the Way" (22:3-5). Ananias, the Damascus Christian who heals Paul's blindness and gives him his initial instruction is touted as ἀνὴρ εὐλαβῆς κατὰ τὸν νόμον, μαρτυρούμενος ὑπὸ πάντων τῶν κατοικούντων Ἰουδαίων (22:12). The Jewish credentials are piled high whenever possible. And, as we noted above, all of Paul's shifts which begin to push the boundaries of his Judaism come about as a result of contact and communication between intermediary and divine—a light and a voice from heaven (22:6-10), a divine healing (22:12-14), and an epiphany in a trance (22:17-21). It is when Paul states that the Lord actually sent him to Gentiles that the boundary is pushed too far for the devout temple crowd and they again call for his death (22:21-22). What is noteworthy about this particular speech is that Paul also includes his persecution by the Jerusalem Jews (21:17-18). Clearly he did not choose his message for the sake of its popularity. The element of disregard for personal safety is obvious as the persecutor allows himself to become the persecuted (21:19-20).

Before the Sanhedrin, Paul again makes a bid to claim at least one strand of Jewish "orthodoxy." He is, he claims, nothing more than a Pharisee who believes in

resurrection (23:6). Admittedly, the narrator does seem to suggest this is a deliberate ploy to split the Sanhedrin over a contentious issue (23:6). However, the fact that Paul willingly makes a claim to his Pharisaic roots, much as he did in 22:3, and will again in 26:5, does imply that his claims are not merely pragmatic but sincerely believed by himself, even if it does serve his own apologetic purposes. Curiously, it is the Pharisees in this case who contend that Paul ought to be able to make his claims "if a spirit or angel spoke to him" (εἰ δὲ πνεῦμα ἐλάλησεν αὐτῷ ἢ ἄγγελος; [23:9]). It appears these Pharisees would not find Paul's "I heard a divine voice" defence entirely implausible.

Paul's speech in his own defence in 24:10-21 is largely structured by the specific accusations levelled by Tertullus which we have discussed above. First, he denies outright that he is a political trouble-maker who stirred up riots either in Jerusalem or anywhere else, claiming a complete lack of evidence on the part of his accusers (24:10-13). Having denied political ambitions, he admits to their charge of being a part of a αἵρεσις, although he denies this pejorative title.<sup>34</sup> He further defuses this accusation by claiming Jewish orthodoxy, at least the Pharisaic variation thereof (24:14-16). He agrees with the entire Law and Prophets, looks forward to the same resurrection and judgment as his accusers, and strives for a clear conscience before God and humanity. Commentators point out what the reader already knows at this point—not all of his accusers would have assented to this characterization of their beliefs, only the Pharisaic element.<sup>35</sup> Combine this with his reiteration of the statement which he made before the Sanhedrin in his closing in 24:21 and suspicion ought to be raised as to whether Paul is attempting to use the same "divide and conquer" procedure which was so effective in the Sanhedrin. Perhaps this is too speculative, but what is certain is that he is claiming at least one form of Jewish orthodoxy and is

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<sup>34</sup>While there is some debate as to the exact nuance of αἵρεσις at this point in time, clearly it has negative connotations or Paul would not feel it necessary to use the phrase ἡν λέγουσιν αἵρεσιν (24:14). See Johnson, *Acts*, 411. For a different read entirely see Lake and Cadbury (100, 298, 301) who suggest αἵρεσιν is not in either the Western text nor in the original text.

<sup>35</sup>Schille, 433; Marshall, *Acts*, 378; Johnson, *Acts*, 413; Neil, 234; Lake and Cadbury, 301-302.



willing to admit only to a theological accusation which falls outside the concern of the Roman court (18:15; 23:29; 25:18-19). Again, Paul slips in an element of selflessness in his defence speech. He has not come to Jerusalem to start riots or desecrate the Temple, but to bring alms for his poor countrymen (ἐλεημοσύνας ποιήσων εἰς τὸ ἔθνος μου) and present offerings (προσφοράς [24:17]). A quiet, pious, and generous man is how he presents himself to Felix, hardly the sort with sedition or Temple desecration in mind. It is a defence later summarized in one statement in his first trial before Festus: "I did no wrong against the Jewish law, the Temple, or Caesar" (25:8).

Paul's final major defence speech before Festus, Agrippa and Bernice is a near replica of the speech given to the raging mob in Jerusalem (26:2-29). He is an orthodox Pharisee and the beliefs which they so strongly object to come straight from the training he received as such (26:5-8). His transformation from persecutor to persecuted is recounted, including the divine communication which was the source of the offending innovation he has introduced to his Judaism (26:12-19). Recounting further divine assistance (26:22) he returns to defending the orthodoxy of his beliefs in a resurrected Christ who sent him to preach to Gentiles (26:22-23). Later, in Rome before a Jewish audience, he will reassert the traditional orthodox grounding of his message (28:17-20).

#### **4. Conclusion**

In the defence speeches offered by Peter, Stephen and Paul we find many of the features of the cautious intermediary who seeks to operate in that tension between gaining power and avoiding appearances of ambition. They characterize their miracle-working as directed for the benefits of others, not themselves. Paul particularly points out his detachment from wealth gain. Furthermore, they deny any interest in political ambition or sedition. Their teaching is, according to them, rooted within the traditional religious framework while their innovations are the result of rather direct contact with the divine. Their defence speeches both allude to and demonstrate their bold speech and lack of concern for personal safety. They declare themselves to be the

positive mirror image of the seditious religious deviants they have been labelled as by their accusers.

### **C. Conclusion**

The charges against and defence speeches by the approved intermediaries of Acts are a strong indication that we are on the right track with our description of the tension within which intermediaries must operate. Observations which we have made in chapters three and four are confirmed in the charges and defences. Indeed, it is the context of the operation of the intermediary in gaining power and having that power intersect with other forms of societal power that begin to make sense of the charges and the defence. The accusation of religious deviance indicates a failed attempt at finding legitimation within an established religious framework, while the defence is to claim precisely that legitimation. Charges of riotous and seditious behaviour clearly fit the framework of an intermediary who introduces a potentially disruptive "outside" source of power into the framework of a community whose own power grid could easily be disrupted by this potentially unlimited source of divine power. Claims by the intermediaries that point to their lack of greed and ambition make good sense in terms of the ambiguous role of the intermediary as one who must offer power without seeking personal power and advantage through that power. Both the criteria distinguishing miracle-workers and magicians and the context in which those criteria function meaningfully are apparent.

### **IV. Defending Power in *Life of Apollonius***

*VA* offers us the same sort of self-defence speech by its leading intermediary we find in Acts. The advantage that *VA* offers over Acts is that the narrator himself steps in to offer a defence against accusations floating in the general public shared by both the implied author and reader. This larger public forum is a strong clue that the charges and defences offered within the narrative world of *VA* are precisely the sort that function within the world shared by writer and reader. Again, this generic quality is precisely what makes this text useful. Furthermore, Apollonius' defence of the Brahmans also offers some excellent insight into the criteria shared by intermediaries

and their audience as to what makes certain mediators of divine power magicians or proper miracle-workers.

## **A. The Charges Against Intermediaries**

### **1. Informal Accusations Against Apollonius**

We have already noted in various places the narrator's direct response to those who, in the past or in the present, suggest that Apollonius is something less than the legitimate wonder-working philosopher Philostratus makes him out to be with this biography. In the opening chapters of the narrative, we discover that there are some who "believe him to be a magician (μάγος) and slander him as wise in coercion (διαβάλλουσιν ὡς βιαίως σοφόν)" (1.2).<sup>36</sup> The reasons which are cited in forming this opinion are Apollonius' communication with the Babylonian Magi, the Indian Brahmans, and the Egyptian Gymnosophists and his ability to foretell the future. Likewise, in 5.12 the narrator pauses the story to insert a defence against those who might claim Apollonius was capable of foretelling the future because he was a magician (τοῖς γόητα τὸν ἄνδρα ἡγουμένοις). When Apollonius steps out of his fetters for a moment to comfort Damis, the narrator further addresses the "more simple-minded of humanity" who might ascribe feats such as these "to the magicians" (ἐς τοὺς γόητας [7.38]).

