

AT THE TEMPLE GATES:
THE RELIGION OF FREELANCE EXPERTS IN EARLY IMPERIAL ROME

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DISSERTATION

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This dissertation by Heidi Katherine Wendt is accepted in its present form
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Heidi Wendt was born May 12th 1982, in Bethesda, Maryland. After five years in Fairfax, Virginia, her family moved to Danville, California, where she attended local public schools. In 2000, she entered Brown University as an undergraduate student. There she concentrated in International Relations and Religious Studies, with a focus on development and interactions between native religion and Christianity in West Africa that included field research in Ghana. After taking several religion courses with faculty whose expertise and research were in the ancient Mediterranean world, she grew increasingly interested in the Greco-Roman context of earliest Christianity.

After graduating Magna Cum Laude from Brown in 2004, Heidi enrolled in Harvard Divinity School, where she studied religion in the Roman Empire with an interdisciplinary approach that included coursework in Roman art and archaeology. During this time she acquired archaeological field experience from excavations in Pompeii and Ravenna, and also through extensive academic travel in Greece, Western Turkey, and Italy. She received an M.T.S. from Harvard Divinity School in 2007.

In 2007, Heidi returned to Brown as a doctoral student in the department of Religious Studies. While at Brown her research continued to focus on situating early evidence for Christians amidst the wider heterogeneous landscape of religion in the early imperial period. She also pursued additional interdisciplinary training in the department of Classics and the Joukowsky Institute for Archaeology in the Ancient World. From 2009 to 2011, she managed the U.S. Epigraphy Project, a digital humanities initiative led by Dr. John Bodel that gathers and distributes information about ancient Greek and Latin inscriptions preserved in the United States of America. In 2011, Heidi was awarded the Emeline Hill Richardson Pre-Doctoral Rome Prize in Ancient Studies, which allowed her to spend a year in residence at the American Academy in Rome. Upon her return, she served as a visiting professor at Wesleyan University as she completed her final year of fellowship at Brown. She received an A.M. in Classics and a Ph.D. in Religious Studies from Brown in 2013.

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To borrow an authorizing strategy from the figures I study, this dissertation is the product of a particular wisdom genealogy. Instead of Pythagoras, Orpheus, Moses, Zoroaster, or the Sibyl, however, I am fortunate to trace my own 'expertise' to the following cast of epic mentors.

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INTRODUCTION

Freelance Religious Experts and the Study of Religion

*They readily discerned that human life is swayed by two great tyrants, hope and fear,
and that a man who could use both of these to advantage would speedily enrich himself.¹*

If one were to take it on Lucian's authority, there was no faster or surer way to gain standing and celebrity in antiquity than through religious entrepreneurship. Not that this was a good thing. Rather, the impression that one gathers from many of his writings is of a second-century world plagued by a veritable pandemic of 'charlatans' in religion and philosophy, among other specialized cultural offerings.

Many of Lucian's works read as primers on religious enterprise and the credulity of any who would put stock in the religion of self-styled experts. His *Philopseudes* investigates both halves of the equation, the sheer mendacity of people and their willingness to believe in nearly anything. As the characters in the dialogue avow the existence of ghosts, the efficacy of mysterious cures, and unusual divine interventions in human affairs, we encounter, in turn, the facilitators of such marvelous happenings: a Babylonian *magos* (μάγος) who rids a

¹ Lucian, *Alex.* 8.4-10 (trans. A. M. Harmon; LCL).

man of poisonous venom with incantations, charms, and purifications; a Syrian exorcist who adjures *daimones* (δαίμονες) in their native tongues; a Pythagorean who in Corinth exhumes a ghost (δαίμων) from the house it haunts after consulting Egyptian works on such matters; and Pancrates, a scribe who learned from Isis in underground Egyptian sanctuaries, who frolics with crocodiles, and who enchants brooms or pestles to serve him.² The narrator's skepticism about such experts is plain: one bitten by their lies is like one bitten by mad dogs; not only does he go mad and fear water, but he bites others, filling their souls with spirits (οὕτω δαιμόνων μοι τὴν ψυχὴν ἐνέπλησας).³

Lucian's biography of Alexander, the founder of an oracle that achieved widespread fame in the second-century, provides further insight into how self-authorized specialists set up shop.⁴ In his early years, the *goēs* (γόης) of Abonoteichus apprenticed with an expert in 'magic', then wandered the countryside of Bithynia plying his services to wealthy women.⁵ After recognizing foreknowledge as the most profitable religious commodity, he contrived to establish his own prophetic shrine of Asclepius, later called Glycon.⁶ Lucian charts the development of the oracle in some detail, noting the many signs and wonders

² Lucian, *Philops.* 11-15 (Babylonian *magos*); 16 (Syrian exorcist); 30-31 (Arignotus the Pythagorean); 33-36 (Pancrates). Pancrates is also the inspiration for Goethe's *Zauberlehrling* and by extension for the Sorcerer's Apprentice of Disney's *Fantasia*.

³ Lucian, *Philops.* 40.

⁴ Christopher P. Jones, *Culture and Society in Lucian of Samosata* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1986), 133-148.

⁵ Lucian, *Alex.* 6.11-12.

⁶ Lucian, *Alex.* 10.

that Alexander affected: fits of inspired madness, speaking in tongues, and prophesying in cooperation with the god's own manifestation, a live python.⁷

When news of Glycon reaches Rome people travel or send envoys to consult him, and none more eagerly than those of greatest power and the highest rank. Alexander even gains a patron in a pious Roman magistrate, whose enthusiasm for the god inflames the city.⁸ With Italy in hand he is emboldened to establish his own mythology, mysteries, then a priesthood, even intimating that his is the soul of Pythagoras.⁹ Lucian's disdain for Alexander is rivaled only in his portrayal of Peregrinus of Parion, a philosopher-*cum*-religious expert active at Rome who pivots between several specialist guises and areas of expertise.¹⁰

Although he has a particular axe to grind with them, Lucian is hardly alone in lampooning figures such as Alexander and Peregrinus. If we begin to take inventory of freelance experts in Roman-period literature, our cases multiply exponentially and with corroboration from every genre. The imaginative first-century novel of Petronius is rife with characters professing idiosyncratic forms of religion: Quartilla and the orgiastic mysteries of Priapus over which she presides, Trimalchio's *mathematicus*, and the 'priestess' Oenothea enlisted to cure

⁷ He garners additional credibility when a Sibylline oracle about a prophet who shall rise among the Romans is read in his favor (Lucian, *Alex.* 11).

⁸ P. Mummius Sisenna Rutilianus, who completed his *cursus honorum* during the reign of Marcus Aurelius (c. 170).

⁹ Lucian, *Alex.* 37-40.

¹⁰ Jones, *Culture and Society in Lucian of Samosata*, 101-116; Jason König, "The Cynic and Christian Lives of Lucian's *Peregrinus*," in *The Limits of Ancient Biography* (ed. Brian McGing and Judith Mossman; Swansea: Classical Press of Wales, 2006), 227-254.

Eumolpus' chronic impotence, among others.¹¹ Whether their ambition is unbridled licentiousness or simply profit, each selects from a vast menu of religious options to assemble rites that are both self-serving and enticing to others. Depicting a similar milieu, Apuleius illuminates the consulting business of an itinerant Chaldean prophet currently active at Corinth, observes an Egyptian necromancer, exposes a Syrian lot divination racket, and paints a vivid picture of rival Egyptian initiation cults in Cenchreae and Rome.¹²

Lest we think that writers bore only negative sentiments toward dedicated experts, Philostratus was commissioned by the Severan empress Julia Domna to compose a hagiographic account of the first-century sensation, Apollonius of Tyana, whose reputation for religious expertise and wisdom persisted still in her day. Even Lucian writes favorably of specialists on occasion, although his praise is limited and reserved for figures such as Demonax, a Cynic philosopher at Athens and a rarity among the more plentiful lot of "those who pretend to be philosophers."¹³ Nevertheless, where experts in religion are concerned the case of Apollonius of Tyana is largely the exception that confirms the rule; most writers

¹¹ Petron. *Sat.* 16-26 (Quartilla and the participants in her orgiastic mysteries to Priapus); 76.10-77.2 (Trimalchio's *mathematicus*); 131.1-7, 136-137 (Oenothea, or 'wine goddess', consulted about Eumolpus' chronic impotence).

¹² Apul. *Met.* 2.12-13 (Diophanes at Corinth); 2.28-31 (Egyptian necromancer); 8.27-30 (Syrian priests); 11.22-24, 11.27-30 (Egyptian cults). See Sarolta A. Takács, "Initiations and Mysteries in Apuleius' *Metamorphoses*," *Electronic Antiquity* 12 (2008): 73-87.

¹³ Lucian, *Nigr.* 24-25. On Lucian's portrayal of Demonax, see Jones, *Culture and Society in Lucian of Samosata*, 78-89. On his characterization of philosophers in general, see *ibid.*, 24-32. Lucian's sharpest condemnations of philosophical pretenders occur, arguably, in his writings, *Vitarum Auctio* and *Fugitivi*.

were more interested in denouncing them as ‘charlatans’ than they were in lauding their virtues and success.

Despite how much ancient authors have to say about such figures, modern historians of religion often overlook the prolific literary attention that freelance experts received, viewing them at best as amusing curiosities, at worst as purveyors of ‘bad’ religion. One of the main reasons that their religious activities have not been satisfactorily defined and studied is that most scholars have to some degree bought into depictions of the sort that we encountered above. In making that observation it is not my aim to defend these religious actors, but to suggest how traditional approaches distort their status and activities. We should neither ignore the prejudices and interests shaping the works of authors such as Petronius, Lucian, and Apuleius, nor accept the word of ancient historians when they cite the corruptive or contaminating influence of foreign practices to justify measures employed to manage specialist activity.¹⁴

The above sources do, however, provide an important retrospective on the ascendancy of freelance religious experts in the first-century CE. By the time that Petronius wrote, and all the more so Lucian and Apuleius, the figure of the freelance expert was recognizable enough as a social type that authors could presume in their readers great familiarity with their activities. Yet taking our available representations at face value makes the significance of this phenomenon inexplicable, that is, unless we accept a characterization of the people who

¹⁴ A problem that I will discuss at some length in chapter two.

embraced freelance experts as gullible and overly prone to ‘superstition’. Even if we trust the point of view furnished by our sources, we quickly run into problems owing to the great number of educated social elites who were likewise prone to consult freelance experts. All told, it simply cannot be the case that they were typically like the versions of freelance experts whom we encounter in so many early imperial writings.

This study examines the evidence from Rome for varieties of freelance religious experts from approximately the mid-first century BCE through the end of the first century CE, a period in which they seem to have become both more prominent and more influential, and also to have diversified in tandem with the Empire’s expanding territory and cultural resources. I am inclined to think that they also increased in number, though with due caution given the relative scarcity of earlier evidence. Within this window, however, references to religious specialists abound in the literary record. This level of literary interest tracks with epigraphic and archaeological evidence for the abundance and diversity of freelance experts throughout the Mediterranean, with a notable concentration in Rome itself. In sources ranging from expulsion decrees to *funeraria*, we learn of places in the capital where religious professionals congregated, of the artifacts implicated in their crafts, of the mechanisms of their diverse offerings, and of those who enlisted them.¹⁵

¹⁵ Epigraphic evidence for freelance experts will appear throughout this study, with some examples denoting particular experts and forms of expertise by name (e.g., epitaphs for ‘scribes’ in the Vigna Randanini catacomb) and other referring to them more generally (e.g., *CIL* 6.4.27140: [*de*]cepit

Given the salience of freelance religious experts in our ancient sources, and how consistently different kinds of experts are treated and even legislated against together, there is a compelling basis for investigating them as participants in a common class of activity within Rome's religious landscape. The quality that unites this class and distinguishes it from other kinds of religious activity is the provision of religious teachings and services in the interest of acquiring status and prestige, and in some cases more transparent forms of profit. While I am neutral on the question of whether this or any other example of ancient religion was normatively good or bad, I intend to show both that the phenomenon of freelance experts was more robust than one would gather from our sources, and also that many people viewed them as legitimate options for pursuing religious interests.

In contrast to the members of civic priesthoods and other offices whose authority and legitimacy were conferred on the basis of social position or institutional affiliation, freelance experts earned theirs by means of skill, countenance, and recognition of their practices. Furthermore, many boasted skills or knowledge that supplemented, enhanced, exceeded, or even supplanted more

utrosque maxima mendacis fama mathematici). For artifacts from Rome that seem to have been produced by freelance experts, see the recent publications of finds excavated from the *fons Annae Perennae* in the modern area of Parioli. Marina Piranomonte, "Religion and Magic at Rome: The Fountain of Anna Perenna," in *Magical Practice in the Latin West: Papers from the International Conference Held at the University of Zaragoza 30 Sept.–1 Oct. 2005*. Religions in the Graeco-Roman World 168 (ed. Richard L. Gordon and Francisco Marco Simón; Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2010), 191–213; Jürgen Blänsdorf, "The Texts from the *Fons Annae Perennae*," in *Magical Practice in the Latin West: Papers from the International Conference Held at the University of Zaragoza 30 Sept.–1 Oct. 2005*. Religions in the Graeco-Roman World 168 (ed. Richard L. Gordon and Francisco Marco Simón; Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2010), 215–244.

ordinary forms of religious activity.¹⁶ Although I refer to such actors interchangeably as freelance religious experts, independent specialists, and professionals, the sense that each term is meant to convey is of a self-authorized purveyor of some form of religious expertise, as opposed to experts on religious matters whose authority was attributed, that is, officially recognized or sanctioned.¹⁷ Likewise, I use the phrase entrepreneurial religion as a simple gloss for the practices and offerings of participants in this class of activity.

Unlike domestic and civic religion, the religion of freelance experts is not a well-studied class of activity at Rome but falls into a gray area that we understand poorly. A number of recent publications dedicated to particular examples have begun to sketch its contours, gathering many data for these figures and also offering nuanced analysis of their activities.¹⁸ Though the limited foci of these

¹⁶ Also James B. Rives, who writes, "The important thing to keep in mind is that there were people whose religious authority derived not from holding an official priesthood or even from expertise in arcane lore, but from the belief that they in some way enjoyed privileged access to divine power and knowledge" [*Religion in the Roman Empire* (Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2007), 168].

¹⁷ The concept of religious 'specialists' could encapsulate any kind of religious actor who holds a form of religious authority. Nevertheless, when I use the term in this study I specifically mean independent or freelance specialists, and, unless otherwise specified, ones in religion according to the definition I will provide later in this chapter.

¹⁸ Some examples include: J. Bert Lott, "The Prince and the Cutting Prophet: A Commentary on Dio 55.31.2-3," (Unpublished Conference Paper; Religion in Pieces Conference Held at Brown University 2-4 Apr. 2012); Pauline Ripat, "Expelling Misconceptions: Astrologers at Rome," *CP* 106 (2011): 115-154; James B. Rives, "Magus and its Cognates in Classical Latin," in *Magical Practice in the Latin West: Papers from the International Conference Held at the University of Zaragoza 30 Sept.-1 Oct. 2005*. Religions in the Graeco-Roman World 168 (ed. Richard L. Gordon and Francisco Marco Simón; Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2010), 53-77; Fritz Graf and Sarah Iles Johnston, *Ritual Texts for the Afterlife: Orpheus and the Bacchic Gold Tablets* (London and New York: Routledge, 2008); Sarah Iles Johnston, *Ancient Greek Divination* (Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2008), 109-182; William E. Klingshirn, "Inventing the *sortilegus*: Lot Divination and Cultural Identity in Italy, Rome, and the Provinces," in *Religion in Republican Italy* (ed. Celia E. Schultz and Paul B. Harvey, Jr.; New York and Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 137-161; Jonathan Z. Smith, "Trading Places," in *Relating Religion: Essays in the Study of Religion* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004);

studies leave room for only preliminary or passing remarks about affinities between different kinds of specialists (i.e., between astrologers and *magi*), together they reveal a number of characteristics, interests, and strategies that were common to many varieties. They also suggest that any one's success depended on offering services that were more attractive not only than those of other specialists working within the same 'area of expertise'—for instance, rival Epicurean teachers, or rival philosophers more generally—but also than those of entrepreneurial figures who were skilled in rival techniques or traditions. I will argue that this dynamic is especially pertinent for those who purveyed some sort of intellectual offering. Since the perceived quality and reputation of a freelance expert was largely contingent upon the sort of clientele that he or she attracted, it is unsurprising to find many religious programs infused with philosophical concepts and other intellectual features that were highly sought after by Roman elites.¹⁹

While novelty was not a prerequisite for this kind of religion, many freelance experts offered wisdom and forms of religion that were alien or otherwise novel from the perspective of audiences at Rome, even if they might have been quite traditional within their native contexts. Some claimed affiliation with or

Marie-Laurence Haack, *Les Haruspices dans le monde romain*. Scripta Antiqua 6 (Paris: Ausonius, 2003); David Frankfurter, "Dynamics of Ritual Expertise in Antiquity and Beyond: Toward a New Taxonomy of 'Magicians'," in *Magic and Ritual in the Ancient World* (ed. Marvin Meyer and Paul Mirecki; Leiden: Brill, 2002), 159-178; Matthew W. Dickie, *Magic and Magicians in the Greco-Roman World* (London and New York: Routledge, 2001).

¹⁹ Pauline Ripat, "Expelling Misconceptions," 115-154, esp. 125.

modeled their practices on those of a renowned cult site.²⁰ Tacitus tells us of a Cilician *haruspex* named Tamiras, who was responsible for founding a temple whose divinatory practices were an extension of those of the Cypriot temple of Venus.²¹ In some cases an itinerant religious expert at Rome might, in fact, have held a prestigious position within a native priesthood, although appealing to the authority of a remote institution qualifies as a form of self-authorization at the capital. Furthermore, many freelance experts were highly innovative in composing and elaborating their religious programs, often in conjunction with exotic framing. Although we should not assume that every one was innovative, the competitive dimension of entrepreneurial religion attached clear incentives to catering to a variety of religious interests, to wielding multiple forms of expertise, and to demonstrating why one's own offerings were more efficacious, beneficial, or exigent than those of any other.

The value of now studying the religion of freelance experts as a unitary phenomenon is at least twofold. On the one hand, we are able to identify a discrete class of agents and activities whose influences often escape notice in scholarship

²⁰ William Klingshirn has argued, for example, that the figure of the *sortilegus* traded on the renown and basic oracular practices of the Temple of Fortuna Primigenia at Praeneste ("Inventing the *sortilegus*"). Fritz Graf and Sarah Iles Johnston draw this sort of conclusion about Bacchic initiators, who drew upon the basic framework of the Eleusinian mysteries in crafting offerings that were otherwise highly innovative (*Ritual Texts for the Afterlife*).

²¹ Tac. *Hist.* 2.3.1: *Conditorem templi regem Aeriam vetus memoria quidam ipsius deae nomen id perhibent fama recentior tradit a Cinyra sacratum templum deamque ipsam conceptam mari adpusalm sed scientiam artemque haruspicum accitam et Cilicem Tamiram intulisse atque ita pactum ut familiae utriusque posteris caerimoniis praesiderent.*

on more visible, institutional forces driving religious change during this period.²²

On the other hand, treating varieties of religious experts together not only allows, but also requires us to work beyond the limits of problematic categories such as ‘magic’, ‘astrology’, ‘mystery cults’, ‘philosophy’, ‘Judaism’, and ‘Christianity’ as we investigate a class of activity whereupon several kinds of practices converged. Such denominations are often inadequate for capturing the considerable diversity of phenomena that fall within them; they are also overly rigid, so that *like* phenomena that fall under different headings seem incomparable.

Part of this problem stems from the fact that our categories are adduced from content that is internal to religious phenomena—that is, how god(s) are represented by particular social formations, what significance those social formations ascribe to certain practices, how they depict their own activities and participants in comparison with those of other social formations, etc.—and thus blur the line between emic and etic representations and explanations. As we will see, expectations of fundamental difference are especially pronounced in studies that devote considerable energy to demonstrating points of continuity between Jewish or Christian groups and other forms of religion in the first and second

²² Recent publications on Roman civic religious institutions include: Jörg Rüpke, *Religion in Republican Rome: Rationalization and Ritual Change* (Pennsylvania, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2012); Eric M. Orlin, *Foreign Cults in Rome: Creating a Roman Empire* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010); Zsuzsana Várhelyi, *The Religion of Senators in the Roman Empire: Power and the Beyond* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010); Clifford Ando, *A Matter of the Gods: Religion and the Roman Empire* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2008); Jörg Rüpke, *The Religion of the Romans* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2007); Eric M. Orlin, *Temples, Religion and Politics in the Roman Republic* (Leiden and New York: Brill, 1997).

centuries, only to conclude that the former were nevertheless unique by virtue of being Jewish or Christian.²³

Since any given expert might employ skills and concepts from multiple areas—a mystery initiator who explained the mechanism behind transformative rites using philosophical representations, or a healer whose prognoses involved astrology—we ought not to presume essential differences between these actors on the basis of selective characteristics of their practices.²⁴ By way of illustration, Arignotus, the Pythagorean whom we encountered in the *Philopseudes*, was evidently a sort of philosopher, but one who enlisted esoteric Egyptian wisdom in order to contend with a ghost, a pursuit which would likely earn him the label ‘magician’ in most publications. Likewise, the self-appointed apostle, Paul, whom I include in this study, devised a religious program that shares points of continuity with phenomena in ‘philosophy’, ‘mystery cults’, ‘Judaism’, and ‘Christianity’, but which is not fully at home in any of these categories. Since many specialized offerings were composite, entrepreneurial forms of religion cut across as many categories of practice as there were different kinds of practices comprising them. It is thus unsurprising when religious experts resist clear categorization and it would be misleading to locate their diverse offerings under only one rubric.

²³ See the discussion and bibliography in chapter five.

²⁴ Experts of all varieties seem to have competed with one another for clients interested generally in novel or rarified services. For examples of religious experts who thus utilized philosophical language and concepts, see Graf and Iles Johnston, *Ritual Texts for the Afterlife*. Many other examples and references will come in chapter four.

The methodology that I pursue in this study seeks to circumvent that inevitable tautology by describing the practices and characteristics of all varieties of freelance experts in a manner that is on the one hand sufficiently attentive to difference but on the other hand neither departs from nor returns to any premise of incomparability. An important premise in my own work is that although religious experts might differ with respect to claims or methods, to ethnic frames of reference, to levels of skill, and to the preconditions that enabled specific skills—for instance, the requisite literacy for producing religious writings or divining from texts—it is useful to theorize such differences as variations within a common class of religious activity. While distinctions in the content of specialist offerings are far from unimportant—for example, a diviner of texts warrants different considerations than a caster of knucklebones—these are secondary to some of the deeper field dynamics in question. Whether one calculates a sophisticated predictive astrological chart or crudely inscribes strange characters into a lead sheet is a difference of aptitude or strategy but not of the basic kind of activity in which the expert is engaging.

Experts in religion were, moreover, but one subset of a wider class of emergent professionals at Rome in other specialized areas such as philosophy, *paideia*, law, and medicine.²⁵ As Elizabeth Rawson notes, competitive dynamics between those specialists also encouraged variety, though space for originality varied considerably depending on the form of expertise in question. The

²⁵ Elizabeth Rawson, *Intellectual Life in the Late Roman Republic* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1985); Rüpke, *Religion of the Romans*, 215–235.

innovative potential of teachers, to use her example, was usually restricted to a limited area, such as terminology, the organization of subjects, disciplinary criteria, and so forth.²⁶ Similar constraints applied in theory to philosophers claiming affiliation with a particular school, although in actuality the stakes of close doctrinal adherence were closely tied to the location and ambitions of the philosopher in question. Cicero complains often of philosophical hacks and is especially attentive to the prolific circulation of Epicurean writings, the first philosophical texts to be translated into Latin, throughout Italy.²⁷ He singles out the works of Catus, an Insubrian Gaul from Northern Italy, Amafinius, and Rabirius, as especially inaccurate and crude, noting that there are now far from learned Epicureans in every village. While certain intellectual specialists, particularly those with whom Cicero and other Roman aristocrats associated might be constrained by the traditions and institutions with which they claimed affiliation, others had more freedom to adjust their practices or to demonstrate authority otherwise.

Framing the activities of freelance religious experts within a wider class of entrepreneurial activity serves as a precaution against inflating their significance beyond due measure. It also signals our need for a particularly fine set of

²⁶ Rawson, *Intellectual Life in the Late Roman Republic*, 322.

²⁷ Cic. *Fam.* 15. 16.1, 19.2-3; *Fin.* 2.44; *Tusc.* 4.6-7. See Rawson, *Intellectual Life in the Late Roman Republic*, 23, 48-49; Miriam T. Griffin, "Philosophy, Politics, and Politicians at Rome," in *Philosophia Togata I: Essays on Philosophy in Roman Society* (ed. Miriam T. Griffin and Jonathan Barnes; New York: Oxford University Press: 1989), 1-37. Griffin notes, "The Epicureans were the first school to present their doctrines in Latin in works which, according to Cicero, were read all over Italy despite their inaccuracy and crudeness" (9). A parallel case can be made for teachings of Pythagoras, which I will discuss at length in chapter four.

instruments with which to isolate them from similar social actors and raises the question of what makes someone a *religious* expert as opposed to one of those other kinds, who might also work independently, be self-authorized, compete with rivals, and offer innovative teachings or services.

I define experts in religion as those specialists whose practices directly enlisted gods and similar beings, which is consistent with my understanding of religion as one sort of social practice that involves such beings and also imputes to them, in addition to any number of special abilities and powers, human-like characteristics that allow people to interact with them according to an intuitive social logic.²⁸ Neither do religious practices form an exceptional domain of social activity, nor do they constitute a coherent dataset on the basis of some unique shared essence.²⁹ Although the understandings that enable their performance involve and also promote certain basic beliefs—for instance, beliefs about the characteristics of gods and how humans should interact with them—they do not require that participants assent to elaborate theological propositions.

²⁸ For elaboration, see Stanley K. Stowers, “The Ontology of Religion,” in *Introducing Religion: Essays in Honor of Jonathan Z. Smith* (ed. Willi Braun and Russell T. McCutcheon; London and Oakville: Equinox, 2008), 434–449.

²⁹ For the position that religion is only an analytic tool see Jonathan Z. Smith, “Religion, Religions, Religious,” in *Relating Religion: Essays in the Study of Religion* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004), 179–198. For the Christian baggage that the term carries, see Brent Nongbri, *Before Religion: A History of a Modern Concept* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2013); Jonathan Z. Smith, “Bible and Religion,” in *Relating Religion: Essays in the Study of Religion* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004), 197–215; Talal Asad, *Genealogies of Religion: Discipline and Reasons of Power in Christianity and Islam* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1993). For the position that meaning grows out of socially organized human activity, and through social activities are constructed, they exist as social realities apart from discourses formed about them in the linguistic realm. For example of theories of religion that exemplify this approach, see Stowers, “The Ontology of Religion,” 436; Kevin Schilbrack, “Religions: Are There Any?” *JAAR* 78 (2010): 1112–1128.

Religious practices also link in an unlimited number of ways with other practices and are distributed throughout many areas of social life, so that “religion is always a matter of more and less” depending on other social practices with which they are bundled.³⁰ A map of possible combinations is especially rich for the ancient Mediterranean world, where religion pervaded nearly every human activity. In instances where religious practices were only marginal components of an activity, the basic assumption that gods were relevant to the task at hand might result in a religious practice playing a minor role in conjunction with another kind of practice—for instance, divining to determine a course of military action. The ancient world yields many such examples of a religious practice or practices linking with other types of practices that are not religious, although having a religious element does not make a practice religious *per se*.

The picture of ancient Mediterranean religion that I am sketching bears some resemblance to the concept of embedded religion that has become a commonplace in scholarship of recent years, but there are important differences between that approach and the one I have outlined above. Both are attentive to the fact that, unlike many modern ones, ancient societies did not segregate religious matters off from other social activities or have a concept of ‘religion’ as a well-defined and autonomous sphere of social life. Both, moreover, reflect awareness of the baggage of certain Christian influences on the modern category of religion that are anachronistic for this period.

³⁰ Stowers, “The Ontology of Religion,” 444.

Granting all this, the heightened consciousness of the latter problem has, in my view, led to a tendency to overcorrect for it, with the result that many scholars now either work with heavily qualified and imprecise concepts of religion, or disqualify any concept of religion as a relevant analytical category for the ancient world. For instance, in an article critiquing the first problem, the slipperiness of ‘embedded religion’, Brent Nongbri argues in favor of discarding the category:

If our reading of the textual and material evidence is correct, what the Romans did was not religion, at least not in the sense that the term is generally used. Ceding this point should in no way lower our opinion of the Romans; it should only reinforce the idea that Romans were different from us in this regard. In spite of this urge to grant the Romans religion, neither the appeals to ancient discussions of the word *religio* nor an expanded definition of religion is an effective means of claiming that Romans had the modern concept of religion. Different aspects of Roman belief and practice may prove to be interesting comparanda with modern religions, but if we make such a collection of ancient ideas and practices and simply label it “Roman *religion*” without acknowledging that it is our own interests that collected this particular set of data together, we short circuit the heuristic process, attributing our own heuristic model to the Romans.³¹

Nongbri rightly identifies confusion on the part of scholars who say that religion was “embedded” in the social structures of ancient cultures in order to signal differences between antiquity and modernity, while continuing to slide back to concepts of ‘a religion’ or ‘religions’ when they refer to entities such as Roman religion and Greek religion.³² But Nongbri himself is locked into a proposition with only two options: either the Romans engaged in practices and held beliefs

³¹ Brent Nongbri, “Dislodging ‘Embedded’ Religion: A Brief Note on a Scholarly Trope,” *Numen* 55 (2008): 440-460, cit. 451-452.

³² Nongbri, “Dislodging ‘Embedded’ Religion,” 452-453.

that fit a *modern concept of religion*, with all of its aforementioned baggage, or we cannot speak of their ‘religion’ at all. Since the first option is clearly wrong, only the alternative remains. At risk of thrusting our own conceptual categories upon the ancient world, we must seek a way of describing Roman interactions with the gods that does not project *any* concept of religion onto antiquity.³³

Theorizing religion as a matter of variously linked social practices that involve a distinct class of imagined beings and anthropomorphisms avoids both problems, inasmuch as this is not the sort of narrow modern concept that Nongbri has in mind. To analyze those types of practices—prayer, speaking to a god, making an offering to a god, caring for the spirits of ancestors, initiating someone into a god’s mysteries, etc.—offers an approach to the study of religion that is potentially as large as all the ways in which human beings in all their cultures have thought about and engaged with any beings within that class.³⁴

As to the appropriateness of using the term ‘religion’ to refer to practices that meet those criteria, I see a greater disadvantage in discarding religion as a second-order category than in working to disabuse it of notions that are not only anachronistic for antiquity, but that are also inapplicable to many modern phenomena that involve the same class of beings.³⁵ Since religion stands in for all

³³ Nongbri, “Dislodging ‘Embedded’ Religion,” 456.

³⁴ Stowers, “The Ontology of Religion,” 242-243.

³⁵ As Stowers notes, “[T]he theory/definition ought to be explicitly a second-order conception designed for and justified by its usefulness in scholarly enquiry. At the same time, certain advantages for such enquiry attach to theories that bear some continuity with

such practices, it is flexible enough to include examples from any historical period or cultural area. We can also speak of religion without meaning ‘a religion’ or ‘religions’, totalities that project coherence and stability onto religion and that also imply bounded and substantial traditions and social groups.³⁶

There are occasions in this study when I will use phrases such as ‘Roman religion’, ‘Greek religion’, and ‘Judean religion’, but I do so in one of two senses: either to refer collectively to any and all religious practices coexisting in a particular geographical area (‘Roman religion’, as in ‘all varieties of religion present at Rome’), or, in the more limited sense of ideas about the religion of other peoples and/or cultural areas from the perspective of non-native audiences (i.e., the set of practices, characteristics, and associations that Roman audiences had in mind when they imagined the religion of Greeks, Judeans, etc.). The latter sense will play an important role in my theorization of freelance experts insofar as many utilized such ethnic caricatures to their advantage by claiming expertise in practices or wisdom traditions that were what I call ‘ethnically coded’, i.e., strongly associated with a particular people or region even if the relationship was more of a verisimilitude than an ostensibly faithful representation of another culture.

In the same vein, debates about whether the Latin word *religio*, or any other cognate from antiquity, maps exactly onto the modern term ‘religion’ can be easily sidestepped. The Romans and other ancient peoples had many descriptive terms

“religion,” “the things of the gods,” or whatever folk concepts that most closely overlap with our modern Western concepts” (“The Ontology of Religion,” 443).

³⁶ In the sense that ‘Judaism’ and ‘Christianity’ are religions in the modern sense. Much of my language here follows Stowers, “The Ontology of Religion,” 445.

for practices and beliefs involving their own gods, ancestors, and related beings; they could also identify and reconcile the same kinds of practices among other peoples, often using their own native concepts.³⁷ Since we can examine such practices without defaulting to a ‘modern concept of religion’ in the sense critiqued by Nongbri and others, the issue of analytical dissonance poses no hindrance to our ability to detect and meaningfully study forms of religious activity in the ancient world.

To bring the discussion back to freelance experts in religion, I include in my category not only actors who engaged gods such as Mithras, Iao, Isis, and Anubis or beings such as *daimones*, but also astrologers, whose services were often predicated on anthropomorphic understandings of celestial phenomena and their relevance to human affairs.³⁸ Of course, there were some astrologers, often differentiated as ‘astronomers’ although the terms were used interchangeably in antiquity, who argued that their art was a predictive ‘discipline’ and thus

³⁷ Latin examples include but are not limited to *religio*, *superstitio*, *mos maiorum*, *sacra*, *ritus*, and the host of terms that describe technical practices such as sacrifice (*sacrificare*), the public act of transferring something to a god’s property (*consecrare*), the repeat performance of a ritual whose outcome was inconclusive or undesirable (*instauratio*), and so on. John North articulates this point neatly when he writes, “In fact, for most purposes [Greeks and Romans] believed...that all normal people believed in *the* gods and goddesses i.e. the same gods and goddesses, whose names differed from society to society, but whose essence remained the same. Caesar in Gaul does not ask the question what are these gods? but rather which of these gods is Mercury?” [Caes. *BGall.* 6.17; John North, “Pagans, Polytheists, and the Pendulum,” in *The Spread of Christianity in the First Four Centuries: Essays in Explanation*. Columbia Studies in the Classical Tradition 27 (ed. William V. Harris; Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2005), 125-143, cit. 136].

³⁸ Tamsyn Barton, *Ancient Astrology* (London: Routledge, 1994), 86-113.

unencumbered by religious understandings.³⁹ Comparable contestations occur at the edge between the practice of medicine and forms of healing that shaded into religion. For instance, the second-century physician and medical writer, Galen, states that he always refrains from bragging about his cures and treatments, lest other physicians and philosophers label him a *goēs* and a *mantis* (μάντις).⁴⁰ Elsewhere he labors to disambiguate confusion about the difference between doctors and *goētes*, whose practices and skills might overlap to an inconvenient degree. Alexander's own teacher was, according to Lucian, a *goēs* of the sort who trafficked in enchantments, miraculous incantations, love charms, conjuring, and estate successions.⁴¹ But he also hailed from the circle of Apollonius of Tyana and was known publicly as a doctor (ἰατρός). Ulpian weighs in on the question of whether doctors are to be considered practitioners of the liberal studies (*studia liberalia*), which he answers affirmatively, provided that one excludes people who make incantations (*si incantavit*), imprecations (*si imprecatus est*), or who perform exorcisms (*si...exorcizavit*), for these are not kinds of medicine (*non sunt ista*

³⁹ Barton, *Ancient Astrology*, 107-109 where she discusses Ptolemy's efforts to provide natural explanations about celestial phenomena. "Ptolemy uses a wide range of explanations in which principles of analogy are always important, but the tendency to anthropomorphize the heavenly bodies is reduced.... [His] naturalistic explanations are often clearly rationalizations of theories which had their origins in myths about the stars. He attempts to remove all elements of the personification which had formed part of the common understanding of the heavens. He is rare among astrologers in his efforts to find rational explanations, and to suppress features he finds too fanciful." See also Serafina Cuomo's discussion in *Pappus of Alexandria and the Mathematics of Late Antiquity* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 9-56.

⁴⁰ Gal. *De praecog.* 10.15.

⁴¹ Lucian, *Alex.* 5.

medicinae genera).⁴² Marcus Aurelius recalls how Diognetus, his instructor in Greek *paideia*, disabused him of tales of wonder-workers (θαυμαστοποιοί) and about incantations and exorcisms of *daimones*.⁴³

We inherit several opinions of would-be disciplinary authorities from the ancient world who define themselves in opposition to people who claim the same specialties but whose practices fall short of the standards that they themselves advocate.⁴⁴ For most, the critical distinction between a real expert in a given subject and an imposter can be distilled to the matter of whether or not the specialist's in question epistemology and practices are religious in the sense for which I argue. For instance, Epictetus taught, "Training exercises (ἄσκήσεις) must not be performed which are contrary to nature and incredible, since then we who call ourselves philosophers would be in no way different from wonder-workers (θαυμαστοποιοί)."⁴⁵ Yet apart from these discourses the boundaries between 'doctor', 'philosopher', 'astronomer', and 'religious expert' are tricky to draw. A doctor and a religious healer might share any number of methods, instruments, and remedies, but differ from each other fundamentally with respect to the diagnosis of an ailment—"the patient contracted an illness", as opposed to 'the patient is afflicted

⁴² Ulp. *Dig.* 50.13.1.2 = *De omnibus tribunalibus* 8; Cuomo, *Pappus of Alexandria*, 35.

⁴³ M. Aur. *Med.* 1.6.

⁴⁴ I have in mind authors such as Galen, Diognetus, Ptolemy, and Lucian and his interlocutor, Celsus, whom he credits with writing books debunking the tricks of the *magoi* (*Alex.* 21).

⁴⁵ Arr. *Epict. diss.* 3.12.1: Τὰς ἀσκήσεις οὐ δεῖ διὰ τῶν παρὰ φύσιν καὶ παραδόξων ἐπεὶ τοὶ τῶν θαυμαστοποιῶν οὐδὲν διοίσομεν οἱ λέγοντες φιλοσοφεῖν.

by a *daimōn*'—and to the course of treatment—medicine or surgery, versus solutions such as exorcism or purification, perhaps even in addition to medicine.⁴⁶

It is important, then, to recognize the stakes that the authors of many of our sources for freelance experts had in thus diminishing their value. An author such as Lucian provides ample fodder for looking down upon such experts, yet it was precisely by derogating *those* cultural authorities that Lucian and his interlocutors staked out their own command over the matters about which they wrote. As he relates Alexander's chicaneries to his correspondent Celsus, Lucian refrains from listing all of the devices by which he deceived his followers because, he comments, Celsus had already cited instances enough in the treatise he wrote against *magoi* (μάγοι).⁴⁷ In like manner, Artemidorus prefaces his encyclopedic work on the subject of dream-interpretation by appealing both to people who would do away with divination completely and to those who have practiced divination erroneously, inciting others to mock and reject the discipline.⁴⁸ But he writes foremost against other authors of treatises on dream divination.

For there is no book on dream-interpretation which I have not acquired, expending much zeal in this regard, and I have also consorted for many years with the much-maligned diviners of the marketplace, whom the high and mighty and the eyebrow-raisers call beggars (προϊκτάς) and charlatans (γόητας) and altar-lurkers (ἀληθῆ), though I have rejected their slander. And in Greece, in its cities and festivals, and in Asia and in Italy and in the largest and most populous of the islands I have listened patiently to old dreams and their outcomes. For in no other way was I able to gain

⁴⁶ Cf. Dale B. Martin, *The Corinthian Body* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995).

⁴⁷ Lucian, *Alex.* 21.

⁴⁸ Artem. *Oneirocrit.* praef. 1.1.

perspective on these matters. As a result, out of this abundance, I become able to speak about each thing such that, speaking the truth itself, I do not babble on, but [I] furnish proofs that are [both] clear and easily grasped by all based on straightforward examples.⁴⁹

For Lucian and Celsus, as for Artemidorus, one's own authority as cultural producer depends on demonstrating exhaustive familiarity with the practices of other would-be authorities, only to then denounce them.

If we disentangle these highly interested and even tactical commentaries from the basic phenomenon at issue, they corroborate a trend toward comprehensive religious programs and services that might look quite different from another point of view. As I will argue in chapter five, the letters of Paul provide a rare and intimate sightline into how seamlessly assorted influences might be interwoven into a composite religious program that demonstrates a need for the specific services he is offering. But the Pauline epistles also alert us to the impossibility of judging the extent to which such combinations were consciously strategic—that is, whether a specialists drew upon certain skills, concepts, and practices with full awareness of how these might position him or her in certain discourses or areas of expertise—or merely reflects the understandings and intuitions that a specialist brought to the activities in which he or she engaged.

For some writers, the sex of the expert in combination with religion is the extenuating factor. Varro speaks of women who employ *praecantatrices* instead of showing their symptoms to a *medicus*, a term which Porphyry, a second-century

⁴⁹ Artem. *Oneirocrit.* praef. 1.2 [trans. Daniel E. Harris-McCoy; *Artemidorus' Oneirocritica: Text, Translation, and Commentary* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012)].

commentator on Horace, uses to define another word for female religious experts, *saga*. “*Sagae* are *praecantatrices* who employ incantations to summon ills to harm people or who employ incantations to drive out such ills.”⁵⁰ At the root of Varro’s rebuke, however, is the apparent fact that women were notable participants in the religion of freelance experts, and crop up not infrequently as both purveyors and consumers in our body of evidence for this class of religious activity. Moreover, the presence of female religious experts is likely underrepresented in instances where independent specialists are referred to collectively.⁵¹ Many of the portraits of women that we will consider in this study might reveal more about the agenda of the writers who craft them than they do about the religious activities of actual women. Nevertheless, I would argue that women are implicated in the religion of freelance experts too often, and by authors who assess their activities both positively and negatively, for all of these examples to be exclusively a matter of constructing gender.⁵²

These observations bring into focus the methodology of the present study, how one determines which actors qualify as purveyors of freelance *religious* expertise, rather than of some other kind of specialized offering. Some negative

⁵⁰ Varro, fr. 15: *ut faciunt pleraeque ut adhabeant praecantatrices nec medico ostendant*. In Hor. *Carm.* 1.27.21: *sagae sunt praecantatrices quae vel arcessere carminibus mala hominibus possunt vel expellere*. For discussion of these references, see Dickie, *Magic and Magicians in the Greco-Roman World*, 133 nn. 36 and 39.

⁵¹ As Matthew Dickie reminds us, “It is likely then that our [sources]...are using the generic masculine when they speak of magicians (*goētes* Gk.; *magi* Lat.) and that both sexes are encompassed under the term” (*Magic and Magicians in the Greco-Roman World*, 193).

⁵² For the interpretive problems of accounts of women’s religious activities, see Ross Shepard Kraemer, *Unreliable Witnesses: Religion, Gender, and History in the Greco-Roman Mediterranean* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011).

examples are fairly straightforward. A Roman jurist might work independently, be self-authorized, command compensation, compete with rivals, and offer idiosyncratic juridical opinions, but was probably unlikely to incorporate religious elements into his typical practices.⁵³ Similarly, while a philosopher might devote considerable attention to matters of theology, or weigh and even affirm the value of certain religious practices, taking up the gods and religion as an intellectual theme is not necessarily a religious activity in my sense of involving interactions with gods and similar beings. Nor is writing a book about novel religious practices, since thinking or writing about gods is not tantamount to evoking them directly. Yet one might claim to possess a divinely authored text, to write under divine inspiration, or to divine from inspired writings.⁵⁴ Related skills and forms of prestige obtain for both sets of intellectual practices, yet in the latter examples learning and writings are part of what I would call a religious activity.⁵⁵

This observation is important since one type of religious experts clearly consisted of writer-intellectuals whose offerings were either related to their learning or were the writings themselves, while other types had nothing to do those skills. In chapters four and five I will demonstrate that an expert's potential

⁵³ Bruce W. Frier, *The Rise of the Roman Jurist: Studies in Cicero's Pro Caecina* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1985), 252-268.

⁵⁴ For an excellent overview of such practices from Classical through Late Antiquity, see Peter T. Struck, *The Birth of the Symbol: Ancient Readers at the Limits of their Texts* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2004).

⁵⁵ As Stowers explains, "In ancient Greek sacrificial practices, a certain gesture with upheld hands meant that the actor was speaking to a deity, praying. In another practice, wrestling in the gymnasium, for example, or voting in an assembly, the gesture might mean nothing or something different. Only as part of a practice do certain actions and sayings have the context in which to be intelligible" ("The Ontology of Religion," 443).

and likelihood to innovate or to assume multiple specialist guises was greater in combination with skills such as writing and textual interpretation. Lucian apes these tendencies in his story of Peregrinus, called Proteus, whose wanderings bring him to Palestine where he learns the marvelous wisdom of the Christians from their priests and scribes (ἱερεῦσιν καὶ γραμματεῦσιν) and becomes a Christian prophet (προφήτης), cult leader (θιασάρχης), and synagogue head (ξυναγωγεὺς) in his own right.⁵⁶ Authoring commentaries on their sacred writings and even composing new ones, Peregrinus is revered as a lawgiver (νομοθέτης) second only to that man who was crucified for having introduced a new initiation into the world. After reinventing himself as a Cynic, Peregrinus ends his life with a dramatic self-immolation at the Olympic games in the cultivated style of Indian Brahmins.⁵⁷ For Lucian, versatility is evidence of making it up as one goes along, that the ‘expertise’ of any given is entirely arbitrary, even while his or her interests and motivations are a constant. But this is not the only way to read things.

Suetonius neutrally recalls one M. Pompilius Andronicus, a Syrian *grammaticus* who, wearied by an unequal struggle against competitors at Rome, gave up his school there to author Epicurean writings from Cumae.⁵⁸ The versatility of both Peregrinus and Andronicus is inseparable from their intellectual abilities, foremost of which are teaching and the production and interpretation of writings. In this

⁵⁶ Lucian, *De mort. Peregr.* 11. See Jan N. Bremmer, “Peregrinus’ Christian Career,” in *Dead Sea Scrolls and other early Jewish Studies in Honor of Florentino Garcia Martinez* (ed. Anthony Hillhorst, Emile Puech, and Eibert Tigchelaar; Leiden and Boston: Brill 2007), 729-747.

⁵⁷ Lucian, *De mort. Peregr.* 11 (Christians); 17 (Egypt ascetic); 18 (Cynic philosopher); 25 (Brahmins).

⁵⁸ Suet. *Gram. et rhet.* 8.8; Rawson, *Intellectual Life in the Late Roman Republic*, 23.

vein, sources such as the Pauline epistles, or, to shift our attention momentarily to the Hellenistic world, the Derveni papyrus and perhaps also the Orphic ritual texts, furnish examples of what conceptual admixtures might ensue from the writings of the literate religious specialist.⁵⁹

There is any number of clear-cut cases of religious expertise that require little justification for inclusion within our category: self-authorized priests, prophets, mystery initiators, *magi*, etc. While the evidence for some of these figures may require adjustment for the bias of our ancient sources, we are on relatively firm ground in calling their practices *religious*. The greater challenge is to make determinations about figures who lie somewhere in between, ones who were clearly participating in the wider phenomenon of freelance expertise but whose offerings are composite in a way that evades obvious inclusion or exclusion. To the extent that religious activities are a matter of degree or focus as opposed to absolute criteria (that is, a practice can be, but need not be, wholly religious), there might be considerable overlap between, say, the practices of an intellectualizing religious expert with and those of another intellectual specialist for whom religious elements are absent or insignificant. As I suggested earlier, for these actors especially religion is always a matter of more and less.

⁵⁹ For the Derveni papyrus see Gábor Betegh, *The Derveni Papyrus: Cosmology, Theology, and Interpretation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004); *The Derveni Papyrus*. Studi e testi per il Corpus dei papiri filosofici greci e latini 13 (ed. Theocritos Kouremenos, George M. Parássoglou, and Kyriakos Tsantsanoglou; Firenze: L. S. Olschki, 2006). For the Orphic *lamellae* see Radcliffe G. Edmonds III, ed., *The "Orphic" Gold Tablets and Greek Religion: Further Along the Path* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011); Graf and Iles Johnston, *Ritual Texts for the Afterlife*.

Furthermore, proficiency in novel religious practices or teachings does not necessarily make someone a freelance expert. Many Roman aristocrats seem to have blurred the line between intense study of esoteric subjects and their actual practice. The late Republican aristocrat and intellectual, P. Nigidius Figulus, is known to have authored writings on Pythagorean doctrines, astrology, and the traditions of the Persian *magi*, in addition to works on theology and other religious topics. Elsewhere he is remembered as a skilled practitioner in those areas, so much so that Jerome refers to him as a *Pythagoricus et magus*.⁶⁰ The emperor Tiberius was an astrology enthusiast and is said to have learned to cast horoscopes more accurately than those who voluntarily devoted their life to it.⁶¹ Nero, too, pursued instruction in exotic arts, although he preferred to learn the secret teachings of the *magi* from his teacher Tiridates.⁶² Although their practices might overlap with those of a freelance religious expert, it is hard to imagine a Roman emperor needing to market such skills for prestige or money.

Another scenario that shares many formal characteristics with the freelance provision of religious expertise, yet which might need to be delineated from the precise phenomenon in question, would be one in which a slave provided religious

⁶⁰ Jer. *Chron.* 183.4. For a comprehensive list of references to P. Nigidius Figulus, in his multiple guises, see James B. Rives, "Magic, Religion, and Law, The Case of the *Lex Cornelia de sicariis et veneficiis*," in *Religion and Law in Classical and Christian Rome*. Potsdamer Altertumswissenschaftliche Beiträge 31 (ed. Clifford Ando and Jörg Rüpke; Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag, 2006), 47-67, cit. 63 n. 59.

⁶¹ Joseph. *AJ* 18. 216-217. Josephus continues that Tiberius believed that everything connected with divination was trustworthy; and because its revelations turned out to be true, he, more than any other emperor, resorted to it in handling his affairs.

⁶² Plin. *HN* 30.14-17; Suet. *Ner.* 13.1.1, 30.2.2. The same emperor made a habit of consulting Balbillus, thought to be the son of Thrasyllus (Tac. *Ann.* 6.22; Suet. *Ner.* 36.1).

expertise within his or her immediate household. While it might be the case that a master would deploy such expertise for profit in a manner suggestive of entrepreneurial religion, much depends analytically on the purposes to which such expertise was put. There is evidence for slaves offering specialized services within their immediate *familiae*, and also, for ones who were given the liberty to extend their talents beyond the *familia* for profit.⁶³ In Acts 16:16, Paul and Silas come across a female belly-talker (ἐγγαστρίμυθος) who earned a great deal of money for her masters by foretelling the future. When they drive out her prophetic *daimōn* in the name of Christ, her masters drag them before authorities on the accusation that they have thrown the city (Philippi) into an uproar by advocating customs unlawful for Romans to accept or practice.⁶⁴ It was generally the case that slaves who possessed specialized skills enjoyed greater privileges, and also, that a higher value was placed on their freedom in proportion to their capabilities.⁶⁵ Even if a slave with foreign expertise had not profited from it beyond his or her immediate *familia*, many freedpersons utilized such skills professionally upon manumission.⁶⁶ In other words, some slaves might have been able to engage in religious

⁶³ It is not always clear whether such profits accrued to the master or partially to the slave as a *peculium*. In the example from Acts that follows, it would appear to be the former.

⁶⁴ The full episode unfolds from Acts 16:16-40.

⁶⁵ E.g., Plin. *HN* 7.128. As Leonard Schumacher notes, “The physician Decimus Merula in Assisi [paid] his master 50,000 sesterces for his manumission, [while] actors (*histriones*), charioteers (*aurigae*), and other specialists are known to have paid far higher sums in order to obtain their liberty” [“Slaves in Roman Society,” in *The Oxford Handbook of Social Relations in the Roman World* (ed. Michael Peachin; Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 589-608, cit. 595].”

⁶⁶ Schumacher, “Slaves in Roman Society,” 602.

entrepreneurship prior to receiving their freedom, while others might have drawn upon their skills in this capacity only once they were freed.

I draw all of the above distinctions cautiously, with a view to the fact that our evidence for any of the experts in question is often partial and may only capture one facet of their expertise. For instance, Paul transmits teachings that contain a great deal of content identified as moral exhortation, or *paraenesis*.⁶⁷ I am also persuaded that he enlists other philosophical language and concepts; for instance, understanding *pneuma* (πνεῦμα), or spirit, as a mobile intelligent substance, as opposed to the third person of the trinity or an exclusively Hebrew concept lacking in any Hellenistic influence.⁶⁸ Yet all of these components of his thought are inseparable from the religious services he offers. If we did not have Paul's own writings, however, and only a passing reference to him, he might just as likely be classified as a teacher, a scribe, a philosopher, or a *goēs*.⁶⁹ We see this sort of problem clearly for freelance experts who are attested by multiple ancient sources; for example, a man named Sudines, called a *mathematicus* by Strabo but a

⁶⁷ The bibliography on moral exhortation in the Pauline epistles is large. The *locus classicus* is the work of Abraham J. Malherbe, "Hellenistic Moralists and the New Testament," *ANRW* 2.26.1 (1992): 267-233; idem, "Exhortation in 1 Thessalonians," in *Paul and the Popular Philosophers* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1989), 49-66, esp. 59; idem, *Paul in his Hellenistic Context* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1995). For a more conservative treatment of the topic, see Victor Paul Furnish, *The Moral Teaching of Paul* (2nd ed.; Louisville, Ky.: Westminster John Knox, 2009), 68-111.

⁶⁸ For example, Stanley K. Stowers, "What is Pauline Participation in Christ?" in *The Holy Spirit: Classic and Contemporary Readings* (ed. Eugene Rogers; Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2009): 91-105; Troels Engberg-Pederson, *Cosmology and the Self in the Apostle Paul: The Material Spirit* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011).

⁶⁹ In the *Acts of Paul and Thecla*, for example, Paul is denigrated as a *magos* (3.9 and 5.6).

haruspex by Frontinus.⁷⁰ Where evidence permits, we must make judgments about the practices in which we know an expert to have engaged, while also avoiding the trap of uncritically accepting the labels of our ancient writers.

Since I am not the first to notice affinities between varieties of independent specialists, it is necessary to outline some important differences between my arrangement and theorization of the evidence for such actors and other studies that have drawn upon the same or comparable bodies of evidence. The brief survey that follows is neither comprehensive, nor limited to the geographic and historical parameters of the present study, but it evinces a number of common assumptions and theoretical positions that I hope to revise.

The first matter is that of the revealing language and concepts that frame many prior studies of the activities of freelance experts, and experts in religion specifically. It has often been the case that when these religious actors are grouped together by modern scholars, it is as a pejorative swath—semi-educated charlatans, soothsayers, wonder-workers—whose activities are understood both to undermine social structures and to offset more esteemed forms of religion and philosophy. The former characterization is clear from the titles of publications such as Ramsey MacMullen’s *Enemies of the Roman Order* and James A. Francis’ *Subversive Virtue: Asceticism and Authority in the Second-Century Pagan World*.⁷¹

⁷⁰ Strab. 16.1.6; Front. *Str.* 1.11.15.

⁷¹ Ramsey MacMullen, *Enemies of the Roman Order: Treason, Unrest, and Alienation in the Roman Empire* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1966); James A. Francis, *Subversive Virtue: Asceticism and Authority in the Second-Century Pagan World* (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1995). As Francis justifies his study, “Deviance is a fact of life. In any human

Incidentally, this antagonistic relationship to prevailing institutions is the very characteristic that allows varieties of specialists to hang together as a coherent object of study. MacMullen unites figures ranging from philosophers and other intellectuals to ‘magicians’ on the basis that all were participating in a “scum of superstition [that] rose to the surface” as medical science and other disciplines stagnated to herald in the “irrational age.”⁷² MacMullen’s adoption of the Roman writers’ point of view gains additional support from its preponderance of assorted specialists, as well as the apparent eclecticism of their offerings. Of the shift he observes in the first centuries BCE and CE, he writes: “Teachers for their part were obliged to present their philosophic or religious revelations wrapped up in the most absurd claims: an interview, *monos pros monon*, with Hermes, perhaps, or with Isis, or some other deity. In the preface to a treatise on astral plants, an author describes how widely he had pursued his researches, always in vain, even at Alexandria; but how at length through the magical offices of a priest in Thebes he obtained an introduction to Asclepius, and learned all that he now discloses to the dedicatee—apparently the emperor Claudius.”⁷³

Such scholarly incredulity and even bare contempt for the conjoining of religious and intellectual practices, often organized under a particular cultural aegis, reveals a preference for ancient phenomena that, in their ‘pure’ forms, most

community exist those who simply will not conform to prevailing standards.... The way in which a society uses its authority to deal with dissenters offers an intimate glimpse into its inner workings—its value, assumptions, and spirit” (xiii).

⁷² MacMullen, *Enemies of the Roman Order*, 245.

⁷³ MacMullen, *Enemies of the Roman Order*, 106.

closely resembled modern notions of rational inquiry. Furthermore, within this scheme, it was the religious experts, with their liberal misappropriations of intellectual material, who forced the hands of cultural producers whose own practices had no place for divine revelation or ‘magic’ but who were eventually overwhelmed by the tide of their influence. “[Only a few generations after Cicero], philosophers became astrologers; and astrologers went by a host of names: “dream diviners,” “Magi,” “Chaldaeans,” etc. The treasury of words carrying honor was being depleted by unjustified borrowings, very much as today the title “scientist” is usurped by anyone who turns tabulator or puts on a white lab coat.”⁷⁴

Although the same competitive dynamics between experts in various specialties and services were conducive to the sort of bricolage that MacMullen denounces, his characterization of such innovations reproduces the tone of ancient authors who had a vested interest in devaluing composite offerings and experts boasting multiple forms of expertise. It is reasonable to assume that there was considerable variation in people’s grasp of philosophy and other specialized teachings, but we should not automatically infer that innovative combinations of practices and influences resulted from a poor grasp of philosophy or another rarified pursuit.⁷⁵ Rather, such combinations were more the norm than the

⁷⁴ MacMullen, *Enemies of the Roman Order*, 109.

⁷⁵ P. A. Brunt, “Philosophy and Religion in the Late Republic,” in *Philosophia Togata I: Essays on Philosophy in Roman Society* (ed. Miriam T. Griffin and Jonathan Barnes; New York: Oxford University Press: 1989), 197: “In the Graeco-Roman world too there must have been *indocti*, a term that can include all who had not carefully studied philosophy, who were influenced by vague awareness of critiques of traditional religion; such men were probably more often to be found

exception in the ancient world, a point that is lost when experts are accused of ‘eclecticism’, which implies the violation of distinct spheres or disciplines that conform to the modern categories ‘philosophy’, ‘medicine’, ‘religion’, and ‘magic’.⁷⁶

Even having corrected for the tenor of ancient writers, some scholars still take umbrage at freelance religious experts on the grounds that their activities smack of profit mongering, self-interest, and insincerity, qualities that clash with some scholarly notions of what religion should entail. Charges of profit and insincerity are still much indebted to our sources, for whom such tropes were among the standard tools for discrediting the religious activities of any person or group that incurred suspicion or disfavor. But the matter of interests is more complicated, especially for studies predicated on theories of religion that hold religion to be foremost, if not exclusively, an instrument for social cohesion.

Robert Parker’s 2005 monograph, *Polytheism and Society at Athens*, includes a wealth of diachronic evidence for religious professionals, whom he groups within ‘unlicensed’ kinds of religion, in opposition to the religious activities of ‘licensed’ social units—*oikoi*, private associations, and public cults—that cumulatively functioned to reinforce different types of social bonding.⁷⁷ Parker writes of

among persons of *some* education than among the masses.” We must thus understand the variety of opinions among the *indocti* to which Cicero refers (*Nat. D.* 1. 5).

⁷⁶ For critical engagements with these issues, see Ando, *A Matter of the Gods*, 1-18; Iles Johnston, *Ancient Greek Divination*, 1-32; John M. Dillon and A. A. Long, eds., *The Question of “Eclecticism”*: *Studies in Later Greek Philosophy* (Berkeley: University of California, 1988).

⁷⁷ Robert Parker, *Polytheism and Society at Athens* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), 116-152 (religious professionals); 44-45 (the synergy of the *oikos* and public cults).

freelance experts: “The best religion, it appears, is amateur religion (i.e., in contrast to the religion of ‘experts’, who demand compensation for their services). The respectability of the priests and priestesses of the public cults is also owed to the respectability of ‘ancestral tradition’ as embodied in those cults.... The shadiness by contrast of the religious professionals is also the shadiness of *unlicensed, free-enterprise religion*.”⁷⁸

The tension evident in Parker’s study between forms of religion that were communally oriented and thus, according to his structuralist model, promoted the continuity of civilized society (civic or polis religion, the religion of families, and kin-groups), and the self-interested, largely independent activities of religious professionals is revealing.⁷⁹ If religion is nothing more than a social tool, and if all Athenian religious behavior contributed to some order of social maintenance, how are we to reconcile the activities of freelance experts, who not only worked outside religious institutions, but who also clearly pursued interests that did not contribute directly to that aim?⁸⁰ The implicit answer is that we cannot; religious professionals had no natural or beneficial social function. The same explanatory confusion surrounds peoples’ incentives for consulting religious professionals, insofar as Parker presumes that even personal acts of devotion were undertaken on

⁷⁸ Parker, *Polytheism and Society at Athens*, 116, parenthesis and emphasis added.

⁷⁹ Parker, *Polytheism and Society at Athens*, 191.

⁸⁰ Parker, *Polytheism and Society at Athens*, 41.

behalf of a larger social unit.⁸¹ Since individuals are not meaningful units of analysis within Parker's theorization of religion, freelance experts are necessarily antithetical to forms of religious activity that can be more easily reconciled with a social-functionalist account.⁸²

That religious professionals pursued certain interests by means of religious expertise does not immediately impeach them, as all religious practices are pursued in the interest of fulfilling some aim, whether that may be health, safety, prosperity, character development, or a favorable afterlife. Yet in many studies, particularly ones for which 'religion' serves societal or communal needs, interest implies selfish, anti-social, or insincere motivations. One can mount a case for why one would engage in the religion of freelance experts, from the perspectives of both purveyors and participants, without implying such motivations. And as to the transactional nature of entrepreneurial religion, I would argue that a similar dynamic accompanies all positions of religious authority, although the forms of capital they accrue may be symbolic and/or misrecognized.

Several scholars who have taken up the subject of freelance religious experts share Parker's basic premise that religion promotes social stability, although their view of how specialists fit within such a scheme is not always negative. Francis is favorably inclined toward 'ascetics', whom he regards as cultural dissidents who

⁸¹ Parker, *Polytheism and Society at Athens*, 40.

⁸² For critiques of social-functionalist theories of religion, see Hans H. Penner, "The Poverty of Functionalism," *History of Religions* 11 (1971): 91-97; Schilbrack, "Religions: Are There Any?"; Paul Firenze, "Value and the Economics of Religious Capital," (Ph.D. Dissertation; Brown University, 2013), 16-47.

had a pivotal role in transforming the psychology of “the civic person...who located authority externally, in various social institutions, into the person of late antiquity who searched within for otherworldly authority.”⁸³ Here, insofar as independent experts championed new and empowered forms of subjectivity, a positive light is cast on their perceived conflict with religious institutions. Alternatively, although taking a similar tack, David Potter locates specialists among a category of religious phenomena that periodically refreshed or revised traditional religious systems and thus ensured their vitality as a necessary medium for change.⁸⁴ Others, applying the arguments of Peter Brown’s influential work on the Christian holy man in late Antiquity, take that position even further. Not only were religious experts social reformers who challenged existing norms and authority, with enough power of their own, they might even usurp the social functions of religious and other institutions: resolving community tensions, arbitrating disputes, symbolically purging violence and unrest, allaying anxieties, and generally promoting the health and stability of social groups.⁸⁵

⁸³ Francis, *Subversive Virtue*, 19. Although ascetics can be rescued from the ranks of specialists whom MacMullen dismisses *tout court*, they are nevertheless not to be confused with “the sort of wonderworkers and demagogues that...infested the street-corners and marketplaces of the second-century Empire.”

⁸⁴ For example, David Potter, *Prophets and Emperors: Human and Divine Authority from Augustus to Theodosius* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1994), 4-14. Potter divides the elements of a “religious system” into passive and active elements, which reflect “the distinction between the acceptance of old knowledge and the search for new.” In his view, oracles and other media of divine communication were the essential vehicles of active religious experience, while cult ritual was the essential public feature of passive experience (5).

⁸⁵ See Peter Brown, “The Rise and Function of the Holy Man in Late Antiquity,” *JRS* 61 (1971): 80-101, esp. 97-98; idem, “The Rise and Function of the Holy Man in Late Antiquity, 1971-1997,” *J ECS* 6 (1998): 353-376.

There is often little if any basis, however, for reading such social functions into our accounts of freelance experts. Not only are they pervasive throughout Roman history, irrespective of the exact contingencies to which Brown attributes their rise, they also correlate inconsistently with social groups, let alone entire sets of 'community' needs or interests. While some experts aspired to forge and maintain social groups dedicated to their religious teachings and other practices, others did not share those interests but preferred instead to consult with clients episodically. Equally, while some specialists issued public critiques of governing authorities and institutions, as we will see, others insistently supported those authorities and institutions in their practices. While scholars who make the former arguments are picking up on certain features of specialist activity, it is less clear that those features have the underlying structural implications ascribed to them.

Several of the studies that I have cited also hold certain assumptions about the recognition and attraction of freelance religious experts, namely, that they were popular because they satisfied inherent psychological and spiritual needs that were unmet by traditional religious institutions.⁸⁶ Unlike other kinds of authorities, whose power was based on social indicators such as attributed status, religious specialists drew their power and objectivity from sources beyond the society in which they operated.⁸⁷ Their special and mysterious brand of authority, in turn, qualified them to address highly particular social and individual needs.

⁸⁶ E.g., Garth Fowden, "The Pagan Holy Man in Late Antique Society," *JHS* 102 (1982): 33-59.

⁸⁷ Brown, "The Rise and Function of the Holy Man," 95-96.

Graham Anderson, for example, attributes the market for 'holy men' in the early Roman Empire to "a moral climate in which there were ills of society to be put right and regulation of the social order required.... Also a part of this moral universe [was] the quest for personal security, identity, and salvation."⁸⁸

To the extent that some innovative forms of religion tend to be grounded in premises of essential difference, to espouse esoteric theologies or cosmogonies, and to consist of practices imbued with special significance, we should expect the religion of specialists to exhibit such features. Yet, again, many experts offered, or even alleged to offer, knowledge and services that were self-evident or basic, but that nevertheless appeared novel to their audiences. Paul, for example, claims simply to be revealing what the ancient Judean writings have always disclosed. In either case we must take care to separate the claims and schematics of the specialists whom we study from our own explanatory accounts, lest we fall prey to their own representations and justifications. Despite the exoticism and mystery in which some couched their offerings, the kinds of services that any of these actors brokered were finite and somewhat predictable: fuller knowledge about or direct communication with the gods, foreknowledge, control over human affairs, healing, fertility, the promise of a better afterlife, and so on.

In addition to attributing the appeal of religious specialists to vague and inaccessible factors, explanations in this vein are also conspicuously tailored toward the emergence of Christianity: the spiritual offerings of 'pagan holy men'

⁸⁸ Graham Anderson, *Sage, Saint, and Sophist: Holy Men and their Associates in the Early Roman Empire* (London and New York: Routledge, 1994), 8.

were counterparts to or prepared the way for a Christian salvation scheme.⁸⁹

Again, I am not denying that specialists themselves sometimes claimed to broker access to special essences or realities; indeed many seem to have utilized this strategy with great success. Rather, my critique applies to academic approaches that take such essence distinctions at face value, a commitment that shapes how we think about and explain some aspects of religion, particularly when concepts such as belief, faith, and spiritual needs are prioritized over the interests that emerge unforced from our evidence.⁹⁰

In more recent scholarship, identity has loomed large as the reason why people sought out the religion of specialists. James C. Hanges, whose examination of Hellenistic ‘cult-founders’ is enhanced by the insights of post-colonial theory, views experts in ethnically coded forms of religion especially as hypostasizing the constant struggle between possible identities determined by broad ethnic categories, but expressed in terms of gods and humans. On this reading, the character of their religious offerings mirrored “the multi-directional undulating tides of cultural forces—successively and simultaneously competing hegemonies of every kind—and embodying the history of generations of resistance, assimilation, mimicry, and contestation of identities and values projected upon them by

⁸⁹ *Contra* Anderson, *Sage, Saint, and Sophist*, 11: “But there is always a market too for the novel and alternative.”

⁹⁰ A set of assumptions that undergirds Rodney Stark’s ‘sociological’ explanations for the success of early Christianity, which I will examine and critique in the conclusion.

multiple dominant others.”⁹¹ The motivation for founding a new cult is thus to be found in the needs of immigrant communities, whose members were in the process of struggling with their identities.⁹²

As with claims about the spiritual or psychological appeal of the religion of specialists, we often have too little evidence to make inferences about the self-understandings of ancient peoples, but are on safer ground in talking about the ways in which they identified toward particular ends.⁹³ Hanges’ observation that people located themselves in culturally available narrative repertoires is important, and it may be the case that the ‘cult-founders’ he considers did so with respect to a particular narrative of cult foundation. Indeed, many of the specialists we will encounter in this study capitalize upon and even exaggerate ethnic characteristics in order to entice clientele interested in exotic forms of religion. But it is less clear to me whether this says anything about one’s *identity*, conceived as a condition, as opposed to one’s ability to understand and locate oneself multiply and opportunistically. While I find post-colonial theory unhelpful for its focus on identity, it does yield the important observation that imperial contexts amplify considerably the complexity and possibilities of selective identifications. They also broadly acquaint people with caricatures of foreign religion, imbued with predictable associations and sources of intrigue (e.g., ‘Judean religion’ entailed the

⁹¹ James C. Hanges, *Paul, Founder of Churches: A Study in Light of the Evidence for the Role of Founder-Figures in the Hellenistic-Roman Period* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2012), 287-288.

⁹² Hanges, *Paul, Founder of Churches*, 150, 385.

⁹³ Rogers Brubaker, *Ethnicity without Groups* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2004).

worship of one god, a body of authoritative texts, and distinctive bodily and eating practices). By touching upon a few reference points, self-styled experts could satisfy basic expectations about foreign religions while filling in contours in innovative ways. In other words, in order to be recognized as a legitimate authority in a particular field a would-be specialist must work out of some tradition, while also introducing new intellectual or other influences that are shown to be extensions of some branch of that tradition.

The final matter that I will raise is that many synoptic studies of freelance experts reduce their varieties to a category that is too narrowly focused on a characteristic or practice of certain examples, whether that is asceticism, itinerancy, ritual expertise, or some other criterion. In Francis' study, for example, all kinds of specialists—the prophet, the miracle worker, and the charismatic leader—are to be found together in the figure of the ascetic.⁹⁴ Francis and other scholars share my instinct to theorize varieties of religious specialists as a class of actors, yet many place too great a burden on qualities that are not pervasive among all of the examples that they considers. As a result, the criterion for bringing the evidence together within the same category—in this case, asceticism—is either too constraining to include every specialist, or so elastic that it is no longer faithful to the sense the term normally conveys. To theorize all varieties of freelance religious experts as a coherent class of actors on the basis that their practices enlisted gods and other non-obvious beings allows us to capture

⁹⁴ Francis, *Subversive Virtue*, xiv-xv.

any permutation of this sort of activity. While that class contains specialists who practiced asceticism, who were itinerant, and who boasted ritual expertise, it does not impose any of these characteristics onto actors who did not exhibit them.

My own investigation of the religion of freelance experts will proceed along the following lines. In chapter one I will provide an overview of common religious phenomena found at Rome in the first-centuries BCE and CE, since theorizing the role of independent specialists within this religious landscape requires the prior step of overlaying this particular class of religious activity upon a broader map. The chapter thus offers a preliminary overview of Rome's religious landscape with the following questions guiding its focus and presentation of evidence: For what reasons did people enlist expertise of independent specialists to supplement other religious activities? What models of religious specialty were familiar at Rome, and thus available to independent actors who might draw on them in structuring intelligible and attractive offerings? With what religious social formations did such specialists interact? Although the task of delineating the activities of freelance experts will continue as we observe them interacting with different forms of religious activity and religious institutions, this chapter illuminates a range of phenomena with which they were commonly linked.

In chapter two I make a case for the significance of entrepreneurial religion at Rome and provide evidence for some of its forms and characteristics. I will also consider certain conditions that promoted the recognition of these figures and contributed to their perceived efficacy. Relevant factors include the behavior of

Roman social elites, who frequently consulted alien religious experts about 'private' matters or retained them in their employ, as well as the considerable attention that was drawn to foreign cultural practices, and religious practices especially, in ideology surrounding the Roman imperial project. The same chapter will also survey Roman regulatory measures aimed at suppressing the influence of freelance specialists, their contingent social formations, and artifacts.

Chapter three examines the relationship between Roman stereotypes about other ethnic peoples, which often featured their distinctive religious practices, institutions, and deities, and the pretext these stereotypes created both for interest in ethnically coded forms of religion and the provision thereof. Marshalling evidence for the presence of Judean and Egyptian religious specialists at Rome, I will also call attention to how the gross categories 'Judaism' and 'Egyptian cult' are not sufficiently differentiated to capture freelance experts working within these ethnic idioms. This chapter will also begin to consider the role of textual expertise and religious writings in the religion of freelance specialists.

Chapter four examines evidence for Persian experts (*magi*) and practices at Rome, an interesting case study insofar as both *magi* and the skills and wisdom for which they were known carried strong ethnic connotations until the late first century CE, at which point they acquired a greater semantic range. Two related objectives of this chapter will to argue for the inclusion of 'magicians' and 'magic' within the category of religion, and also to investigate the particular juncture of religion and philosophical influences in phenomena that received the label 'magic'.

The chapter also examines the emergence of cult devoted to the Persian-themed god Mithras, who first appears in our Roman evidence around the late-first or early-second century. I am interested in Mithras cult for two principal reasons: the plausible role that freelance experts played in its origins, and because it provides a useful example of the convergence of diverse cultural influences that include astrology, mysteries, Persian gods and wisdom, and perhaps philosophy.

In chapter five I read the letters of Paul as a rare form of firsthand evidence for the religion of freelance experts. I begin by drawing affinities between features of the letters and Paul's self-representation and the characteristics of this class of activity that we have examined in previous chapters: the ethnic coding of his religious program, the centrality of religious writings and textual practices there within, his indebtedness to philosophical concepts and discourses, the rivalries evident between Paul and other Christ authorities, and perhaps even other varieties of freelance experts, the nature of his own authority (divine revelation, a visit to the third heaven, prophecy), and even the punishments that he alleges to have endured. Locating Paul within this class of religious activity, and even within a specific subset of it (Judean religious specialists), offers new interpretive possibilities for his letters, while also providing a fruitful example of how the religion of freelance experts might work on the ground.

I will conclude with an analytic typology of the religion of freelance experts that both argues for continuities across all varieties of experts and also attends to the preconditions for and implications of certain skills, strategies, artifacts, and

content (i.e., the difference between a highly literate specialist and one who performs simple lot divination). I will also devote some attention to the kinds of people who engaged in entrepreneurial religion, as specialists and as clients. I will argue on the basis of the preceding evidence that many who plied and consumed these forms of religious were either ineligible or inappropriate for existing institutional roles owing to factors such as civil status and gender. It is well known that the wealth and skills of such actors were often at odds with the constraints of their civil statuses, and religious entrepreneurship seems to have offered new avenues for accruing authority and prestige.

In this dissertation I seek to answer a basic question that might be pursued along many different lines of inquiry: how did the activities of freelance experts contribute to broader religious transformations in imperial Rome? By isolating a particular class of activity I hope to demonstrate the value of an approach that examines myriad forms of religion at the level of practices, strategies, and interests. The impetus for such a project stems from problems that arise when we classify the *products* of what I view to be a common and competitive phenomenon as if they are distinct and incompatible. The alternative is to theorize all varieties of freelance experts as participants in a common class of activity, entrepreneurial religion, regardless of whether their offerings differ with respect to undergirding assumptions, methods, and cultural frames of reference.

CHAPTER ONE

Varieties of Religion in Early Imperial Rome

Before we turn to evidence for the religion of freelance experts, we must begin with some framework for situating this particular class of religious activity among other varieties of religion attested at Rome. This topic is admittedly vast and is complicated further by the fact that many publications about Roman religion focus heavily upon the activities of social elites, and make only passing remarks about domestic religious practices and, more rarely, about the interventions of ‘charlatans’, ‘soothsayers’, and ‘magicians’ in civic religious life. Unsurprisingly, they privilege kinds of religion for which we have the most evidence: activities involving temples, public rites, and sanctioned authority figures.¹ While recent decades have seen a turn toward studies of private religion, especially domestic cult and voluntary associations, independent religious specialists have received

¹ The bibliography on civic religion at Rome is vast and varied. In addition to the references above (11 n. 22), see John Scheid, *Quand faire, c'est croire: les rites sacrificiels des Romains* (Paris: Aubier, 2011); James H. Richardson and Federico Santangelo, eds., *Priests and State in the Roman World* (Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag, 2011); John Scheid, “Cults, Myths, and Politics at the Beginning of the Empire,” in *Roman Religion* (ed. Clifford Ando; Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2003), 117-146; Inez Scott Ryberg, *Rites of the State Religion in Roman Art*. *Memoirs of the American Academy in Rome* 22 (Rome: American Academy in Rome, 1955).

relatively less attention.² At best, specialists appear as interesting but marginal actors, at worst, as comical, seditious, and/or wholly derivative of culturally superior religious institutions.