### **2. Informal Accusations Against the Brahmans**

When Apollonius visits the Egyptian Gymnosophists singing the praises of the Indian Brahmans, Thespion, the leader of the Gymnosophists casts aspersions on the Brahmans as intermediaries (6.10). Thespion objects to the wonder-working of the Brahmans on two grounds. First, he regards their displays of divine power as "crowd-pleasing" magical displays. He compares the Gymnosophists to the Brahmans by using the analogy of the Olympic and Pythian festival. The former is simply a display of athleticism while the latter involves various crowd-pleasing activities to go with the athletic display (ποικίλαις δημαγωγούσιν [6.10]). Thespion claims that truth does not require "conjuring and the 'coercive craft'" (θαυμασιοουργίας τε καὶ

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<sup>36</sup>On the translation see above page 171, note 232.

βιαίου τέχνης [6.10]). Second, the Brahmans' "magic" is used to supply them with all they need and offers them a life of comfort. If Apollonius accepts the Brahman way of life, Thespesion tells Apollonius, "You will not have to work but everything will come to you automatically" (καὶ πονήσεις οὐδέν, ἀλλ' αὐτόματα σοι βαδιεῖται πάντα [6.10]). The implication is that the Brahmans' power is being used to offer themselves a life of luxury. If Apollonius embraces this wisdom, Thespesion claims, he will become a wandering beggar eager to flatter eyes and ears (εἰ δὲ τὸ τῶν ἀγειρόντων ἀσπάση, κολακεύσεις ὀφθαλμούς τε καὶ ὦτα [6.10]).<sup>37</sup> Simply put, the Brahmans use their power simply to impress the crowds and enrich themselves and thus these displays of power are negatively labelled by Thespesion.

### 3. Formal Charges Against Apollonius

Apollonius, like Paul, faces a formal Roman trial toward the end of the narrative. At the core of the charges brought against Apollonius upon his voluntary arrival in Rome to face Domitian's accusations is that he is a magician who has used his illegitimate powers against the Emperor. When he is first brought in for questioning, the prosecutor abuses him "as a wizard and an adept at magic" (ὡς γόητι καὶ ἱκανῶ τὴν τέχνην [7.17, Loeb]).<sup>38</sup> This more general charge is fleshed out into four detailed accusations which are picked up again later by Domitian in his questioning of Apollonius during the trial (7.20, 8.5).

First, Apollonius' unique style of dress and general ascetic lifestyle is objectionable. His philosopher's garb alone is apparently grounds for charges (7.20, 8.5). This would be utterly puzzling, except of course that Nero himself took to being

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<sup>37</sup>The charge of being one who begs (τῶν ἀγειρόντων) should probably be read as a form of magic accusation given the closely related ἀγύρτης (both terms are traditionally used for the begging priest of Cybele [LSJ]) which is clearly associated with terms such as μάγος (in the usual negative sense of the term)(Graf, *Magic*, 21-22, 27-28).

<sup>38</sup>τέχνη can, of course, have a rather more neutral reference as it literally refers to any art, skill, or handicraft. However, its usage as a term referring to soothsaying and evil cunning is attested by LSJ and the context here would hardly allow any other translation than the Loeb offers. Elsewhere Philostratus uses the term in other contexts which also clearly imply magic (1.2, 8.34) and also uses the phrase βιαίου τέχνης, literally "the coercive craft," to speak of magic (6.10). Perhaps ideally one would translate it "the craft" with the understanding that this is short for "witchcraft."

suspicious of all who took on philosopher's dress as malevolent diviners (4.35). The distinctive style of dress, part of the intermediary's societal "distancing" to gain power according to our above analysis, is here the very thing which brings on deep suspicions about the intermediary.

Second, Apollonius is charged with having been worshipped (προσκυνέω) by certain people (7.20). Domitian later rephrases the charge when he asks Apollonius why people favour him by naming him as a god (τοῦ χάριν οἱ ἄνθρωποι θεόν σε ὀνομάζουσιν; [8.5]). As we noted above, allowing divine honours to be heaped on an intermediary is typically construed as having crossed the line on status gain and unseemly ambition in the realm of the gods.

Third, Apollonius is under suspicion because he predicted the plague which engulfed Ephesus (τὸ ἐν Ἐφέσῳ ποτὲ ὑπὲρ λοιμοῦ χρῆσαι [7.20]). Domitian asks more directly, "What set off or contributed to you predicting to the Ephesians their plague?" (8.5).<sup>39</sup> We can only speculate that the implication is that to accurately predict the arrival of the plague would implicate Apollonius in its very arrival. Another alternative would be to simply see this as an example of Apollonius' magical powers of divining the future which Domitian will next claim were used against him to encourage his arch-enemy Nerva.

The fourth charge is that of declaring anti-Domitian sentiments, some secretly or obscurely, some openly or clearly, and some on the claim that he had heard them from the gods themselves (διειλέχθαι δὲ καὶ κατὰ τοῦ βασιλέως τὰ μὲν ἀφανῶς, τὰ δ' ἐκφάνδην, τὰ δ' ὡς θεῶν ἀκούσαντα [7.20]). Clearly related to this charge of uttering sentiments which were to the detriment of Domitian is the "grand charge" which Domitian jumps to directly following the Ephesus incident. That is, Apollonius is charged with having visited Nerva and sacrificed an Arcadian boy at night to consult the auspices concerning the Emperor.<sup>40</sup> These auspices

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<sup>39</sup>πρόθεν γὰρ...ὀρμώμενος ἢ τῷ ξυμβαλλόμενος προεῖπας τῇ Ἐφέσῳ νοσήσειν αὐτούς;

<sup>40</sup>It is striking that Juvenal speaks of diviners consulting the auspices of various animals and "even of a boy" just before he speaks of the value of persecution and imprisonment for an astrologer (*Satire* 6.548-564).

apparently persuaded or excited Nerva about his prospects in usurping the throne (καὶ ἐπᾶραι αὐτὸν τοῖς ἱεροῖς τούτοις [7.20]).<sup>41</sup> Domitian simply claims outright that he sacrificed the child and questions "for whom" he did it (8.5). This most shocking accusation is actually a two-fold charge. First, the sacrifice of the child to consult the auspices is clearly something only a most evil magician would do. A killing such as this is both morally objectionable and results in some form of ritual impurity within the narrative world of *VA*.<sup>42</sup> And, as the exchange between the Eleusinian hierophant and Apollonius demonstrates, an "unclean" dealing with the gods is γοητεία (4.18-19). Second, this bit of black magic was carried out *to divine the future of the Emperor* so that a rival could strike effectively.

#### 4. Conclusion

Again the formal and informal charges levelled at the legitimate intermediaries of *VA* within the narrative world of the text all demonstrate various features we noted in our description of the intermediary gaining and maintaining power. The ever-increasing reputation as a mediator of divine power, first gained through withdrawal (as is displayed by Apollonius' distinctive garb) and travel, is itself at the heart of the accusations against the intermediaries. As we noted in Acts, it is the very success of the intermediaries which can create problems for them. Indeed the "miracles" themselves can be used to cast suspicion on the intermediary when particular *effects* of these miracles are highlighted. The accusers are suggesting that the displays of divine power mediation serve to openly advance the comforts and cause of the intermediary. The intermediary is charged with operating in a self-serving ambitious manner. The charge of unacceptable religious deviance which played a prominent role in Acts is also here, nowhere more so than in the critical charge that Apollonius murdered a boy to read the auspices.

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<sup>41</sup>Or as the Loeb so nicely translates (for our purposes anyway), "by such rites you roused his ambitions."

<sup>42</sup>This is clear from Apollonius' own defence in 8.7.10, but is also clear when other murders and murderers are discussed in the narrative (6.5, 7.6, 7.25).