In reality, there were not neat boundaries between different classes of religious activity, nor between ‘public’ and ‘private’ religious practices and interests. The Janus shrine in the Roman Forum, for example, was a monument with strong civic resonances and implicated thoroughly in the augural tradition. Nevertheless, excavations of this site indicate that sometime in the late-first century BCE it began offering *auspicia privata* on certain days in exchange for financial donations or other offerings.³ Personal consultations seem to have matched civic auspication in both method and scope, inasmuch as a channel of communication with the gods could be opened on the donor’s behalf to solicit signs about impending private matters. Since all classes of religious activity entailed practices connected with beliefs about gods, ancestors, and other non-obvious beings, their practitioners would have experienced them seamlessly, relying on common expectations and understandings to participate in any given form. In other words, they are discrete principally from an analytic perspective,

² For recent scholarship on the religion of households, see the collection of essays in John Bodel and Saul M. Olyan, eds., *Household and Family Religion in Antiquity* (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2008); Kate Cooper, *The Fall of the Roman Household* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007). For voluntary associations, see John S. Kloppenborg and Stephen G. Wilson, eds., *Voluntary Associations in the Graeco-Roman World* (London and New York: Routledge, 1996); Philip A. Harland, *Dynamics of Identity in the World of the Early Christians: Associations, Judeans, and Cultural Minorities* (New York: T & T Clark, 2009); idem, *Associations, Synagogues, and Congregations: Claiming a Place in Ancient Mediterranean Society* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2003).

³ Rabun Taylor, “Janus, Auspication, and the Shrine in the Roman Forum,” *MAAR* 45 (2000): 1-40, cit. 16-17. See also Louise Adams Holland, *Janus and the Bridge*. Papers and Monographs of the American Academy in Rome 21 (Rome: American Academy in Rome, 1961).

since there were neither clear boundaries nor essential differences between them in practice.⁴ I thus find it more productive to differentiate modes of religion and religious social formations apparent in our evidence—civic religion, domestic religion, voluntary associations, and so forth—and to isolate their characteristics.⁵ This chapter will thus describe religious phenomena at Rome, and will sort these into specific classes of religious activity, each with its own distinctive features, contexts, and actors.

Since it would be impossible to provide a comprehensive overview of Rome's religious landscape, this chapter is tailored to features that offer insight into the place of independent specialists within it. As I noted in the introduction, three questions motivate my selection of evidence and the attention I draw to certain features: First, for what reasons might people enlist the expertise of specialists to supplement other religious activities? Second, what models of religious specialty were familiar within the civic institutions of Rome specifically, and thus available to figures who were ineligible for such offices but who might nevertheless trade on their authoritative titles and other characteristics in

⁴ Stowers, "The Ontology of Religion," 36. That is to say, analytic distinctions between different modes of religiosity are a matter of respective contexts, actors, and other features, not of bounded and incommensurate activities or entities.

⁵ In framing the evidence in this manner, I am indebted to the recent work of Stanley Stowers, who outlines four distinct modes of ancient Mediterranean religion and attempts to explicate the logic of their constitutive practices, among other features. Stanley K. Stowers, "The Religion of Plant and Animal Offerings Versus the Religion of Meanings, Essences, and Textual Mysteries," in *Ancient Mediterranean Sacrifice* (ed. Jennifer Wright Knust and Zsuzsanna Várhelyi; New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 35-56.

structuring intelligible and attractive offerings? And third, with what kinds of religious social formations might freelance experts overlap?

In order to answer the first question we must investigate the relationship between matters of religion that required only the basic understandings and practical know-how that people possessed intuitively or without training, and matters that required special techniques, purportedly special knowledge, or other forms of expertise. Ancient authors furnish several examples of the general ability of religious practitioners to communicate with gods and related beings through practices such as soliciting and recognizing signs sent from the gods, and interpreting meaningful dreams or portents. But they also capture circumstances wherein expert opinions were sought for communications whose significance was weighty, complex, or might be construed in different ways. The latter kind of example is plentiful and miscellaneous and underscores how regularly specialists were entrusted to decipher or otherwise mediate matters involving the gods.

With the second question, one anticipates certain challenges in defining civic institutions and in focusing productively on those positions, practices, resources, and skills within them that might have been calqued on by specialists.⁶ Our ancient sources provide some guidance on this matter. Some authors warn, for example, of itinerant *augures* and *haruspices*, specialists for whom there were ‘authoritative’ counterparts in Roman civic institutions. Others recount episodes whereupon Roman administrators attempted to limit the private circulation of

⁶ Clifford Ando, “The Ontology of Religious Institutions,” *History of Religions* 50 (2010): 54-79.

‘unauthorized’ oracles attributed to the Sibyl.⁷ The figures and practices at issue in those instances were certainly neither the aristocratic priests of the same titles, nor the state collection of Sibylline prophecies and their curators; rather, they seem to have involved independent specialists who modeled their authority and expertise on civic priesthoods and known divinatory resources. While the specific institutions upon which specialists drew are clear in some instances, there is no limit to the practices or positions that might thus influence specialist activity. The important distinction to keep in mind is that whereas senatorial augurs, Sibylline interpreters, *haruspices*, and other civic actors were financed and approved by the state, freelance experts who drew on these institutions did so as a self-authorizing strategy and did not derive legitimacy directly from them. Furthermore, although the practices and abilities of a self-authorized augur might resemble those of the official augural college, the two were incommensurate with respect to the interests they served (the private matters of ordinary people versus public matters concerning the activities of civic institutions and the Roman aristocracy).

The third question concerns the complex ways in which specialists interacted with or even engendered other religious phenomena whose characteristics were not identical with those constitutive of their own religious activities. A handful of voluntary association inscriptions from the Hellenistic period trace their origins to religious specialists, though such evidence constitutes

⁷ Cato, *Agr.* 5.4.4 (itinerant *haruspex* and *augur*); Columella, *Rust.* 1.8.6.1, 11.1.22.6 (itinerant *haruspex* and *saga*). On the confiscation of prophetic materials: Suet. *Aug.* 31.1.4; Tac. *Ann.* 6.12; Cass. Dio, 57.18.3-5. On the distinction that I am drawing between ‘authorized’ and ‘unauthorized’ actors and practices, see the discussion in chapter two.

a sort of retrospective on specialist activity, insofar as the associations themselves would fall outside the scope of this class.⁸ In other sources we observe specialists attempting to establish groups with regular contours and institutional characteristics, to form networks with one another, and to develop mutually beneficial relationships with existing religious groups or institutions.⁹ Lucian's Peregrinus continued to instruct groups of Christians in his new incarnation as an itinerant Cynic philosopher, even though he had not formed them himself.¹⁰ Alternatively, Alexander shored up his standing with the institutional oracles of Claros and Didyma by referring his visitors to them for further consultation. He also employed a host of colleagues, some of whom did reconnaissance about potential clients in Rome, others of whom expounded the written prophecies that he issued as they grew more obscure.¹¹ Although it falls just beyond the chronological parameters of this study, a text such as the *Didache* provides criteria for determining the authenticity of vagrant prophets and other religious instructors, who were likely to visit and might even be valuable to existing Christian social formations.

⁸ *IG* 10.4.1299, cf. *SIRIS* 62-87. Walter Burkert, *Ancient Mystery Cults* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1987), 38.

⁹ On this point see Iles Johnston, *Ancient Greek Divination*, 109-182.

¹⁰ Lucian, *De mort. Peregr.* 11 (on his initial involvement with Christians); 16 (on his ongoing involvement with Christians in the guise of a Cynic philosopher).

¹¹ Lucian, *Alex.* 29 (on his relations with institutional oracles); 37 (on his agents in Rome); 49 (on kinds of specialists involved in his oracle).

Two kinds of religious activity in particular—the religion of the household or family (domestic religion) and the religion of the state (civic religion)—comprise the most prevalent and visible examples of religion at Rome. For the same reasons, these classes have left the most substantial imprint in our evidence record, though the monumentality and propagandistic aspects of civic religion have naturally resulted in more durable data.

Regarding the former mode of religion, terms such as ‘household’ or ‘family’ religion tend to engender considerable scholarly debate about the precise scope and definition of phenomena to which they refer. For my purposes, the phrase ‘domestic religion’ encompasses the array of religious practices conducted privately by individual actors within domestic contexts.¹² It is worth reiterating that the exact boundaries of Roman categories for ‘public’ and ‘private’ religion existed largely in the eye of the beholder, or in this case, on the page of whichever writer formulated them. Even if their criteria were debatable the terms of those debates were less a matter of spatial contexts (i.e., public or private spheres), than of ‘Whom’, ‘Why’, and ‘How’? In other words, on whose authority were religious activities carried out (civic priests as opposed to a household head, a member of a voluntary organization, or a freelance expert), on whose behalf (the people and

¹² In this I follow John Bodel, who proffers the following justification for training his lens thus: “As an independent object of investigation, household cult has seemed elusive and scarcely able to be disentangled from its public forms. It may appear both less puzzling and less obscure if we abandon the idea of representation and shift our focus from the group (the clan, the family, the household) to the individual – the slave or freedman, the family member, the *paterfamilias* – and personal acts (or attitudes) of religiosity expressed in domestic contexts” [“Cicero’s Minerva, *Penates*, and the Mother of the *Lares*: An Outline of Roman Domestic Religion,” in *Household and Family Religion in Antiquity* (ed. John Bodel and Saul M. Olyan; Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2008), 248-275].

territory of Rome as opposed to practices performed on behalf of individual persons, households, and clans), and at whose expense.¹³

The formal responsibilities of domestic religion fell to the head of household (*paterfamilias*), who acted as a priest in performing *sacra familiae* on behalf of all the members—kin, but also slaves, and even freedmen and their descendants—but these do not constitute the totality of religious practices that unfolded in the domestic realm. Other household practices involving gods and non-obvious beings included activities at meals, both every day and for special religious occasions.¹⁴ Even more commonly, private offerings, vows, and interpretations of signs from the gods were made by all household members, including slaves, many of whom had been brought to Rome from provincial territories and arguably may have been allowed to maintain native forms of religious practice.¹⁵ At least this is the implication of Tacitus' complaint that Romans now have nations within their families, that is, ethnically diverse slave

¹³ For example, Pompeius Festus, *De Verborum Significatu* (ed. Wallace M. Lindsay; Stuttgart: Teubner, 1913), 284, s.v. *Publica sacra*. For a discussion of Roman positions on the difference between 'public' and 'private' religion, see Bodel, "An Outline of Roman Domestic Religion," 249.

¹⁴ See Stanley K. Stowers, "Kinds of Myths, Meals and Power: Paul and the Corinthians," in *Redescribing Paul and the Corinthians* (ed. Ron Cameron and Merrill P. Miller; Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2011), 105-149.

¹⁵ For an overview see Stanley K. Stowers, "Theorizing Religion of Ancient Households and Families," in *Household and Family Religion in Antiquity* (ed. John Bodel and Saul M. Olyan; Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2008), 5-19, esp. 11. The issue of whether the household truly constituted a 'private' realm, in opposition to 'public' life, has received considerable attention. In referring to private acts or including domestic religion in the category of private forms of religion I am not making a determination on the basis of the character of spaces, but roughly on the status of certain practices under Roman law and jurisprudence. In other words, private religion comprises and rites, groups, or institutions that were not officially recognized as public by Roman authorities, even if some forms of private worship might occasionally be liable to their regulation.

populations, with exotic religious practices (*externa sacra*) and manners of conducting these practices that were contrary to Roman ones (*diversi ritus*).¹⁶

While much could be said about domestic religion, I need only call attention to two features relevant to understanding entrepreneurial religion. One is the apparent flexibility of religious activities conducted in the private sphere, while the other, which I have already touched upon above, is the range of the private interests or concerns for which a specialist might be consulted. Regarding the matter of flexibility, we can look to one form of household cult centered around domestic shrines (*lararia*), situated in various places within the house, where offerings were made to a typical cast of household deities: the *Lares*, the *Genius* (the guardian spirit) of the *paterfamilias*, as well as familial ancestors.¹⁷ Cultivation of the *Lares* was at the core of Roman domestic religion and followed a relatively standard script of communal practices with roles for all members of a household, including its slaves.

Other components of household cult were both more exclusive and could be adjusted to accommodate idiosyncratic deities and variations on basic religious practice. Such fluidity is apparent in the cultivation of the *Penates*, another main focus of domestic religion, who were represented by cumulative collections of images and tokens contributed by specific family members. John Bodel argues that, unlike the *Lares*, who were a rather generic set of deities, the *Penates* were

¹⁶ Tac. Ann. 14.44.3: *Postquam vero nationes in familiis habemus quibus diversi ritus externa sacra aut nulla sunt*. For discussion of the reference, see Bodel. "An Outline of Roman Domestic Religion," 268.

¹⁷ Bodel, "An Outline of Roman Domestic Religion," 255-258.

more often menageries of sacred items, whose contents manifested the interests and alignments of various individuals. While religious activities involving the *Lares* and *Penates* might be linked, the two sets of deities and the cult specific to each were conceptually and practically distinct. In his twelfth satire, for instance, Juvenal imagines himself at home offering incense to his paternal *Lares* before appeasing “his own Jupiter” (*nostrum Iovem*) amidst little wax images bedecked with wreaths.¹⁸ Bodel focuses on the example of Cicero’s Minerva, a personal cult image of the deity that Cicero dedicated in the Temple of Jupiter Optimus Maximus after his own house was destroyed by Clodius. To that example one might add the image of Apollo taken from Delphi that Sulla would publicly supplicate before battles, or the wooden image of Mercury that Apuleius kept, along with other linen-wrapped religious tokens, in his stepson’s *sacrarium*.¹⁹

The testimony of Apuleius is particularly interesting, inasmuch as he provides evidence not only for the accumulation of sacred images and other objects, but also for how one might amass such items, here, by undergoing mystery initiation. As he refutes the accusation that his own special tokens are ‘magical’, he explains:

I participated in several sacred initiations (*sacrorum pleraque initia*) in Greece and I keep certain tokens and objects (*signa et monumenta*) of these rites, which the priests gave to me. I claim nothing unusual, nothing unknown (*nihil insolitum nihil incognitum*). Even you initiates (*mystae*) of the one father Liber who are here know what you keep hidden at home and

¹⁸ Cic. *Leg.* 2.42; Juv. 12.87-90. Bodel, “An Outline of Roman Domestic Religion,” 252-255 and n. 19.

¹⁹ Val. Max. 1.2.3 (Sulla’s Apollo); Apul. *Apol.* 53-56.

honor silently, away from non-initiates. Certainly I...have learned complex rituals (*multiiuga sacra*), many rites (*plurimos ritus*), and various ceremonies (*varias ceremonias*) out of an eagerness for truth and service to the gods.... Can anyone who has any recollection of religious practice (*memoria religionis*) really be astonished at seeing a man who has knowledge of so many mysteries of the gods guard in his home certain amulets of these sacred rites (*sacrorum crepundia*) and wrap them in a linen cloth, which is the purest covering for divine things (*rebus divinas*)?²⁰

In defending the 'religious' (i.e., non-'magical') value of the objects in question, Apuleius directs our attention to another important detail about them: that they are reminders of instruction he has received in complex rituals, teachings that he is presumably able to reproduce elsewhere in combination with the same tokens. It even seems that his impetus for having commissioned a controversial statuette of Mercury, wrought from tablets of ebony that he procured from a woman named Capitolina, was to acquire a certain kind of image that he could then supplicate according to his own custom (*cui ex more meo supplicassem*).²¹

The widespread tendency to accumulate such objects, which Apuleius takes for granted in defending his own private religious activities, bears out also in *realia* recovered from domestic contexts. The discovery of several private *lararia* in cities such as Rome and Pompeii, usually in the form of wall-niches or small aedicular structures, underscores the individuality, or individualities, reflected in the items selected for veneration at these shrines. Examples from Pompeii include simple pairings of conventional civic deities (Mercury, Jupiter, Juno, and Minerva) along

²⁰ Apul. *Apol.* 55.18-25, 56.2-6 [*Apuleius: Rhetorical Works* (ed. Stephen Harrison, John Hilton, and Vincent Hunink; Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2002)].

²¹ Apul. *Apol.* 61-62.

with the *Lares*, as well as more elaborate or exotic combinations (Anubis, Isis, Harpocrates, Asculapius, Fortuna, Bacchus, Neptune, Faunus, Venus, Hercules, Priapus, Silenus, and Eros).²² Other assemblages prove even more eclectic, counting aniconic objects or images of demigods, heroes, and notable humans among their inventories. Since several of these gods and beings were associated with particular rites or practices, the diversity evident in these collections may also correspond to some corresponding degree of diversity in the religious activities that utilized their various items.

While many of the images above are of deities officially recognized by the Roman state, the inclusion of civic deities, and, all the more so, of deities who did not formally receive cult, among the standard household gods bears witness to the important role of personal preference in Roman private religious practice. The same general trends that we can adduce from ordinary domestic contexts appear to have obtained also for the habits of the emperor and other Roman elites. Bodel cites a vignette from the *Historiae Augustae* wherein Severus Alexander's *lararium* collection contains images of his ancestors, statues of Alexander the Great, a selection of deified emperors, certain "more holy" souls like Apollonius of Tyana, and statuettes of Christ, Abraham, Orpheus, and "others of this sort."²³ Fictitious perhaps, the story is no less valuable as a source for the assortment of divine

²² Bodel, "An Outline of Roman Domestic Religion," 262.

²³ *SHA* 2.29; Bodel, "An Outline of Roman Domestic Religion," 263.

beings, including exceptional humans, who might plausibly become recipients of private cult, even in the personal practices of civic actors.

Responding to this dynamic set of possibilities for individual practice, some ancient authors propose guidelines for proper and improper forms of religious activity. According to Cicero, acceptable private religion requires “having no gods separately (*separatim*), either new gods or foreign gods, unless publically adopted, and worshipping privately (*privatim*) only those gods whom one has received from ones ancestors.”²⁴ Notwithstanding the vagueness of his distinction between *separatim* and *privatim*, the statement betrays a clear bias against rites that are perceived to be novel, except ones performed for gods that receive public cult. One must exercise caution in assuming that Cicero is merely reproducing widely shared norms, all the more so since his opinion bears a suspicious resemblance to Plato’s attitude toward ‘superstition’ in his *Republic*.²⁵ But he is not alone in proposing such guidelines. Livy undertakes a similar effort in his description of the office of *pontifex maximus*, under whom Numa subordinated all public and private religious ceremonies to prevent confusion in the sacred law, whether through the neglect of the inherited rituals or by the adoption of foreign ones.²⁶ Both authors

²⁴ Cic. *Leg.* 2.19; Bodel, “An Outline of Roman Domestic Religion,” 250.

²⁵ Pl. *Resp.* 364B: “But the strangest of all these speeches [of layman and poets] are the things they say about the gods and virtue, how so it is that the gods themselves assign to many good men misfortunes and an evil life but to their opposites a contrary lot; and begging priests and soothsayers go to rich men’s doors and make them believe that they by means of sacrifices and incantations have accumulated a treasure of power from the gods that can expiate and cure with pleasurable festivals” (trans. Paul Shorey; LCL).

²⁶ Livy, 1.19.20.5.

express concerns about the possibilities of religion that was not beholden to civic institutions, which they attempt to constrain with rules and reminders about appropriate channels of religious authority.

Yet passages such as these are idealizing reactions to pervasive characteristics of religious practices conducted ‘privately’, namely, that they were expansive and liable to innovation, whether because a family member had acquired a special item or undertaken novel religious instruction, or because an itinerant religious expert had introduced a household to a new deity or form of cult.²⁷ Speaking directly to the latter point, Suetonius notes that toward the end of his life Nero had contempt for all forms of *religio*, even the Dea Syria whom he had once followed, but was captive to another *superstitio*, to which he clung tenaciously. “For he had received as a gift from some unknown common man, as a protection against plots, a little image of a girl; and since a conspiracy at once came to light, he continued to venerate it as a powerful divinity and to offer three sacrifices to it every day, encouraging the belief that through its communication he had knowledge of the future.”²⁸ One wishes that Suetonius had more to say

²⁷ See Bodel, who notes, “In fact, the practices of Roman domestic and household religion were more varied and less clearly demarcated than Cicero or Festus would allow, and the preferences of individuals played a larger role in them than Varro was prepared to concede (“An Outline of Roman Domestic Religion,” 251). Even if the writings of these authors did reflect more widespread positions about the norms of religious practice, it is difficult to imagine how such positions would be enforced.

²⁸ Suet. *Ner.* 56 (trans. J.C. Rolfe; LCL): *religionum usque quaque contemptor praeter unius Deae Syriae hanc mox ita sprexit ut urina contaminaret alia superstitione captus in qua sola pertinacissime haesit siquidem <im>agunculam puellarem cum quasi remedium insidiarum a plebeio quodam et ignoto muneri accepisset detecta confestim coniuratione pro summo numine trinisque in die sacrificiis colere perseveravit volebatque credi monitione eius futura praenosceret. ante paucos quam periret menses attendit et extispicio nec umquam litavit.*

about the *plebeius quidam et ignotus* who gave Nero the statuette and told him of her powers, but we know of several occasions on which this emperor is said to have consulted or even to have been initiated into the mysteries of exotic religious experts.²⁹ The important point is that “when selections of this sort were being made, of a sampling of deities (and practices)...we may assume that the choices were driven by personal preference for or attraction to certain ideas represented by the particular deities selected or by some other talismanic quality embodied in the images themselves, rather than by any formalistic adherence to prescribed norms of practice or belief.”³⁰

The second feature of domestic religion that is relevant to freelance experts involves the understandings and expectations that supported most domestic religious activity. Regardless of the character of household cult, the bulk of religious activities that we know to have been conducted in this context consisted of basic practices such as prayer, sacrifices, libations and other offerings, and divination—religious competencies that did not require specialized mediation or interpretive skills, since all operated according to an intuitive logic of social exchange between human and divine actors.³¹ This logic of everyday social

²⁹ Suetonius claims that Nero had rites performed by *Magi* in the effort to summon the shade of Agrippina and entreat it for forgiveness (*Ner.* 34.4). Pliny recounts similar details about Nero’s relationship to the *magus* Tiridates, who initiated Nero in magical meals and attempted to transmit the art of the *magi* to him. See subsequent discussion in chapters two and four (*HN* 30.14-17).

³⁰ Bodel, “An Outline of Roman Domestic Religion,” 261-262.

³¹ Rives, *Religion in the Roman Empire*, 43: “The basic cult practices that I sketched above—prayer, sacrifice, and to some extent divination—were open to all, so that people generally had no need of any third party to mediate between them and the gods. It was only as members of a group that individuals depended on someone else for the performance of basic rituals, since in every group,

exchange, which is well attested at Rome and throughout the various cultural areas of the Mediterranean, presumed that gods and similar beings were relevant to and participated in the activities of everyday life.³² Inferences about these beings did not require extensive rationalization or theorization. Rather, people interacted with them in like manner to how they maintained relationships with other people: offering gifts and thanks for things they had received, making promises in exchange for assistance, and intuiting the gods' intentions.

Consider, for example, Ovid's eloquent recapitulation of a prayer to Robigo, the personification of wheat rust, which beseeches the deity not to ravage the annual wheat crop in exchange for which the farmer will be able to pay his vows to her.³³ While such interactions often unfolded in extraordinary ways that were suitable to the special properties and abilities ascribed to gods and similar beings, the practical understandings that enabled them involved matching knowledge about how to participate in common social practices with lore and stock inferences about how gods or godlike beings would behave as persons.³⁴

whether a household or an association or a city, there were people whose role was to represent the group in its dealings with the divine."

³² Stowers, "The Religion of Plant and Animal Offerings," 36-37: "Four characteristics of conceiving gods and similar beings in this mode of religiosity stand out: People interact with them as if they were persons; they are local in ways that are significant for humans; one maintains a relationship to them with practices of generalized reciprocity; and humans have a particular epistemological stance toward them." These characteristics are hardly limited to the cultural areas of the ancient Mediterranean, but obtain for all known religious phenomena in every period and geographic area.

³³ Ov. *Fast.* 4.905-32.

³⁴ By unfolding in extraordinary ways I mean simply that these basic practices were often couched in pomp and circumstance and accompanied by special effects, objects, etc. In other words, even

Shading into a slightly more skillful area, all people were capable at some basic level of recognizing and ascertaining meaning from signs appearing to be sent from the gods in order to express their will or intentions. Our ancient sources take it for granted that individuals possess these skills. More than one author relates a story about Caecilia, the wife of Metellus, who, in pursuit of an omen regarding her niece's marriage prospects, held a nocturnal vigil according to the ancient custom in a certain shrine where she awaited words that fit her intent.³⁵ Unbeknownst to Caecilia, the omen was issued when she offered her seat to the weary niece, who went on to marry Metelleus after her own death soon after. Although the sign was mistaken, Caecilia expected to solicit and comprehend it in a customary manner with whose procedures she was already familiar. Elsewhere we receive the tradition of Tertia, the young daughter of L. Aemilius Paulus, who in a fit of weeping told her father that her dog Perseus had died. By this omen the general understood that he would defeat his Macedonian adversary of the same name.³⁶ Suetonius goes to some length to record the notable qualities of the Roman emperors, while mentioning almost as an afterthought the droves of signs,

though humans might interact with gods in the same manner by which they interacted with one another, there were nevertheless certain signals that human divine relations were of a special sort.

³⁵ Val. Max. 1.5.4; Cic. *Div.* 1.104, 2.83.

³⁶ Cic. *Div.* 1.103; Val. Max. 1.5.3; Plut. *Aem.* 1.10.6-8.

omens, and prodigies that presaged their respective reigns or guided their decisions.³⁷

While many of these episodes involve actors with ordinary abilities in divination and interpretation, other episodes require the adroitness of a religious expert. After waking from a disturbing dream in which he raped his own mother, Julius Caesar consulted *coniectores*, who took it to portend that he was destined to rule the world.³⁸ Though acknowledged in his own right as exceptionally skilled in the interpretation of religious phenomena (*alioquin etiam interpretandarum religionum peritissimus*), Marius never campaigned without the Syrian woman Martha, who attended to matters of *sacra* and on whose authority he was said to have made every move.³⁹ Even supposing the basic divinatory and interpretive practices that comprised the religion of everyday social exchange—a non-specialist might be able to recognize a sign sent from the gods or to determine whether an offering had been accepted—some problems, ritual requirements, signs, etc. were complicated or important enough that they exceeded ordinary capabilities and thus required the expertise of one specialized in such matters. John Scheid elaborates,

Just as magistrates and the Senate did, individuals resorted constantly to diviners... In private sacrifices [the] celebrants used *extispicium* and

³⁷ For instance, the series of signs that presaged the respective reigns of Augustus and Vespasian (Suet. *Aug.* 94-95; *Vesp.* 5).

³⁸ Suet. *Jul.* 7.2.

³⁹ For evidence of Marius' own interpretive skills see Val. Max. 1.5.5. For his relationship with Martha see Val. Max. 1.2.3; Front. *Strat.* 1.11.12; Plut. *Mar.* 17.

probably also *haruspicina*. We know from a number of documents that great families and modest ones alike consulted *haruspices*, Chaldaean astrologers (*mathematici*) and other prophets of a variety of origins in order to obtain explanations for prodigies and also protection from them. So, for example, the father of the Gracchi, who complained so bitterly to the Senate about the Etruscan *haruspices*, nevertheless himself consulted *haruspices* about a prodigy noted in his own household, and furthermore accepted their interpretation.⁴⁰

To his examples one might add designated healers, purifiers, dream interpreters, and other varieties of specialists that will be discussed more extensively as we examine evidence for their activities specifically. The point in mentioning them here is to identify demands for their services emanating from the domestic sphere.

The principle of social exchange between gods and humans that organized most domestic religion held also for most activities comprising civic religion, even if civic activities were typically embellished and appointed discrete performance spaces. Despite the significant overlap of these two modes, qualities such as scale and institutionalization produced the impression of a contrast between basic religious inferences and practices, and special conditions or criteria that enabled civic activities. For example, unlike religious practices conducted in the household, which were embedded in other domestic activities and specific to that context, versions of these practices performed at public temples or shrines were more visibly demarcated from other kinds of social activity, even if the organization of civic religious practices still had clear political and economic components, among

⁴⁰ John Scheid, *An Introduction to Roman Religion* (trans. Janet Lloyd; Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2003), 124-125.

others.⁴¹ Civic religion also operated in and through formal institutions, by which I mean everything from officially consecrated spaces to elected priesthoods to special laws pertaining to religious matters.⁴² Likewise, it amplified the communal dimension of household cult, designating roles for the different demographics that comprised Rome's free population and reinforcing ideologies of social integration through multi-media representations.⁴³

Since civic religiosity consists of sundry actors and social formations, an important thread uniting its permutations is that they were incorporated into and beholden to a larger administrative apparatus controlled by the Roman senate and the emperor. Roman civic religion consisted, then, in very broad brushstrokes, of four main senatorial priestly colleges, each with distinct domains of expertise, of several lesser senatorial priestly colleges, including various *salii* and *sodalitates*, of a shortlist of priests (*flamines*) devoted to specific deities, of individual priests and communal bodies (*sodalitates*) for imperial cult, and of lesser sacred sodalities consisting of *cultores* charged with matters of public cults. These positions and social formations are not meant to be exhaustive, but representative of the

⁴¹ Stowers, "Theorizing the Religion of Households and Families," 11: "The religion of household and family, located primarily in the home and at the family tomb, is the ultimate religion of place. The place of domestic religion is "here" because it is not "there." "There" is the religion of public, civic, and state religion epitomized by the temple. A temple is centrally defined by occupying a separated sacred space in contrast to the home." On the economic elements of temple institutions, see Brent Nongbri, "Paul Without Religion: The Creation of a Category and the Search for the Apostle Beyond the New Perspective," (Ph.D. Dissertation; Yale University, 2008), 123-160.

⁴² While legislation involving religion might place constraints upon private religious practice, this is not the same as saying that domestic religion had institutional aspects.

⁴³ Communal ideology was especially pronounced in the Augustan period. See, for example, C. Brian Rose, "'Princes' and Barbarians on the Ara Pacis," *JRA* 94 (1990): 453-467.

assortment of institutions that fell under civic purview. They also remind us of how few members of Rome's population would have held one of these offices or participated regularly in civic religious institutions.

As the above distribution suggests, the most important offices of Roman civic religion were restricted to social elites, who were also members of the Roman senate.⁴⁴ Indeed, religious office was one of the privileges and spheres of activity that cordoned the elite nobility off from other strata of Roman society.⁴⁵ Within this *ordo*, senators eagerly pursued appointment to one or more of the major priestly colleges, or to lesser priesthoods from which they might be promoted to more prestigious religious offices.⁴⁶ Each of the major sacerdotal colleges—the *collegia pontificum* and *augurum*, the *quindecimviri sacris faciundis*, and the *septemviri epulonum*—had a fixed number of exclusively senatorial members,

⁴⁴ For example, Andrew Wallace-Hadrill, "Mutatas Formas: The Augustan Transformation of Roman Knowledge," in *The Cambridge Companion to the Age of Augustus* (ed. Karl Galinsky; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 55-86, esp. 56-57.

⁴⁵ Although the senatorial order furnished the state priests responsible for determining religious regulations and dictating the religious behavior appropriated for other social locations, some of the people who performed public cult responsibilities were not aristocrats, and, in limited cases, not even freeborn. Freedmen and public slaves regularly assisted priests and magistrates in their cultic responsibilities and certain practices and cults. John Scheid usefully reminds us that the role of freedmen and slaves in public celebrations is underrepresented in our evidence ["Graeco-Roman Cultic Societies," in *The Oxford Handbook of Social Relations in the Roman World* (ed. Michael Peachin; Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 535-547, cit. 538-539]. Nevertheless, as Géza Alföldy writes, "The aristocracy determined the nature of [*religio*] the correct relationship with the gods. It furnished the state priests, who were called upon to discover divine will and to determine religious regulations. Moreover, the traditions of the families of the aristocracy dictated the religious behavior proper to members of society in various situations" [*The Social History of Rome* (trans. David Braund and Frank Pollack; Totowa, NJ: Barnes & Noble Books, 1985), 35-36].

⁴⁶ The question of whether senators sought minor priesthoods first, in order to advance to more prestigious ones later as their careers developed, is the subject of some debate. For a discussion of the evidence and differing interpretations, see Várhelyi, *The Religion of Senators in the Roman Empire*, 60-61.

elected by the emperor and senate upon the recommendation of incumbent priests. The priesthoods were not merely formal, but entailed specific technical training and access to archival materials.⁴⁷ To the extent that most Roman senators served as civic priests, and that religious responsibilities—issuing decrees on sacrifices, bestowing various religious honors, authorizing supplications, commissioning or permitting temple construction, expelling certain religious actors, proscribing certain religious rites, divinizing some emperors and imperial family members, and offering games, among other matters—were integral to the senate’s corporate authority, some have argued the senate itself was intertwined with the activities of civic religious institutions.⁴⁸

Even though civic institutions and actors oversaw versions of the same religious practices conducted in the domestic sphere—prayer, purification, vows, sacrifices and other offerings, and divination—their authority presupposed special competencies and privileged knowledge that surpassed the resources of ordinary practitioners. One source of this authority lay in the possession of textual corpora, either archival or prophetic, which occupied a central place in the ordering and structure of religious knowledge in Roman civic religion. As Elizabeth Rawson

⁴⁷ There was little status variance in the membership of other priestly colleges, whether traditionally senatorial or equestrian. Interestingly, the college of *luperci*, which was traditionally equestrian from the time of Augustus, started to admit some senatorial members in the early Severan period, indicating that whatever flexibility there was in the membership criteria of civic priestly colleges moved in a top-down direction rather than the other way around. See Várhelyi, *The Religion of Senators in the Roman Empire*, 62.

⁴⁸ Mary Beard, “Priesthood in the Roman Republic,” in *Pagan Priests: Religion and Power in the Ancient World* (ed., Mary Beard and John North; Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1990), 19–48. According to Várhelyi, those connotations only increased as it expanded to include non-Italian representatives, since service in a provincial priesthood was the surest path to gaining a seat at Rome (*The Religion of Senators in the Roman Empire*, 48).

notes, such scholarly apparatuses were the major point of contrast between the divinatory practices of the senatorial priesthoods and other forms of divination that were reliant upon texts and textual practices.⁴⁹

Some writings were repositories of procedural knowledge about religious activity. The records of the pontifical college detailed ritual formulae and procedure as well as jurisprudence in matters of *religio*.⁵⁰ Similarly, the augural college upheld a strict law concerning the consecration and decommissioning of spaces, as well as the reading of auspices, which were taken according to a standard set of procedures. Although no references to a corpus of augural books akin to the pontifical books appear in our sources, the precise and scientific practices of this college have led some scholars to speculate about the existence of such records to school new members in its principles.⁵¹ Either way, the actual and postulated uses of writings in these two institutions of Roman state religion were principally bureaucratic and procedural and, as we will see, differed fundamentally from the kinds of roles that writings played in the religious practices of literate freelance experts.

⁴⁹ Rawson, *Intellectual Life in the Late Roman Republic*, 306.

⁵⁰ John Scheid, "Oral Tradition and Written Tradition in the Formation of Sacred Law in Rome," in *Religion and Law in Classical and Christian Rome*. Potsdamer Altertumswissenschaftliche Beiträge 31 (ed. Clifford Ando and Jörg Rüpke; Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag, 2006), 14-46.

⁵¹ Notwithstanding, the position is a controversial one and has been challenged by the augural law's foremost authority, Jerzy Linderski, who argued that the augural law was so sacred that it was never written down ["The Augural Law," *ANRW* 2.16.3 (1986): 2146-2312. On general aspects of the augural college, see Jerzy Linderski, "Watching the Birds: Cicero the Augur and the Augural Temple," *CP* 81 (1986): 330-340; idem, "Cicero and Roman Divination," *PdP* 37 (1982): 12-38.

Other writings, such as the Sibylline oracles, demanded more specialized textual exegesis. Perhaps for this reason, curatorial and interpretive responsibilities involving the state prophetic collections were the responsibility of another specific senatorial priesthood, the *quindecimviri sacris faciundis*, whose members were charged by the Senate in 75 BCE with reconstituting the Sibylline corpus after its destruction eight years prior.⁵² The task dispatched them to oracular sites throughout the Mediterranean where they read and adjudicated the authenticity of utterances attributed to the Sibyl.⁵³ Their expertise might also have been enlisted periodically to sort through confiscated texts pertaining to divination and sacrifice that were in private circulation at Rome, a possibility that we will entertain in the next chapter. The same chapter will provide a general sense of how this process unfolded.⁵⁴

Yet another body of writings, the *libri haruspicini*, was instrumental in determining the appropriate civic recourse to any prodigies that occurred within Roman territories and were officially recognized by the senate. Prodigy expiation was but one area of specialized knowledge and techniques comprising the *Etrusca*

⁵² The Roman Sibylline collection was destroyed in 83 BCE when the temple of Jupiter Optimus Maximus was burned. See J. L. Lightfoot, *The Sibylline Oracles: With Introduction, Translation, and Commentary on the First and Second Books* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2007); Charles Guittard, *Carmen et prophéties à Rome* (Turnhout, Belgium: Brepols, 2007); Herbert W. Parke, *Sibyls and Sibylline Prophecy in Classical Antiquity* (ed. B. C. McGing; New York: Routledge, 1988).

⁵³ In the late republic Sibyls proliferated and became associated with specific places. Varro catalogues ten Sibyls, all localized, and all derived from literary attestations, while Pausanias travels to various sites laying claim to Sibyls: Delphi, Delos, Erythrae, Marpessus, and Alexandria.

⁵⁴ Tacitus records a senatorial debate concerning the admission of a newly discovered and purportedly Sibylline prophecy to the collection of verses under the charge of the *quindecimviri* (*Ann.* 6.12).

disciplina, a body of textual resources that the Romans had inherited from the Etruscans. Even though it fell to the senate to solicit rulings on prodigies, the actual consultants and interpreters of the *libri haruspicini* were Etruscan social elites organized into a college of sixty persons.⁵⁵ Though there might have been some relationship between the two, this body was distinct from salaried *haruspices* whose expertise involved interpreting the entrails of sacrificial victims and thus determining the efficacy of the sacrifice itself.⁵⁶ At some point in the early empire it seems that the *Etrusca disciplina* was put under the control of the *quidecimviri s. f.* The relationship of the *Etrusci libri* to the collection of prophetic texts kept in the Temple of Apollo and guarded by that priesthood is unclear, although the latter was rumored to include the *libri Vegoici*, prophecies of an Etruscan prophetess, in addition to the *oracula Sibyllina*.⁵⁷ In their official capacity, the *Etrusci libri* detailed expiatory procedures and also contained lists of prodigies that occurred during the republic. We do, however, receive varying accounts of their contents. Cicero divides the Etruscan books topically into three parts—*haruspicini*, *fulgurales*, *rituales*—while Varro mentions the Etruscan *libri fatales*, which

⁵⁵ See Haack, *Les Haruspices dans le monde romain*; Bruce McBain, *Prodigy and Expiation: A Study in Religion and Politics in Republican Rome* (Bruxelles: Latomus, 1982). The college of *haruspices* was especially active in the late republic, when they advised about prodigies far more regularly than the *quindecimviri s. f.*

⁵⁶ John North, “Diviners and Divination at Rome,” in *Pagan Priests: Religion and Power in the Ancient World* (ed. Mary Beard and John North; Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1990), 51-71.

⁵⁷ Servius on *Aen.* 6.72; Livy, 25.23; Lact. *Div. Inst.* 1.6.12; Barthold Georg Niebuhr, *History of Rome*, v. 1 (trans. Julius Charles Hare and Connop Thirlwall; Philadelphia: Thomas Wardle, 1835), 384.

Censorinus assimilates to the *libri rituales*.⁵⁸ Later sources refer to *sacra Acheruntia*, attributed to the first Etruscan *haruspex*, Tages, and thought to concern matters pertaining to the underworld. Arnobius even entertains the possibility that they included instructions for how to transform the souls of the dead into immortal *dii animales* by means of appropriate animal sacrifices.⁵⁹

Although the Sibylline oracles, and perhaps some Etruscan writings, were a partial exception to the largely *pro forma* use of writings in civic religion and more closely resembled the activities of literate intellectuals, overall significant differences remain between the two. Most importantly, civic divinatory practices were not ends in and of themselves, but held value only to the extent that they promoted other institutions and activities. Moreover, all were undertaken according to precedent and were beholden to multiple forms of oversight. As Francesco Santangelo remarks,

[Praise] for the rewards of divination is not unqualified. The foresight of the ancestors is celebrated because they decided to limit the potential options of their divinatory practices. The emphasis is on *contineri*: augury sets a limit on the use of power, the Sibylline books provide a framework for ancient prophetic utterances, and the Etruscan discipline sets rules for the expiation of prodigies. Cicero certainly gives a favourable assessment of the role of public divination, but he qualifies it by saying that there is no orderly and meaningful divination without *prudentia*—without a sound set of checks and balances or ultimately without a range of political and legal practices. In fact, divination is useful and makes sense only because it is included within a specific and well-established legal framework.⁶⁰

⁵⁸ Cic. *Div.* 1.72; Varro apud Censorinus, *DN* 14.15, also 17.5.

⁵⁹ Arnob. 2.62; Serv. *Aen.* 4.56; Macr. 3.5.1; Rawson, *Intellectual Life in the Late Roman Republic*, 303.

⁶⁰ Francesco Santangelo, “Law and Divination in the Late Roman Republic,” in *Law and Religion in the Roman Republic* (ed. Olga Tellegen-Couperus; Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2011), 31–56, cit. 48.

With the earlier caveat about Cicero's perspective still in mind, his assessment of public divination offers a valuable line of sight into its highly specific, purposive role within the context of Roman state religion. However carefully situated civic divinatory practices were, however, they involved multiple agents operating somewhat anonymously from numerous locations.⁶¹ As John North has argued, the relative anonymity, remove, and diffuseness of some of these positions, made it easy enough to lay claim to their associated expertise. But the inconsistent ability of Roman authorities to police would-be usurpers of civic titles, artifacts, and practices is beside the point, insofar as freelance religious experts were for the most part filling a role that public cult did not address. While there might be some occasions for competition between specialists and civic institutions—for instance, a foreign diviner attached him- or herself to someone in high political office and his or her private readings touched on public matters that would otherwise be addressed by official diviners—it was not generally in the interest of civic religious authorities to contend with such figures, since the latter rarely trespassed on their turf.⁶² Alternatively, although state religious activities were performed on behalf of all residents of Rome, they did not address the specific range of concerns that freelance experts met (e.g., healing, personal divination, reversals of fortune, recovering property, etc.).

⁶¹ North, "Diviners and Divination at Rome," 52, 55.

⁶² Exceptions will be dealt with in greater detail in chapter two.

Rome also managed a number of foreign cults, which had been imported according to a specific protocol (i.e., consultation of the Sibylline oracles) and which were often officiated by native priests or priestesses.⁶³ Although their rites might seem exotic or novel to Roman audiences, these cults were regulated by Roman authorities, who exercised some control over their influence. The cult of Magna Mater, which was imported to Rome by Sibylline decree and established in a prominent location on the Palatine hill, was a garishly alien presence in the city, complete with strangely garbed native priests and provocative secret rites.⁶⁴ The impact of its strange practices was kept in check, however, by restrictions upon the participation of Roman citizens in this cult. To the contrary, the unregulated introduction of Bacchic cult into the city precipitated a famously aggressive suppression of its enthusiasts in 186 BCE, the result of which was the imposition of strict guidelines aimed not at expelling the god or depriving him of his preferred

⁶³ Orlin, *Foreign Cults in Rome*. This was the case, for example, the cult of Ceres, which was officiated by priestesses brought to Rome from Magna Graecia, as well as that of Magna Mater. For the former see Barbette Stanley Spaeth, *The Roman Goddess Ceres* (Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 1996).

⁶⁴ For the introduction of Magna Mater, see Livy, 29.14.5-14. On the cult more generally, see Jacob Latham, "Fabulous Clap-Trap: Roman Masculinity, the Cult of Magna Mater, and Literary Constructions of the *galli* at Rome from the Late Republic to Late Antiquity," *Journal of Religion* 92 (2012): 84-122; Rabun Taylor, "Two Pathic Subcultures in Ancient Rome," *Journal of the History of Sexuality* 7 (1997): 319-371; Eugene N. Lane, ed., *Cybele, Attis, and Related Cults: Essays in Memory of M. J. Vermaseren*. Religions in the Graeco-Roman World 131 (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 1996); Mary Beard, "The Roman and the Foreign: The Cult of the 'Great Mother' in Imperial Rome," in *Shamanism, History, and the State* (ed. Nicholas Thomas and Caroline Humphrey; Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1994), 164-190.

method of veneration, but at instituting a regulatory framework for involvement in the cult.⁶⁵

As multi-cultural influences began to saturate Rome to an unprecedented degree toward the end of the Republic, the range of religious services available and of those qualified to purvey them became more variegated and appear to have multiplied considerably. This is not to make any sort of argument for the purity of Roman religion prior to this point, but to suggest that steady influxes of new ethnic populations, gods, practices, and alleged religious benefits posed challenges with respect to how to regulate new forms of religion and their freelance purveyors. Yet the provision of alien religion is only one side of the coin in understanding the administrative challenges it posed, the other of which is the apparent enthusiasm among Roman audiences about exotic or otherwise novel religious practices.

Tangible features of Rome's urban fabric familiarized its population with foreign peoples, and in turn with their distinctive customs, ritual paraphernalia, deities, and priests.⁶⁶ As the city honed its cosmopolitan character an emphasis fell on making new imperial territories and peoples knowable to the public.⁶⁷

⁶⁵ *CIL* 1².581 = *ILS* 18 = *ILLRP* 511. Select bibliography includes: Sarolta Takács, "Politics and Religion in the Bacchanalia Affair of 186 B.C.E.," *HSCP* 100 (2000): 301-310; R. A. Bauman, "The Suppression of the Bacchanals: five questions," *Historia* 39 (1990): 334-348; Erich S. Gruen, *Studies in Greek Culture and Roman Policy*. Cincinnati Classical Studies 7 (Leiden: Brill, 1990), 34-78.

⁶⁶ Orlin, *Foreign Cults in Rome*, 191-213; idem, "Foreign Cults in Republican Rome: Rethinking the Pomerian Rule," *MAAR* 47 (2002): 1-18. For a complementary discussion that is not specific to religious practices, see C. Brian Rose, "The Parthians in Augustan Rome," *AJA* 109 (2005): 21-75.

⁶⁷ Claude Nicolet, *Space, Geography, and Politics in the Early Roman Empire* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1991).

Structures were built to display despoiled objects, maps, allegorical figures of the provinces, even exotic flora, prompting some to describe such monuments as metaphors of empire.⁶⁸ Other monuments pointed explicitly to alien knowledge forms and writing, such as the countless obelisks imported to the city and the famous *horologium* of Augustus.⁶⁹ The city's role in stimulating interest in foreign cultural practices and specialists therein will be considered throughout this study. For now it suffices to suggest that the global symbolism infusing its urban topography contributed in subtle but broadly accessible ways to their basic recognition and attraction among Roman audiences.⁷⁰

Rome's motley religious landscape was not only taking shape on the ground but also stimulated intellectual interest in alien religion, epistemologies, and institutions.⁷¹ From roughly the first-century BCE, the Greek and Latin literary records teem with writings about religion: ethnographies of provincial subjects, surveys of foreign religious practices and theologies, and philosophical investigations of cross-cultural religious practices such as divination. Beyond mere curiosity about provincial cultures, many writers had a vested interest in parsing

⁶⁸ Catharine Edwards and Greg Woolf, eds., *Rome the Cosmopolis* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006); Ann Kuttner, "Culture and History at Pompey's Museum" *TAPA* 129 (1999): 343-373.

⁶⁹ See Grant Parker, "Obelisks still in exile: monuments made to measure?" in *Nile into Tiber: Egypt in the Roman World. Proceedings of the 3rd International Conference of Isis Studies, Faculty of Archaeology, Leiden University, May 11-14, 2005*. Religions in the Graeco-Roman World 159 (ed. Laurent Bricault, Miguel John Versluys, and Paul G. P. Meyboom; Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2007), 209-222; Carlos Noreña, "Medium and Message in Vespasian's Templum Pacis," *MAAR* 48 (2003): 25-43; Erik Iversen, *Obelisks in Exile I: The Obelisks of Rome* (Copenhagen: G. E. C. Gad, 1968).

⁷⁰ See the discussion in chapter three.

⁷¹ See Ando, "The Ontology of Religious Institutions," 54-57.

novel or alien religious phenomena into discursive categories that were distinct from and often antithetical to Roman *religio*.⁷² Similar reasons led writers to annotate Roman civic observances, to sort out the identities of obscure Roman deities, and to harmonize foreign concepts and categories with Roman ones.⁷³ This exegetical trend is most apparent for, although hardly restricted to, writers such as Cicero, Varro, and Ovid, who simultaneously participated in state cult and produced intricate interpretations of basic religious practices and observances that were auxiliary to their civic responsibilities.⁷⁴ Despite the limited number of people who operated at that literary register, their writings had a wider diffusion than one might expect. An inscribed Roman calendar from Palestrina contains brief explanations of its scheduled religious events, which may derive from the work of Verrius Flaccus, a freedman of Augustus who completed a scholarly

⁷² See Nongbri, *Before Religion*, 25-64.

⁷³ Duncan McRae, "The Books of Numa: Writing Intellectuals and the Making of Roman Religion" (Ph.D. Dissertation; Harvard University, 2013). The *locus classicus* for such writings is Arnaldo Momigliano, "The Theological Efforts of the Upper Classes in the First Century B.C." *CP* 79 (1984): 199-211, reprinted in *Roman Religion* (ed. Clifford Ando; Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2003), 147-163. See also Thomas Tarver, "Varro and the Antiquarianism of Philosophy," *Philosophia Togata II: Plato and Aristotle at Rome* (ed., Jonathan Barnes and Miriam T. Griffin; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), 130-164, esp. 134. The author mentions several books produced in this vein: on augury, the *Auguralia* of C. Claudius Marcellus, praetor in 80 BCE, Cicero's *De auguriis*, the *Auguralis disciplina* of Appius Claudius Pulcher, consul in 54, and P. Nigidius Figulus' *De augurio privato*; on pontifical practices, the *Ius pontificium* of Q. Fabius Maximus Servilianus, consul in 142, Veranius' *Quaestiones pontificales*, and Octavius Hersennius' *De sacris saliaribus Tiburtium*. As Tarver concludes, "The evidence suggests a bookish Roman elite, defined by the intellectual curiosity of its spare time, which was willing to spend time and energy—and money—in philosophical speculation characterized by a network of back-and-forth literary activity" (138).

⁷⁴ Mary Beard, "Ancient Literacy and the Function of the Written Word in Roman Religion," in *Literacy in the Roman World. JRS Supplementary Series 3* (ed. Mary Beard et al.; Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1991), 35-58, cit. 56: "Roman state religion was intensely exegetical; it was defined and explained by the stories that were told about it. The root of much of this exegesis lay in the cognitive possibilities opened up by writing."

commentary on the Roman calendar.⁷⁵ While there is a temptation to view these elaborate works as windows into the ‘essence’ of Roman religion, philosophical and philosophically informed writings were no more essential to Roman state religion than were the offerings of entrepreneurial specialists.⁷⁶

No factor contributed more significantly to Roman encounters with the alien or exotic, however, than the copious populations of resident aliens whose numbers in the city were unprecedented during the period in question.⁷⁷ Rome’s overall population had roughly tripled in the last two centuries of the Republic, driven by voluntary and involuntary migrations from all over the territorial empire, and its demographics were heavily skewed toward slaves, freedpersons, and *peregrini*.⁷⁸ Preoccupations with foreigners and freedpersons—though these categories usually overlapped in all but the civil status distinction between *peregrini* and *libertini*—are especially pronounced in evidence from the early

⁷⁵ Filippo Coarelli, *Revixit ars. Arte e ideologia a Roma. Dai modelli ellenistici alla tradizione repubblicana* (Roma: Quaesar, 1996); Richard L. Gordon, “From Republic to Principate: priesthood, religion, and ideology,” in *Pagan Priests: Religion and Power in the Ancient World* (ed., Mary Beard and John North; Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1990), 179–198, reprinted in *Roman Religion* (ed. Clifford Ando; Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2003), 62–83.

⁷⁶ For the relationship between literary production and religious practice, see Dennis C. Feeney, *Literature and Religion at Rome: cultures, contexts, and beliefs* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1998).

⁷⁷ David Noy, *Foreigners at Rome: Citizens and Strangers* (London: Duckworth with the Classical Press of Wales, 2000).

⁷⁸ Willem Jongman, “Slavery and the growth of Rome. The transformation of Italy in the second and first centuries BCE,” in *Rome the Cosmopolis* (ed. Catharine Edwards and Greg Woolf; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 100–122, esp. 106.

imperial period, as authors reflect upon their considerable and diffuse social influences, as well as attempts to limit these.⁷⁹

Concerning the impact of Rome's shifting demographics on religious matters, Tacitus' aforementioned complaint about the religious diversity of multi-ethnic Roman households bears witness to the role of slavery and immigration in forcing intimate encounters with foreign religion. Incidental mechanisms of 'cult migration'—for example, an immigrant or group of immigrants who continue to worship a native god—account only partially, however, for the novel forms of religion that appeared in Rome in the first centuries. As we shall see in the following chapters, some instances were deliberately proliferated by entrepreneurial figures while others had less to do with alien practices *per se* than with the expanded opportunities for religious participation, patronage, and office that new forms of religion might afford.

Regarding the latter point, there are several indications of a growing demand for formal religious participation among upwardly mobile social actors, as well as of Roman efforts to expand opportunities for office-holding and

⁷⁹ Concerns about the social activities of freedmen abound in evidence from the first centuries BCE and CE, ranging from a series of legislation curtailing manumission rates and the rights, to dismissive characterizations of freedmen perpetrated by historians and novelists. With respect to the first concern, during the reign of Augustus large-scale slave manumissions had become so common that the imperial government passed successive laws, first limiting the number of slaves who could receive their freedom by *testamentum* (the *lex Fufia Caninia* of 2 BCE), and then, designating an age requirement for manumission (the *lex Aelia Sentia* of 4 CE) and limiting the rites bestowed upon freedmen manumitted informally or immaturely (the *lex Iunia*, often dated to 19 CE). The *lex Fufia Caninia* set a limit upon the number of slaves who could be given their freedom by will at one time on the death of their master, depending upon how many slaves he or she owned. The *lex Aelia Sentia* set a minimum age of 20 for manumission and also made it difficult for freedmen younger than the age of 30 to acquire full citizenship. Both laws were meant to prevent large numbers of slaves from gaining citizenship *en masse* and without state regulation, thus limiting their influence on public life.

participation in Roman civic religion. It is well known that the civil status constraints that barred freedmen and foreigners from advancing to the leading *ordines* where one acquired civic office often stood at odds with the enormous wealth, education level, and social influence that many were able to achieve.⁸⁰ Some wealthy freedmen aspired to another civic order, a variation of the *Augustales*, which are attested for nearly every urban area of the Empire. The series of positions comprising this civic station included titles such as *seviri*, *seviri Augustales*, *Augustales*, *magistri Augustales*, all of which are attested in over 2,500 inscriptions.⁸¹ Although the origin and purposes of local *Augustales* are obscure, those of their activities that are captured in inscriptions include cultic and commemorative rites performed at imperial cult temples (*templum Augusti*), as well as public rites conducted in urban fora before statues of emperors who received cult.⁸² That the ranks of the *Augustales* occasionally included freeborn members (*ingenui*) indicates the relative respectability of such positions.⁸³ The majority of our evidence for this body, however, some 80-90 per cent, is for freed

⁸⁰ John Patterson, *Landscapes and Cities: Rural Settlement and Civic Transformation in Early Imperial Italy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 236. Although, on rare occasions, important freedmen might be admitted into the equestrian order—as was the case for Antonius Musa, the doctor of the emperor Augustus (Cass. Dio, 53.30.3)—such cases constituted exceptions to typical constraints upon the social status possible for former slaves. Even these freedmen were highly unlikely to enter a city's *ordo decurionum*, which was open to other *equites*, though they might be awarded the honorific *ornamenta decurionia* or *decurionatus*.

⁸¹ Patterson, *Landscapes and Cities*, 242-243.

⁸² John D'Arms, "Memory, Money, and Status at Misenum: Three New Inscriptions from the *Collegium* of the *Augustales*," *JRS* 90 (2000): 126-144; Steve E. Ostrow, "'Augustales' along the Bay of Naples: A Case for their Early Growth," *Historia* 34 (1985): 64-101; R. Duthoy, "Les *Augustales*," *ANRW* 2.16.2 (1978): 1254-1309.

⁸³ Patterson, *Landscapes and Cities*, 246-247, 250.

participants, who, in exchange for their membership and other honors, would bestow civic benefactions, finance urban development, and erect statues for the emperor and his family members, often in excess of *decuriones*.⁸⁴ This is certainly the sort of unbridled largess that Petronius lampoons in his depiction of the freedman Trimalchio, who is himself a *sevir Augustalis* and displays the *fasces* prominently in his dining room.⁸⁵

If not by way of the *Augustales*, other freedmen might serve as *magistri* and *ministri* of the *Lares compitales*, offices that were expanded under Augustus in 7 BCE when he redistricted Rome into 14 regions of 265 *vici*, each with a *collegium* and *compita* performed for the *lares* and the *genius Augusti*.⁸⁶ Already by the late Republic, free citizens had begun to withdraw increasingly from these *collegia*, which were temporarily abolished in 64 BCE, allegedly for their political influence and abuses.⁸⁷ When these cults were not only revived but also multiplied, their leadership positions were held largely by freedmen, whose responsibilities were to

⁸⁴ Patterson elaborates, "The predominance of freedmen is very significant for the understanding of the role of the *Augustales* in urban society. Since freedmen were excluded from the *ordo*, service in the body of *Augustales* provided the only way in which the wealthy and ambitious freedman could engage in public life...Many of those attested as *Augustales* appear to have acquired wealth through trade, manufacture, or commerce, and the creation of the *Augustales* likewise had the effect of allowing the city to draw upon the resources gained by these means. The institution thus provided a means of acquiring additional prestige for the wealthier among the city's freedmen, as well as an opportunity for the city to exploit their enthusiasm for participation in civic life" (*Landscapes and Cities*, 247).

⁸⁵ Petr. *Sat.* 30.

⁸⁶ Ramsay MacMullen estimates that each of these 265 *vici* would have consisted of approximately five hundred adult males, whose support Augustus attempted to garner by extending new positions in the *compitalia* and by banqueting these districts at the state's expense [*Roman Social Relations: 50 B.C. to A.D. 284* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1974), 68].

⁸⁷ New Pauly: *Compitalia*.

prepare for and preside over the popular *sacra publica* and games devoted to the Compitalia for three days each January.⁸⁸ The street-corner shrines appointed for worship of the *Lares* even bore inscribed records of the annual *magistri vicorum*, formalizing their participation in a manner that echoed similar consular and triumphal lists displayed elsewhere in the city. Although these special priesthoods for freedmen, too, extended limited opportunities for civic religious authority to non-elites, such agents were beholden to the state, nevertheless, by means of accountability structures like the official Roman calendar, which designated specific occasions for the performance of their respective roles, and by virtue of the fact that many of the religious rites they performed were financed by the state.

Despite those efforts to design public offices for freedmen specifically, there remained a vast gray area between civic and domestic religion that lacked clearly defined rules and hierarchies but wherein status and authority could be articulated in novel ways.⁸⁹ The same space encapsulated the preponderance of religious activity that occurred in the city. Like freelance religious experts, the people who

⁸⁸ MacMullen, *Roman Social Relations*, 69: "At *compitalia* the youths of the street competed in games under the direction of the *magistri vicorum*, whose annual choice by lot from the freedmen residents Augustus had arranged in hopes of meshing this class into the machinery of his administration."

⁸⁹ Unlike the senatorial and equestrian *ordines*, however, which were delimited quite specifically and had strict criteria for entry and advancement, the lower social strata consisting of freeborn persons (*ingenui*), freedmen (*liberti*), foreigners (*peregrini*), and slaves (*servi*), lacked clearly defined rules and hierarchy. See Alföldy, *The Social History of Rome*, 147-148: "The borderlines between the various lower strata ran vertically in accordance with [legal status]: that is, these borderlines could only determine the social position of the individual to a certain extent. There were no clear social divisions running horizontally through the lower strata, whereas within the upper strata there were clear distinctions between the positions of the various strata. Thus positions within one and the same lower sector of the population could be very different, while the positions of particular members of different lower strata could be very similar."

pursued positions in the *Augustales*, the compital *collegia*, or comparable institutions sought status and prestige through religious activity. And yet the latter did so by connecting with the religion of the state and its attributed prestige, while freelance experts had to earn status and prestige by means of skill, self-authorization, and recognition of their practices. In other words, apart from certain commonalities in the ambitions and social locations of the actors involved, their strategies were actually quite different. Furthermore, some freelance experts, particularly ones whose religious practices were intellectualizing, esoteric, and involved writings, seem to have courted prestige in a highly specialized niche and bear fewer, if any, similarities with people who pursued civic offices.

Another well-known example of how competitive dynamics played out among actors of freed or peregrine civil statuses, and also many women who were Roman citizens, was through the formation of private collegial organizations.⁹⁰ These associations were unrelated to those sacerdotal colleges and sodalities that were established by the senate or emperor, and which had specific responsibilities within the apparatus of government.⁹¹ To the contrary, private collegial

⁹⁰ On the social status and religious participation of Roman women generally, see Celia E. Schultz, *Women's Religious Activity in the Roman Republic* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2006), 139-150; Ross Shepard Kraemer, *Her Share of the Blessings: Women's Religions among Pagans, Jews, and Christians* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), 80-92, 106-127. See also Philip A. Harland, "Familial Dimensions of Group Identity (II): 'Mothers' and 'Fathers' in Associations and Synagogues of the Greek World," *JSJ* 38 (2007): 57-79; Tessa Rajak and David Noy, "Archisynagogoi: Official, Title and Social Status in the Greco-Jewish Synagogue," *JRS* 83 (1993): 75-93.

⁹¹ John S. Kloppenborg, "Collegia and *Thiasoi*: Issues in function, taxonomy, and membership," in *Voluntary Associations in the Greco-Roman World* (ed. John S. Kloppenborg and Stephen G. Wilson; London and New York: Routledge, 1996), 16-30.

associations were unregulated by the state, although many seem to have mimicked the organization and hierarchies of civic institutions.⁹²

The *raisons-d'être* of these groups are notoriously varied, ranging from professional or ethnic affiliation to shared servitude to the cultivation of a particular deity or deities. Though some of these groups might merely enlist a divine patron or engage in religious practices as a marginal component of their activities (for instance, praying or making an offering to convene a meeting), others were devoted foremost to religious activities and interests. Beginning in the second-century many seem to have made burial provisions for their members, who paid regular dues to ensure them. All seem to have enjoyed a strong convivial component, and many pooled their resources to acquire or build a designated gathering place, many of which stood in areas clustered with tombs.⁹³

As was the case for the *Augustales* and compital colleges, our evidence for *collegia* at Rome gives the impression that a substantial number of their participants and officials were either freedpersons or of servile descent. Some

⁹² Kloppenborg, "Collegia and *Thiasoi*," 17-18. Also Patterson, *Landscapes and Cities*, 255: "The organization of the *collegia* consciously recalled that of the urban communities, and this is illustrated by the terminology they used (*Dig.* 3.4.1): the clubs had *decuriones* and annual officers known as *aediles*, *curatores*, *magistri*, or *quaestores*, supported by *scribae* or *viatores*; the rank and file members of the clubs were known as the *plebs* or *populus*. Just as the citizens of the broader community were organized according to carefully defined hierarchies, so the organization of the *collegium* too was hierarchical in nature."

⁹³ For example, *CIL* 6.10234 = *ILS* 7213. Schumacher, "Slaves in Roman Society," 601: "However, freedmen are represented in a markedly greater number in these associations than are slaves (*CIL* VI 30983); and in most cases, freedmen also carried out the executive functions in the *collegia*." On the Roman *collegia* in modern scholarship, and in particular the influence of the search for Christian origins on their study, see Jonathan S. Perry, *Roman Collegia: The Modern Evolution of an Ancient Concept* (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2006), 23-59.

groups also included slaves among their members.⁹⁴ And as was also the case for those examples, the development of collegial organizations in the first centuries BCE and CE tracks with a surge in economic growth at Rome, especially for enterprises like trade and artisanal production that tended to be dominated by *libertini* and their descendants. Since the cost of participation in a *collegium* could run rather high, members usually had some means at their disposal. The proclivity to organize in this fashion is a reflection, to some scholars, of the efforts of successful freedpersons to differentiate themselves from others of their gross social location, who lacked the same levels of wealth and, in some cases, skill or education.⁹⁵

Explicitly cultic private *collegia*—those whose membership was determined by common religious interests and objectives—tended to be the most inclusive type of voluntary organization, often admitting members of either sex, and of any social status, although their leadership criteria might be more restrictive.⁹⁶ The precise roles or implications of the myriad titles and ranks associated with such groups are often unknown, and it is unlikely that such positions corresponded to power and authority beyond their boundaries.⁹⁷ Within the *collegia*, however, members enjoyed opportunities to advance in status, to extend benefactions, to

⁹⁴ Patterson, *Landscapes and Cities*, 254-255.

⁹⁵ Patterson, *Landscapes and Cities*, 261.

⁹⁶ Kloppenborg, “Collegia and *Thiasoi*,” 25.

⁹⁷ Stephen G. Wilson, “Voluntary Associations: An Overview,” in *Voluntary Associations in the Greco-Roman World*, (ed. John S. Kloppenborg and Stephen G. Wilson; London and New York: Routledge, 1996), 1-15, esp. 10.

acquire honors, and perhaps even to court elite patrons, all of which might be unavailable to them in a wider social context or as individuals.⁹⁸ In fact, many such organizations were able to collectively command the patronage of important persons in the city, relationships that often conferred financial support and advocacy in exchange for loyalty to the patron. While a patron might work to secure obvious favors such as a professional contract or government recognition for his or her *collegium*, the less explicit interests that these relationships furthered were equally beneficial for improving the status and honor of collegial members.⁹⁹

There was yet another, related source of attraction for freedpersons to cultic *collegia* and other new forms of religion. Although freedmen themselves were ineligible to enter the *ordo*, their freeborn sons were, and religious patronage constituted one means by which a wealthy father might begin to lay the foundation for a civic career on behalf of his progeny.¹⁰⁰ A well-known example of this practice from Pompeii records a restoration of a public Isis temple whose rebuilding in 62 CE was funded by the six-year-old son of a freedman.¹⁰¹ Obviously commissioned by the boy's father, the benefaction bestowed in his name captures the deferred civic aspirations of this social location. It may also be notable that its

⁹⁸ Kloppenborg, "Collegia and *Thiasoi*," 26-27.

⁹⁹ Jonathan S. Perry, "Organized Societies: *Collegia*," in *The Oxford Handbook of Social Relations in the Roman World* (ed. Michael Peachin; Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press), 499-515, esp. 504-505.

¹⁰⁰ Patterson, *Landscapes and Cities*, 237. The promotion of freedmen's sons into the *ordo* becomes especially prominent by the second century, although this trend may be distorted by a concomitant rise in epigraphic commemoration practices, which reach their height also at this time.

¹⁰¹ *CIL* X 846 = *ILS* 6367.

recipient is a temple to an Egyptian deity, despite the fact that Isis enjoyed public rites by this time and that many of the activities conducted at the temple reflect a version of Egyptian religion tailored heavily to a Roman audience.¹⁰² As novel religious institutions transitioned from private to public status, it is conceivable that they opened up new opportunities for office and patronage than were available within more established institutions.

Collegia enjoyed great latitude with respect to their membership, to their conference of internal titles and ranks, and to the dedications they offered. As Jonathan Perry remarks, “Even on the rare occasions when an emperor or governor intervened in [collegial activities] (by licensing or recognizing the association in some way), the government never attempted to regulate the college’s interior workings. As a consequence, a great variety of internal arrangements become the norm, throughout the empire.”¹⁰³ As seems to have been the trend with the *Augustales*, certain *collegia* might come to acquire an established civic role, largely in exchange for financial contributions or as a reflection of the status they had managed to achieve.¹⁰⁴ From the perspective of those in power, some of these groups generated mutually beneficial opportunities for socially ‘marginal’, yet influential and numerically dominant actors within a relatively coordinated nexus

¹⁰² This is the argument of Molly Swetnam-Burland, “Egyptian Objects, Roman Contexts: A Taste for Aegyptiaca in Italy,” in *Nile Into Tiber: Egypt in the Roman World. Proceedings of the 3rd International Conference of Isis Studies, Faculty of Archaeology, Leiden University, May 11-14 2005. Religions in the Graeco-Roman World 159* (ed. Laurent Bricault, Miguel John Versluys and Paul G. P. Meyboom; Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2007), 113-136.

¹⁰³ Perry, “Organized Societies,” 512.

¹⁰⁴ Patterson, *Landscapes and Cities*, 258.

of civic institutions and practices.¹⁰⁵ Nevertheless, toward the end of the republic and in the early part of the empire, Roman authorities imposed a number of restrictions upon collegial associations, excepting ones of demonstrably ancient origin or public utility.¹⁰⁶ These concerns reflect the threat such groups might sometimes be seen to pose to the established social order, as least from the perspective of Roman elites, particularly to the extent that they operated beyond the boundaries of formal political structures.¹⁰⁷ Whether or not *collegia* and freelance experts posed such threats in actuality is another matter, and one that will resurface in the next chapter.

In effect, much of the evidence for collegial organizations indicates that positions of authority within or patronage extended toward these social formations provided an opportunity to imitate or even exercise civic participation. With respect to cultic voluntary associations specifically, participation in these groups often allowed members to hold priestly offices or to exercise specialized religious skills that would not be available to them beyond their boundaries. Yet much scholarship on voluntary organizations subordinates the religious interests that were served by such groups to other kinds of interests they promoted, overstating their non-religious practical attractions in lieu of theorizing the kinds of religious services and expectations that they satisfied.

¹⁰⁵ Patterson, *Landscapes and Cities*, 262.

¹⁰⁶ See chapters two and three.

¹⁰⁷ Patterson, *Landscapes and Cities*, 253.

In many publications, I would argue, the cultic character of some voluntary organizations is regarded as being somewhat superficial, or secondary to their straightforward social benefits: enhancing prestige, promoting social mobility, group membership and conviviality, pragmatic services like burial provision, etc. It is as though some scholars have difficulty imagining that some of the people who participated in *collegia* could have had distinctly religious motivations for doing so. In other words, granting that the former interests track with certain voluntary associations, there is no reason to exclude the possibility that as many members had an equal or primary investment in the religious aspect of such groups. In like manner, while participation in a religious institution with civic ties admitted for a certain kind of status and prestige, state religion was not the norm for the majority of peoples' religious activities.

To bring the discussion back to the relationship between immigration and religious change, it seems that religious motivations were often paramount in the continued practice of native forms of religion by immigrants. We know of several cultic groups that formed due to obvious factors such as ethnic affiliation and a desire to cultivate native deities according to local customs: for example, synagogues of Judeans, the household of the Alexandrians, the corporation of Phrygians, and people from Berytus. One group of Tyrians, who transferred a statue of their god Sarepta to Puteoli in 79 CE, exists still a century later, when they appeal to the city council in Tyre for financial assistance in maintaining their

community center and ancestral worship.¹⁰⁸ Inscriptions from Rome bear witness to numerous synagogues where Judeans met in order to preserve ancestral customs and to organize annual tithes to the temple of their god in Jerusalem, among other activities.¹⁰⁹

The pietistic motives that would appear to underlie these cases are often ascribed such a powerful effect that they are taken to account also for the attraction of non-immigrants to foreign religion.¹¹⁰ By this logic, people who had occasion to observe the religious activities of immigrants were passively drawn in by their perseverant devotions, to the point either of participating alongside them or of incorporating some novel practices into their own religious activities. That picture couples neatly with another assumption, that people banded together naturally to form communities dedicated to novel cult worship or religious

¹⁰⁸ IGR 1.420-1; Rives, *Religion in the Roman Empire*, 173.

¹⁰⁹ Philo offers a highly idealizing account of the Roman synagogues in his *Legatio ad Gaium* (156-158). The literature on Judean synagogues is especially rich: Silvia Cappelletti, *The Jewish Community of Rome: From the Second Century B.C. through the Third Century C.E.* Supplements to the Journal for the Study of Judaism 113 (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2006); L. Michael White, "Synagogue and Society in Imperial Ostia: Archaeological and Epigraphic Evidence," *HTR* 91 (1997): 23-58 and *Judaism and Christianity in First-Century Rome* (ed. K. P. Donfried and P. Richardson; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998); Leonard Victor Rutgers, *The Jews in Late Ancient Rome: Evidence of Cultural Interaction in the Roman Diaspora* (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 1994).

¹¹⁰ For example, Martin Goodman, *Mission and Conversion: Proselytizing in the Religious History of the Roman Empire* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1994), 83: (On an expulsion of Judeans from Rome recorded by Valerius Maximus 1.3.2) "It seems difficult in the context of Judaism in the second century BCE to imagine a new convert being recommended to set up altars of any kind.... What may have happened is that some Romans, impressed by the Jews, chose to express their admiration in the conventional Roman fashion by the setting up of altars within the city. How pleased Jews might be about this it is impossible to say, but they would certainly distinguish it quite clearly from the conversion of Romans to Judaism."

practice.¹¹¹ Although scenarios of immigrants retaining native customs offer one mechanism by which alien religious practices might be instated abroad, this is not the only feasible mode by which local deities and forms of religious activity migrated to new contexts. In fact, many accounts of how gods and religious practices arrive at new destinations implicate independent religious specialists as the agents of their proliferation. Livy traces the initial arrival of Bacchus at Rome to an itinerant *graecus*, who initiated several Romans into the gods mysteries.¹¹² Those men and women, in turn, became priests and priestesses of Bacchanalia in their own right and initiated others. Although the *graecus* drops out of the ensuing account of the cult's investigation and suppression, Livy is aware of the plausibility of an alternate mechanism for its transmission than the piety of Greek immigrants. The same mechanism is, moreover, corroborated in other forms of evidence for the introduction of alien religion to other Mediterranean cities.

Such examples indicate that some religious social formations that involved foreign practices only grew into discernible phenomena with regular contours, members, and leadership figures as the result of considerable work on the ground and by the efforts of independent specialists. The overlap between entrepreneurial religion and voluntary associations is predictable, as many entrepreneurial figures

¹¹¹ For example, John Scheid, who views such religious social formations as essential to human existence. "Religious practices thus held an incontrovertibly unifying function in the ancient world: it was through religion that one belonged to a community, and it was in large part through its cultic traditions that one community distinguished itself from others. Individual religiosity was surely developed in this setting, yet it was always as a member of a collective that an individual encountered the gods" ("Graeco-Roman Cultic Societies," 534).

¹¹² Livy, 39.8. 3-4.

seem to have been interested in forming regular social groups with institutional characteristics. This is neither to suggest that all such formations owe their genesis to independent specialists, nor that every specialist was interested in forming groups. Nor was there a set timeline for how long it might take such a group to acquire such institutional characteristics, so that they would fall more squarely under a heading like voluntary associations than under entrepreneurial religion. Finally, the assorted other interests that might lead someone to pursue religious entrepreneurship are not mutually exclusive with pietistic motives. Indeed, the same dedication to native deities and practices that likely prompted some people of shared ethnicities to organize religious groups abroad is easily extensible to individual actors eager to instruct Roman audiences in such matters.¹¹³

Questions of categorization and motivation will continue to arise as we turn our attention to evidence for the activities of freelance religious experts in the following chapter. Nevertheless, within the larger map of religious activities conducted at Rome during the period in question, we approach this particular class with a better appreciation for the occasions on which such experts might be consulted, of the models of religious authority that were available to them, and of the religious social formations with which they might overlap.

To summarize some of the general social dynamics that may prove relevant to our study, I offer the following remarks from John Patterson:

¹¹³ Hanges, *Paul, Founder of Churches*, 159: “The evidence of the texts we shall examine...suggests that those engaged in [cult foundation] are so because of a sincere religious desire. Whether we choose to label this evidence of proselytizing activities is another question.”