## **B. Defences by the Narrator and Apollonius**

### **1. The Narrator Defends Apollonius**

We suggested above that the narrative indicates that there is a segment of popular opinion which holds that Apollonius' foreign travels and prescience put him in the category of γόης. The narrator's strategy in defending Apollonius from a magic accusation resulting from his foreign journeys and his prescience is to call on historical precedents (1.2). The narrator compares Apollonius' apparently questionable activity with that of well known philosophers from the classical past.<sup>43</sup> The narrator has at his disposal other philosophers, and indeed four wonder-working and prescient philosophers, who engaged in the same activities as Apollonius and none would cast aspersions on them as magicians. Empedocles, Pythagoras, Democritus, and Plato all visited the foreign intermediaries such as the Babylonian Magi, Egyptian priests and prophets, and spoke of divine matters much as Apollonius did. Socrates was capable of foretelling the future with the help of his δαιμόνιον. Anaxagoras is cited as a well-respected classical philosopher who, like Apollonius, predicted disasters. In short, Apollonius' activity is not religious deviant or innovative, but rather is in line with that of the great classical philosophers of the glorious past (1.2).

As for Apollonius' predictions of the fall of Nero which provoke a defence by the narrator in 5.12, these are defended on the grounds that Apollonius only revealed the will of the gods, he did not attempt to manipulate fate. Magicians (οἱ γόητες), says the narrator, use a variety of coercive rites such as torturing phantoms, barbaric sacrifices or certain assaults and anointing to alter that which is decreed by fate (μεταποιεῖν φασὶ τὰ εἰμαρμένα). Apollonius, on the other hand, simply followed fate and revealed the future based on what was revealed to him by the gods. Then the narrator throws in an additional argument, which corresponds to Thespion's charge against the Brahmans. The narrator claims that Apollonius never sought to discover the secret of the Brahmans' telekinetic powers. Clearly, Thespion is on to something with his charge of superfluous and self-serving displays of miraculous

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<sup>43</sup>Francis, 184.

power. Apollonius cannot be an ambitious γόης so long as he demonstrates a circumspect humility in the realm of the gods and humanity.

The defence the narrator brings up in regard to Apollonius' release from his prison fetters momentarily is most unusual given the rest of the narrative. Here the narrator suggests that magic craft<sup>44</sup> is a fraudulent business in which those with uncritical minds are duped into thinking success is attributable to the magic they performed and lack of success to their own failure to perform the given rite perfectly (7.39). At first glance, the line of argument seems to be that since magic is nothing more than illusory self-deception Apollonius could not have been released from the fetters by it. This, however, runs contrary to all the other references to magic craft (ἡ τέχνη) and magicians (γόης) in *VA* where these have real but misused power.<sup>45</sup> One might simply attribute this to an unreliable narrator who at this point slips and lets his true beliefs about magic and magicians show. However, there is another option which is suggested by the narrator's passing remark at the end of 7.38.

When Apollonius pulls his leg out of the fetters, the narrator records Damis' claim that at this point he truly understood Apollonius' divine and superhuman nature (ὅτι θεία τε εἶη καὶ κρείττων ἀνθρώπου). Damis' realization is based on Apollonius having done this without a sacrifice, a prayer, or speaking (7.38). It is precisely sacrificial rites which are then picked up in 7.39 as key features of magic craft. Obviously incantations—read as Damis' "prayer and speaking"—are also understood as features of magic. The narrator claims those who suggest that Apollonius' display of power must be magic are falling prey to the same error as those who attribute all their personal success to magic and all personal failure to unseen errors in the magical sacrificial rites. The claim is not that all magic is illusion, but rather that the conclusion that successful displays of supernatural power must be magic

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<sup>44</sup> Magic is referred to here with the usual terms used elsewhere in *VA* to describe illegitimate power mediation including ἡ τέχνη and the practitioner as γόης.

<sup>45</sup> The tension between Philostratus' apparent view of magic in 7.39 as conjuring tricks and his view of magic elsewhere as supernatural albeit evil is noted by Flinterman who simply suggests his approach is not coherent (65).



craft and the doer a γόης is an incorrect conclusion *in this case*. And the reason it is an incorrect assumption, in this case, is that Apollonius did not, and indeed could not, perform any of the usual magical rites. The folly is blanket assumptions, not belief in magic per se. While the narrator suggests others laugh at magic, he will simply denounce it so that young men will not dabble in magic craft. The overall effect of this defence within the framework of the narrative is not to suggest that magic is purely illusory, but that simply to assume that Apollonius used magic because he had supernatural abilities is uncritical thinking of the sort typically associated with magic.

It is worth noting as an aside that the fetter incident implicitly provides a response to the "no-win" witch test the insolent tribune offers to Apollonius (7.21). The tribune suggests that he will attempt to execute Apollonius. If he succeeds Apollonius was innocent, if he fails Apollonius is indeed a wicked magician capable of falsely passing himself off as a divine being. Apollonius had, earlier in the narrative, offered his own version of a "no-win" witch test. He claimed that if they succeeded in holding him and bringing him to trial he was not a magician. If they really believed him to be a magician, after all, they would both fear his power if arrested and ultimately fail in their attempt to hold him for trial (7.17). The fetter incident, however, demonstrates both that Apollonius had divine power, indeed power enough to escape should he want to, but that it was not of the illegitimate magical variety since he does make use of that power to escape and save himself.<sup>46</sup> By showing what he could do, but chose not to, the narrator has further enhanced the reputation of the intermediary.<sup>47</sup> Apollonius

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<sup>46</sup>Eusebius also makes the connection between the witch-test and the fetter incident, although he is a less charitable reader of the narrative and uses the escape to conclude that Apollonius was indeed a γόης by his own claim that failure to bind him would prove him to be one (*Treatise against the Life of Apollonius by Philostratus* 35). How one might read Paul and Silas' potentially successful "prison break" which is in the end nothing of the sort (16:25-28) against this background of intermediaries capable of escape but not doing so deserves further consideration at some point.

<sup>47</sup>Knoles rightly states that this miracle is primarily "done as an act of friendship towards Damis" (148). This may well capture Apollonius "primary motive" (148), but one needs to distinguish between the narrator's motivation and the character's. The character Apollonius is portrayed as using the miraculous to encourage a depressed Damis, the narrator reports that same episode to dispel magic accusations. The fact that their "motives" differ may serve to heighten the overall effectiveness of the narrator's intent, since Apollonius provides proof against magic accusations without overtly attempting to do so.

willingly faces the false charges, because they are false, and because failure to do so would be an indictment of his revolutionary cohorts (7.9, 14). He has power, but does not use it to personal advantage.

## **2. Apollonius Defends Himself and the Brahmans**

At the core of Thespion's charges against Apollonius is that Apollonius, in choosing Indian wisdom, has chosen a form of divine mediation interested in crowd-pleasing miraculous display for profit (6.10). Apollonius claims he has not chosen a life of luxury as offered by many philosophies, but the rigor of Pythagoreanism (6.11). His power, but also his lack of personal ambition, are derived from this philosophy which allows him freedom from envy, tyrants dreading him rather than he them, a high approval from the gods in his rites, foreknowledge, and the ability to spot gods, heroes, and phantoms disguised as humans. He has power to be sure, but also those qualities which keep the exercise of this power in check. Like the narrator, he reaches into the classical past to pull out Plato as one who holds to the same view of the soul as his Pythagorean philosophy. This move then allows him to justify his love of the Brahmans. His connection with them is their accurate (in Apollonius' view anyway) teachings on the soul as immortal. With this as the hallmark of Pythagoreanism, Apollonius then suggests that the greatest philosophy should be allowed the greatest display of its power, and that is what in fact the Brahmans represent in his view. Implicit in this is the argument that the display of miraculous power, which seems dangerously excessive to Thespion, is really designed to draw attention to Pythagoreanism and its view of the soul, and is not simply self-serving for the Brahmans. Just as Apollonius' Pythagoreanism allows him divine power without personal ambition, so the Indians are enigmatically described by Apollonius as occupying the ambiguous realm of ironic tensions which characterize the life of the intermediary. They are men "dwelling upon the earth, and yet not upon it,...fortified without fortifications,...possessed of nothing, and yet possessed of all things" (6.11, Loeb).

Apollonius then begins to take Thespesion's argument apart. Apollo, the god of "simplicity" according to Thespesion, actually rather likes adorning temples and poetic oracular words.<sup>48</sup> The Indians, argues Apollonius, are simply following the pattern of Apollo himself in putting forward their wisdom with a certain pomp and style. Again, the appeal is to a well known and established religious institution, in this case the Pythian oracle. Apollonius then offers a keen observation that we ourselves ought not to miss—even austerity can be a form of "adornment."<sup>49</sup> The subtleties of the operation of ascetic holy men, denying themselves one form of advancement and power to gain another, is not lost on this austere intermediary. The defence amounts to a declaration that "adornment" for a given form of wisdom is inevitable and in itself does not constitute illegitimacy.

In the case of the Brahmans, not only does their particular pomp and ceremony find justification in the Pythian oracle, but Apollonius further suggests that their miraculous displays are in keeping with their particular worship. Since they worship a god in the air—the sun—levitation as an act of worship is appropriate. What is passed off by Thespesion as excessive miracle-working for crowd-pleasing and profiteering motives is interpreted by Apollonius here as a deeply symbolic form of worship. Presumably their miraculous levitation ought to draw attention to their object of worship, not themselves.

### **3. Apollonius' Formal Defence**

Apollonius' formal defence in book eight actually falls into two sections. First there are the actual court proceedings, in which Apollonius offers one-line retorts to Domitian's distilled version of the accusations (8.5). Second there is the written text the narrator claims was the extended formal defence Apollonius had prepared on his

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<sup>48</sup>οὐδὲ ἑαυτοὺς ἀπαξιούσιν ὧν ἐκεῖνοι πέπανται. διήλθες τινα, Θεσπεσίων, καὶ περὶ τῆς Πυθοῦς λόγον ὡς ἀπλῶς τε καὶ ἀκατασκεύως χρώσης...ὁ δ' ἵνα μεγαλορρήμων τε φαίνοιτο καὶ ἡδίων τοῖς ἐρωτῶσι, ποιητικὴν ἠρμόσατο (6.11).

<sup>49</sup>“Moreover a man who goes without shoes and wears a philosopher's cloak and hangs a wallet on his back is a creature of ornament; nay, more even the nakedness which you affect, in spite of its rough and plain appearance, has for its object ornament and decoration, and it is not even exempt from the proverbial 'pride of your own sort to match.'” (6.11, Loeb).

own behalf (8.7). In some respects, the short oral responses by Apollonius correspond to the longer version in the written text. However the written text offers a level of detail and nuance that is far more helpful in elucidating the sort of criteria distinguishing legitimate miracle-workers from illegitimate magicians. Again, it goes without saying that the fact that Philostratus may have concocted this entire speech makes it no less useful for our project.<sup>50</sup>

Apollonius' written defence can be roughly divided into six sections. He begins with a general defence against the charge of being a γόης (8.7.1-3). He then answers the four key charges in sequence: his appearance and diet (8.7.4-6); his being addressed as a god (8.7.7); his prediction of the plague in Ephesus (8.7.8-9); and his sacrifice of an Arcadian boy to read the auspices against the Emperor (8.7.10-15). Finally, Apollonius answers Euphrates' basis for all these charges—the apparently anti-Domitian remarks Apollonius made while discoursing on the Fates in Ionia (8.7.16).

Apollonius' opening words in his written defence have no correspondence to his shorter oral defence. These opening lines suggest both the basic elements of a magic accusation and the core defence. Apollonius claims that while Socrates was charged with introducing new δαιμόνια, he is being charged with being one, or rather, with inducing others to proclaim him a δαίμων. In a delightful use of prophetic irony, Apollonius then suggests that his accusers may well one day even charge Domitian with "offending against established religion" (8.7.1, Loeb).<sup>51</sup> He hesitates even calling on Zeus as his advocate, for fear that this will be construed as a case of a γόης "bringing heaven to earth" (8.7.2). Vespasian is thus called in as his witness, for Domitian's father neither objected to his appearance nor did he request

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<sup>50</sup>To cite but one example of this conclusion which has overwhelming support among those attending to source critical matters in *VA*—F. Solmsen (142). Eduard Meyer claims that the temptation for Philostratus to test his stylish art "konnte ein Sophist wie Philostratos unmöglich widerstehen" ("Apollonios," 419). Be that as it may, Solmsen still has pointed out that the speech is in keeping with the general thrust of answering accusations of magic against Apollonius and as such Philostratus is presenting what he believes to be a plausible defence against that sort of charge by one so accused.

<sup>51</sup>The actual text read ὡς διαβάλλοντα τὴν περὶ τοῦ θεοῦ δόξαν, literally, "as slandering the splendour [or reputation] of the divine matters." The Loeb translation capture the nuance of this charge rather nicely.

that Apollonius "compel the Fates or Zeus" to help him establish his rule. Furthermore, Apollonius claims, he held his conversations with Vespasian publicly *in a temple*, something a γόης would never do. Indeed, rather than Vespasian requesting Apollonius "compel the gods" (ἀνάγκην ἐπὶ τοὺς θεούς) the subject matter of the conversation stood in direct contradiction to all that γοητεία stands for: law, the just acquisition of wealth, the correct worship of the gods, and the rewards in store for an upright ruler. Finally, Apollonius asks, what sort of dupe practises γοητεία for free, as everyone knows money is the final object of magic (8:7.3). Apollonius, on the other hand, has a letter from Vespasian confirming his commitment to a life of poverty.

Here then are the distinguishing features of legitimate and illegitimate intermediaries. The illegitimate intermediary accepts and indeed induces divine honours being heaped on them. Magicians stand in opposition to established institutional religion, and particularly the temples. They illegitimately compel the gods to do their bidding, particularly to aid others to power against the will of the gods and gain great personal wealth doing so. The legitimate intermediary, then, is one who does not accept or induce others to heap divine honours upon them. They operate within the general boundaries of established institutional religion, including the temples. They do not compel the gods nor pander to earthly rulers, but rather practise correct worship. Finally, they do not grow wealthy with their art. These, then, are all key features we noted in the operation of intermediaries under "Gaining Power" and "Intersecting Power." These features will all recur throughout the defence speech. The one additional feature that is not in these opening paragraphs but will gain prominence throughout the rest of the written speech is that of appealing to the great figures of the past and casting his own behaviour as in terms of ancient precedents.<sup>52</sup>

In his short oral defence, Apollonius defends his linen philosopher's garb on the grounds that he does not wish to trouble wretched animals to dress himself (8.5). In the written speech, his vegetarian diet and dress is once again based on his loathing of becoming unclean through the shedding of animal blood, but here the ancient and

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<sup>52</sup>Francis, 105-107.

venerable Pythagorean roots of this belief are clearly articulated (8.7.4). Furthermore, linen does not have the luxurious reputation of wool, thus underscoring his own humility, even if the linen does allow him greater purity and thus greater access to divine revelations in his dreams (8.7.5). The motif of divine power through withdrawal and denial could not be more dramatically expressed. Likewise, his uncut hair is designed to be intentionally "unattractive" (unlike the "dandies" in Rome), even if, ironically, it is still a source of honour as it recalls the ancient traditions of the Spartans in their heyday and honours the head which is the source of prayer, speech, and interpretive wisdom. The tradition of Empedocles, who went even further with his long hair, adorning it and thus claiming to be a god, is called in as a precedent for behaviour which far exceeds that of Apollonius yet went unpunished. Apollonius' appearance may be a part of his mediatorial "accessories" but they are defensible on the grounds of their non-ambitious nature and their rootedness in ancient traditions.