Under the Empire, the potential avenues for social mobility [increased] in number and variety... At the same time, Roman society underwent a process of increasing structural differentiation. Specialism in military service, in the professions, and in the increasingly important imperial bureaucracy allowed many new ways for the ambitious to advance... Social mobility, then, was one of the defining features of the history of imperial Italy, in the absence of major incidents of *histoire événementielle*; and one of the chief dynamic forces in the history of the peninsula in the first three centuries AD, despite (or because of) the increasing concern of the authorities to emphasize the differences between *honestiores* and *humiliores*.¹¹⁴

As I have attempted to intimate in the preceding pages, this more variegated set of possibilities for social mobility included ones engendered by religious phenomena specifically. Though under the Republic religious authority had been largely restricted to social elites, in the shifting landscape of early imperial Rome one might garner social prestige or influence by new means: by holding a low-level civic religious office, by patronizing or wielding authority in a private voluntary organization or temple, or even by styling oneself and being recognized as an expert in exceptional religious competencies.¹¹⁵ Indeed, this latter point fits with Patterson's second observation that the increase in number and variety of potential avenues for social mobility tracked with an increase in specialization across many domains of social practice. The emergence of a class of professionals in the domain of specialized forms of knowledge, one subset of which was

¹¹⁴ Patterson, *Landscapes and Cities*, 190.

¹¹⁵ See also Stanley K. Stowers, who places Paul and similar types of actors in such a context ["Does Pauline Christianity Resemble a Hellenistic Philosophy?" in *Paul Beyond the Judaism-Hellenism Dualism* (ed. Troels Engberg-Pedersen; Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2001), 81-102, reprinted in *Redescribing Paul and the Corinthians* (ed. Ron Cameron and Merrill P. Miller; Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2011), 219-244].

specialized religious knowledge, will be our point of entry into the material of the next chapter.

In conclusion, I am not suggesting that all of the religious phenomena described above were wholly new in the first centuries BCE and CE—indeed, many are attested earlier and may only appear to have increased in number due to the large quantity of multiform evidence that survives from this period—but rather, that the broader societal changes pursuant to the formation of the Roman Empire and the elevation of Rome as its capital city were germane to their flourishing. Whereas gaps in our evidence record prohibit responsible quantitative arguments, we are on securer ground in suggesting that this period seems to mark a substantial turn in the diversity, visibility, and influence of religious phenomena that fall between civic and domestic modes of religiosity.

CHAPTER TWO

The Case for Entrepreneurial Religion in Early Imperial Rome

In the introduction we encountered several depictions of freelance experts in religious wisdom and services, a sampling that could be multiplied and elaborated further still insofar as similar caricatures abound in literature of the period.¹

Although each example poses certain interpretive challenges, collectively they establish clear points of congruence in the kinds of practices that specialists brokered, in the reasons that people sought them out, and in the sorts of concerns they might raise from the perspective of Roman magistrates.

The aim of this chapter is to pull back from the intimate, if critical, portraits furnished largely by second-century commentators, in order to piece together from other kinds of evidence the activities of freelance religious experts in the 100 to 150 years before they wrote. Granting that any argument about the relative number of such experts in early imperial Rome—that is, whether they became more numerous at this time than they had been in the second or early first

¹ In addition to the aforementioned examples, freelance experts litter the pages of texts in the 'Hellenistic romance' and other novelistic genres. They also have prominent roles in many early Christian writings, especially Acts.

centuries BCE—is hindered by the relatively thinner literary evidence from earlier periods, we are on safer ground in observing apparent increases in their visibility, influence, and sheer varieties over the course of the first century CE.

Despite having gained a higher profile at this time, the figure of the freelance expert was not a new addition to the religious landscape of the first centuries. Cato the Elder warns his *vilicus* not to consult an itinerant *haruspex*, *augur*, *hariolus*, or *Chaldaeus*, while Cicero quotes Ennius repudiating in verse the *Marsum augurem*, *haruspices*, *de circo astrologi*, *Isiaci coniectores*, and *interpretes somniorum*, all of whom lack both knowledge (*scientia*) and skill (*ars*).² A confirmed bachelor in a comedy of Plautus defends his decision not to marry on the grounds that wives are too costly, demanding money each month to pay the woman who utters incantations (*praecantrix*), the woman who interprets dreams (*coniectrix*), the inspired prophetess (*hariola*), and the woman who divines from entrails (*haruspica*). Nor will any wife turn away empty-handed the woman who observes the heavens (*qua supercilio spicit*).³ The playwright is a rich source for freelance experts in this early period. He alleges to know of both male and female *haruspices*, a reminder that when our sources refer to certain kinds of experts in the masculine plural they, too, may have examples of both men and women in

² Cato, *Agr.* 5.4.4; Cic. *Div.* 1.132. It is debated whether Cicero is truly quoting Ennius as opposed to attributing to him verses that critique figures and sentiments of his own day. For a succinct summary of the matter, see M. S. Salem, “Ennius and the ‘Isiaci Coniectores,’” *JRS* 28 (1938): 56–59.

³ Plaut. *Mil.* 692–694. For a discussion of freelance experts in Plautus see Matthew W. Dickie, *Magic and Magicians in the Greco-Roman World* (London and New York: Routledge, 2003), 162–163.

mind.⁴ Plautus even identifies specific places in the city where such figures congregate, noting that there is a market in the Velabrum where one can find, in the company of bakers and butchers, *haruspices*, and “those who change form or provide the means for others to change form.”⁵

Charismatic experts also figure prominently in narratives about the origins of Rome’s oldest institutions and institutional practices. Attus Navius, a legendary figure who displayed his powers of divination before Tarquinius Priscus by splitting a whetstone with a razor, was still lauded as the first expert in augury when Livy and Dionysius of Halicarnassus recounted this tradition and located his statue, *capite velato*, before the Comitium.⁶ Numerous other sources recall the acquisition of the Sibylline Oracles from a old woman who arrived unknown at Rome and offered to sell Tarquin first nine, then six, then three books of prophecies, burning three after each of his refusals. Only after consulting the augurs did the king learn he had rebuffed a gift from the gods and paid her the full original price to acquire the remaining books, whereupon the mysterious woman disappeared from among men.⁷

These examples confirm that freelance religious experts are as old as the extant Latin literary record and were familiar to Roman audiences already by the

⁴ Plaut. *Curc.* 483; *Mil.* 692-094.

⁵ Plaut. *Curc.* 483-484: *in Velabro vel pistorem vel lanium vel haruspicem / vel qui ipsi vortant vel qui aliise ubi vorsentur praebeant*. Dickie, *Magic and Magicians in the Greco-Roman World*, 163.

⁶ Livy, 1.36; Dion. Hal. *Ant. Rom.* 3.71.5; Sextus Aurelius Victor, *De vir. ill.* 6.

⁷ Dion. Hal. *Ant. Rom.* 4.62; Aul. Gell. 1.19; Varro apud Lactantius 1.6; Plin. *HN* 8.27.

end of the third century BCE, if not much earlier. By the late republic, however, our picture has changed considerably. In a book about methods for soliciting knowledge and assistance from the gods, Cicero bears witness not only to a proliferation of competing divinatory practices at Rome, but also to a mess of specialists in these different methods: *haruspices*, *sacrificuli*, *vates*, *sortilegi*, *magi*, *augures Marsi*, *astrologi*, *harioli*, and *Chaldaei*. Cicero invokes all of these titles exactly, expecting readers to recognize the figures and their corresponding domains of expertise. Some titles also receive further ethnic qualification, for instance, when he describes the practices of the *haruspices* of Etruria, Elis, Egypt, and Carthage. Another century and a half later Juvenal furnishes an even fuller catalog of religious experts, including but not limited to a eunuch of Bellona, an impersonator of Anubis, a Judean priestess and interpreter of the laws of Jerusalem, Armenian and Commagenian *haruspices*, Chaldean astrologers, and vendors of Thessalian charms.⁸ In contrast to those of the last decades of the republic, earlier experts appear less exotic and, in the case of Cato's *augur* and *haruspex*, more embedded in Roman civic institutions for the titles and authority they claim. By Juvenal's day, the range of specialists who might prey upon the *superstitiones* of women is as varied as the cultural areas under Roman control or otherwise known among Roman audiences.⁹

⁸ Juv. 6.314-614.

⁹ I have chosen to not translate the Latin term *superstitio*, whose English cognate 'superstition' derives its meaning from Enlightenment and modernist ideas about rational religion and which fails to capture the normative perspectival sense in which Latin authors used it. For bibliography

Indeed, Cicero and Juvenal are apt bookends for a period within which freelance religious experts seem to have become especially prominent and influential at Rome, and also more varied with respect to the titles they claimed, to the composition of their religious programs and services, and to the ethnic coding of certain practice or forms of expertise. Several recent studies have arrived at similar conclusions by examining the evidence for individual kinds of experts. Surveying uses of the term *magus* and its cognates, James B. Rives determines that this language is applied to Persian experts consistently until the last quarter of the 1C CE, when its semantic range expands to include non-Persian actors and practices. He notes a similar trajectory for the term *Chaldaeus*, which fractures into *mathematicus* and *astrologus* at roughly the same time.¹⁰ William E. Klingshirn arrives at a similar chronological profile in an investigation of the *sortilegus*, a figure that first appears in Cicero's *De Divinatione* and whose expertise seems to have been modeled on the practices of the Praenestine oracle.¹¹ J. Bert Lott inventories instances of Syrian prophets and prophetesses in Rome and throughout its territories from the beginning from the mid-2C BCE through the 2C CE, when Apuleius parodies an itinerant group of Syrian lot diviners.¹² Challenging the conventional wisdom about expulsions of astrologers from Rome, Pauline

and discussion of the history of superstition as a concept see Dale B. Martin, *Inventing Superstition: From the Hippocratics to the Christians* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2004).

¹⁰ Rives, "Magus and its Cognates in Classical Latin," 53-77.

¹¹ Klingshirn, "Inventing the *sortilegus*," 137-161.

¹² Lott, "The Prince and the Cutting Prophet."

Ripat amasses a rich body of evidence for astrologers and astrological practice whose examples are especially concentrated in the 1C CE through the early 2C.¹³ Read in isolation, these studies provide interesting evidence for some of the idiosyncratic actors populating Rome's religious landscape. Read synoptically, they suggest that the mid-1C BCE through the end of the 1C CE was a period of significant transformation and expansion for the wider phenomenon of freelance religious experts, and one that brought Roman audiences into contact with varieties of specialists from all over the expanding empire.

As I suggested in the introduction, in order to comprehend fully the dynamics between these experts in religion, we need to widen our lens to include brokers of services that, though equally rarified, would not qualify as religious according to the methodology outlined in the introduction. As Elizabeth Rawson and others have shown, the same period witnessed significant transformations in Rome's intellectual life, owing largely to an influx of teachers, philosophers, doctors, and other specialists from cosmopolitan centers that had fallen under Roman control.¹⁴ While the reception of foreign experts might be ambivalent at times, there were also clear incentives drawing them to the city. Suetonius recalls how "[Julius Caesar] conferred citizenship on all who professed medicine at Rome, and on all teachers of the liberal arts, to make them more desirous of living in the

¹³ Ripat, "Expelling Misconceptions," 115-154.

¹⁴ Elizabeth Rawson notes migrations to Rome of intellectuals from Alexandria in the wake of Actium (*Intellectual Life in the Late Roman Republic*, 318).

city and to induce others to resort to it.”¹⁵ Experts who directly enlisted gods and other non-obvious beings in their activities were thus but one subset of a wider class of social activity, whose growth at Rome is also well attested in the first centuries. As I proposed in the introduction, that wider context is necessary for situating observable rivalries and areas of overlap between freelance experts of all varieties, irrespective of their purported domains of expertise. This chapter thus notes practical affinities across the wider class of specialist activity (i.e., between the practices of religious experts and philosophers, between those of healers and doctors, and so forth), as well as common measures that Roman authorities used to manage its many and varied participants.

Several conditions promoted the rise of freelance religious experts, and experts of other varieties, at Rome during the historical period of this study. One is the city’s fresh cosmopolitan status, the fashioning of which had a notable impact on elements ranging from its urban fabric to the composition of its population to the volume and quality of its cultural resources.¹⁶ Within ‘cultural resources’ I would include not only the varieties of cultural producers that came to reside there, but also rich collections of art that were transported to and displayed at

¹⁵ Suet. *Jul.* 42.1.10–11 (trans. J. C. Rolfe; LCL): *omnisque medicinam Romae professos et liberalium artium doctores quo libentius et ipsi urbem incoherent et ceteri adpeterent civitate donavit.*

¹⁶ The bibliography on the refashioning of Rome as a ‘world city’ is vast. See especially Edwards and Woolf, eds. *Rome the Cosmopolis*; Diana E. E. Kleiner, *Cleopatra and Rome* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2005). For Rome’s cultural resources see Kuttner, “Culture and History at Pompey’s Museum,” 343–373; J. J. Pollitt, “The Impact of Greek Art on Rome.” *TAPhA* 108 (1978): 155–174; Donald Strong, *Roman Museums: Selected Papers in Roman Art and Architecture* (London: Pindar Press, 1994); George W. Houston, “Tiberius and the Libraries: Public Book Collections and Library Buildings in the Early Roman Empire,” *Libraries & the Cultural Record* 43 (2008): 247–269.

Rome from all over the empire, the formation of public and private libraries throughout the city, its thriving book industry, and, with the latter two items, a general swell in the production and consumption of writings during the same period. Although we will continue to explore how such resources contributed generally to the recognition and attractiveness of specialists and even provided instruments for their activities, efforts to recast Rome as a city akin to Alexandria and other notable cultural centers provided a stimulus to would-be cultural authorities of all stripes, especially ones skilled in textual practices. It is in this vein that Cicero complains of Italy's saturation with Epicurean writings, which were rivaled only by the brisk trade in Pythagorean documents at Rome proper. Indeed, King Juba II of Mauretania, an avid student of Pythagorean teachings, was known to travel to Rome to acquire new writings of 'Pythagoras' from the vast literature in circulation there.¹⁷

As Andrew Wallace-Hadrill has argued, the same period witnessed a gradual slackening of aristocratic control over religious knowledge and authority in favor of greater reliance upon the skilled council of freelance experts.¹⁸ The dominance of the senatorial elites during the republican period had always coincided with and been legitimated by its effective ministrations of 'traditional'

¹⁷ Rawson, *Intellectual Life in the Late Republic*, 41-51, 291-294; Holger Thesleff, *An Introduction to the Pythagorean Writings of the Hellenistic Period*. Acta Academiae Aboensis, Humaniora 24.3 (Åbo: Åbo akademie, 1961), 54-55; Duane W. Roller, *The World of Juba II and Kleopatra Selene: Royal Scholarship on Rome's African Frontier* (New York: Routledge, 2003), 158-159.

¹⁸ Wallace-Hadrill, "Mutatas Formas," 56-57. Wallace-Hadrill is persuaded by the thesis that religion and control of priesthods was as foundational to the social dominance of Roman nobility as patronage. He also expands the arguments of this piece considerably in *Rome's Cultural Revolution* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008), esp. 213-314.

civic religion: the activities of civic temples, auspices and prodigies, and the organization of the calendar. But this order had inherent elements of instability, not the least of which was competition among individual aristocrats who would periodically attempt to establish themselves at the top. Since the order as a whole was naturalized and reinforced by the perceived will of the gods, challenging the ‘traditional’ ways of soliciting and interpreting divine information held enormous potential for lending legitimacy to a political candidate.

One can trace this strategy through the tumultuous political circumstances of the late republic, when, for instance, Julius Caesar justified his political ambitions by appealing to the dire situation of the Roman calendar, which had suffered such neglect that it was entirely out of sync.¹⁹ To remedy that situation he wrested from the *pontifices* the power to intercalate additional days and instead enlisted leading philosophers and *mathematici*, foremost of whom was the Alexandrian astronomer Sosigenes, to bring the calendar back into line with the solar year.²⁰ Control over divisions of Roman time was more than an archaic

¹⁹ As Wallace-Hadrill explains, “Roman accounts make clear the reform [of the calendar] is political.... For Cicero, intercalation was an institution ‘wisely set up by Numa which has disintegrated thanks to the negligence of subsequent *pontifices*.’ That negligence, as Cicero himself was well aware, was also the outcome of numerous pressures on the college of the *pontifices*, and the interests at stake were not only the anxieties of those like Cicero, who did not wish their term of provincial office prolonged, but political and financial. In the short term, Caesar’s reform removed from the game a tool of political manipulation which has been used by his enemies. But it also constituted a more fundamental attack on the authority of the *nobiles* who controlled the priesthoods” (“*Mutatas Formas*,” 59). See also Mary Beard, John North, and Simon Price, *Religions of Rome I* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 99-108; Dennis C. Feeney, *Caesar’s Calendar: Ancient Time and the Beginnings of History* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007); Jörg Rüpke, *The Roman Calendar from Numa to Constantine: Time, History, and the Fasti* (trans. David M. B. Richardson; Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2011), 38-43, 109-139.

²⁰ Plut. *Caes.* 59.5; Plin. *HN* 18.211.

privilege, it was an expression of the power of the pontifical priesthood; as such, transposition of that responsibility signaled broader changes in the administration of religious life.²¹ Cicero shared Caesar's concern about the chaos of the calendar, and elsewhere praises Varro, the author of several volumes on Roman religion, for having restored the memory of traditions, procedures, and even deities that were at once central to Roman identity but which had become obscure or been forgotten: "When we were strangers abroad and lost in our own city, your books led us back home, so to speak, so that at least we were able to recognize who and where we are. You revealed the age of our native land, its divisions of time, the rules of sacrifices and priesthoods; discipline at home and at war; the location of regions and places; and the names, types, functions and causes of all matters human and divine."²² There has been considerable scholarly debate about whether this rhetoric of deterioration reflects the actual state of civic institutions or whether it was merely a convenient political platform. For our purposes it matters only that the perceived chaos of Roman religious institutions at the close of the republic set the stage for great transformations in the organization of civic

²¹ Wallace-Hadrill, "*Mutatas Formas*," 59-60: The calendar defined when certain words could be spoken in public (*fasti*), when not (*nefasti*), when assemblies could be held (*comitiales*), and when by contrast the gods should be worshipped. It was the business of the *pontifices* to know when Romans should act and how, to know the rhythms of life that would secure divine approval. Caesar's reform denied the *pontifices* that knowledge, and transferred the knowledge of the year to the rational calculations of the mathematician.... Conversely, the use of 'professionals' to correct the calendar is a political use of the professional authority of experts who enjoyed widespread esteem to trounce the authority of the traditional priestly cast.

²² Cic. *Acad.* 1.9 (trans. Wallace-Hadrill): *nam nos in nostra urbe peregrinantis errantisque tamquam hospites tui libri quasi domum deduxerunt ut possemus aliquando qui et ubi essemus agnoscere tu aetatem patriae tu descriptiones temporum tu sacrorum iura tu sacerdotum tu domesticam tu bellicam disciplinam tu sedum regionum locorum tu omnium divinarum humanarumque rerum nomina genera officia causas aperuisti.*

religious authority. In particular, because civic religion was set up precisely so as to support the interests of the aristocratic order as a whole rather than the interests of its individual members, it left a powerful niche for freelance experts who might legitimate individual political aspirations through alternative means.

Augustus, who undertook an ambitious program of cultural reform that purposefully relocated religious authority away from Rome's entrenched nobility, contributed further to the unraveling of aristocratic dominance already evident during the late Republic.²³ The conservative aspects of his religious platform are well known and included a tandem restoration of traditional institutions and quasi-suppression of alien influences.²⁴ Cassius Dio recapitulates a speech of Maecenas, famously an example of historical retrojection, in which he instructs Augustus to preserve the traditions of their fathers while specifically admonishing the corrupting influences of alien religious experts:

You should both hate and punish those who attempt to introduce foreign elements (τούς ξενίζοντας) into [our ancestral customs (τὰ πάτρια)] you should abhor and punish, not merely for the sake of the gods...but because such men, by bringing in new (καινά τινα δαιμόνια) in place of the old, persuade many to adopt foreign practices, from which spring up conspiracies, factions, and cabals, which are far from profitable to a monarchy. Do not, therefore, permit anybody to become an atheist or a γόης. Divination (μάντική), to be sure, is a necessary art, and you should by

²³ Wallace-Hadrill, "Mutatas Formas," 58. Despite many familiar components, the author argues that the new 'court society' of the Empire brought about a fundamental shift in the location and structure of Roman social power, since the emperor, rather than a restricted group of Roman nobility, was able to control the allocation of political office and other formally elite privileges.

²⁴ See the essays on this subject in the *Cambridge Companion to the Age of Augustus* (ed. Karl Galinsky; Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005). See also Karl Galinsky, "Continuity and Change: Religion in the Augustan Semi-Century," in *A Companion to Roman Religion* (ed. Jörg Rüpke; Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2007), 71-82.

all means appoint some men to be diviners (ιερόπτας) and augurs (οἰνωιστάς), to whom those will resort who wish to consult them on any matter; that there ought to be no experts in ‘magic’ (μαγευτάς) at all. For such men, by speaking the truth sometimes, but generally falsehood, often encourage a great many to attempt revolutions. The same thing is done by those who pretend to be philosophers; hence I advise you to be on your guard against them too.²⁵

We will explore the full implications of this passage at a later point in the chapter, but it is noteworthy here both as a reiteration of the religious conservatism for which Augustus came to be known and as a reminder that discourses about tradition regularly appointed alien specialists as its primary foil.

Despite this impression of continuity, however, religion was also one of the areas of civic practice most affected by Augustan transformations. In 9 BCE, the emperor followed Caesar’s precedent by enlisting another Alexandrian astronomer, Facundius, to implement a correction to the calendar necessitated by confusion between a four- versus three-year leap cycle.²⁶ What the aristocratic priesthood lost in this case was a tremendous gain for the public persona of the freelance expert, whose visibility and perceived efficacy increased from the trust publicly placed in figures such as Sosigenes and Facundius with one of the most central and sensitive apparatus guiding the performance of civic religious activities.

Freelance experts might also prevail upon civic practices without solicitation. Cassius Dio recounts one such occasion in 7 CE on which the actions of a female diviner compelled Augustus to vow public games in the midst of the

²⁵ Cass. Dio, 52.36.2-4; Francis, *Subversive Virtue*, 81.

²⁶ Wallace-Hadrill, “*Mutatas Formas*,” 59.

Illyrian revolt, though the author is clear to distinguish the emperor's real opinion of her from popular sentiment. "[Augustus] made a vow with reference to the Megalensian games because some woman had cut some letters on her arm and practiced some sort of divination. He knew well, to be sure, that she had not been possessed by any divine power, but had done this thing deliberately; but inasmuch as the populace was terribly wrought up over both the wars and the famine (which had now set in once more), he, too, affected to believe the common report and proceeded to do anything that would make the crowd cheerful, regarding such measures as necessary."²⁷ Suetonius is likewise careful to delineate alien rites in which Augustus participated out of respect for their antiquity and establishment (initiation into the Eleusinian Mysteries), from others that he held in contempt (the rites of the temple of Apis in Egypt and of the Jerusalem temple in Judea).²⁸ Yet the same biographer details how the reign of Augustus was predicted by the astrologer Theogenes, whose rooftop gallery in Apollonia Octavian visited with Agrippa, and how the emperor published his own horoscope, how he drew upon astrological imagery in imperial ideology, and how he even cultivated an interest in physiognomy.²⁹ Tempering the imagined council of Maecenas, these examples

²⁷ Cass. Dio, 55.31.2-3 (trans. Earnest Carey; LCL).

²⁸ Suet. *Aug.* 93.

²⁹ Suet. *Aug.* 94.12: *in secessu Apolloniae Theogenis mathematici pergulam comite Agrippa ascenderat cum Agrippae qui prior consulebat magna et paene incredebilia praedicerentur reticere ipse genituram suam nec velle edere persuerabat metu ac pudore ne minor inveniretur qua tamen post multas adorationes vix et cunctanter edita exiliuit Theogenes adoravitque eum tantam mox fiduciam fati Augustus habuit ut thema suum vulgaverit nummumque argenteum nota sideris Capricorni quo natus est percusserit.* On the emperor's use of astrology in his imperial ideology, see

reveal a strategic interest in certain forms of novel religion that only escalated with imperial successors.³⁰

Indeed, it became increasingly common over the course of the first century for emperors and other social elites to be closely associated with religious experts, and many even retained them in their permanent retinues. Tiberius was ever accompanied by his personal astrologer, Thrasyllus, and under his tutelage made such progress in the art that he was able to detect a harmful *daimōn* in a dream sent to him by an adversary.³¹ As we saw in chapter one, Nero is remembered for being especially prone to engage with alien forms of religion: first attaching himself to the Dea Syria, then to a *superstitio* oriented around the statuette of a girl who grants him knowledge of the future.³² Elsewhere we are told that he underwent rites of the *magi*, rumors to which Pliny assigns a specific *magus*, Tiridates, who allegedly traveled with other *magi* to Rome in order to initiate Nero and instruct him in their arts.³³ Nero's second wife, Poppaea Sabina, was also known to patronize alien forms of religion, though her interests gravitated toward

Paul Zanker's classic work, *The Power of Images in the Age of Augustus* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1988).

³⁰ Suet. *Aug.* 92.

³¹ Tac. *Ann.* 6.20.

³² Suet. *Ner.* 56.

³³ Plin. *HN* 30.14-17; Morton Smith, *Jesus the Magician* (2nd ed.; New York: Harper & Row, 1981), 71-72.

Judaic practices and the Jerusalem Temple, as well as astrology.³⁴ Vespasian hitched his own dynastic claims to a series of signs issued by temples as he traveled as a military general through Egypt, as well as to the prophecy of a Judean priest.³⁵ Tacitus recalls how, upon hearing that their general might become emperor, his men “gathered around Vespasian, encouraged him, and recalled the prophecies of seers (*vatum*) and the movements of stars (*siderum motus*). Nor was he untouched by such *superstitio*, as was later evident when he had obtained supreme power, for it is well known that he kept a certain astrologer (*mathematicus*) named Ptolemy Seleucus as a guide and source of foreknowledge (*rectorem et praescium*).”³⁶ Seleucus was in good company. Philostratus alleges that Apollonius of Tyana served as so regular an advisor to Vespasian that others in his retinue complained that the emperor was more devoted to the diviner than pilgrims to oracles.³⁷ Providing another glimpse of rivalry between religious experts and other kinds of specialists, Marcus Aurelius recalls how Diognetus, his

³⁴ This is in addition to retaining the astrologer Ptolemy Seleucus (Tac. *Hist.* 1.22). Margaret H. Williams, “θεοσεβης γαρ ἦν: The Jewish Tendencies of Poppaea Sabina,” *JTS* 39 (1988): 97-111; Ross Shepard Kraemer, “Giving up the Godfearers,” *Journal for Ancient Judaism* (forthcoming).

³⁵ Albert Henrichs, “Vespasian’s Visit to Alexandria,” *ZPE* 3 (1968): 51-80. Regarding independent prophecies made about Vespasian at Rome during his absence in the East, see Suet. *Vesp.* 5-7 and Tac. *Hist.* 1.86, 2.78.

³⁶ Tac. *Hist.* 2.78.1: *post Muciani orationem ceteri audentius circumsistere hortari responsa vatum et siderum motus referre nec intactus tali superstitione ut qui mox rerum dominus Seleucum quendam mathematicum rectorem et praescium palam habuerit*. The same Seleucus, whom Juvenal refers to as *saepius exul* (6.557) seems to have been part of the *familia* of Poppaea Sabina and to have accompanied Otho in Lusitania. Tac. *Hist.* 1.22; Suet. *Oth.* 4.1; Plut. *Galb.* 23.4. Ripat, “Expelling Misconceptions,” 135; Cynthia Damon, *Tacitus “Histories” Book I*. Cambridge Greek and Latin Classics (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 151.

³⁷ Philostr. *VA* 33. 1.

teacher of Greek *paideia*, disabused him of tales of wonder-workers (θαυματοποιοί) and *goētes* about incantations and exorcisms of *daimones*.³⁸

Personal religious consultants were not exclusive to the imperial period, but had appeared beside Gaius Gracchus, Marius, Sulla, and Julius Caesar, *inter alios*.³⁹ Nevertheless, they occur in this capacity more regularly and with greater diversity toward the end of the first century BCE. We know many such experts by name, and of several occasions wherein Roman elites consulted them for personal inquiries that lay beyond the bounds of civic religion. The latter cases are often cloaked in scandal. The treasonous ambitions of Marcus Scribonius Libo Drusus were allegedly stoked by Chaldeans, the *sacra* of the *magi*, and dream interpreters (*somniorum interpretes*).⁴⁰ Similarly, Furius Scribonianus was exiled in 52 CE for consulting astrologers about the demise of Claudius, which prompted an expulsion of astrologers (*mathematici*) from Italy.⁴¹ Lollia Paulina, the third wife of the emperor Caligula, was sanctioned for consulting the Clarian oracle of Apollo, Chaldeans, and *magi* for an indication about the future bride of the emperor Claudius.⁴² Another aristocratic woman, Pomponia Graecina, was arraigned for alien *superstitio* more generally (*superstitionis externae rea*), although we can

³⁸ M. Aur. Med. 1.6; Francis, *Subversive Virtue*, 48.

³⁹ Val. Max. 9.12; Val. Max. 1.2.3; Front. Strat. 1.11.12; Plut. Mar. 17; Plut. Sull. 5; Suet. Jul. 81.2.

⁴⁰ Tac. Ann. 2.27.5-7: *Firminus Catus senator ex intima Libonis amicitia iuvenem inprovidum et facilem inanibus ad Chaldaeorum promissa magorum sacra somniorum etiam interpretes impulit.*

⁴¹ Tac. Ann. 12.52; Ripat, "Expelling Misconceptions," 145.

⁴² Tac. Ann. 12.22.1-5: *Isdem consulibus atrox odii Agrippina ac Lolliae infensa quod secum de matrimonio principis certavisset molitur crimina et accusatorem qui obiceret Chaldaeos magos interrogatumque Apollonis Clarii simulacrum super nuptiis imperatoris.*

deduce from *comparanda* that freelance experts were somehow implicated in her activities.⁴³ In view of the fact that such figures were regularly sought to forecast or authenticate the prospects of ambitious challengers or to issue a challenge to the authority claims of a political rival, it is unsurprising that they are populous in narratives of events such as the Social Wars or the Year of Four Emperors.⁴⁴ Even if these highly public incidents elicited negative reactions, the fact that astrologers, *magi*, and other diviners occupied prominent roles within them bolstered their perceived relevance to Roman affairs.

While these and other factors undoubtedly advanced the publicity of freelance experts in alien or novel religious offerings, others contributed to their supply. The first century of the empire witnessed considerable changes in the structures of religious authority in numerous provincial areas. Egypt and Judea, for example, saw major ruptures in the organization of provincial temples, while in Italy the Praenestine temple of Fortuna Primigenia suffered severe economic penalties in the aftermath of the Social Wars. As Roman administrative pressures and other forms of upheaval impacted assorted religious institutions and

⁴³ Tac. *Ann.* 13.32. See Margaret H. Williams, who evaluates the affair in order to decide whether it was or was not an instance of Jewish proselytism [“The Expulsion of the Jews from Rome in A.D. 19,” *Latomus* 48 (1989): 765-784, esp. 771 n. 34].

⁴⁴ Also MacMullan, *Enemies of the Roman Order*, 133: “In 33 B.C., wars with Antony impended, in A.D. 68-70, four emperors came and went; in 16, 52, 89, and 175, plots or pretenders used astrology to unsettle the populace.”

materials, our evidence for self-authorized Egyptian priests, scribes, interpreters of biblical writings, and lot diviners increase in tandem.⁴⁵

Within the same window, and owing to different but comparable circumstances, unauthorized Sibylline books and prophetic materials proliferated in the city.⁴⁶ In 76 BCE, the Senate had dispatched envoys throughout the Mediterranean to reconstitute Rome's collection of Sibylline oracles, which had been lost seven years earlier when Sulla burned the Capitoline temple where they were kept. The envoys spent years gathering prophecies issued by Sibyls in Erythrae, Cumae, Samos, Ilium, Libya and Sicily, which were brought to Rome for evaluation by the *quindecimviri*.⁴⁷ One can imagine what an impetus this was for the production of 'authentic' prophetic books, and what novelty was possible by virtue of the global effort to recover them. In point of fact, discoveries of new 'authentic' Sibylline texts continued well into the first century CE, when some examples surfaced after Augustus confiscated all prophetic materials in circulation at Rome.⁴⁸ Tacitus recalls a query put to Tiberius concerning a new Sibylline book, whose admission among the other verses of this prophetess a member of the

⁴⁵ For Praeneste, see Klingshirn, "Invention of the *sortilegus*." For Egyptian priests, see David Frankfurter, *Religion in Roman Egypt: Assimilation and Resistance* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1998), 198-237. For the aftermath of the destruction of the Jerusalem temple, see Martin Goodman, *Rome and Jerusalem: The Clash of Ancient Civilizations* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2007), 424-487; idem, "Jewish Proselytising in the First Century," in *Judaism in the Roman World. Ancient Judaism and Early Christianity 66* (Boston: Brill, 2006), 91-116.

⁴⁶ Frankfurter, *Religion in Roman Egypt*, 198-203; Klingshirn, "Invention of the *sortilegus*," *passim*.

⁴⁷ Tac. *Ann.* 6.12; Parke, *Sibyls and Sibylline Prophecy in Classical Antiquity*, 142.

⁴⁸ Suet. *Aug.* 31.1.4.

quindecimviri had demanded.⁴⁹ The emperor responds by reminding all parties involved of the usual process for authenticating such verses, and also that, because of the many apocryphal works circulated under the famous name, Augustus had fixed a day by which they were to be delivered to the urban praetor, and after which their private ownership became illegal. For a sense of how the latter materials might be enlisted to authorize specialists and specialized services, we need only recall that Lucian's Alexander concocts a 'Sibylline oracle' in order to presage his initial claim to religious authority, and another each time he develops a new facet of his expanding religious operation.⁵⁰

The above observations lead into another important body of evidence for specialist activity at Rome, namely, administrative measures such as expulsions or proscriptions undertaken to regulate or suppress their influence. While many of these measures have been of scholarly interest, they tend, understandably, to be examined in isolation, with the focus falling on a particular incident or a category of affected practices and actors: astrology and astrologers, magic and magicians, philosophy and philosophers, Judaism and Jews. Even though such studies do acknowledge parallels between, say, the shared lot of astrologers and magicians, this sort of comparison stops short of seeing the artificial distinctions being drawn by the categories themselves. The shortcoming of that approach is that we fail to see the forest for the trees: a relatively coordinated phenomenon—regulatory

⁴⁹ Tac. *Ann.* 6.12; Cass. Dio, 57.18.3-5.

⁵⁰ Lucian, *Alex.* 10-11, 40.

measures aimed at independent specialists—is overlooked in favor of narrow attention to its individual components. In light of the reframing proposed by this study, I will spend the remaining part of this chapter considering more general trends in measures intended against the wider class of specialist activity, and against varieties of religious specialists specifically. That is, we will explore a possible relationship between recipients of common regulatory measures that is not specific to the content of their programs or services, but that investigates features shared by those recipients from an administrative perspective in order that they should be managed by the same means, often concomitantly.

With our evidence thus arranged, we are positioned to observe that such measures occurred with particular frequency from the mid-1 C BCE through the end of the 1C CE, affecting experts in areas such as philosophy, medicine, and rhetoric, in addition to religion. While they might take the form of an expulsion, a proscription of certain practices, or the confiscation of certain objects or materials, or issue from an individual magistrate, the senate, or the emperor, each of these measures can be shown to address an aspect of specialist activity. Again, when Livy chronicles the Bacchanalia controversy, he first attributes Italian enthusiasm for the cult to an itinerant Greek *sacrificulus et vates*, who oversaw secret nocturnal *sacra*.⁵¹ Although the *graecus* recedes from subsequent commentary on Bacchic

⁵¹ Livy, 39.8.3-5: *Graecus ignobilis in Etruriam primum venit nulla cum arte earum quas multas ad animorum corporumque cultum nobis eruditissima omnium gens invexit sacrificulus et vates nec is qui aperta religione propalam et quaestum et disciplinam profitendo animos errore imbueret sed occultorum et nocturnorum antistes sacrorum*. This is not the only point of origin that Livy offers. As his story of the Bacchanalia affair progresses, Livy also claims that the rites were first restricted to women, an account which he attributes to a freedwoman interrogated about her knowledge of

fervor at Rome, his report of the investigation of the cult contains several features that recur in other instances of regulation that involve specialist activity.

Purporting to quote the consul charged with the investigation, Livy writes:

How often...has the task been assigned to the magistrates of forbidding the introduction of foreign *sacra*, of excluding *sacrificulos et vates* from the Forum, the Circus, and the City, of searching out and burning books of prophecies, and of abolishing every system of sacrifice save the one performed according to Roman custom.⁵²

Though this passage contains a number of interesting features, I would call attention to the pattern of regulatory efforts he implies, which includes the prohibition of new and privately introduced foreign *sacra*, the expulsion of specialized religion brokers, and the rejection of novel perspectives or methods of sacrifice, whatever he means by *disciplina sacrificandi*.

Livy is not exaggerating the frequency with which Roman magistrates and other authorities charged with the city's governance issued edicts proscribing certain foreign practices, expelling certain religious experts, and ordering the confiscation of prophetic materials circulating without authorization in the city.

Such measures grew increasingly common and severe over the course of his

the cult. For a discussion of the fuller account and the central role of women in it see Kraemer, *Unreliable Witnesses*, 29-34.

⁵² Livy, 39.16.8-9: *Quotiens hoc partum avorumque aetate negotium est magistratibus datum uti sacra externa fieri vetarent sacrificulos vatesque foro circo urbe prohiberent vaticinos libros conquirent comburerentque omnem disciplinam sacrificandi praeterquam more Romano abolerent iudicabant enim prudentissimi viri omnis divini humanique iuris nihil aeque dissolvendae religionis esse quam ubi non patrio sed externo ritu sacrificaretur.*

lifetime.⁵³ On separate occasions, the emperor Augustus excluded private forms of Egyptian religion from the city's *pomerium*, limited the subjects about which *manteis* could prophesy, attempted to introduce disciplinary standards for the practice of astrology, and, as we just saw, made illegal the private possession of oracles attributed to the Sibyl.⁵⁴ Under Tiberius, between 16 and 19 alone, there are at least seven separate references to measures aimed at suppressing the activities of *magi*, *goētes*, *venenarii*, *malefici*, *haruspices*, *mathematici*, *Chaldaei*, *harioli*, diviners of all varieties, practitioners of Egyptian and Judean religion, as well as the circulation of pseudepigraphic *oracula sibyllina* and other kinds of *fatidici libri*.⁵⁵ The fervor of his efforts was not lost on later historians; the *Chronicle of the Year* 354 notes the unprecedented number of executions of *venenarii* and *malefici* ordered by Tiberius, forty-five men and eighty-five women.⁵⁶ According to Ulpian, nearly every emperor after Tiberius renewed legislation against *mathematici*,

⁵³ For further discussion of the first-century evidence, see Orlin, *Foreign Cults in Rome*, 191-214.

⁵⁴ On Augustus banning Egyptian cult from inside the *pomerium*: Cass. Dio, 40.47.3-4, 53.2.4, 54.6.6; for discussion of the evidence, see Orlin, "Foreign Cults in Republican Rome," 1-18. For the regulation of *manteis*: Cass. Dio, 56.25.5; Suet. *Tib.* 63. On the Sibylline books: Suet. *Aug.* 31.1; Tac. *Ann.* 2.32.

⁵⁵ The following references, which are not exhaustive, mention such actions: Tac. *Ann.* 2.85, 6.12; Suet. *Tib.* 36.1, 63; Dio 56.25.5, 57.15.8, 57.18.3-5, 57.18.5a. Such measures included but were not limited to *magi*, *goētes*, *haruspices*, *mathematici*, *Chaldaei*, *arioli*, and diviners of any variety whatsoever. Pauline Ripat offers an excellent overview of the evidence for these measures, though weighted in favor of those that affected astrologers ("Expelling Misconceptions," 115-114). Although *venenum* and *venenarii* are not always a matter of religious practice (i.e., sometimes these words seem to mean 'poison' or 'potion', substances that may or may not have involved the imagined participation of gods or similar beings), by the first century BCE this word-group had come to signify more generally any prayer or ritual that consigned some person or thing to the gods of the underworld for destruction. See Rives, "Magic, Religion, and Law," 56-57.

⁵⁶ *Chron. ann. ccliv MGH IX*, 145: *hoc imp. (sc. Tiberio Claudio) primum venenarii et malefici comprehensi sunt hominibus XLV mulieres LXXXV ad supplicium ducti sunt*. For a discussion of the reference, see Dickie, *Magic and Magicians in the Greco-Roman World*, 154.

Chaldeans, *harioli*, and all who do similar things (*et ceteris qui simile inceptum fecerunt*).⁵⁷

Expulsions alone were issued with greatest concentration from 33 BCE to 93 CE and, since they targeted freelance experts directly, provide the clearest example of a strategy employed to moderate their influence in Rome.⁵⁸ Whereas incidents of expulsion from the city have often been seen as symptoms of Roman attitudes toward the purported cultural entities affected, for instance, toward ‘philosophy’ or ‘astrology’, there are several clues that these actions had a more limited scope. In a recent article, Pauline Ripat revisits the apparent paradox of why astrologers were expelled periodically from Rome, despite the credibility and prominence of astrology among many members of its population.⁵⁹ She notes that the same emperors who legislated against astrologers had published their own horoscopes, counted astrologers among their retinues, and even studied the art themselves.⁶⁰ Hence the notion of a uniform Roman attitude toward ‘astrology’ is inadequate for sorting out the particulars of whom these edicts did and did not affect, why they were issued, and how they were enforced.

⁵⁷ Ulpian, *De officio proconsulis* 7, *Coll.* 15.2.1-3: *Praeterea interdictum est mathematicorum callida impostura et obstinate persuasione nec hodie primum interdici eis placuit sed vetus haec prohibito est denique extat senatus consultum Pomponio et Rufo cons. [17 CE] factus quo cavetur ut mathematicis Chaldaeis ariolis et ceteris qui simile inceptum fecerunt aqua et igni interdicatur omniaque bona eorum publicentur et si externarum gentium quis id fecerit ut in eum animadvertur.* See Rives, “Magic, Religion, and Law,” 67; Ripat, “Expelling Misconceptions,” 143.

⁵⁸ Frederick H. Cramer, “Expulsion of Astrologers from Ancient Rome,” *Classica et Mediaevalia* 12 (1951): 9-50.

⁵⁹ Ripat, “Expelling Misconceptions,” 116.

⁶⁰ Cramer, “Expulsion of Astrologers,” 27; Ripat, “Expelling Misconceptions,” 122.

Ripat concludes that the edicts were not aimed at a category of practice, but at certain practitioners, “street astrologers,” who, unlike other practitioners of astrology, lacked a position in an elite retinue or some other informal standard of accreditation.⁶¹ While the concept of a street astrologer requires, in my view, further theorization, Ripat is right to isolate a specific target within the assortment of divinatory techniques, ethnic designations, schools of instruction, and ideological programs gathered under the ancient category and scholarly rubric of astrology. Her argument gains further support from the observation that astrologers were often expelled jointly with figures such as *goētes*, *magi*, and other types of diviners.⁶² Parallel observations might be made for these figures also, so that the expulsion of *magi* referred not to an outright proscription of magic, which was not a salient category of practice at the time, but rather, to people claiming expertise in Persian religion or in practices such as necromancy.⁶³ Likewise, the expulsion of Chaldeans obtained not for an ethnic population, but for brokers of an ethnically coded form of divination.⁶⁴ And perhaps circumscriptions of Egyptian rites were meant not for the activities of temples, and certainly not for any Egyptian or Alexandrian community, but for the sort of itinerant priests and

⁶¹ Ripat, “Expelling Misconceptions,” 123–124.

⁶² Ripat, “Expelling Misconceptions,” 121.

⁶³ See the discussion in chapter four.

⁶⁴ As proposed as a possibility for further research by Rives, “*Magus* and its Cognates,” 75.

Isis interpreters (*Isiaci coniectores*) that we learn of from various sources.⁶⁵

However general the language of some edicts, if we train our focus on broader patterns in our evidence it appears that all of these measures were strategies that Roman authorities commonly employed in order to regulate the activities of freelance experts in specialized knowledge and services.

Although some expulsions targeted specialists specifically, the same or similar measures were often aimed also at their clientele and certain practices with which they were associated. Tacitus recounts a senatorial debate about Egyptian and Judaic rites, the outcome of which was that four thousand freedmen infected by *ea superstitione* were either sent to Sardinia to curb brigandage or instructed to depart from Italy unless they set aside their *profanos ritus*, a technical term for something consecrated privately, as opposed to through an official public ritual.⁶⁶ Suetonius adds that *mathematici* were expelled at the same time, though Tiberius issued a pardon to ones who promised to desist from the art.⁶⁷ Josephus weighs in too, but in his account Tiberius responds directly to acts of deception perpetrated by the priests of an Isis temple, who facilitate the seduction of one Roman noblewoman, and by a disreputable Judean and his accomplices, who pose as

⁶⁵ Cic. *Div.* 1.132.6.

⁶⁶ James B. Rives, "The Control of the Sacred in Roman Law," in *Law and Religion in the Roman Republic*. Mnemosyne Supplements 336 (ed. Olga Tellegen-Couperus; Leiden: Brill, 2011), 165-180. As Rives explains, "[Res] *sacrae* were things that had undergone the specific ritual of consecration, carried out on public authority. In normal circumstances, only a Roman magistrate acting under the guidance of a *pontifex* could perform a consecration.... As our sources indicate, the *pontifices* were the ones who both defined the term *sacer* as meaning "consecrated by a particular ritual" and controlled the knowledge necessary to perform that ritual" (169-170).

⁶⁷ Tac. *Ann.* 2.85; Suet. *Tib.* 36.1.

experts in Mosaic law instruction in order to steal from another.⁶⁸ While the former are investigated and crucified, and their temple decommissioned, the latter provoke an expulsion of πᾶν τὸ Ἰουδαϊκὸν τῆς Ῥώμης.⁶⁹ Though we will revisit the episode of 19 in the following chapter, for present purposes the account suggests important points of overlap between the activities of religious specialists, their clientele, and the private, often alien, forms of religion they broker, a collocation of concerns that occurs in other discussions of religious regulation.

These examples also measure a growing frustration on the part of members of the Roman ruling class about how to regulate freelance religious experts, exacerbated by the ineffectiveness of prior measures. As we have already seen, Suetonius recalls Augustus' confiscation and destruction of prophetic texts circulating under the names of authors of little repute, including *oracula sibyllina*, some of which were deemed authentically Sibylline and added to the state collection. Within the same decade, Tiberius repeated the same actions, with an equally broad scope that included all varieties of divinatory texts. The need to renew the effort speaks both to the unbridled proliferation of these materials, but possibly also to the emperor's role in creating a pretext for their authenticity inasmuch as new texts were still being authenticated as genuine under both

⁶⁸ Joseph. *AJ* 18.81-84.

⁶⁹ While this and other incidents involving Judeans or Judaic practices are invariably understood to have been intended against Rome's entire 'Jewish community' or some arbitrary segment thereof, in keeping with the above suggestions, I have argued rather that they were intended against people claiming facility with texts, special teachings, and practices associated with Judea for the benefit of non-Judean audiences, and perhaps also their clients or followers. For a fuller discussion see Heidi Wendt, "Rereading Roman Actions against Judeans and Christians," (A.M. Thesis; Brown University, 2013).

Augustus and Tiberius. The apparent futility of these measures, judging from their periodic reissue, seems to have to have augmented the severity of Roman efforts to suppress the phenomenon in question. Justin claims that by his day death had been decreed for those who read the books of Hystaspes, the Sibyl, or the biblical prophets.⁷⁰

Our best source for the scope and detail of regulation intended against specialist activity appears in the juridical writings of Ulpian and Julius Paulus, contemporaries under the Severan emperors who bear witness to the coalescence of various earlier measures into sweeping indictments of any and all practices associated with freelance religious experts. Consider the following selection from the *Sententiae* of Paulus (c. 210), which despite its length is worth quoting in full:

Those who have performed, or arranged for the performance of impious or nocturnal rites (*sacra impia nocturnave*), in order to enchant (*obcantarent*), transfix (*defigerent*), or bind (*obligarent*) someone, are either crucified or thrown to the beasts. Those who have sacrificed a man, or obtained omens from his blood (*hominem immolaverint exve eius sanguine litaverint*), or have polluted a shrine or a temple (*fanum templumve polluerint*), shall be thrown to the beasts or, if *honestiores*, be punished capitally. It is agreed that those guilty of the magic art (*magicae artis conscios*) be inflicted with the extreme punishment, that is, be thrown to the beasts or crucified. Actual magicians (*magi*), however, are burned alive. No one is permitted to have in their possession books of the magic art (*libri artis magicae*); those in whose possession they are found have their property confiscated and their books publicly burnt, and they themselves are deported to an island; *humiliores* are punished capitally. Not only is the practice of this art, but also the knowledge (*scientia*) prohibited...

Prophets (*vaticinatores*) who pretend that they are filled with a god (*qui se deo plenos adsimulant*), are to be expelled from the city lest, for that reason, public customs (*publici mores*) be corrupted by human credulity (*humana credulitate*) for the hope of some promised event (*ad spem alicuius*

⁷⁰ Just. 1 *Apol.* 44.12.

rei), or, in any case, lest the peoples' minds be disturbed by this. Therefore, having first been beaten with rods they are expelled from the city. But if they persist, they are thrown into public prison, or deported to an island, or, in any case, sent elsewhere. Those who introduce religious practices that are new and unknown either in use or reason (*novas et usu vel ratione incognitas religiones inducunt*), from which people's minds might be disturbed, are to be deported if *honestiores*, punished capitally if *humiliores*. Anyone who consults *mathematici*, *harioli*, *haruspices*, or *vaticinatores* about the health of the emperor, or the principal matters of state, is to be punished capitally, as is the one who gives the response. It is better for one to abstain not only from divination (*divinatione*), but from the knowledge itself (*ipsa scientia*), and its books. But if slaves consult about the health of their masters, they are to be subjected to the highest penalty, that is, the cross. And any persons consulted by them for this purpose, if they should give responses, are condemned to the mines or banished to an island.⁷¹

Paulus provides a neat summary of strategies used to counteract every conceivable manifestation of specialist activity recognized at the beginning of the third century, and, in specifying each penalty, sketches a fairly comprehensive picture of what these activities might entail: performing suspicious rites in order to act upon other people, making inappropriate or polluting offerings to gods, participating in 'magical' practices or possessing 'magical' writings, prophesying under divine inspiration, introducing new or unknown religious practices, consulting varieties of diviners about inappropriate matters, and performing or studying divination. As James Rives notes, the passage provides excellent evidence for the use of law to police religious behavior, for the gradual and complex construction of a legal category of "religious deviance." In particular, he suggests that the practices it condemns are not carefully defined and were perhaps even incapable of more

⁷¹ Paul. *Sent.* 5.21-23; Smith, *Jesus the Magician*, 76; Francis, *Subversive Virtue*, 91; MacMullen, *Enemies of the Roman Order*, 125, 130.

exact definition, leaving considerable room for negotiating the application of punishments on an almost case-by-case basis.⁷² I differ slightly from Rives insofar as I suspect that the principal issue at stake is not “religious deviance” *per se*, but rather, the assorted activities of freelance religious experts, who are here treated as a united category of actors and practices irrespective of their myriad skills, teachings, and other offerings.⁷³

Another detail that emerges from the passage is that different penalties were appropriate to the civil status of whoever committed a given offense, even if the offense itself was identical. While a correlation between certain forms of punishment and the status of the accused is a common feature of Roman law, the fact that Paulus goes to some length to lay out these provisions in legislation targeting specialists indicates that people of peregrine or freed civil status were notable among the participants in this class of activity. Cassius Dio underscores this point as early as the reign of Tiberius, noting the separate and differentially severe punishments meted out for astrologers and *goētes*, as well as anyone who practiced divination in any other way whatsoever, under an imperial edict: those of peregrine status were to be put to death, while banishment was to be enforced for any citizens accused of still employing divinatory arts at this time, after a previous decree had forbidden such activities in the city.⁷⁴ As we saw in Tacitus’ account of the episode of 19, four thousand people of freed descent (*libertini generis*) infected

⁷² Rives, “Magic, Religion, and Law,” 47-48.

⁷³ Rives, “Magic, Religion, and Law,” 67.

⁷⁴ Cass. Dio, 57.15.8.

by that *superstitio* (presumably, Egyptian and Judaic rites) were banished from Italy on the threat of perennial enslavement if they defied the order.⁷⁵

Alternatively, governing authorities might make an example of Roman citizens who were entangled in questionable practices. Tacitus mentions a general expulsion of *mathematici* and *magi* from Italy then qualifies that one from this lot, L. Pitunius, was cast off the Tarpeian rock, while another, P. Marcius, was executed in the ancient fashion (*more maiorum*) outside the Esquiline gate.⁷⁶

As we saw in the previous chapter, Rome's population was undergoing significant demographic shifts in the early imperial period, owing in large part to voluntary and involuntary migrations to the city and high rates of slave manumission. The latter, in particular, gave rise to observable inconsistencies in the power, wealth, influence, and education enjoyed by some foreigners and freedmen, as well as some women, and the limited opportunities for political or religious office holding available to them.⁷⁷ Laying claim to religious or other forms of special expertise, or banding together in some sort of voluntary social formation

⁷⁵ Tac. *Ann.* 2.85.

⁷⁶ Tac. *Ann.* 2.32. An explication of *more maiorum* occurs in Suetonius' account of the death of Nero, when the fugitive emperor receives a letter informing him that the senate had pronounced him a public enemy and that they were seeking to punish him in the custom of the ancestors, and he must ask what that manner of punishment was. Nero learns that the criminal was stripped, fastened by the neck in a fork, and then beaten to death with rods (Suet. *Ner.* 49.2). See also Livy, 1.26.6; Suet. *Claud.* 34.1; Suet. *Dom.* 11.2-3; William A. Oldfather, "Livy 1.26 and the *supplicium de more maiorum*," *TAPA* 39 (1908): 49-72; Eva Cantarella, *I supplizi capitali: Origine e funzioni delle pene di morte in Grecia e a Roma* (Milano: Rizzoli, 1991).

⁷⁷ On the tendency of wealthy women to exercise civic participation through religious benefaction see Celia E. Schultz, *Women's Religious Activity in the Roman Republic* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina, 2006).

were two, not unrelated, ways in which people seem to have compensated for civil status restrictions.⁷⁸

In light of these conditions it is noteworthy that many of the people involved in novel forms of religion, as either brokers or participants, seem to have been foreigners, freed-persons, and women. Nor would it be surprising if religious expertise was an attractive avenue for pursuing social advancement, given how the position of some specialists was boosted by the prominence that many achieved in Roman society. At the same time, we should not be inattentive to status hierarchies that existed among freelance religious experts. The figures whom we glimpse alongside emperors and other Roman aristocrats had often themselves been social elites in their native contexts, and, as Ripat argues, were likely exempt from regulatory measures aimed at others of their general kind.⁷⁹ On occasion a consultant who had held comparable status in his native context would receive Roman citizenship and other honors at Rome; Flavius Josephus enjoyed such privileges, as did the Julio-Claudian court astrologers Thrasyllus and his successor, possibly son, Balbillus.⁸⁰ With these caveats in mind, there is good reason

⁷⁸ See the preceding discussion in chapter one.

⁷⁹ See Ripat, "Expelling Misconceptions," 122-123; Glen W. Bowersock, "Foreign Elites at Rome," in *Flavius Josephus and Flavian Rome* (ed. Jonathan Edmondson, Steve Mason, and James B. Rives; New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 53-62.

⁸⁰ See the discussion of Thrasyllus and Balbillus in chapter four. See also Ripat, "Expelling Misconceptions," 122-123.

nevertheless to suspect that many purveyors and consumers of religious expertise were either *peregrini* or *libertini*.⁸¹

Paulus also corroborates the escalating severity of all penal measures aimed at curbing specialist influence, a trend beginning in the first century BCE and already implied in Justin Martyr's remark that in the Rome of his day the crime of possessing illicit prophetic writings carried capital punishment. Although one factor exacerbating the force of these measures was their apparent ineffectiveness, another is that punishments might carry the unintended consequence of enhancing the reputations of those who suffered them. Juvenal quips that the most famous astrologer is he who has most often been in exile, who breeds trust in his skill if a handcuff clatters on his right hand, for nobody will be credited with talent who has not been condemned.⁸² Much as exile had become the mark of the true philosopher, attempts to suppress the influence of freelance experts and the practices with which they were associated could heighten their perceived authority, authenticity, and efficacy. Reckless public critiques of the emperor only increased the renown of Lucian's Peregrinus, who became known as the philosopher banished for his frankness and excessive freedom, akin to Musonius

⁸¹ Or in some cases even slaves. Again, Acts 16:16 mentions a female slave whose owners turned a profit from her divinatory skills.

⁸² Juv. 6.560-564; Ripat, "Expelling Misconceptions," 141. Seneca relates that philosophers were expelled from Rome as corruptors of the youth (*Helv.* 10.8). See also, Glen W. Bowersock, *Martyrdom and Rome* (Cambridge University Press: 1996), 16-17.

Rufus, Dio, Epictetus, and anyone else who had been in a similar predicament.⁸³ In fact, Musonius Rufus himself wrote an entire treatise on the virtues of exile.⁸⁴

The threads binding these assorted instances of religious regulation are, first, that they target actors operating outside of civic institutions and procedures—namely, freelance experts in specialized forms of religion, as well as any artifacts and social formations they might produce—and second, that the same strategies are used consistently to suppress various permutations of this class of activity—Egyptian and Judaic rites, astrologers and other diviners, but also, privately held prophetic texts. It is within this general climate and class of activity that I am inclined to locate Seneca’s recollection of a time early in Tiberius’ reign when *alienigena sacra* were suppressed and abstention from the flesh of certain animals became a point of debate, among other arguments against *superstitio*.⁸⁵ Equally, the trial of Pomponia Graecina, the aforementioned aristocratic woman charged with participating in alien *superstitio* (*superstitionis externae rea*) marks a tendency among Roman audiences to seek out novel, often alien practices from a panoply of available options and configurations thereof, and further, for the correlation of this tendency with administrative intervention.⁸⁶

⁸³ Lucian, *De mort. Peregr.* 18. On the banning of philosophers from Rome under the Flavians: Cass. Dio, 65.13; Tac. *Agr.* 3; Plin. *Tra.* 3.11.

⁸⁴ “That Exile is Not Evil” (Muson. 10.7-10). I am grateful to my friend Birgit van der Lans for drawing attention to this source.

⁸⁵ Sen. *Ep. Mor.* 108.22.

⁸⁶ Tac. *Ann.* 13.32.

Such examples point to a wider phenomenon of Romans experimenting with novel forms of religion that is not identical with the effects of freelance experts, but that seems to have been furthered by or deeply resonant of their activities. A similar pattern, comparable in scope if not quite in scale, is observable in the second century BCE, where we encounter a cluster of regulatory episodes that include but are not limited to the Bacchanalia affair of 186, the alleged discovery and burning of the books of Numa Pompilius in 181, expulsions of certain philosophers and other professional knowledge producers in 161 and 154, and an expulsion of Chaldeans and Judeans in 139.⁸⁷

Many of the sources we have considered provide insight into some of the concrete concerns motivating Roman officials to examine and punish certain figures and kinds of social activity. Astrologers, *magi*, and other diviners attracted negative attention on occasion by casting imperial horoscopes for contenders to the throne, or by prognosticating about the affairs of powerful people.⁸⁸ Beyond

⁸⁷ Livy, 39.8, 40.29.2-14; Polyb. 31.24.6-7; Plut. *Aem. Paul.* 6.4-5, 33.3; Val. Max. 1.3. By Gruen's analysis, "The confrontations of Greek and Latin culture that followed Rome's eastern wars in the 180s and 160s engendered nervous insistence on the superiority of native traditions" (*Studies in Greek Culture and Roman Policy*, 163-167). In other words, these scattered incidents stemmed from a symbolic resistance to alien morals and manners, the outcome of which was a series of regulatory efforts implemented to shore up trust in Roman values. While discourses about the superiority of Roman institutions relative to Greek and other imported practices abound, the problem is not only a discursive one, appeased by symbolic gestures. Rather, evidence from the second-century, like the first-century examples we have examined, betrays a real profusion of these kinds of knowledge brokers. Not only is there an audience for them, they are capable of exerting influence and corrupting concrete social institutions.

⁸⁸ In addition to the examples above, see Tac. *Hist.* 1.22 (trans. C. H. Moore; LCL): "The astrologers also, a tribe of men untrustworthy for the powerful, deceitful towards the ambitious, a tribe which in our state will always be forbidden and retained, they also urged him on, declaring from their observation of the stars that there would be new movements on foot and that the year would be a glorious one for Otho. Many of these astrologers, the worst possible tools for an imperial consort,

the inappropriate gender roles and sexual improprieties that loom so large in Livy's account of the Bacchanalia affair, other concerns that emerge involve the forging of private documents and criminal behavior.⁸⁹ At the extreme end of the spectrum, self-authorized specialists could pose a tremendous and very measurable threat to Roman governance. There is no shortage of incidents in Roman history wherein an inspired figure was able to marshal insurgent masses against Roman authorities and, in many cases, took a heavy toll in the form of military losses, casualties, and resources. Religious experts instigated two separate slave revolts that wracked the province of Sicily. In 135 BCE, a Syrian prophet of Dea Syria named Eunus prophesied an imminent inversion of the social order and commanded a force of 70,000 slaves, whom he called his Syrians, against Rome.⁹⁰ A generation later a second revolt was led by a certain Salvius, a man skilled in divination. In Thrace, a Bessian man named Vologaeus, a priest of the Dionysos worshipped by that people, won a band of followers by "performing deeds under divine inspiration." He then led his adherents in a revolt against the local ruler, who was an ally of Rome in the time of Augustus, and usurped power for himself.⁹¹ In the late 60s CE, the seer Veleda spurred a revolt in Gaul with her prophecies of the imminent

shared Poppaea's secret plans and, one of them, Ptolemy, who had been with Otho in Spain, had promised him that he should survive Nero."

⁸⁹ Again, for a discussion of issues of gender in Livy's account of the Bacchanalia affair see Kraemer, *Unreliable Witnesses*, 29-34.

⁹⁰ Florus, 2.7.4-7, 2.7.9-12; Diod. Sic. 34.2.5-9, 36.1-11; Lott, "The Prince and the Cutting Prophet," 11-12 n. 48; Keith R. Bradley, *Slavery and Rebellion in the Roman World, 140 B.C.-70 B.C.* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1989), 46-82.

⁹¹ Cass. Dio, 54.34.5-7; Rives, *Religion in the Roman Empire*, 188.

demise of Roman troops.⁹² As we will see in the next chapter, Josephus shares similar accounts of ‘pseudo-prophets’ who, claiming divine inspiration, instigated social disturbances that warranted administrative or military intervention in Judea.⁹³

The potential and very real power of freelance experts—whether they lent credence to the ambitions of another, or whether they became figureheads themselves under the pretense of possessing divine information or instructions or even directly mediating a god—argues against common symbolic or social-functionalist explanations of actions taken against them: i.e., astrologers and philosophers were expelled from Rome periodically as a reassertion of traditional Roman values, while Jews were targeted in times of social anxiety because they represented the quintessential ‘other’. While it is true that ancient authors often pathologize alien or otherwise novel cultural practices using metaphors of contagion—Tacitus, as you will recall, speaks of freedpersons *infected* by *ea superstitione*—we must take care to delineate the tangible social problems underlying such incidents from their discursive justifications.

The sheer frequency of measures undertaken to regulate the influence and reverberations of specialist activity reinforces the fact that they were causing real headaches—bureaucratic, political, and military—for those in power, and apparently also for the lower-level officials responsible for policing them on the

⁹² Tac. *Hist.* 4.61, 65; Rives, *Religion in the Roman Empire*, 188.

⁹³ Joseph. *BJ* 2.253-265, 2.271, 6.285-287. For a discussion of these references, see Steve Mason, *Josephus and the New Testament* (2nd ed.; Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2003), 79-80, 170-172.

ground. Nor were the perceived problem with freelance experts always a matter of subversive or disquieting activity. Marcus Agrippa expelled *magi* and astrologers from Rome in 33 BCE as part of a city improvement initiative that also involved sewer cleaning, public building and street repair, and the provision of hygiene services, among other efforts.⁹⁴ In this case, the issue seems to be that specialist activity was undesirable, a public nuisance, though we need to take care to recognize the normative judgments of social elites such as Agrippa or Suetonius whose perspectives surely differed from those of the majority of people at Rome, many of whom relied on the services of freelance religious experts.

Notwithstanding the fact that experts were commonly linked with the treasonous ambitions of certain Roman elites, Ripat notes that not one of the eight well attested mass expulsions of astrologers can be definitively tied to such activities.⁹⁵ Her observation subtly rounds out our picture of the uneasiness of members of the Roman ruling class about freelance experts. While one could easily overemphasize the seditious or otherwise disruptive potential of freelance experts in explaining Roman actions against them, the more general concern they raised seems to have been foremost regulatory in nature: they were at once highly influential but difficult to isolate and contain. What actions that were taken against them, moreover, probably had less to do with the neighborhood dream-interpreter and her lot, who posed no measurable threat to the current Roman

⁹⁴ Cass. Dio, 49.43.1-5.

⁹⁵ Ripat, "Expelling Misconceptions," 117-118.

social order, and more to do with a handful of well-positioned experts who might assert considerable power in situations of instability. But the very fact that freelance experts could become a threat in theory makes sense of the ruling authorities' sensitivity about the broader phenomenon of specialist activity, and their forceful, even disproportionate responses to it.

It might also be the case that historical accounts written during a period rife with specialist activity were influenced by contemporary events and actors in their reconstructions of earlier events involving the introduction and suppression of novel religious practices to Rome, for instance, Livy's account of the Bacchanalia affair. He belabors the point that, unlike other foreign religious experts whose rites, if novel, were at least transparent, the *graecus* professed openly neither his occupation nor his teachings. The profile betrays Livy's disdain for the enterprising (*quaestus*) and variegated expertise of the *graecus*, who is not only the overseer of occult initiations, but also a *sacrificulus et vates* to round things out.

Even if he has no sound historical basis for positing an itinerant expert behind the introduction and spread of alien practices, clearly in Livy's day the figure was a plausible epicenter for popular foreign practices. In other words, it matters less if the story of the *graecus* is accurate, than that he expects his readers to accept his explanation and also to infer from his characterization of the *graecus* exactly what sort of religious practices are at issue. The fact that he is writing in this climate also raises the question of whether contemporary observations influence his and other writers' reconstructions of the past. When Valerius

Maximus recapitulates Athenian actions against Pythagoras and Socrates he writes: “The philosopher Pythagoras was expelled by the Athenians and his books publicly burned because he had written that he did not know whether the gods existed and if they existed there was no way of knowing what they were like.”⁹⁶ Socrates was condemned in the same city on the ground that he sometimes argued *contra religiones*.” In another version of his text, Socrates was condemned because he appeared to be introducing a new religion (*novam religionem*) among the Athenians. While there are many possible explanations for the similarities between accounts of the past written in the first centuries and actual first-century events, not the least of which is that there were only so many penal actions available to any ancient authorities, we should not discount the possibility that authors such as Livy, Valerius Maximus, Suetonius, and others imagined specialists in these roles and receiving these strictures by virtue of the fact that they were witnessing such things in their own time.

In this chapter I have argued that the thickening presence of freelance experts at Rome heightened competition for clients interested generally in rarified cultural offerings. Such competitive dynamics had important consequences for the shape of specialist activity in the first centuries BCE and CE. One is that competition encouraged variety, inducing many experts to devise composite specialized programs and services. Not only do many specialists appear to have claimed expertise in different technical skills or religious benefits—for instance, in

⁹⁶ Val. Max. 1.1 ext. 8, epitomes of Januarius Nepotianus and Julius Paris (trans. D. R. Shackleton Bailey; LCL).

more than one form of divination, or in services such as healing, purification, and intervention in afterlife affairs—many also justified and explained the efficacy of their offerings by resorting to philosophical or medical language and concepts. Since freelance specialists of all varieties vied with one another for followers interested generally in rarified services, their offerings were highly adjustable in order to accommodate new enthusiasms.

Another consequence is that the diversification occurring among all varieties of freelance experts made them especially difficult to identify and manage from an administrative perspective.⁹⁷ We can see that lack of clarity playing out in at least two areas: first, in the broad scope of edicts and other legislation intended against varieties of specialists, and second, in the practical difficulties that administrators seem to have encountered when it came to enforcing these measures.

Regarding the first point, we have seen that many of the actors, *sacra*, *ritus*, and *caeremoniae* that appear in accounts of expulsion or proscription had acceptable counterparts, either in public activities or in elite habits, which undermines the explanation that the cause of these measures lay in general Roman anxieties over the practices in question.⁹⁸ Although the language of edicts might be quite general, the edicts seem to have been specific not only to specialist activity, but also to the activities of a certain social register of specialists. I do not

⁹⁷ One part of which was a natural consequence of the cultural heterogeneity present in the city, while another part was more self-directed as specialists working within common categories of practice or ethnic idioms to differentiate themselves from rivals.

⁹⁸ Ripat, “Expelling Misconceptions,” 116.

mean to imply that Roman administrators had exact protocols for authorizing certain religious actors or phenomena, particularly ones operating outside civic institutions. Yet for many kinds of specialists we can observe a similar unofficial pattern whereby some—for instance, ones with certain qualities or pedigrees (Thrasyllus, Josephus, Chaeremon)—were spared stricture on occasions when others of their kind were expelled or otherwise legislated against. I would also take issue with the notion that such measures were intended against those experts who peddled derivative or crude offerings, and did so for money, a conclusion that too readily accepts the opinions of ancient authors.⁹⁹ Rather, with such a picture one sees a contrast not between authorized and unauthorized specialists in any strict sense, but between different sources of legitimacy and authority, e.g., skill and reputation, ancestry and status, or the status of a patron or clientele. Roman authorities regularly, if in an ad hoc fashion, took it upon themselves to determine the limits of religious activity in certain respects, with the result that we can speak on a case by case basis of ‘authorized’ and ‘unauthorized’ actors, groups, or activities, so long as these labels are understood to be relational and in flux.

Even if magistrates did have a specific set of actors and practices in mind when they issued edicts targeting specialist activity, because freelance experts overlapped with various social formations and institutions in Rome’s population,

⁹⁹ For instance, Ripat’s criteria for differentiating ‘street astrologer’ from ‘court astrologers’: “First, street astrologers peddled a debased or simplified form of astrology to answer the mundane inquiries of the rude masses, while those who serviced the elite are expected to have practiced a more intellectually rigorous and pedigreed form of astrology... Second, street astrologers sold their questionable “services” for money.” Third, and as we have seen, “street astrologers,” unlike their privileged counterparts, found no friendly loophole extended to them to escape expulsion” (“Expelling Misconceptions,” 123-124).

the ability of those in power to determine the boundaries of the independent specialist phenomenon relative to other forms of religion was poor. The task of elucidating categories of suspicious practice was thus itself a competitive enterprise, and one that engendered opportunities for ‘apologetic’ writers, entrepreneurial competitors, and informants alike. We will consider examples of writers who formulated criteria for alien expertise and forms of religion in the next chapter, but here I will point out that informers appear in many of our sources as the mechanism by which particular actors who had fallen under suspicion were even identified by Roman authorities, that they might then be arrested, questioned, and somehow punished.

Livy notes a reward that was posted to solicit additional witnesses about Bacchic activities, an obvious incentive for informing on a phenomenon already under investigation.¹⁰⁰ Pliny complains that accusations of Christian affiliation have spread, as is usually the case, owing to the mere fact that the matter is being scrutinized.¹⁰¹ He is especially cautious about handling incriminating evidence whose authorship is undisclosed, namely, an unsigned and publicly published *libellus* identifying several people as Christians.¹⁰² Trajan responds that such

¹⁰⁰ Livy, 39.14.6.3-4: *indicibus Aebutio ac Faeceniae ne fraudi ea res sit curare et alios indices praemiis invitare iubent.*

¹⁰¹ Plin. *Tra.* 10.96.5: *propositus est libellus sine auctore multorum nomina continens.*

¹⁰² Plin. *Tra.* 10.96.4.3-5.1.

accusations should be inadmissible,¹⁰³ echoing a precedent set by Nerva, who outlawed anonymous informing against participants in Judaic practices and other suspicious activities to counteract the climate of rampant suspicion that he had inherited from Domitian. Although the activity on which he informs does not appear to be religious, it was the *sacrificulus* Licinius, a plebian whose specialty was purifying *familiae*, who notified Pompey that the slaves and freedmen of Milo were organizing to assassinate him.¹⁰⁴

Speaking to the challenges of implementing regulatory edicts, Suetonius notes that Vitellius became especially ill disposed toward astrologers after issuing a proclamation that banned them from the city before the Kalends of October, in response to which they posted a placard assuring the public that the emperor would no longer be alive by that date.¹⁰⁵ What the combined details of these sources suggest is that Roman religious regulation was often ineffective and at least partially dependent for its enforcement on some degree of voluntary participation and public cooperation.¹⁰⁶ Furthermore, the category of actors

¹⁰³ Plin. *Tra.* 10.97.2: *sine auctore vero propositi libelli in nullo crimine locum habere debent*. For Nerva's response, see Cass. Dio, 68.1.2.

¹⁰⁴ Asc. in *Mil.* 45: *Licinium quendam de plebe sacrificulum qui solitus esset familias purgare*. Dickie, *Magic and Magicians in the Greco-Roman World*, 164.

¹⁰⁵ Suet. *Vit.* 14.4-5: *nullis tamen infensior quam vernaculis et mathematicis ut quisque deferretur inauditum capite puniebat exacerbates quod post dedictum suum quo iubebat intra Kal. Oct. urbe Italiaque mathematici excederent statim libellus propositus est et Chaldaeos dicere bonum factum ne Vitellius Germanicus intra eundem Kalendarum diem usquam esset*.

¹⁰⁶ Conditions that were all the more difficult to fulfill when those in power were despised, as Vitellius was. Nevertheless, there are many examples of specialists who were put on trial for predicting the death of an emperor, even if they had done so outside of Rome and needed to be transported there: Ascleparion, an astrologer tried before Domitian for making predictions about

affected by an edict might only be clarified in practice through accusation or self-incrimination.

These observations shed additional light on the infirmity of actions undertaken to regulate or suppress specialists and practices with which they were commonly associated, and perhaps also temper our impression of how many specialists were displaced or constrained by any given measure. They also alert us to another important arena in which competition between rival specialists might have played out. It is no accident that Paul devotes large swaths of his letters to denouncing opponents, that the author of Acts envisages the apostles clashing with Judean exorcists, philosophers, and the makers of sacred images, or that Justin Martyr maligns necromancers, philosophers, and followers of Mithras in addition to false authorities on Christ when he explains to Marcus Aurelius the marks of a true Christian. Such dynamics also operated at different registers, so that literate experts might denounce rival authorities or practices in writing, while others might cast suspicion upon or inform against the activities of a competitor.

In this chapter I have surveyed a range of evidence that illuminates from different perspectives the significance of freelance experts, and of experts in religious teachings and practices, in early imperial Rome. Each topic within that range underscores deep analogies in the activities and positions of specialists of all varieties, as well as in how they were coordinated as a common class of actors for

his life (Suet. *Dom.* 15.3; Cass. Dio, 67.16.3); Larginus Proculus, brought to Rome from Germany for forecasting the impending fates of Caligula and Domitian (Cass. Dio. 59.29.4, 67.16.2); Sulla, an astrologer reputed to have informed Caligula of his impending death (Suet. *Calig.* 57.2).

administrative purposes. On this basis, I have argued that freelance experts constituted a discrete class of religious activity at Rome, irrespective of the content of their specific programs, teachings, and services, or the potential ethnic framing thereof. Moreover, experts in religion can and should be contextualized within a wider class of social activity populated by varieties of specialists—philosophers, doctors, teachers, and so forth—who did not directly enlist gods or other non-obvious beings in their offerings. Isolating this class of actors allows us to observe a high degree of fluidity in their practices, as well as competitive dynamics that cut across different kinds of experts. If we shift our focus to evidence for people who enlisted freelance experts—for instance, Libo Drusus or Lolliia Pollina—such rivalries received additional fodder from the tendency of those with the resources to do so to consult multiple specialists about the same matter.

The chapter that follows will extend the above insights to an examination of ethnically coded experts and practices. Although we have already witnessed several instances of ethnically coded religious expertise, chapter three considers evidence for Judean and Egyptian examples in order to theorize the effects of religious offerings presented within an ethnic framework. A focus on alien experts also invites further theorization of dynamics that promoted the recognition and attraction of exotic forms of religion among Roman audiences. Such considerations are particularly *à propos* for a period within which Rome was saturated with representations of the cultural areas within its imperial command, as well as with actual populations from its provincial territories.