When questioned by Domitian as to why people call him a god, Apollonius' curt reply is to pass along the Indian wisdom that every truly good human may be honoured by that title (8.5). The actual nature of the charge and the theology which lies behind defence is more apparent in the written speech. Apollonius' written defence implies that he is being charged not only with accepting divine honours, but inducing or in some way evoking this from the larger public. Those who declare publicly that Apollonius is a θεός do so because they have been "thunderstruck by [Apollonius]" (ἐμβεβροντημένους ὑπ' ἐμοῦ [8.7.7]). Apollonius thus asks what discourse or miracle of word or deed he might have used to induce this worship (τί διαλεχθεὶς ἐγώ, τί δ' οὕτω θαυμάσιον εἰπὼν ἢ πράξας ὑπηγαγόμεν τούτους ἀνθρώπους προσεύχεσθαί μοι). The implication is that his miracle-working was designed to bring divine honours to himself. Rather, Apollonius contends, he was never honoured as a god by any city, but simply honoured for healing diseases and correcting their religious practices. In other words, his miracle-working was a philanthropic exercise which aided its recipients physically and spiritually. And, as he again points out, he did it all without gaining wealth.

This would be an adequate defence, except that Apollonius does seem to allow certain humans to be called gods as his oral defence suggests, and it seems, he himself allows that title to be applied to himself as we have seen above. In the written defence, his theology in this matter is fleshed out somewhat more clearly and his real meaning becomes apparent. The cities which honoured him for his philanthropic miracle-working and reform activities know full well the distinction between divine beings and humans, Apollonius contends. However, they are also aware of a kinship between the two, and as the virtues come from the Gods, those who exhibit great virtue are thus "near the gods and divine" (τοὺς μετέχοντας αὐτῶν ἀγχιθέους τε εἶναι καὶ θείους [8.7.7]). Hence, a good and virtuous human might well be addressed as a god or divine.<sup>53</sup> Here Apollonius again dips into the glorious past to draw out a venerable precedent for his argument. Lycurgus himself was addressed by the Pythian Apollo as a god because he was a "good man" (ὡς ἀνδρὶ ἀγαθῷ). Apollonius further bolsters his argument from Egyptian and Indian theology which suggests that good humans have something of God in themselves (τοὺς ἀγαθοὺς τῶν ἀνθρώπων θεοῦ τι ἔχειν). Apollonius, having thus redefined what it means for a human to be labelled a θεός, is now safe in accepting the title for himself as a good and virtuous human. The argument runs along the lines of, "I was never given divine honours, and if I was by being called a θεός, it was only because I am a virtuous human."<sup>54</sup> There are hints, however, that this humility is intentionally self-effacing, since Apollonius does hold some secret convictions about his soul's past and future transformations (8.7.7). Clearly Apollonius falls into the category of one who could easily (and perhaps even legitimately) accept divine honours but deliberately chooses not to.

As for the charge that he predicted the plague in Ephesus, Apollonius like Peter in Acts 4:9 points to his salvific intent and asks what all the fuss is about (8.7.8). Who

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<sup>53</sup>Backing up our interpretation of θεός as an ethical compliment rather than an ontological claim is the excellent analysis provided by Du Toit, 292-300.

<sup>54</sup>There is an obvious similarity to the μάγος defence of, "I should not be labelled a μάγος but if I am it ought to be understood as a title for legitimate Persian priests" (*Epistles of Apollonius* 16-17; *Apuleius Apology* 25).

indeed, asks Apollonius, would not have wanted Ephesus to have been saved from the plague which he did by spotting the εἶδος of the plague as a poor old man (8.7.8-9)?<sup>55</sup> However, he then concedes that the charge is not saving Ephesus from the plague but predicting it. This feat is presented by the accuser as "beyond wisdom and prodigious" which was not possible unless Apollonius were a magician and unspeakable sort of person (τουτὶ γὰρ ὑπὲρ σοφίαν εἶναι καὶ τερατῶδες...εἰ μὴ γοῆς τε ἦν καὶ ἀπόρητος [8.7.9]). The implication is clearly that the prediction did not come from Apollonius' "wisdom" but was enabled by his magical powers.

Apollonius refutes this suggestion on three grounds. First, there are examples of other great "foretellers" of plagues who avert these in the history of Greece and none of them were faced with magic accusations. Second, and this corresponds to his shorter oral defence, it is Apollonius' light diet which allows him to foresee impending events. While one might be tempted to view this as a demythologizing defence by offering a naturalistic explanation for his prescience, the defence as a whole will hardly allow this interpretation. His diet, after all, is a product of the divine wisdom he received from Pythagoras and his animal-free diet and dress are what moves him from the human pole closer to the divine.<sup>56</sup> Furthermore, he claims a secret wisdom on the causes of a plague which he will not share publicly. Indeed, his third ground for refuting the magic accusation is to claim he gave credit for stopping the plague to Hercules, much as he did after defeating the male-devouring lamia. What sort of honour-loving γόης, asks Apollonius, would credit a god for their achievement? Furthermore, the γόης makes use of the gods of the underworld (χθονίοις θεοῖς),

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<sup>55</sup>Burkert astutely suggests the stoning of the old man in Ephesus under Apollonius' direction is some variation on the killing or expulsion of the φαρμακός as a purification ritual (*Greek Religion*, 83). However the ritual trappings, such as the feeding of the φαρμακός, are missing and, furthermore, the narrative is rather clear on the poor old man not as a symbolic scapegoat (the populace is initially horrified at the idea of stoning the beggar), but an actual manifestation of the δαίμων causing the plague (hence the transformed remains when the stones are removed)(4.10).

<sup>56</sup>Apollonius suggests three types of "beings" in terms of knowledge of the future: the gods who foresee all that lies in the future, the human who only apprehends the present, and the wise who knows what is approaching. Apollonius is claiming that it is as someone with divine wisdom that he is capable of foreseeing the plague (8.7.9).



not pure (καθαρός) deities such as Hercules (8.7.9). A γόης, unlike Apollonius, would be one who uses their access to impure deities to perform powerful acts and then claim some personal credit or advantage for the achievement.

When Domitian questions Apollonius for whom he sacrificed the Arcadian boy, Apollonius oral defence is that Domitian ought to call trustworthy witnesses to back up his claim that he actually ever performed this deed in the Roman countryside (8.5). This rather straightforward defence of being elsewhere with a host of witnesses at the time of the alleged crime is repeated in the written defence (8.7.14). Here too one finds the straightforward challenge that Apollonius' accusers should be able to shed some light on the identity of this mysterious Arcadian boy he is alleged to have sacrificed (8.7.12). These straightforward rational defences, appealing as they are to the modern mind raised on courtroom dramas, are downplayed by Apollonius himself as merely rhetorical, while he prefers to defend himself on the grounds of his philosophical convictions (8.7.12). That is, as a Pythagorean philosopher, he has never offered a sacrifice with blood, nor does he accept that the gods appreciate in any way blood-stained sacrifices (8.7.12). As he points out, the Ephesian charge suggests he has a gift of prescience not predicated on sacrificial rites, but rather, the gods reveal their intentions to him as a holy and wise man. Why then would he wish to make himself impure and thus lose his access to the "voice of a god"(8.7.10)? Besides, he counters, what could possibly be his motivation for assisting a potential rival to the Imperial throne given his track record of accepting no gifts or rewards from Emperors (unlike his rival Euphrates) (8.7.11).<sup>57</sup> Apollonius closes his defence against this charge by once again dipping into his personal theology to suggest that human auspices would be useless for divining the future due to the liver-altering anger and fear a specifically human victim would experience (8.7.15).

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<sup>57</sup>The claim to non-ambition is somewhat ironic, given that as readers we know that Apollonius did in fact encourage Nerva in his political ambitions. While he did not accept any monetary gifts from Nerva, or any other Emperor for that matter, perhaps the exercise of power was reward enough in itself. Clearly, Apollonius saw it as his duty as benefactor of humanity to assist in the overthrow of irresponsible despots in favour of more virtuous rulers (7.8).