CHAPTER THREE Ethnically Coded Experts and Forms of Religion at Rome

In his sixth satire, Juvenal deplores the infelicitous pastimes of Roman women: gossip, adultery, poisoning, and *superstitio*. As he speculates about how wives busy themselves with their husbands away, he introduces a revolving door of visitors who include a eunuch of Bellona, an impersonator of Anubis, a Judean priestess and interpreter of the laws of Jerusalem, Armenian and Commagenian *haruspices*, and Chaldean astrologers. From these religious experts wives solicit services ranging from dream interpretation, to purification, to the coercion of lovers or wealthy acquaintances, to prognostication about the deaths of burdensome relatives. Women of humble means might have their lots cast or features read by a seer at the circus, while wealthier ones consult Phrygian or Indian augurs, skilled in the stars and heavens.¹

As I proposed in the preceding chapter, freelance experts not only grew more influential in the early imperial period, they also seem to have diversified to reflect the empire's expanding territory and cultural resources. Juvenal's catalog of

¹ Juv. 6.314-614.

exotic experts captures an impressive range of ethnic and cultural frames of reference that were presumably familiar to various audiences. Since the same period witnessed dramatic shifts in Rome's population, due to increases in voluntary and involuntary immigration and to new imperial networks for trade, travel, governance, and military service, it is to be expected that those living at the capital became increasingly aware of the distinctive languages, customs, and institutions of peoples from other cultural areas of the Mediterranean.

In addition to these points of contact, a number of other dynamics promoted broad familiarity with alien peoples and cultural practices, and alien religious practices in particular. In a recent study, Eric M. Orlin argues that a suffusion of foreign cults and influences in Rome beginning from the late republic prompted the Romans to fashion a discrete identity centered on the superiority of their religious customs and institutions, over and against those of provincial subjects and other peoples with whom they came into contact.² While they were hardly the first to have constructed stereotypes about ethnic peoples and their distinctive cultural practices, such representations seem to have been especially salient in the late republican and imperial periods, and also to have been diffused widely in media that included but were not limited to ethnographic writings, images, and public performances such as the Roman triumph.³

² Orlin, *Foreign Cults in Rome*, 3-30.

³ For the relationship between ethnographic writings and other methods for communicating the Empire's new geographic reaches, see Trevor Murphy, *Pliny the Elder's Natural History: An Empire in the Encyclopedia* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), esp. 154-160.

Although multi-cultural investigation is especially prominent in literature from this time, constructing ethnicity was not only a literary project. To a degree that is only now being explored, ethnic stereotypes operated on the ground to familiarize people broadly with alien cultural practices, as well as with ritual paraphernalia, rites, deities, and authority figures. This is especially evident at Rome, where great emphasis fell on shaping the city into a microcosm of the empire.⁴ From the vivid displays of triumphs to exotic materials and motifs depicted in frescoes, mosaics, and sculpture, the city abounded with alien representations, a vibrant world fair of its geographic reach.⁵ The same conditions promoted the intelligibility of certain alien cultural practices, even if people encountered these in highly caricatured forms.

Basic expectations about alien religion also created a pretext for people claiming expertise in ethnically coded religious practices. As Marie-Laurence Haack has shown, many *haruspices*, a type of diviner coded as Etruscan, shored up their legitimacy by exaggerating or affecting Etruscan ethnicity in their

⁴ Catharine Edwards and Greg Woolf, "Cosmopolis: Rome as World City," in *Rome the Cosmopolis* ed. Catharine Edwards and Greg Woolf; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 1-20.

⁵ Mary Beard, *The Roman Triumph* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2007), esp. 106-186; Ida Östenberg, *Staging the World: Spoils, Captives, and Representation in the Triumphal Procession*. Oxford Studies in Ancient Culture and Representation (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003); Bettina Bergmann, "The Art of Ancient Spectacle," in *The Art of Ancient Spectacle* (ed. Bettina Bergmann and Christine Kondoleon; New Haven: Yale University Press), 9-36; Hubert Cancik, "Die 'Repraesentation' von 'Provinz' (nationes, gentes) in Rom. Ein Beitrag zur Besinnung von 'Reichsreligion' vom 1. Jahrhundert v. Chr. bis zum 2. Jahrhundert n. Chr." in *Römische Reichsreligion und Provinzialreligion* (ed. Hubert Cancik and Jörg Rüpke; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1997), 129-43; Sheila Dillon and Katherine E. Welch, eds., *Representations of War in Ancient Rome* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006).

nomenclature and dress.⁶ Exotic monuments, objects, and images suffusing the cityscape seem to have provided another kind of infrastructure for specialists claiming affiliated domains of expertise.⁷ Depictions of Egyptian figures, landscapes, and deities were especially common throughout Roman Italy and Molly Swetnam-Burland calls attention to the prevalence of representations of men and women in ritual dress carrying cultic implements, and sometimes even dressing as Egyptian gods, particularly Anubis. In his fifteenth satire Juvenal confirms that notions about Egyptian gods and religious practices were widespread: “Is there anyone who does not know the monsters that crazy Egypt worships?” he begins, and proceeds to list the animals and even vegetables that receive cult there.⁸ A famous Nile mosaic from Praeneste contains several, more favorable, vignettes of Egyptian religious practice unfolding in a ‘native’ context, even if these images reveal more about Roman illusions of Egypt than they do

⁶ Haack, *Les haruspices dans le monde romain*; Ripat, “Expelling Misconceptions,” 115-154.

⁷ Grant Parker offers a fascinating analysis of the exotic associations attached to even the most mundane objects, “*Ex Oriente Luxuria*: Indian Commodities and Roman Experience,” *Journal of Economic and Social History of the Orient* 45 (2002): 40-95.

⁸ Indeed, Juvenal’s fifteenth satire, a condemnation of anger, makes the case using the example of heated religious rivalries in Egypt. Juvenal queries, “Is there anyone who doesn’t know the kind of monsters that crazy Egypt worships? One district reveres the crocodile, another quakes at the ibis, glutted with snakes. The sacred long-tailed monkey’s golden image gleams where the magic chords reverberate from crumbling Memnon and ancient Thebes lies in ruins with its hundred gates. Entire towns venerate cats in one place, in another river fish, in another a dog—but no one worships Diana. It’s a violation and a sin to crunch your teeth into a leek or an onion. Such holy peoples, to have these gods growing in their gardens! Their tables abstain completely from woolly animals, and there it’s a sin to slaughter a goat’s young. But feeding on human flesh is allowed” (6.1-13; trans. Susana Morton Braund; LCL).

about activities with which Roman audiences were familiar.⁹ At the more intellectualizing end of the spectrum, Plutarch's *De Iside et Osiride* harmonizes strains of Egyptian myth in order to explicate the profound and philosophical significance of a similar range of Egyptian representations and religious practices.¹⁰

The popularity of these images in a range of contexts and media (frescoes, reliefs, mosaics, coins), as well as a sustained interest in Egyptian priests and practices among educated literary audiences, underscores the intrigue that Egyptian religion held in the Roman imagination.¹¹ While 'Egyptian' monuments and image programs enjoyed their greatest vogue under the Julio-Claudians, the Flavians evoked both Egypt and the province of Judea vividly in Rome's cityscape.¹² Two Flavian monuments in particular—the Arch of Titus, famous for its inner

⁹ M. J. Versluys, *Aegyptiaca Romana. Nilotic Scenes and the Roman Views of Egypt*. Religions in the Graeco-Roman World 144 (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2002), 52-53, 006 Palestrina; P. J. P. Meyboom, *The Nile Mosaic of Palestrina: Early Evidence of Egyptian Religion in Italy* (Leiden: Brill, 1994).

¹⁰ For example, *De Is. et Os.* 352b (trans. Frank Cole Babbitt; LCL): "For [Isis] is wise, as I have said, and discloses the divine mysteries to those who truly and justly have the name of 'bearers of the sacred vessels' and 'wearers of the sacred robes.' These are they who within their soul, as though within a casket, bear the sacred writings about the gods clear of all superstition and pedantry; and they cloak them with secrecy, thus giving intimations, some dark and shadowy, some clear and bright, of their concepts about the gods, intimations of the same sort as are clearly evidenced in the wearing of the sacred garb. For this reason, too, the fact that the deceased votaries of Isis are decked with these garments is a sign that these sacred writings accompany them, and that they pass to the other world possessed of these and of naught else." See Frederick E. Brent, "Religion Under Trajan: Plutarch's Resurrection of Osiris," *Sage and Emperor: Plutarch, Greek Intellectuals, and Roman Power in the Time of Trajan (98-117 A.D.)*, (ed. Philip A. Stadter and Luc Van der Stockt; Leuven: Brill, 2002), 72-92.

¹¹ Molly Swetnam-Burland, "'Egyptian' Priests in Roman Italy," in *Cultural Identity: In the Ancient Mediterranean* (ed. Erich S. Gruen; Los Angeles: Getty Research Institute, 2011), 336-353, esp. 339, 341.

¹² C. Brian Rose, "The Egyptianizing of Rome in the Wake of Actium," (forthcoming); Fergus Millar, "Last Year in Jerusalem: Monuments of the Jewish War in Rome," in *Flavius Josephus and Flavian Rome* (ed. Jonathan Edmondson, Steve Mason, and James B. Rives; New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 101-128.

relief depicting the triumphal procession of the offering table and golden candelabrum of the Jerusalem temple, and the Templum Pacis, where these instruments were permanently installed—underscored the centrality of the Jerusalem cult to the new Flavian dynasty.¹³ While allusions to Judea at Rome are not as obvious as the Egyptian-themed material attested so amply in Roman Italy, the importance of this geographic area and its religious influences ought not be discounted for the relative subtlety of Judean monuments and other representations (i.e., an inscription or a relief compared with the more conspicuous obelisks, pyramids, and sphinxes calling Egypt to mind throughout the city). The public displays of the Flavian triumph and of the spaces designed to proclaim a new Roman dynasty were visible reminders of Judean culture, stimulating interest in Judean religion and perhaps also demand for expertise in the novelties practices and benefits associated with it.

While it is important to cast a wide net in theorizing the recognition and attractiveness of specialists, literary evidence still furnishes the fullest examples of the centrality of religion in first-century reflections on alien peoples. Consider a text such as Cicero's *De Divinatione*, in which Quintus proffers various kinds of explanation for the natural relationship between certain peoples and the specific forms of divination with which they are commonly associated.¹⁴ Egyptians and Babylonians have devoted their attention to astrology, for example, owing to the

¹³ Noreña, "Medium and Message in Vespasian's Templum Pacis," 25-43.

¹⁴ Cic. *Div.* 1.41.90-94.

level plains and unobstructed view of the sky in the regions they inhabit, while Arabians, Phrygians, and Cilicians study the songs and flights of birds, which they have ample occasion to observe as they wander the plains with their herds of cattle. Individual cities are also notable for their cultivation of certain divinatory arts, Telmessus in Caria and Elis in the Peloponnesus, both distinguished for superior skill in haruspication.¹⁵ Cicero also connects regional competencies in divination with the specific specialists who wield them: among the Persians, the augurs and diviners are the *magi*; in Syria, the Chaldeans are preeminent for their knowledge of astronomy and for their quickness of mind.¹⁶ Even among the uncivilized tribes of Gaul there are Druids who have knowledge of physiognomy, augury, and conjecture.¹⁷

¹⁵ Cic. *Div.* 1.41.91.

¹⁶ Rawson, *Intellectual Life in the Late Roman Republic*, 308: On Chaldeans according to Diodorus Siculus, “Chaldaean believe that the world is eternal and ruled by divine providence, which means in fact by the five planets: four are called after Ares, Aphrodite, Hermes and Zeus (i.e. Mars, Venus, Mercury and Jupiter) as they are with us, but Saturn is called ‘the star of the sun’. They foreshadow especially natural calamities. Lower in rank are the thirty stars known as the ‘Gods of the Counsel’, half overseeing the area above the earth (which is shaped like a hollow boat) and half that below it; every ten days one of those above is sent as a messenger to those below and *vice versa*. Twelve of them hold the chief authority, each ruling one month and one sign of the Zodiac. Twenty-four other stars, half in the northern part of the heavens and half in the south, are called Judges of the Universe, those visible being assigned to the world of the living and those invisible to that of the dead.... He adds that the Chaldaean were also skilled in prophesying from the flight of birds, dreams, portents and entrails; no wonder the various national systems of soothsaying began to affect each other. He also lays weight on the way the lore was passed down from father to son, and claims an early start to deep learning. He does not stress secrecy. In fact the special astronomical and mathematical skills needed for casting a horoscope no doubt protected adepts from too much competition.”

¹⁷ Cf. Joseph. *Ap.* 1.32.6, where Josephus makes similar remarks about the specialists to whom different chronicles of alien wisdom were entrusted: among the Egyptians, to the priests, among the Babylonians, to the Chaldeans, among the nations in touch with the Greeks, to the Phoenicians, and among the Judeans, to the chief priests and the prophets. Similarly, Origen quotes Celsus as having proffered lengthy sections from Herodotus about the specific deities that each nation cultivates (*C. Cels.* 5.34-40). Origen’s response to the points that Celsus raised offers competing

Writings also engendered opportunities for ethnic self-representation, often in the service of apologetic interests. I have in mind authorities on ‘Egyptian’ matters such as Manetho, Chaeremon, Apion and ones on ‘Judean’ matters such as Josephus and Philo, whose respective presentations of Egyptian and Judean histories both translated their cultural legacies into terms that were relatable and appealing to Roman readers, and distinguished these legacies from those of other foreign cultures with whom they were regularly conflated. It was also not uncommon for Judeans to be grouped together with Syrians and Samaritans, which underscores some imprecision or fluidity in Roman ideas about alien peoples.¹⁸ That Judeans and Egyptians were often pitted against one another might

characterizations of these nations: “Celsus thought fit to say that the Chaldaeans have been a race endowed with the highest inspiration from the beginning, though it was from them that the deceitful art of astrology spread among men. Celsus also reckons the *Magi* among the most inspired races, though from them magic, which takes its name from their race, has come to other nations as well, to the destruction and ruin of those who use it. The Egyptians whom Celsus also mentioned earlier, went astray in having impressive precincts about their supposed temples, but inside nothing but cats or crocodiles or goats or snakes or some other animals. Yet now Celsus thought fit to remark that the nation of the Egyptians is also endowed with the highest inspiration, and that from the beginning, probably because from the beginning they fought against the Judeans. The Persians, who marry their mothers and have sexual intercourse with their daughters, appear to Celsus to be an inspired race; and the Indians also of whom in the previous pages he said that some had tasted human flesh. But although the Judeans, especially those of early times, did none of these things, not only does he not call them endowed with the highest inspiration, but even says that they will presently perish (*C. Cels.* 6.70).

¹⁸ Throughout this dissertation I consciously adopt the language of Judean, and where the ancient sources specify, Judaic, in favor of Jewish or Judaism. Where I do use the latter terms it is to reproduce the language or sense of other scholars whose work I cite. The simplest explanation for my choice is that Judean and Judaic are most faithful to the Greek terms *Ἰουδαῖος*, *Ἰουδαϊκός*, and their Latin equivalents *Iudaeus*, and *Iudaicus*. Judean has also gained traction in recent years because it foregrounds the geographic and ethnic connotation of these terms, which evoked a suite of specific cultural practices, of which religious practices and the paramount religious institution, the Jerusalem temple, were only a part. Judean also points to Judea in a way that Jewish does not, when geographic designation was central to Roman concepts of Judean provincials and their provincial practices. For an important reconsideration of these terms and the assumptions they entail, see Steve Mason, “Jews, Iudaeans, Judaizing, Judaism: Problems of Categorization in Ancient History,” *JSJ* 38 (2007): 457-512. While Mason’s piece has engendered considerable debate, none of

be explained in part by characteristics with which both were associated—great antiquity, authoritative writings and textual practices, exotic writing systems, etc.—not to mention biblical accounts of their intertwined history.¹⁹ Yet the first-century rivalry between them welled up from an even deeper source. In the aftermath of Actium, Augustus and his successors had subordinated native Egyptians beneath ranking Romans, Greeks, and Judeans, in that order of privilege, in their administration of Egypt.²⁰ Competition not to be the underclass, which ran especially high in Alexandria where there was a large Judean population, is part of the background of a dynamic observable even at Rome.

One clear example of inter-ethnic tension between Judeans and Egyptians occurs in Philo's *Legatio ad Gaium*, where he criticizes certain residents of Alexandria who had readily granted the divinity of Gaius Caligula. From those of the Egyptians, Philo singles out an imperial slave named Helicon, whose apparent

the objections to his arguments undermine the utility of his useful point about the characteristics associated with the Judeans as an ethnic peoples or a provincial territory from the perspective of Roman audiences. Moreover, arguments about the *terminus a quo* for 'Judaism' as a category of religion post-date the period of this study. For a neat summary of the Judean/Jewish debate see Cynthia Baker, "A 'Jew' by Any Other Name," *JAJ* 2 (2011): 153-180.

¹⁹ For an interesting example of Judeans and Egyptians being inveighed against together by yet another would-be entrepreneurial competitor, Diogenes of Oenoanda notes their absurd tendency toward superstition: "The nations of the Jews and the Egyptians are a clear sign that the gods have no power to check any wrongdoing; they are the most superstitious of all peoples, and yet also the most accursed (3.8-4.2)"; Christopher P. Jones, "Josephus and Greek Literature in Flavian Rome," in *Flavius Josephus and Flavian Rome* (ed. Jonathan Edmondson, Steve Mason, and James Rives; New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 201-208.

²⁰ See Naphtali Lewis, *Life in Egypt Under Roman Rule* (2nd ed.; Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1999); J. Grafton Milne, *A History of Egypt Under Roman Rule* (3rd ed.; Chicago: Ares, 1992); Alan K. Bowman, *Egypt After the Pharaohs, 332 B.C.-A.D. 642, From Alexander to the Arab Conquest* (2nd ed.; Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996).

knowledge of astrology, Judean teachings, and other rarified pursuits had earned him that emperor's audience.

The greater portion of these men were Egyptians, wicked, worthless men, who had imprinted the venom and evil disposition of their native asps and crocodiles upon their own souls, and gave a faithful representation of them there. And the leader of the whole Egyptian troops, like the coryphaeus of a chorus, was a man of the name of Helicon, an accursed and infamous slave, who had been introduced into the imperial household to its ruin; for he had acquired a slight smattering of the encyclical sciences, by imitation of and rivalry with his former master, who gave him to Tiberius Caesar. And at that time he had no especial privilege, since Tiberius had a perfect hatred of all youthful sallies of wit for the mere purposes of amusement, as he, from almost his earliest youth, was of a solemn and austere disposition. But when Tiberius was dead, and Gaius succeeded to the empire, he then, following a new master, who invited him to every description of relaxation and luxury, such as could delight every one of the outward senses, said to himself: "Rise up, O Helicon! Now is your opportunity. You have now an auditor, and a spectator, who is of all men in the world the best calculated to receive the exhibition of your talents favorably. You are a man of very attractive natural talents.... And do not seek for any more abundant causes; for you have a sufficient foundation with respect to the customs of the Judeans and the national laws of that people, in which you were yourself brought up, and in which you have been instructed from your very earliest childhood...so now, make an exhibition of your learning."²¹

Philo then proceeds to detail how, having gained the ear of Gaius, Helicon wasted no opportunity to malign the Judeans and their laws and customs.²² Also rousing this emperor against Judeans was his advisor Apelles, a tragic actor and a native of Ascalon, who discharged his 'Ascalonite poison' against the Judeans because, he

²¹ Philo, *Leg.* 26.

²² Philo, *Leg.* 27.171.

explains, there is a perpetual hostility between the people of Ascalon and the Judeans, although they are bordering nations.²³

Josephus devotes an entire work to refuting Egyptians who have libeled Judeans in writing, positing the superiority of Judean cult over Egyptian as one of the many reasons for their hostility.²⁴ On this point he offers his own caricature of Egyptian religion: “Therefore the opposition between the [Judeans and the Egyptians] produced much enmity between them, insofar as our piety (εὐσεβεία) differs from that which is customary among those people, as much as the nature of God resides in irrational beasts. For it is an ancestral custom for them to esteem animals as gods, and this custom is universal, although there are local differences in the honors paid to them. These frivolous and altogether senseless people, accustomed from the beginning to erroneous ideas about the gods, were not capable of imitating the solemnity of our theology (θεολογία), and the sight of our numerous admirers filled them with envy.”²⁵ Josephus invokes as his Egyptian literary adversaries Manetho, Chaeremon, and Apion, whose inverse arguments for the prestige of Egyptian customs over and against those of the Judeans he labors to dismantle anecdote by anecdote. In turn, a fragment ascribed to Chaeremon casts the habits of Egyptian priests in a favorable light: they pursued ascetic personal habits; maintaining a frugal diet, a state of ritual purity, and a distinctive bodily

²³ Philo, *Leg.* 203-206.

²⁴ Joseph. *Ap.* 223.

²⁵ Joseph. *Ap.* 224.4-226.1.

comportment, they were masters of philosophy, and wielded extraordinary ritual knowledge, among other qualities.²⁶

The mutually antagonistic positions of these authors were at once strategies for disentangling the overlapping histories and cultural legacies of the peoples of Judea and Egypt, and also arguments for the prestige of one set of cultural practices over another. It is no coincidence that many of the authors who wrote in such a capacity were, or had been, aristocrats within their native contexts, and targeted opponents who seemed to have shared their social location, interests, and skills. Literary production thus offered one arena for asserting, refining, or contesting constructions of ethnicity, and one that often overlapped with another activity: serving as a teacher or authority on alien wisdom, writings, and practices for the benefit of imperial households or other Roman aristocrats. Josephus claims to have fulfilled such a role for both Poppaea Sabina and later the Flavian emperors, while Chaeremon was a teacher and advisor to Nero. Both were, moreover, of aristocratic priestly lineages.

Writings were also tools for internal differentiation, insofar as Josephus and Philo laid out for their readers acceptable forms of Judean religious practice and authority, while also decrying misappropriations of both by other Judeans claiming expertise in Judean wisdom, texts, teachings, and religious practices. Josephus relates pendant anecdotes about deceptions perpetrated at Rome by the priests of

²⁶ In Porph. *Abst.* 4.6-8; *Chaeremon: Egyptian Priest and Stoic Philosopher* (trans. Pieter Willem van der Horst; Leiden: Brill, 1984), fragment 10; Swetnam-Burland, "'Egyptian' Priests in Roman Italy," 337. On affinities between Chaeremon's characterization of Egyptian priests and Philo's of the *Therapeutae*, see Joan E. Taylor, *Jewish Women Philosophers of First-Century Alexandria: Philo's 'Therapeutae' Reconsidered* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2003), 44-46.

an Isis temple, who facilitated the seduction of one aristocratic Roman woman, and by a disreputable Judean and his accomplices, who posed as experts in the laws and wisdom of Moses in order to steal from another.²⁷ His writings also contain references to assorted ‘pseudo-prophets’ who drew large followings in Judea on the basis of fraudulent claims and unrealized promises.²⁸ These incidents appear within a series of like examples that Josephus marshals in support of a larger lesson: “that an innovation and reform in ancestral traditions weighs heavily in the scale in leading to the destruction of its followers.”²⁹

Josephus also offers positive images of Judean religious expertise, recalling in detail his countryman Eleazar’s performance of exorcisms and healing before the Flavians and their armies. Of course, Josephus wastes no opportunity to vaunt *his* infallible record as a prophet and dream interpreter. The freelance experts that we encounter in his writings join those mentioned by non-Judean authors, who situate Judeans alongside other experts in alien or otherwise novel teachings and services. Lest we think that Juvenal was mistaken to include a Judean priestess in his catalog of exotic experts, he insists that Judeans will interpret any kind of dream for a fee. In his *Tragopodagra*, Lucian quips that one man purges himself with sacred medicine, while another man is mocked by chants sold by ‘imposters’,

²⁷ Joseph. *AJ* 18.65-84.

²⁸ Joseph. *BJ* 2.253-265, 2.271, 6.285-287.

²⁹ Joseph. *AJ* 18.9.

and another still falls for the spells of a Judean.³⁰ Likewise, he tells of the ‘Syrian’ exorcist from Palestine who has cured countless people afflicted by *daimones*, albeit for a huge fee.³¹ While his opinion of the exorcist differs considerably from the more favorable account of Eleazar, the activities are a practical match for those that Josephus recalls. Regardless of any one author’s angle on religious specialists, on Judeans, or on individual figures, it is clear that many are aware of Judeans who act in this capacity or at least can plausibly imagine them doing so.

While one may rightly probe the range of interests shaping such portraits the observation stands that several ancient sources implicate Judeans in a class of religious activity populated by varieties of freelance experts, many of whom brokered ethnically coded offerings. It matters less that such portraits are entirely accurate than that Judeans feature as plausible actors at all in scenarios where religious experts are clearly of interest. Although Judeans occur relatively less often than other ethnically coded examples within our rich body of evidence for freelance experts, they are not infrequent. Nevertheless, scholars tend either to discount evidence for Judeans participating in this phenomenon, or to reframe their activities using concepts of proselytism and conversion that are largely

³⁰ Lucian, *Trag.* 171-173.

³¹ Lucian, *Philops.* 16: “...the Syrian from Palestine who is an expert in exorcism, and how many demoniacs, falling down moonstruck and rolling their eyes, their mouths full of foam, he takes in hand and stands them up and sends them off in their right mind, ridding them of their great troubles for a huge fee. For when, standing over the prostrate [demoniac], he asks the *daimones* whence they came into the body, the sick man himself is silent, but the *daimōn* answers, either in Greek or in some foreign tongue, where he comes from and how and whence he came into the man. And the exorcist, resorting to conjurations and, if the *daimōn* does not obey, also threatening it, drives it out.”

exclusive to Judean religion.³² Few scholars today describe engagement with other forms of alien religion using the language of conversion; nor would many extend the motive of proselytism to Bacchic initiators, Chaldeans, *haruspices*, *magi*, druids, Syrian prophets, or itinerant Egyptian priests.³³

As I noted in the introduction, the gulf between constructions of alien religion and the practices of ethnic peoples in native contexts might have been vast. When I use phrases such as ‘Greek’, ‘Egyptian’, or ‘Syrian’ religion, I mean specifically ideas that were held about the religion of a particular people or cultural area from the perspective of non-native audiences.³⁴ In this vein, John Scheid has argued persuasively that the ethnic qualification of certain *sacra*, *mores*, or *ritus* conducted by Roman officiants in Rome—his example is manners of practice performed in a Greek way, or *graeco ritu*—often amounted in practice to slight modifications of local religious activity that nevertheless traded on

³² This special pleading for Judean specialists is most apparent in the scholarly literature on the apparent expulsions of ethnic Judeans from Rome in 139 BCE, 19 CE, and under Claudius. Though many scholars are tempted to limit the intended recipients of these measures to ‘proselytizing Jews’, a position which, in my view, partially acknowledges that specialist activity lies at the bottom of these incidents, they are nevertheless unable to reconcile this impulse with actual portraits of Judeans engaging in the sort of specialist activity that is clearly attested for other ethnically coded forms of religion. For a summary of this literature see Wendt, “A Rereading of Roman Actions against Judeans and Christian.”

³³ A departure from A. D. Nock, who used the language of conversion quite broadly to describe any engagement with ‘new religion’ [*Conversion: The Old and the New in Religion from Alexander the Great to Augustine of Hippo* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1961)].

³⁴ In other words, ‘Judean religion’, like other forms of alien religion entailed regular, if stereotypical, characteristics from the perspective of Roman audiences. For similar arguments about characteristics associated with Egyptian religion see the contributions in *Nile into Tiber: Egypt in the Roman World. Proceedings of the 3rd International Conference of Isis Studies, Faculty of Archaeology, Leiden University, May 11–14, 2005*. Religions in the Graeco-Roman World 159 (ed. Laurent Bricault, Miguel John Versluys, and Paul G. P. Meyboom; Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2007).

qualities associated with the given cultural frame of reference.³⁵ Likewise, religious activities conducted *cincto gabino*, a way of wrapping the toga so that left both arms free, not only facilitated the taking of auspices but also, by evoking, invoked the legacy of Gabii in augural expertise.³⁶ Religious activities conducted *graeco ritu* were neither limited to ethnic Greeks, nor bound to any one setting, such as a temple for a Greek god, and similar distinctions delineated the religion of other ethnic populations from certain practices, techniques, and paraphernalia that carried strong ethnic or provincial associations. Such ethnically coded practices and artifacts were germane to the activities of ethnic specialists, whose intelligibility might depend on fulfilling certain expectations about their particular ethnic idiom, yet who were free to innovate upon such features in other directions.

The evidence implicating some Judeans in the religion of specialists thus begs for the more nuanced treatments of the sort exemplified in recent studies of other participants in this phenomenon. At the same time, broader theorizations of the class of religious activity are incomplete without accounting for the presence of

³⁵ John Scheid, “*Graeco Ritu*: A Typically Roman Way of Honoring the Gods,” *HSCP* 97 (1995): 15–31, cit. 19. Scheid’s construal of *ritus* as a manner of conducting religious practice is especially useful for present purposes and, I would argue, has broader implications for both other religious concepts and activities and other cultural frameworks than the Greek example that he explores in his study.

³⁶ The platform for Scheid’s argument is that religious practices associated with different cultural areas of the Roman Empire shared a basic intelligibility and practical logic. As he remarks, “Even the religions of the barbarians were not substantively different from the religions of civilized people. Everywhere people made sacrifices, prayers, and vows, celebrated sacred games, and built sanctuaries. The same terminology was used for the description of all of these celebrations, not to mention the net of interpretation that connected the gods of the *oikoumene*” (“*Graeco Ritu*,” 18). Nevertheless, particular features of alien practices and theologies varied in notable ways, appearing especially distinctive or novel among non-native audiences—for instance, Attic initiation into the Eleusinian mysteries, Judean allegiance to only one god, or the Egyptian cultivation of deities with animal characteristics.

Judeans therein. One argument of this chapter, then, is that Judeans participated notably in and were commonly associated with the religion of freelance experts in the first century CE. Moreover, like other purveyors of foreign religious offerings, Judeans were tied to forms of expertise associated with their ethnicity or provincial region. Since there are indications of Judeans assuming different specialist guises—from instructors of ethics to exorcists—my general criterion for delineating Judean *religious specialists* is that they directly enlisted their god (here, in the singular) and other non-obvious beings in their programs and services.³⁷

If we revisit some of the above examples, we can begin to tease out some common perceptions of ‘Judean religion’, even if these tell us more about characteristics that were widely associated with the religious practices of Judeans or Judea, than about a standard conception or arrangement of religious practice among ethnic Judeans. In other words, I am not presuming to reconstruct some normative ‘Judean religion’ that existed on the ground, but rather, am interested in stereotypical constructions of the religion of Judea(ns) that circulated among non-Judeans in the first centuries. Befitting the great number and variety of diviners that occur in our evidence for specialist activity, many of the capabilities ascribed to Judeans were divinatory in nature and often enlisted their holy writings. It is no accident that the aforementioned figures—experts in the wisdom and laws of Moses, a Judean priestess and *interpretes legum*, Judean dream

³⁷ See Stanley K. Stowers, who argues that ‘Judean laws’ were commonly presented as a program for philosophical self-mastery in the first century, especially among Roman audiences [*A Rereading of Romans: Justice, Jews, and Gentiles* (New Haven: Yale University Press), 58-82].

interpreters, and Josephus himself—all appeal to the authority of these texts, whether or not they utilized them directly within their respective offerings.

References to the sacred writings of the Judeans appear in most Roman discussions of Judean religion, and thus furnished an obvious opportunity for claiming Judean religious expertise.

There are many indications that these materials were enlisted in a divinatory capacity, with the sacred books of the Judeans being mined for prophecies of contemporary relevance. Josephus says that Judean rebels had been provoked to war in part by interpreting an ‘ambiguous oracle in their holy writings (χρησμός ἀμφίβολος ἐν τοῖς ἱεροῖς εὐρημένος γράμμασιν), to the effect that at that time one from their country would become the king of the world.’³⁸ Many Judean wise men were led astray in their interpretation (πολλοὶ τῶν σοφῶν ἐπλανήθησαν περὶ τὴν κρίσιν), since the oracle referred not to a Judean leader but to Vespasian, who was proclaimed emperor on Judean soil.³⁹ Tacitus and Suetonius also note a mysterious prophecy from the ancient priestly writings of the Judeans that was being read variously in the context of the Judean war and that presaged a time when the East would grow strong and men beginning from Judea should possess the world.⁴⁰ When Cassius Dio recalls the series of portents and dreams that pointed to Vespasian’s sovereignty, he credits Josephus directly: “These portents needed interpretation; but not so the saying of a Judean named Josephus. He,

³⁸ Joseph. *BJ* 6.310-313.

³⁹ Joseph. *BJ* 6.312-313; Mason, *Josephus and the New Testament*, 49-50.

⁴⁰ Tac. *Hist.* 5.13; Suet. *Vesp.* 4.5-6. See Henrichs, “Vespasian’s Visit to Alexandria,” 51-80.

having earlier been captured by Vespasian and imprisoned, laughed and said: “You may imprison me now, but a year from now, when you have become emperor, you will release me.”⁴¹ In Appian’s version of events the dream disappears in favor of strict textual divination: “For Josephus, as he related himself, found in the sacred writings some oracle which revealed that one from their country would become ruler of the world.”⁴²

That the Judean writings were thought to contain predictions pertinent to first-century affairs is clear; Josephus himself claims several times that they foretell the entirety of world history, including the rise and fall of nations.⁴³ Also clear is that these texts were considered to be divinely authored or inspired. Elsewhere he indicates that God has great concern for the Judeans and has foretold their deliverance in all sorts of ways (παντοίως προσημαίνοντα τῷ σφετέρῳ γένει τὰ σωτήρια) in the oracles (ἐν τοῖς λογίοις).⁴⁴ As to the question of which texts were being read for prophetic content, as opposed to, say, for tenets about the proper conduct of human life, Josephus appears to impute prophetic authorship, and presumably also prophetic value, to the majority of the biblical writings that he considers to be authoritative, including those of Moses that contain his laws.⁴⁵

⁴¹ Cass. Dio, 66.1.1-4.

⁴² Apud: Zonaras, *Epitome Historiarum* 11.16.

⁴³ Joseph. *AJ* 10.266-281; 11.1-3, 331-339; Mason, *Josephus and the New Testament*, 103.

⁴⁴ Joseph. *BJ* 6.310-311.

⁴⁵ Joseph. *Ap.* 1.37-40 (H. St. J. Thackeray; LCL): “It therefore naturally, or rather necessarily, follows (seeing that with us it is not open to everybody to write the records, and that there is no discrepancy in what is written; seeing that, on the contrary, the prophets alone had this privilege,

Importantly, although Josephus himself attests to a multiplicity of interests that the Judean writings address—prophecy, the proper conduct of human life, effective governance, and so on—he is inconsistent about the terminology by which he refers to specific writings and how they are to be read. His varied references to the Judean laws (νόμοι), oracles (λόγιοι), holy books (ιερά βιβλία), and prophecies in the holy writings (χρησμοί ἐν τοῖς ἱεροῖς γράμμασιν) show these labels to be largely interchangeable and thus unreliable as indicators of which texts were understood to hold prophetic value.

For their prophetic value, ‘biblical’ writings were on a par with Rome’s Sibylline books and other prophetic corpora that the Romans had amassed in their state collection, which was rumored to have included the *libri* of the Etruscan seer Vegoia and perhaps also texts of the *disciplina Etrusca*, the oracles of the Marcii, and those of Albunea of Tibur.⁴⁶ Aelian seems to presume as much when he includes a Judean Sibyl among those of Erythraea, Samos, Egypt, Sardinia, and Cumae, while Pausanias too posits a Judean Sibyl: “There grew up among the Hebrews above Palestine a woman who gave oracles and was named Sabbe. They

obtaining their knowledge of the most remote and ancient history through the inspiration which they owed to God, and committing to writing a clear account of the events of their own time just as they occurred)—it follows, I say, that we do not possess myriads of inconsistent books, conflicting with each other. Our books, which are justly accredited, are but two and twenty, and contain the record of all time. Of these, five are the books of Moses, comprising the laws and the traditional history from the birth of man down to the death of the lawgiver. This period falls only a little short of three thousand years. From the death of Moses until Artaxerxes, who succeeded Xerxes as king of Persia, the prophets subsequent to Moses wrote the history of the events of their own time in thirteen books. The remaining four books contain hymns to God and precepts for the conduct of human life.” Since there is some disagreement in the first century about exactly which of the Judean writings had authoritative status, I use the adjective ‘biblical’ simply to mean any Judean texts thought by Roman audiences to hold special status among Judeans.

⁴⁶ Servius on *Aen.* 6.72; Livy, 25.23; Lact. *Div. Instit.* 1.6.12.

say that the father of Sabbe was Berosus, and her mother Erymanthe. But some call her a Babylonian Sibyl, others an Egyptian.”⁴⁷ Acknowledging these similarities, albeit in the interest of disproving that Jesus was foretold by Judean prophecies, Celsus evidently equated “the predictions, whether they were actually spoken or not, made by the people of Judea after their usual manner, as even now is customary with those who live round about Phoenicia and Palestine, [which] are thought to be wonderful and unalterable,” with “the predictions of the Pythian priestess or of the priestesses of Dodona or of the Clarian Apollo or at Branchidae or at the shrine of Zeus Ammon, and of countless other prophets.”⁴⁸ Interestingly, these examples introduce new avenues of divine inspiration for the Judean writings, while also contemporizing their production.

As with other prophetic corpora, the above examples suggest that the Judean writings could be enlisted directly in religious practices. Their authority might also be appealed to notionally in order to authorize other religious practices.⁴⁹ Although it remains hypothetical, it is not beyond the realm of possibility that the triumphal introduction of these texts to Rome may even have resulted in their incorporation into the collection of prophetic corpora curated within the temple of Apollo Palatinus. Josephus says that after featuring a copy of the law in the Flavian triumph over Judea, Vespasian ordered that it be deposited

⁴⁷ Ael. *VH* 12.35; Paus. 10.12.9 (trans. W.H.S. Jones; LCL).

⁴⁸ Origen, *C. Cels.* 7.3 (trans. Henry Chadwick).

⁴⁹ Paul, for example, makes several appeals to what is written in ‘the law and the prophets’ without necessarily supporting these particular claims with citations from these texts.

and kept in the imperial complex (ἐν τοῖς βασιλείοις), by which he must mean the complex of houses, porticos, and the Apollo temple on the Palatine hill.⁵⁰ The precise configuration of this imperial complex has been the subject of recent debate, but for our purpose it matters only that the temple was incorporated within it, architecturally and conceptually. The phrase *en tois basileiois*, then, might be read as shorthand for ‘in the imperial complex’, which included the temple where the Romans kept many prophetic texts, as opposed to the conventional reading of ‘in the imperial residences’.⁵¹ Josephus seems to use the same shorthand when he notes that on the night before the triumph the militaries had been drawn up around the gates not of the imperial complex atop [the Palatine] (οὐ τῶν ἄνω βασιλείων), but of the temple of Isis on the Campus Martius. In contrast, after the triumph the Flavian family withdrew εἰς τὸ βασίλειον, in the singular, where he seems to mean their personal residence.⁵² This proposition fits well with the Romans’ tendency to amass any and all prophetic corpora they came across, all the more so since the Palatine temple was purportedly home not only to the Sibylline oracles, but the aforementioned

⁵⁰ Joseph. *BJ* 7.150.