Aside from the demand to call material witnesses, Apollonius' barrage of arguments against the most serious charge of human auspice-reading in the end demonstrate the same features as his previous arguments. Apollonius opened his defence on the murder charge by asking Domitian if he really believes Apollonius to be some foreigner who might do something so barbaric.<sup>58</sup> The implication is that magic of this variety stands in utter contradiction to all that decent human society (i.e., Greco-Roman society) stands for. This claim to stand within acceptable Greco-Roman philosophy and religion thus becomes his defence against Euphrates' accusation that he indulged in anti-Domitian rhetoric. In Ionia Apollonius had suggested that if someone was fated to take the Imperial throne they would do so even if they had to rise from the dead to do it. Apollonius claims this was not directed against Domitian at all (7.9, 8.7.16).<sup>59</sup> Zeus himself would approve of Apollonius' sentiments about the immutability of fate and necessity (8.7.16). It is, as it were, Apollonius' claim to Homeric "orthodoxy." The equation between γοητεία and the attempted manipulation of the Fates on several occasions in the narrative demonstrates the dual function of this discourse on the immutability of Fate. Surely this perspective does not simply justify Apollonius' remarks on Imperial succession but also contradicts the ongoing claim by Apollonius' opponents that he manipulates Fate as a γόης. Apollonius is claiming both orthodoxy and orthopraxy within the general religious world of Greco-Roman society.

#### 4. Conclusion

The conclusions we reached when looking at the defence speeches by intermediaries in Acts also apply here. Their miracle-working power has landed them in trouble and it is this mediation of power which they must defend. Like the apostles

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<sup>58</sup>Once again the foreign-magic connection shows up which is also present in the charges that he is a magician because of his consorting with foreign priests and prophets.

<sup>59</sup>As Eusebius correctly notes, is truly doubtful that Apollonius is being entirely genuine at this point for as it is earlier narrated in the story it is clearly an anti-Domitian remark directed at Domitian's attempt to kill off potential successors (7.9; Eusebius *Treatise* 39). However, the saying is ambiguous and cryptic enough that one could potentially use the defence Apollonius does here. Apollonius' outspoken boldness is frequently seen as tempered, although he never is portrayed as outrightly dishonest for the sake of flattery of escaping peril. See above page 143, note 156.

claiming to be faithful interpreters of the Hebrew Bible traditions, Apollonius and the narrator appeal to the great religious figures and ideologies of Greek history to justify and defend the conduct of the intermediaries. Even the apparently "innovative" elements of their operation can find some precedent in ancient philosophers or as a natural outworking of their acceptable religious ideology. As with the Apostles, emphasis is laid on the detachment from wealth and a denial of political ambition or sedition. The philanthropic and salvific nature of their miracle-working is also highlighted in both.

A formal charge of "manipulating the Fates" as a magician is not present in Acts, and so a direct defence by an approved intermediary against that charge is not present in the biblical text.<sup>60</sup> The *defence* against the charge of "manipulating the Fates," however, is a twofold claim which can be found in Acts. That is, the intermediary under attack claims a religious "orthodoxy" which in Apollonius' case means he knows well enough to leave fate alone (in Acts it is a claim to belief in the Law and Prophets [24:14]). The second claim is a lack of personal ambition which in Apollonius' case casts doubt on any apparent motivation to do so. This line of defence is also clearly there in Acts. While the specific charge of ambition in the realm of the gods is not made against any legitimate intermediary in Acts, the potential defence against this charge is in fact already present in the miracle-workers' speeches.

### C. Conclusion

The accusations and defence speeches within the narrative world of *VA* confirm our findings from the larger narrative. Gaining power as an intermediary and then using that "outside" power within the power structures of a given society is a tricky business. With great outside power comes a constant demand for safe-guards in the use of that power. To make an overt display of ambition in human society was to ensure that one was accused of using the wrong sort of spiritual power, of being a

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<sup>60</sup>This may be an overstatement in that the Sanhedrin's question of ' Ἐν ποίᾳ δυνάμει ἢ ἐν ποίῳ ὑνόματι ἐποιήσατε τοῦτο ὑμεῖς; may well imply some attempt by Peter and John to have some divine being do their bidding (as we suggested for the Sons of Sceva [see above page 118]). Their defence, therefore, is to point to the salvific nature of their act (4:9) much as Apollonius does with respect to predicting the plague in Ephesus.

magician rather than a legitimate miracle-worker. Magicians were seen as standing over and against all that Greco-Roman society held sacred. Intermediaries thus cast themselves ultimately as servants of Greco-Roman society, benevolent purveyors of access to the power of the acceptable gods themselves, uninterested in personal gains. Those who accepted this characterization would claim these intermediaries were acceptable miracle-workers, those who could not accept this characterization threw accusations of magic against them.

#### **IV. Conclusion**

In exploring the charges against intermediaries and defences by and for intermediaries and their activities in both Acts and *VA*, our lens trained on the criteria distinguishing miracle-worker from magician is brought into sharp focus. What is implied in the intermediary's precarious rise to prominence and in the tension-fraught intersection between intermediary and societal power structures becomes explicit at this point. The charges against the intermediaries in Acts include being socially disruptive and politically subversive, religious deviance of the highest order, and causing financial loss for an aggrieved party. *VA* includes the charge of political subversion to be sure, religious deviance (particularly under the rubric of a pernicious foreign influence), and also ambition in the realm of the gods—including the attempt to manipulate fate and receiving a divine title—and using divine power for personal advancement and comfort. The defence offered by the intermediaries or other interested parties suggests both these and some further qualities associated with an illegitimate purveyor of divine power. Their divine power was used for a harmful purpose, they are self-seeking opportunists most concerned with their own safety and advancement, and the powers they mediate are of a lesser, frequently malevolent sort. The approved intermediary, the miracle-worker, is the mirror image of the magician and it is these qualities which the intermediary on trial claims for himself. In Acts these qualities include an emphasis on the salvific nature of their mediation and the very power of the mediation itself, a boldness and selflessness which defies self-interested motivation and avoids any wealth gains, a claim to religious orthodoxy of some sort,

and a neutral stance toward political authority. *VA* likewise stresses the miracle-worker's stance within the traditional religious framework, the extraordinary nature of the power mediated matched by a circumspect humility both in human and divine circles, an avoidance of wealth gains, the positive use towards which the divine power is directed, and a critical distance from any political self-interest.

The qualities sought out in an intermediary who eventually found legitimacy or acceptance with a particular group and the qualities which were associated with an illegitimate intermediary thus set out the parameters for the cultural game an aspiring intermediary must play. These criteria function much as Douglas suggests witchcraft or sorcery accusations function. These criteria allow a given society to access the interstitial power offered by fringe characters like the intermediaries of Acts and *VA* while controlling the potentially destructive effect this unlimited source of power may carry with it. That these criteria are applied in an uneven fashion with a degree of subjectivity that may cause social historians to revert to the conclusion "my miracle-worker is your magician" ought not to discourage us. Rather, the realization that we are dealing with the give and take of human relationships and human power structures ought to warn us in advance that the exchange between intermediary and established communities will always be uneven and exhibit a certain ebb and flow. That stated, the remarkable correspondence between Acts and *VA* in terms of what opponents suggest about intermediaries and the criteria appealed to in defence of those same intermediaries indicates that within the variation is a shared cultural script well suited to the culture in which it functions.

## Chapter 6

### Conclusion

#### I. **Miracle and Magic: The Criteria in Context in Acts and *Life of Apollonius***

We began our investigation with the story of Philip and Simon in Samaria from Acts and the miles which separate the critical scholar, to whom they appear as fundamentally similar characters, and the ancient narrator who clearly drew a sharp distinction between the two. For the narrator one was clearly a worker of miracles, the other a practitioner of magic. But how, as late twentieth century scholars, are we to understand these two categories? Static absolute definitions of the two as offered by late nineteenth and early twentieth century social anthropologists have proven inadequate, but the alternative offered by scholars working out of a sociology of knowledge framework is equally inadequate—as our opening illustration itself demonstrates. The way forward, we suggested, was to be found in a refreshed historic imagination. The camera must be traded for the camcorder and focused precisely on characters such as Philip and Simon who appeared to be so similar, and who indeed, were subject to being labelled as both miracle-workers and magicians by opposing camps. It is in a detailed investigation into the operation of characters labelled as performers of miracle or magic that one can discover the criteria which distinguished the two in the minds of Greco-Roman Mediterraneans as well as gaining a deeper understanding of the practical outworking of the criteria. Indeed, what becomes evident is that the criteria themselves are a function of the very social dynamic that is the relationship between miracle-worker/magician and Greco-Roman social worlds.

We stated at the outset that our goal was not a new absolute list of criteria akin to the "supplicative versus manipulative" framework of the older social anthropology definitions. Rather, our interest lay in a polythetic classification scheme—a scheme in which one has a series of potential characteristics which may or may not apply in a specific case. If our opening words came from Acts and set up the problem, it is only appropriate if our concluding words on the solution to the problem come from *VA*. When Apollonius defends his decision not to accept ten gifts from the King to Damis

he makes the following statement:

Well, I think, O Damis, that a wise man runs more risk than do sailors and soldiers in action, for envy is ever assailing him, whether he holds his tongue or speaks, whether he exerts himself or is idle, whether he passes by anything or takes care to visit anyone, whether he addresses others or neglects to address them. And so a man must fortify himself and understand that a wise man who yields to laziness or anger or passion, or love of drink, or who commits any other action prompted by impulse and inopportune, will probably find his fault condoned; but if he stoops to greed, he will not be pardoned, but render himself odious as a combination of all vices at once (1.34, Loeb).

This statement illustrates rather well that at the heart of the distinction between miracle-worker and magician lies a social dynamic—expressed here as envy arising from perceived greed on the part of the σοφός. The σοφός, clearly an intermediary in Apollonius' personal case, is fundamentally a person caught in an unusually ambiguous and profoundly ironic social position. The intermediary as narrated by Apollonius may well be faulted on one point or another in a list of criteria dividing miracle-worker from magician. However, there is an overriding envy index and if the intermediary should use their access to divine power in a greedy fashion, making status or wealth gains unacceptable within the taut face-to-face communities in which they sought to operate, they are sure to "render themselves odious" and find their lives narrated as if they had "a combination of all vices at once." While various charges may well stick to a purveyor of divine power, it is their ability to navigate the dangerous waters of gaining a reputation for being a powerful intermediary without being seen to be desirous of that power which determines where the intermediary will ultimately be placed. What separates miracle-workers from magicians is not a hard list of vice and virtues. Rather the distinction is to be found in the interaction between an intermediary offering outsider power and access to the divine and the local community both desiring and fearing that power and the cultural script which makes exchange between the two possible. Ultimately one does end up with a list of criteria which are typically assigned to miracle-workers or magicians arising from precisely this exchange—a polythetic classification in which all or only some of the criteria may be used to pass judgment.

Within the narrative world of Acts, powerful intermediaries frequently came from the fringes, from the interstices of social patterning to use Douglas' terms. And this fringe existence was, to some extent, the source of their power. But even more it was a means of controlling the unlimited power a mediator of divine power could accumulate. Travel and loss of concern for the self as part of the process of gaining a reputation as a powerful intermediary go a long way themselves in preventing the power thus gained from rising to threatening levels. Miracle-working was, of course, the ultimate expression of mediated divine power, and here surprisingly bigger is better (which makes good sense in terms of Christian monotheistic claims) and even punitive miracles can be performed by legitimate miracle-workers so long as personal advantage is not sought through the miracle. On this latter point, personal ambition is out for any intermediary who does not wish to be placed in the undesirable category of magician. An intermediary's lack of personal ambition is demonstrated not in cutting back on miracle-working, but in deflecting any honour or status or wealth which may accrue through the performance of powerful miracles. It is the very irony of the double compliment the narrator pays his miracle-workers in Acts which captures this tension—they are potent enough miracle-workers to be mistaken for divine figures but demonstrate their truly spectacular character by turning down divine honours.

*VA* likewise narrated its positively assessed miracle-worker Apollonius as one who combined a societal withdrawal and extensive travel. The positive function of the latter was more evident here as foreign travel was status-enhancing—although the usual ambiguity of gaining power was immediately evident here as well as foreign travel could also be used against the intermediary as a sign of pernicious foreign religious influence. Miracle-working and its interpretation proved remarkably similar in the two accounts. In both narratives miracles demonstrate the ultimate connectedness of miracle-worker with the heavenly realm. Contrary to popular opinion, extravagant miracle-working itself is not problematic, indeed even punitive miracle-working offers its positive rewards, so long as both are accompanied by the appropriate deflection of honour, status and wealth. To be ambitious in human society



is mirrored by ambition in the realm of the gods ultimately expressed in coercion and manipulation of fate for personal benefit or profit. Here curiously enough the supplicative versus manipulative definitions for miracle and magic may still have some usefulness—now understood as one factor among others and within the framework of a larger social context. This latter point may also be suggested by the Acts narrative, particularly in the sons of Sceva episode.

If an exploration of the intermediaries' rise to prominence sketches the general shape of the criteria distinguishing miracle-worker from magician, investigating the convergence of the intermediary's outside inarticulate power with the articulate power and authority structures of Greco-Roman communities brings the function of the criteria to life. In both narratives the intermediary seeks out legitimation within some form of established religious framework whether that be the synagogue and rootedness in the Hebrew Bible for Paul in Acts or the Asclepion and standing in the traditions of classic Greek philosophers for Apollonius. In Acts legitimacy is hard won and relatively rare. The intermediaries with their boundary stretching interpretation of the sacred tradition meet with a largely mixed response. The existing religious community leadership was not surprisingly less than thrilled at their claim to an alternative form of divine mediation while other community members found new opportunities within their alternative. Even as new communities formed around the miracle-workers of Acts, these new communities rapidly moved to defend themselves from outside intermediaries as well, including their own founders.

The magician as religious deviant is, therefore, at least partially a product of this attempt at an alternative form of mediation of the divine which fails to meet with approval from some form of established religious community or cult. The miracle-worker, conversely, must gain that legitimacy. In *VA* that legitimacy is frequently offered by local cults who enter into a reciprocal relationship advantageous to both parties. Here it is not so much a case of the temple versus the holy man, but the holy man and temple in tandem. However, even in *VA*, rather well known cult sites are less welcoming to a reforming intermediary like Apollonius and on more than one occasion

they label him a γόης. The only place where intermediaries may rule the day without fear of reprisals is among their own entourage and here the loose voluntary nature of the community means that those who find the intermediaries' exercise of power objectionable may simply leave. Aside from this unique set of circumstances, the bold proclamations of the intermediary belie a far more subtle social exchange than is obvious on the surface. Overall, Greco-Roman communities demonstrate a sophisticated defensive strategy which allows them to access the power these intermediaries may offer from beyond the fringes of ordered society without necessarily falling victim to the socially disruptive nature of this potentially unlimited power source.

The intersection of intermediary and political authorities also bears out both the power and the danger these characters represent to existing holders of political power. On the one hand, ambitious political authorities may be fascinated by the access to divine power and information these religious virtuosi represent. The bold well-traveled outsider who apparently can speak to the very will of the gods was simply too interesting to pass up. One can see this both in a character such as Sergius Paulus or Felix in Acts or the various Eastern kings or Vespasian in *VA*. On the other hand, intermediaries in Acts also represented social disruption and so crossed paths on less pleasant terms with political authorities whose highest priority was maintaining the *pax Romana*. At this point, intermediaries are also cast at times as politically seditious. In *VA* this is an even more frequent charge taken rather seriously and indeed seems to have more substance. Here again the cultural script offers some interesting ambiguities. The intermediaries demonstrate their detached boldness and lack of concern for self through criticism of the Emperor, a move which is part of being legitimate miracle-workers, but which can also be used against them in magic accusations as their words are construed as seditious and their mediatorial powers must be dark magic. The intersection of the intermediary's power and that of the political authority threaten the latter and the outcome is a magic accusation, much as it was in the case of religious authorities.

The ideal feature of both of our narratives for our purposes is the fact that in both there are extensive defences offered by intermediaries of their activities. Both the accusations and the defence speeches offered by or on behalf of the miracle-working heroes of both accounts confirm and give clarity to the criteria which one can see functioning in the rise to prominence and the ongoing activities of intermediaries in our two narrative worlds. Distilled and abstracted, the narrative data suggest that the illegitimate intermediary of Acts and VA, the magician, is characterized as socially disruptive, politically subversive, self-interested and ambitious both within human and divine social circles, mediating divine power characterized as malevolent or from lesser divine beings, seeking personal wealth and status gains through their spiritual power, and fundamentally a religious deviant. The legitimate miracle-worker on the other hand is one whose lack of self-interest and ambition is displayed in societal detachment, bold speech and actions which favour truth over personal safety, a detachment from political ambitions of any sort, avoidance of wealth, mediating divine power characterized as primarily directed toward salvific ends and extraordinarily powerful, and to some degree within an acceptable and established religious framework.

Distilled further one could cast our findings in terms of the definition of miracle and magic as follows. When an individual performs an extraordinary event which is understood to be a mediation of some sort of divine power, it will be classed a miracle if it is not performed for some personal advantage by the miracle-worker, it is a particularly powerful display of mediated divine power, it is not overtly undermining the acceptable social and political structures of a given community, and/or it can be understood to occur within an established religious framework. On the other hand, it will be classed as magic if it is performed for the personal advantage of the intermediary, it is carried out in such a way as to suggest a manipulation of divine beings, it is overtly undermining acceptable social and political structures within a given community, and/or it is understood to be an act of religious deviance. It is imperative to remember, however, that this thesis is not suggesting that this is in any

way an absolute (or even exhaustive) list. Rather, these are the shared criteria of players within both of our narrative worlds—only certain criteria may be used in any given case and certainly the application of the criteria is subjective to the extreme. That does not, however, rule out the fact that there was a base of shared values which were consulted in determining whether a given intermediary would be granted miracle-worker or magician status. The extent to which these values are shared and the evenness with which they are applied will, of course, vary considerably from context to context—and that sets up the next stage of research in this regard.

What is firmly established by our study is that our narrators, in presenting characters such as Philip and Simon in Acts or Apollonius in *VA*, were clearly expecting their readers to pick up the clues left in the text which favoured a characterization as either miracle-worker or magician. What our study has accomplished is to draw these out and tag them for readers who are foreigners in the distant narrative worlds of Acts and *Life of Apollonius*. We have, in the words of Geertz, sorted out "winks from twitches."<sup>1</sup>

## **II. From "Narrative World" to "Historical World": Further Testing and Application**

We have already suggested in our introduction that our focus on narrative worlds was not meant to put off forever the question of whether what these narrative worlds present corresponds with what we normally think of as the "real" historical world of Imperial Rome. One could proceed by attempting to determine which aspects of the two narratives correspond to what we normally think of as historical fact. Given the ink spilled over this issue and the lack of any great consensus this does not seem the most fruitful way forward. More productive would be to simply begin to see how the descriptions of miracle-workers and magicians and the criteria separating miracle and magic help to make sense of a variety of texts from the Greco-Roman world. Ideally a variety of genres and a variety of religious perspectives would be the most useful. Testing of this sort would then help to establish how widespread the values and

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<sup>1</sup>"Thick Description," 16.

criteria concerning miracle and magic we discovered in our two texts really were. It would further hone and perhaps expand this list and it might just aid our imagination and analysis as we tease out meaning from these other texts.

Among Christian texts which appear on the surface at least to benefit from or further develop the findings of this thesis would be 1 Thess 2, 2 Cor 10-12, *Didache* 11-13, *Herm. Man.* 11.<sup>2</sup> 1 Thess 2, for instance, reads rather well as an intermediary's defence shortly after being forced out of town and leaving faithful followers behind. 2 Cor 10-12 involves this rather puzzling rhetoric by Paul in which he seems to be attempting to draw attention to his mediatorial power without actually being seen to do so in order to combat malicious claims made about him by other traveling intermediaries. The ambiguity of having power without being seen to use it to personal advantage may well be part of the answer to this tortured rhetoric. *Didache* 11-13 provides guidelines for communities dealing with itinerant prophets and apostles which appear to demand the sort of criteria we noted in our study of these individuals. So too the Shepherd of Hermas in describing true and false prophets appears to be utilizing at least some of the features we noted in distinguishing legitimate from illegitimate intermediaries. One might even be tempted to reenter the fray in gospel scholarship and probe whether aspects of the ambiguity of possessing great mediatorial power but deflecting and downplaying the honour which may accrue might just possibly be a factor in the ever vexing "messianic secret" of Mark. We are making no claims in any of these cases, simply pointing out the next step.

Jewish texts which would serve well as a test of our hypothesis include particularly rabbinic accounts of Jewish holy men. Honi the Circle Drawer would be an obvious place to begin.<sup>3</sup> In *m. Ta'an.* 3:8 Honi is narrated as drawing a circle on the ground and demanding rain from God. Both the mishnaic text itself and

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<sup>2</sup>Two studies of the latter two which would be an excellent beginning include Stephen J. Patterson ("Didache 11-13: The Legacy of Radical Itinerancy in Early Christianity," in *The Didache in Context: Essays on Its Text, History and Transmission*, ed. C. N. Jefford [NovTSup 77; Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1995], 313-329) and J. Reiling, *Hermas and Christian Prophecy: A study of the Eleventh Mandate* [NovTSup 37; Leiden : E. J. Brill, 1973]).

<sup>3</sup>A formative study on Honi the Circle-Drawer within both a Greco-Roman and rabbinic context can be found in W. S. Green, "Palestinian Holy Men: Charismatic Leadership and Rabbinic Tradition," in *ANRW* II.19.2 (1979), 619-647.

subsequent scholars have asked the question of why this is not a case of magic.<sup>4</sup> Clearly a character such as Honi exhibits many of the characteristics which cause divergent assessments of the intermediaries in our narratives. Other miracle workers in rabbinic texts might also prove helpful such as the traditions concerning Hanina ben Dosa. Upon his wife's complaint about their abject poverty (which is highlighted by several stories), Hanina's prayer brings forth a golden table leg which he subsequently prays to be withdrawn.<sup>5</sup> The hint of a miracle-worker powerful enough to gain great wealth with his or her power but choosing not to is clearly present.

Within texts which may be loosely labelled as belonging to the realm of Greco-Roman paganism, apologies against accusations of magic such as that offered by Apuleius' *Apology* are ideal. Indeed this particular text is formative in Kolenkow's "A Problem of Power", itself formative in our study and so a return to that particular text would be useful, along with other texts alluded to in her article. One might even be so bold as to venture back into the realm of the *Papyri Graecae Magicae* to see what connection there might be between popular perceptions of what a magician is and does and the nature of these texts. Certainly Graf's hypothesis that these texts represent a form of radical religious individualism could well be combined with our findings on magic as socially subversive and representing individual ambition.<sup>6</sup>

We could, of course, make a much longer list of ancient texts which could confirm and modify our proposal. Our point is simply that the Greco-Roman world is a world populated with religious virtuosi whom we will have to understand better if we are to understand that world at all. To the extent our construal of the narrative worlds of Acts and *VA* allows us to imagine the operation of these strange foreign characters just a little bit better, the project as a whole has succeeded.

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<sup>4</sup>Lighstone certainly seems to be equating Honi's actions with other forms of ancient magic (*Commerce*, 25-29, 37).

<sup>5</sup>*b.Ta'an*. 25

<sup>6</sup>205-233.

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