⁵¹ Most scholars treat all of the cultic items despoiled from Jerusalem and the copy of the law displayed in the triumph as war booty. See, for example, Beard, *The Roman Triumph*, 152-153; Millar, “Monuments of the Jewish War,” 109; Goodman, *Rome and Jerusalem*, 431-432: “There was no mistaking the symbolic significance of the last of all the spoils of victory: ‘a copy of the Jewish law’, that is, a scroll of the Torah. There could not be a clearer demonstration that the conquest was being celebrated not just over Judea but over Judaism...Josephus reports, but does not explain, that the Torah scroll (“their law”) and the purple hangings of the Temple sanctuary Vespasian kept guarded in the imperial palace.”

⁵² Joseph. *BJ* 7.123 and 155, respectively. Millar notes other places in Josephus’ account of the triumph where his terminology for monuments is very loose (“Monuments of the Jewish War,” 104).

compendia of foreign prophecies. It is even likelier that the Judean texts met such a fate since they predicted Rome's new dynastic arrangement.

Although he does not claim to divine directly from the Judean writings, Josephus links his own revelations with scriptural prophecy, inasmuch as he was enabled to understand the meaning of inspired dreams and ambiguously uttered prophetic statements by virtue of the fact that he was "not ignorant of the prophecies in the sacred books."⁵³ For Josephus, intimate knowledge of these books is inseparable from priestly authority, which is ultimately the source of his own wisdom and mysterious power, as it is for others of priestly lineage who also possess prophetic abilities.⁵⁴ He also grants inerrant knowledge of the future to the Essenes on account of their great virtue.⁵⁵

Alternatively, dreams concerning Judean affairs need not bear any relationship to their sacred writings. Artemidorus writes in his *Oneirocritica*, "There are some dreams that cannot be solved before the events come to pass.... Of that kind was the one in which a *praefectus castrorum* saw written upon his sword ι κ θ. Then there came the Judaic revolt in Cyrene, and the fellow who had seen the dream distinguished himself in the war, and this was what the above-mentioned dream had signified: by the ι were meant the Judeans, by the κ the Kyrenaeans, by the θ Thanatos. However, before it came to pass, this dream could not be resolved,

⁵³ Joseph. *BJ* 3.352; Mason, *Josephus and the New Testament*, 49.

⁵⁴ Joseph. *BJ* 3.352, 3.356.

⁵⁵ Joseph. *BJ* 1.78-80 (on the infallible predictions of Judas the Essene); *AJ*. 15.371-379 (on the Essenes' knowledge of the future).

but when the event happened, it was very manifest.”⁵⁶ It is unclear whether Juvenal’s priestess and interpreter of the laws of Jerusalem is meant to be a diviner, or whether he means to impute ‘law interpretation’ also to the Judean dream interpreters that he mentions. Either way these examples allow us to imagine specialists in a variety of practices staking their legitimacy on Judean sacred texts, without the texts themselves contributing directly to divination.

Other widespread characteristics of Judean religion emerge as we multiply our examples. A perusal of the sources gathered in Menahem Stern’s volumes of *Greek and Latin Authors on Jews and Judaism* yields other interests in and ideas about Judean religion held by non-Judeans.⁵⁷ Diodoros Siculus reports that Moses received his laws from the god who is invoked as Iao, a sentiment Varro echoes when he states that the Judean god is called Iao in the Chaldaean mysteries, though elsewhere in Varro’s writings he is equivalent to Jupiter.⁵⁸ Regarding the authority of Moses, Apollonius Molon depicts the lawgiver as a *goēs* and an imposter, while Alexander Polyhistor credits a Hebrew woman named Mōso with composition of the laws.⁵⁹ Strabo styles Moses as an Egyptian priest who invented aniconic worship to protest divine representation in the form of beasts or

⁵⁶ Artem. *Oneirocrit.* 4.24.

⁵⁷ Menahem Stern, *Greek and Latin Authors on Jews and Judaism: Edited with Introductions, Translations, and Commentary I–III* (Jerusalem: Israel Academy of Sciences and Humanities, 1974).

⁵⁸ Diod. Sic. 1.94.1–2; Varro apud August. *De Cons. Ev.* 1.27.42. The gloss about the Phoenician meaning of Iao occurs in Herennius Philo’s reference to Varro’s identification of the Judean god (apud Lydus, *De Mens.* 4.53).

⁵⁹ Apollonius Molon apud Joseph. *Ap.* 2.145–148; *De Roma*, apud Suda s.v. Ἀλέξανδρος ὁ Μιλήσιος.

humans.⁶⁰ He also appears in genealogies of wisdom and practices current in the Roman period, alongside Numa Pompilius, Orpheus, Pythagoras, and Zoroaster.⁶¹

Many of these authors depict and perhaps envisaged 'biblical' figures as purveyors of forms of religious expertise that, though innovative in the distant context of biblical history, were familiar and prolific in the times they wrote. Pompeius Trogus alleges, for instance, that Moses inherited wisdom from his father Joseph, who was eminently skilled in prodigies, possessed full knowledge of divine law, and also established the science of dream interpretation.⁶² Such genealogies of practice reflect a range of authorial interests, but they might also do real work to authorize particular forms of religious expertise. The *Greek Magical Papyri* attribute to Moses assorted apocryphal books and charms, while Josephus makes a similar claim about the transmission of Solomon's wisdom in matters of exorcism and healing.⁶³ Vettius Valens praises the most wonderful Abramos for transmitting valuable astrological insights in his books, as well as for inventing and testing other things.⁶⁴ In this capacity, protagonists of biblical myth functioned like figures such as Orpheus and Pythagoras, whose purported authorship of certain religious practices, secret books, and wisdom traditions was not merely a

⁶⁰ Strab. 16.2.35.

⁶¹ Apul.. *Apol.* 90.

⁶² Pompeius Trogus apud Just. *Hist. Phil.* 36.2.11. Similarly, Porphyry claims that Pythagoras learned the exact science of dreams from 'the Hebrews' (*Vit. Pyth.* 11).

⁶³ John G. Gager, *Moses in Greco-Roman Paganism*. SBL Monograph Series 16 (Nashville and New York: Abingdon Press, 1972), 134-161.

⁶⁴ Vett. Val. 2.28.

fanciful attribution, but offered a convenient precedent and resources for the activities of independent specialists.⁶⁵

The story of Eleazar provides an opportune sightline into how these dynamics played out in practice. According to Josephus, Judeans possess supreme techniques for expelling demons and effecting cures, owing to the fact that Solomon was unsurpassed in these practices after God taught him the art concerning *daimones* (τὴν κατὰ τῶν δαιμόνων τέχνην).⁶⁶ How can we be sure that the cures of Solomon have retained their power into the first century? Because Josephus recently observed Eleazar thus invoking Solomon's wisdom, presumably at Rome, since all three Flavians were also present. He describes his tactics at length: Eleazar would draw out the *daimōn* through the nose of the afflicted person using a ring under whose seal was one of the roots that Solomon prescribed. When the man fell down, he banished the *daimōn* by speaking Solomon's name and reciting the incantations he had composed, but not before sending it into a container of water as a sign to authenticate the exorcism. If one did not know that it was Josephus who attributed such capabilities to Solomon, one might infer that the author who did so had faulty knowledge of biblical

⁶⁵ Graf and Iles Johnston, *Ritual Texts for the Afterlife*, 165-184. Morton Smith makes the interesting observation that the *Greek Magical Papyri* contain many spells that use the names of Jesus, Adam, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Moses, and Solomon as those of gods or god-like beings, whereas names of historical persons from Greek, Egyptian, or Persian tradition are not used in this capacity, although many such persons are named as authors of spells or magical books. On this basis, Smith posits, "magical deification may have been unusually prominent in Jewish tradition (as exorcism seems to have been)" (*Jesus the Magician*, 114).

⁶⁶ Joseph. *AJ* 8.44-49. Stories about Jesus certainly trade on the same idea about Judeans, particularly the Gospel of Mark. I have argued for continuities between such expectations about Judean religion and the characterization of Jesus in the canonical gospels in "Interpretes Legum: Judean Diviners in the Early Roman Empire," (Unpublished Conference Paper; SBL, 2012).

sources. The passage is thus an important illustration of how freely contemporary practices might be interpolated into Judean myths in the interest of harnessing their authority to specialist activities.

As I will argue in the fifth chapter, Paul qualifies as a sort of expert in Judean religion, whose authority stems from having unlocked secret designs from God's oracles.⁶⁷ As with other Judean specialists, the Judean writings figure integrally into Paul's religious program, as do divinatory methods that enable him to proffer novel interpretations of these texts and that support the mythmaking that justifies his religious services. But, paralleling a strategy that Fritz Graf and Sarah Iles Johnston have posited for Orphic *bricoleurs*, who drew on and creatively combined elements from the vast repertoire of themes from Greek myth, Paul's 'biblical' artifice is tailored to initiation into the mysteries of Christ, which occurs through baptism. During the rite initiates receive God's own *pneuma* (πνεῦμα) in order to be spared from a human condition and eschatology of his own design.⁶⁸ Having received divine *pneuma*, some acquire special skills in their own right: the ability to prophesy, to discern spirits, or to speak in tongues, and to heal. Episodes from the Judean writings also aid Paul's teachings in a non-divinatory capacity by supporting his ethical injunctions, for instance, when he shares the story of the

⁶⁷ E.g., Rom 3:1-2.

⁶⁸ Graf and Iles Johnston, *Ritual Texts for the Afterlife*, 66-136.

Israelites' turn to idolatry and other vices as a cautionary example that was transmitted in order that initiates not desire evil things.⁶⁹

Although it is impossible to know whether other Judean specialists claimed to transmit divine *pneuma*, given the rare insider perspective that the survival of Paul's letters offers, there are indications that others at least claimed their authority along similar lines. The 'deceivers' and 'imposters' whom Josephus excoriates were alleged to be acting under divine inspiration when they drew followers to the desert under the belief that God would give them a token of freedom.⁷⁰ A certain *goēs* named Theudas also persuaded masses of people to follow him, this time to the Jordan River where he claimed that he was a prophet and boasted that he could part its waters.⁷¹ It was perhaps in response to figures such as these that Philo is compelled to clarify, "If anyone cloaking himself under the name and guise of a prophet and claiming to be possessed by inspiration lead us on to the worship of the gods recognized in the different cities, we ought not to listen to him and be deceived by the name of a prophet. For such a one is no prophet, but a *goēs*, since his oracles and pronouncements are falsehoods invented by himself."⁷² Nor were Samaritans exempt from such disturbances. A 'pseudo-

⁶⁹ E.g., 1 Cor 10:6-12.

⁷⁰ Joseph. *BJ* 2.259-263. Worse still, an Egyptian who had gained a reputation as a prophet led 30,000 Judeans from the desert to the Mount of Olives, whence he proposed to take Jerusalem from the Romans.

⁷¹ Joseph. *AJ* 20.97-98.

⁷² Philo, *Spec. Leg.* 1.315.

prophet' among them rallied a following to Mount Gerazim on the promise he would reveal sacred vessels that Moses had deposited there.⁷³

While baptism construed as a transformative initiation might have been Paul's innovation, the practice appears in Josephus' note on John the Baptist, whom he describes as a good man who exhorted Judeans to lead righteous lives, to practice justice towards their fellows and piety toward God, and only then, to join in baptism in order to consecrate their bodies as they had cleaned their souls by right behavior.⁷⁴ Epictetus similarly connects the Judean practice of baptism with commitment to a principled existence, though he invokes the practice in relation to counterfeit baptizers, who are not Judeans but only act the part by priding themselves on principles that, in reality, they do not profess.⁷⁵

Throughout these writings we encounter a set of distinctively Judean religious capabilities that includes, but is not limited to, dream interpretation, prophecy, revelation, interpretation of oracles, revelations linked with scriptural prophecies, law and philosophical instruction, exorcism, and also baptism, which is depicted variously as a purifying practice or even as an initiation rite that enacts essential change. Elsewhere we encounter Judean and non-Judean authors alike adducing allegorical interpretations from biblical texts.⁷⁶ This assortment is not

⁷³ Joseph. *AJ* 18.85-87.

⁷⁴ Joseph. *AJ* 116-119.

⁷⁵ Arr. *Epict. diss.* 19-21.

⁷⁶ Philo, of course, but also Paul, as I will discuss further in chapter five. For non-Judeans who read biblical texts allegorically, Origen cites the example of Numenius of Apamea: "How much better

only internally consistent for a Judean author such as Josephus, but recurs in sources penned by non-Judeans.

Assumptions about ancient 'Judaism' on the part of modern scholars often obscure the participation of some Judeans in the religion of freelance experts, leading many to dismiss the evidence that they did so as biased or marginal in relation to some notion of normative Judean religion. Additional interpretive challenges lie in the proscriptions of certain divinatory practices and figures found in Deuteronomy and Leviticus, which might mislead us into downplaying or seeking alternate explanations for apparent examples of Judean specialists in divinatory practices.⁷⁷ This issue is complicated, since biblical texts provide as many examples of acceptable forms of religious expertise, especially dream interpretation, prophecy, and healing, as they do proscriptions of other forms and figures. One question we might consider, then, is whether Judeans who styled themselves as prophets or dream interpreters, or who divined from biblical texts, were aware of such precedents, and whether the tendency to claim expertise in

than Celsus is Numenius the Pythagorean, a man who showed himself in many works to be very learned and who by studying several doctrines made from many sources a synthesis of those which seemed to him to be true. In this first book on "The Good" where he speaks of the nations that believe god to be incorporeal, he also included the Judeans among them, and did not hesitate to quote the sayings of the prophets in his book and to give them an allegorical interpretation" (Numenius of Apamea, *De Bono*; apud Origen, *Contra Celsum* 1.15). On allegorical interpretation see G. R. Boys-Stones, *Post-Hellenistic Philosophy: A Study of its Development from the Stoics to Origen* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2001); David Dawson, *Allegorical Readers and Cultural Revision in Ancient Alexandria* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002); David Konstan, "Introduction," in *Heraclitus: Homeric Problems*. Society of Biblical Literature Writings from the Greco-Roman World Series 14 (ed. and trans. Donald Russell and David Konstan; Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2005).

⁷⁷ Deut 18:10; Lev 20:27.

these services and not others reflects an awareness of biblical denunciations of other specialists and specialties.⁷⁸

It may also be the case that Judean specialists appear in contexts where we are unprepared to recognize them. In an unpublished paper, I argue that occasional expulsions of Judeans and proscriptions of Judaic *sacra* or *ritus* issued at Rome were intended against Judean specialists, their contingent social formations, and artifacts, as opposed to against the city's entire 'Jewish community' or some arbitrary segment thereof.⁷⁹ In each source for those events, Judeans appear either alongside or in anecdotal relation to figures regularly regarded as purveyors of religious expertise, whether these be Chaldeans and other kinds of astrologers, practitioners of Egyptian religion, *magi*, or diviners of other varieties. Some ancient authors pointedly attribute such measures to the unbridled proliferation of Judean or Judaic practices among Roman audiences and even identify unaffiliated specialists in Judean religion as the abettors.

As we have seen, Josephus identifies the activities of a disreputable Judean posing as an expert in Mosaic wisdom and laws as the cause of an expulsion that occurred under Tiberius in 19 CE. This man and his three associates persuade a Roman noblewoman drawn to *iudaica* to send donations to the Jerusalem temple, which they then appropriate for themselves. When her husband reports this to Tiberius, the emperor orders the Judaic element (πᾶν τὸ ἰουδαϊκὸν τῆς Ῥώμης) to

⁷⁸ That question, in turn, raises complicated questions about whether such things, if they were known at all, reflect awareness of actual texts or simply of norms about Judean religious practice that might have a textual basis.

⁷⁹ Wendt, "A Rereading of Roman Actions against Judeans and Christians."

leave the city.⁸⁰ Josephus' preamble to the scandal frames it in general terms as an incident that affected Roman *ioudaioi*, yet his subsequent word choice of πᾶν τὸ ἰουδαϊκόν raises uncertainty about whether the expulsion referred narrowly, or even primarily, to ethnic Judeans. Daniel R. Schwartz has shown that in the *Antiquitates* Josephus prefers the adjective foremost for religious practices and artifacts associated with Judea, as in Judaic rites or texts, whereas he reserves *ioudaios* primarily for statements about ethnicity.⁸¹ While he uses the phrase *ioudaikon* at least fifteen times in the *Bellum Iudaicum* as a synonym for Judean populations, he does so only twice in the much more expansive *Antiquitates*: in the expulsion passage, and earlier in the work, in reference to a body of Pharisees active at Herodian court, who claimed to possess foreknowledge of things through God's appearances to them.⁸² Here the phrase explicitly denotes Judean religious specialists, and incidentally, ones who incurred favor with royal women by telling their futures. By way of contrast, when Josephus wishes in the later text to speak of populations of ethnic Judeans, his tendency is to use a phrase such as 'the multitude of Judeans' (τὸ ἰουδαίων πλῆθος). In other words, he may likewise have

⁸⁰ Joseph. *AJ* 18.81-84. Other sources for the expulsion of 19 are Tac. *Ann.* 2.85.11-17; Suet. *Tib.* 36.1.

⁸¹ Daniel R. Schwartz, "Herodians and *ioudaioi* in Flavian Rome," in *Flavius Josephus and Flavian Rome* (ed. Jonathan Edmondson, Steve Mason, and James Rives; New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 63-78, cit. 76-77. For example, where Josephus records Roman documents that spoke to the status of Judean religion in various parts of the empire, their language of ἱερὰ ἰουδαϊκά indicates that such practices are a matter of choice, and separable from the ethnicity of practitioners.

⁸² Joseph. *AJ* 17.41-43. Schwartz also notes the passage but reads it with a slightly different emphasis ("Herodians and *ioudaioi*," 77). That Josephus refers to the Pharisees as a group of Judaic men suggests to him that an ethnic Judean need not adhere to 'Judaism', hence the supplementary adjective that specifies their religious activities. I do not necessarily disagree, but view the Josephus' sense here as carrying the additional connotation of a particular specialty in Judean religion.

experts in Judaic matters in mind when he recounts the expulsion, a nuance that could follow from having become sensitive to a distinction between ‘Judean’ people and matters, and ‘Judaic’ people and matters, in fifteen or more years spent at Rome.⁸³ These possibilities must remain only suggestive.

Whatever Josephus means by πᾶν τὸ ἰουδαϊκὸν τῆς Ῥώμης, he places blame for the expulsion squarely on the four specialists, only one of whom is specifically designated as an ethnic Judean.⁸⁴ His explanation also accords with an assertion of Cassius Dio, who claims that an expulsion was issued under Tiberius because many Judeans had flocked to Rome and were turning natives to their ways. Nevertheless, many read Josephus’ account of the Judaic ‘deceivers’ as a literary conceit, all the more so for his pendant story of Egyptian priests who beguile another Roman matron, an Isis devotee, into a tryst with an unrequited suitor masquerading as

⁸³ This seems to fit with Cohen’s suggestion that Josephus is far more precise in recognizing different degrees of adherence to Judean religion in the *Antiquitates* than he was in the *Bellum Iudaicum* (“Respect for Judaism,” 420). Another clue may lie in his depiction of the advent to Rome of an imposter claiming to be Herod’s murdered son Alexander, which he recounts in both the *Bellum Iudaicum* (2.101-110) and the *Antiquitates* (17.324-338). Though in the first he describes the turnout of τό γε μὴν Ἰουδαϊκὸν ἐν τῇ Ῥώμῃ ἅπαν, in the latter, the same gathering is now εἰς τὴν Ῥώμην...πᾶν τὸ τῇδε Ἰουδαίων πλῆθος. Interestingly, scholars are quite willing to dismiss this particular statement of corporate activity as hyperbole, while reading the language of the expulsion more straightforwardly.

⁸⁴ The Judean ethnicity of all four men is usually inferred, though the text does not directly support this interpretation. Only one man is referred to specifically as a ἰουδαῖος, while the others are introduced only as three men (τρῆς ἄνδρες). As to the question of whether Roman administrators would have been able to isolate and punish specific culprits from the Judean population, Philo provides an instructive example in the *Legatio ad Gaium*. Mentioning certain accusations made against Roman Judeans at the instigation of Sejanus, he notes that Tiberius reassured Judeans throughout the empire that the incident had not affected all Roman Judeans but only the few guilty. While it is unclear if he means the expulsion, the passage suggests at a minimum that the measures did not alter the status of Judeans at Rome, and that Roman authorities were capable of punishing some Judeans without implicating every one.

Anubis.⁸⁵ Josephus' apologetic interests have been widely noted, as is his tendency to blame problems involving Judeans on an anomalous handful of morally bereft troublemakers—for example, the religious 'deceivers', 'pseudo-prophets', and 'charlatans' who stoked the Judean masses with false promises and were responsible for political unrest that warranted Roman intervention.⁸⁶ But his inclusion of specialists in narratives about provincial power struggles is neither arbitrary nor entirely fictive. He introduces many by name and appoints them with specific claims and capabilities—prophecy, divine revelation, the performance or promise of signs and wonders, and so forth—by which they were able to marshal tremendous popular support, warranting Roman administrative intervention. Whether or not he is privy to accurate details of the expulsion under Tiberius, he casts this event in like terms and, in so doing, plays directly into Roman anxieties about the sort of hazards that freelance religious experts were known to pose. That he makes a normative judgment about specialists and slanders their activities in predictable ways ought not be confused with the social phenomenon of freelance experts and the considerable influence that they often wielded.⁸⁷

⁸⁵ Most notably in a theory put forth by Henry St. John Thackeray, who argues that this passage belongs to a long section (*Antiquitates* 17-19) composed not by Josephus but by the so-called "Thucydidean hack [*Josephus, the Man and the Historian* (New York: Jewish Institute of Religion Press, 1929), 110].

⁸⁶ Joseph. *BJ* 2.253-265, 2.271, 6.285-287.

⁸⁷ On the difficulty of extracting reliable historical evidence from accounts such as Livy's narrative of the Bacchanalia affair and Josephus on the Egyptian and Judean deceivers, particularly inasmuch as both are entangled with underlying concerns about gender, see Kraemer, *Unreliable Witnesses*, 29-55. Despite the problems with adducing the historicity of such accounts, the fact that independently acting religious specialists appear as legible culprits within them reinforces the argument that specialists were regularly associated with the introduction of novel religious

These measures, too, can and should be read within the wider context of regulatory strategies pursued in order to get a handle on the unbridled proliferation of alien religious practices in Rome, especially on threatening practices such as divination, prophecy, spells, and initiations, by targeting obvious agents behind their introduction and spread. Not only did many occur within a context of fervent entrepreneurial religious activity, the same methods for censuring Judeans and Judaic practices were used to limit the activities of independent specialists with areas of expertise ranging from textual or numerological divination, initiation rites, and sundry other services bundled in complex configurations. It follows that in contexts where known varieties of such specialists are of interest, other figures populating these contexts are complicit in the same class of religious activity.

Although scholars often discount indications that some Judeans proactively brokered expertise in Judean wisdom, teachings, and other religious practices on the grounds that there is insufficient evidence for mass conversions to Judaism at Rome in this period, it is the questionable model of gentile attraction and conversion to 'Judaism' that hinders an accurate understanding of the evidence.⁸⁸

A basic principle undergirding the conversion model is that the proactive

teachings and practices, and that, following the same logic, specialists would have been obvious targets for any administrative measure intended to scotch this form of religious activity.

⁸⁸ A clear illustration of the sway this model holds is in the negative reception of an argument put forth by Ernest L. Abel, who proposed that we can only arrive at the numbers supplied by our ancient sources if Judean expulsions targeted proselytizers and proselytes, as opposed to [only] ethnic Judeans ["Were the Jews Banished from Rome in AD 19?" *REJ* 127 (1968): 383-386]. While I think that Abel is more or less correct about whom these measures targeted, his operative concept of proselytism is easily discredited for lack of support.

provision of religious knowledge, practices, and even group membership is both approved by and done on behalf of a larger religious entity, Rome's 'Jewish community'.⁸⁹ But all of these concepts—proselytism and conversion, the Roman Jewish community, and Judaism, as a *religion* in the modern sense—rely on an anachronistic set of expectations about engagement with Judean religion, and one that is essentially different from how Roman audiences negotiated other alien religious practices.

As I have argued in this chapter, our sources furnish clear examples of people in Rome who claimed facility with texts, special teachings, and practices associated with Judea for the benefit of non-Judean audiences, and furthermore, that it was these specialists specifically whose activities Roman authorities attempted to regulate by expelling Judeans or outlawing Judaic *sacra* or *ritus*. To consider that these measures concerned experts in Judean religion, and to take seriously the figures whom we encounter in Josephus, Juvenal, and others, locates Judeans within a religious phenomenon that is well attested with respect to brokers of other foreign cultural practices. In so doing we also counteract the tendency to render Judeans living at Rome religiously unique, incomparable with other forms of alien religion present there.

⁸⁹ See, for example, Martin Goodman's definition: "Information, education, and apologetic might or might not coexist within any one religious system, but all three can individually be distinguished from what may best be described as proselytizing. Those who approved of a proselytizing mission believed that, as members of a defined group, they should approve of those within their number who might choose to encourage outsiders not only to change their way of life but also to be incorporated within their group" (*Mission and Conversion*, 4).

With yet another mode of religiosity informing our picture, the category 'Judean religion' appears both more variegated and, in its specific varieties, more comparable to the range of phenomena contained within headings such as 'Greek religion' and 'Egyptian religion' at Rome, neither of which we would expect to contain a normative version of religious practice or to resemble a *religion* in the sense that Christianity and Judaism become *religions*. A number of studies have already argued persuasively for affinities between some Judean religious phenomena and contemporary non-Judean analogues, for instance, between synagogues and voluntary associations.⁹⁰ Freelance experts in Judean wisdom and practices constitute another discernible set of actors within Judean populations, but one that might overlap with other Judean social phenomena in complex ways. If we examine the activities of independent specialists in other forms of ethnic religion, for example, we learn that some formed networks with one another, while others attempted to establish groups with regular contours and institutional characteristics, and others still interacted with existing religious groups or institutions. We might imagine a similar set of scenarios with respect to how specialists in Judean religion related to a wider population of ethnic Judeans, though these must remain tentative in the absence of much corroborating evidence. The important point is that, in calling Judean specialists freelance or

⁹⁰ The bibliography devoted to these topics is large: Rajak and Noy, "Archisynagogoi," 75-93; Steve Mason, "Philosophiai: Greco-Roman, Judean and Christian," in *Voluntary Association in Greco-Roman World* (ed. John S. Kloppenborg and Stephen G. Wilson; London and New York: Routledge, 1995), 31-58; idem, "Flavius Josephus in Flavian Rome: Reading Between the Lines," in *Flavian Rome: Culture, Image, Text* (ed. A. J. Boyle and W. J. Dominik; Leiden: Brill, 2003) 559-589; Harland, *Associations, Synagogues, and Congregations*; idem, *Dynamics of Identity in the World of Early Christians*.

independent, I am not setting them in absolute contrast to other Judean religious actors or forms of religious activity. Nor am I am positing the existence of any normative Judean religion from which specialists deviated.

Admitting for Judean religious specialists also makes better sense of first- and second-century commentaries on the influence of Judean practices on non-Judeans.⁹¹ Seneca complains that Judean customs are received ubiquitously in his day, so much so that “the conquered have given laws to their conquerors.” At least Judeans actually know the rationale for their observances, unlike the majority of people, who imitate them out of ignorance.⁹² Tacitus explains the origins of abstention from pork and leavened breads, fasting, sabbath, circumcision, distinctive burial customs, and aniconic cult, then laments that these *novos ritus* have gained traction among Romans.⁹³ Juvenal warns that a father who gives up every seventh day to idleness will raise a son even more receptive to Judean customs: worshipping nothing but the divinity of the heavens, abhorring pork, taking to circumcision, and exchanging Roman law for Mosaic.⁹⁴

Together these sources point to a wider phenomenon of non-Judeans taking up some Judean practices that might occur in any number of forms: special eating

⁹¹ Such commentaries are not limited to non-Judean authors. Josephus is also well aware, or at least claims, that large numbers of non-ethnic Judeans have adopted Judean practices, reminding Apion of masses throughout the whole world who exhibit a zeal for Judean religious practice, observing the Sabbath, the fasts, the lighting of lamps, and many of the food laws, and attempting to imitate various noble qualities which characterize the Judeans (*Ap.* 2.39, 282-284). Shaye J. D. Cohen, “Respect for Judaism by Gentiles According to Josephus,” *HTR* 80 (1987): 409-430, cit. 425-426.

⁹² Sen. apud August. *De civ. D.* 6.11.

⁹³ Tac. *Hist.* 5.5.

⁹⁴ Juv. 14.96-106.

habits, festival observance, aniconic worship, consulting prophets or diviners, divining from biblical texts, or studying them as intellectual resources. Though this phenomenon is not identical with the effects of Judean specialists, there is strong reason to suspect that it was probably furthered by their activities.

Romans seem to have been familiar with features of Judean religion already in the first century BCE, when both Pompey and Sosius celebrated triumphs over Jerusalem and an influx of Judean slaves entered Rome. Granting that he is writing at some remove, Porphyry asserts, “The law of the Judeans [once] flourished only in a small region of Syria, though later, indeed, it was gradually extended to the confines of Italy; yet this happened after Gaius Caesar and certainly not before his reign.”⁹⁵ Regardless of when Judean writings reached Rome, their prominence must have received a considerable boost after the defeat of Judea in 70 CE, which culminated in the destruction of the Jerusalem temple and triumphal removal of its sacred objects and texts to the capital.

One can imagine how this renewed focus on Judea, and Judean divination, fomented interest in *iudaica* that had already existed at Rome for some time, and in Judean prophecy specifically. Josephus even insists that the god of the Jerusalem temple had already departed prior to its destruction, leading some scholars to ask whether non-Judeans might have conceived of the removal of his cult

⁹⁵ Porph. *Adv. Christ.* apud August. *Ep.* 102.8.

paraphernalia to Rome as a sort of *evocatio*.⁹⁶ Whether anyone really thought that the god of the Judeans had been incorporated into the Roman pantheon and now received cult in the capital city is impossible to know. At the very least, Josephus himself provides some sense of the kinds of claims that a professed expert might make about Judean religion.

Another factor that may have contributed to the recognition of and attraction to Judaica at Rome was the social status of people said to have engaged in Judaic practices to varying degrees: imperial family members, governors, and other elites. While the relationship between elite and popular trends at Rome was often dialectic, interest in Judean religion among notable Romans likely corresponded, either as a catalyst or a reflection, to the habits of wider audiences. In this vein, just as the time Cleopatra spent at Rome stimulated great enthusiasm for *aegyptiaca*, a version of this argument might apply to the Judean royal family, the Herodians, many of whom were raised by Roman nobles from the time they were children.⁹⁷ Indeed, as the infamous companion of Titus, the Herodian queen Berenice captivated popular imagination much as her exotic Egyptian predecessor had done as Caesar's consort a century earlier.⁹⁸

⁹⁶ Joseph. *BJ* 299-300. For a discussion of this interpretation, see James B. Rives, "Flavian Religious Policy and the Destruction of the Jerusalem Temple," in *Flavius Josephus and Flavian Rome* (ed. Jonathan Edmondson, Steve Mason, and James B. Rives; New York and Oxford: 2005), 145-166.

⁹⁷ Stowers, *A Rereading of Romans*, 66-82; Schwartz, "Herodians and *Ioudaioi* in Flavian Rome," 67-78; G. W. Bowersock, "Foreign Elites at Rome," in *Flavius Josephus and Flavian Rome* (ed. Jonathan Edmondson, Steve Mason, and James B. Rives; New York and Oxford: 2005), 53-62.

⁹⁸ See Kleiner, *Cleopatra and Rome*; Sarolta Takács, "Alexandria in Rome," *HSCP* 97 (1995): 263-276. On Berenice, see Ross Shepard Kraemer, "Typical and Atypical Jewish Family Dynamics: The Cases

In other words, similar conditions, and also shared characteristics, seem to have contributed to intrigue in both Egyptian and Judean cultural practices at Rome. This observation segues into another: the above survey of evidence for specialists in Judean religion regularly brings us face to face with evidence for specialists in Egyptian religion, whether a list of exotic experts, an joint expulsion of participants in Egyptian and Judean religion, or a proscription of Egyptian and Judaic rites. The clearest case of practitioners of Egyptian and Judean religion being jointly targeted occurs in Tacitus' account of the episode of 19, which begins with a senatorial debate concerning Egyptian and Judaic *sacra* (*de sacris Aegyptiis Iudaicisque*), the outcome of which was a resolution dispatching four thousand people of freed status (*libertini generis*), of the sort infected by that superstition (*ea superstitione*) to curb brigandage in Sardinia. Others were to leave Italy by an appointed day unless they renounced their profane rites (*profanos ritus*).⁹⁹ Not only does Tacitus treat Egyptian and Judaic *sacra* as a common *superstitio*, he does not limit the expulsion to either ethnic Judeans or ethnic Egyptians, or both, but rather, ties it to an ethnically heterogeneous civil status with which these two ethnically coded *sacra* somehow intersect.¹⁰⁰ The same coincidence obtains for

of Babatha and Berenice," in *Early Christian Families in Context* (ed. David Balch and Carolyn Osiek; Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans), 114-139.

⁹⁹ Tac. *Ann.* 2.85.11-17: *actum et de sacris Aegyptiis Iudaicisque pellendis factumque patrum consultum ut quattuor milia libertini generis ea superstitione infecta quis idonea aetas in insulam Sardiniam veherentur coercendis illic latrocinii et si ob gravitatem caeli interissen vile damnum ceteri cederent Italia nisi certam ante diem profanos ritus exuissent.*

¹⁰⁰ In his discussion of the passage, Rutgers has the Senate deciding to expel all practitioners of Judaism and of Egyptian rites, a departure from the text itself, which clearly states that its debate concerned *sacris Aegyptiis Iudaicisque* (62). See Leonard Victor Rutgers, "Roman Policy Toward the

Judean and Egyptian literary specialists, who, as we have seen, regularly cast one another as adversaries, but also for other writers who co-implicate Judeans and Egyptians in common religious practices.¹⁰¹

Insofar as one aim of this chapter on ethnically coded religious practices and specialists has been to demonstrate the need for a more differentiated picture of Judean religiosity in Rome, a parallel argument might also be made for greater attentiveness to the diverse religious phenomena—*sacra*, *ritus*, officiants, buildings, altars, and spaces associated with Isis, Isis and Sarapis, Harpocrates, Anubis, and other Egyptian deities—captured under the heading ‘Egyptian cult’. Not only do both of these second-order categories, ‘Judaism’ and ‘Egyptian cult’, make the phenomena to which they correspond seem incomparable with one another, both also ride roughshod over a diverse spectrum of religious practices and practitioners apparent in our evidence. In the same way that scholars tend to presume that a synagogue or community lies behind every Judean specialist or reference to Judaic practices, a full-scale temple and priesthood is typically read

Jews: Expulsions from the City of Rome during the First Century C.E.,” *CA* 13 (1994): 56-75, reprinted in *Judaism and Christianity in First-Century Rome* (ed. Karl P. Donfried and Peter Richardson; Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1995), 93-116]. The automatic construal of Judaic *ritus* or *sacra* as “Judaism,” even where the referent is directly parallel to other ethnically coded religious practices, is symptomatic of unexamined assumptions about Judean religion and its incomparability to other alien forms of religion. In support of my position see E. Mary Smallwood, *The Jews Under Roman Rule: From Pompey to Diocletian* (Leiden: Brill, 1976), 201-210; Francis Richard David Goodyear, *The Annals of Tacitus, Books 1-6* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1972-1981), 441-442.

¹⁰¹ In a discussion of unusual dietary practices, for instance, Sextus Empiricus writes, “A similar behavior may be found in respect of food in people’s worship of the gods. The Judean and the Egyptian priest would prefer to die instantly rather than eat pork, while to taste mutton is reckoned an abomination in the eyes of a Libyan, and Syrians think the same about pigeons, and others about cattle” (*Pyr.* 3.222-223).

into every instance of Egyptian religion in Rome, however bare the evidence.¹⁰² The result is that all Egyptian phenomena run together in such a way that any reference to the proscription of Egyptian rites, a banning of private devotion, or a pejorative remark about Egyptian religious practice produces the same impression of contradiction that Ripat highlighted for Roman attitudes toward ‘astrology’.

Not unlike the situation of some astrologers and ‘astrology’, or of some Judeans and ‘Judean religion’, regulation aimed at Egyptian phenomena at Rome occurs with some frequency toward the end of the republic, continues, though in a different manner, within the scope of Augustus’ religious reforms, and persists under subsequent emperors.¹⁰³ Between the years 59 and 48 BCE alone, the Senate issued five separate edicts to tear down altars and statues dedicated privately to Egyptian deities.¹⁰⁴ As Sarolta Takacs points out, “The interpretation of [a]

¹⁰² For example, Swetnam-Burland seems to presume that every epigraphic instance of the titles ‘priest’ and ‘scribe’ necessarily corresponded to one of Rome’s known temples to the Egyptian gods. While she may be correct about any one item, the very salience of the image(s) of Egyptian religious officiants that she argues for points simultaneously to great intrigue in such figures, and also to competing conceptions of their activities (“Egyptian’ Priests in Roman Italy”).

¹⁰³ See Orlin, “Octavian and Egyptian Cults,” 231-253.

¹⁰⁴ Cic. *Ad Att.* 2.17.2; Horst R. Moehring, “The Persecution of the Jews and the Adherents of the Isis Cult at Rome in A.D. 19,” *Novum Testamentum* 3 (1959): 293-304, cit. 293. Our evidence for actions against “the cult” in 58 BCE survives in Tertullian, who is quoting Varro (Tert. *ad Nat.* 1.10). Recounting a series of portents from 52 BCE, Dio includes another senatorial decree to tear down privately built temples of Isis and Sarapis as an unwitting offense against these gods (Cass. Dio, 40.47.3). In 48 BCE, *manteis* recommend that temples of Isis and Sarapis in the Capitoline vicinity be razed to the ground once more when a swarm of bees settles ominously near a statue of Heracles in this area (42.26.2). Additionally, we have a passage in Valerius Maximus in which the consul L. Aemilius Paullus singlehandedly beat in the doors of a temple of Isis with an axe (1.3.4). Coarelli and Takács both want to place this incident in the first half of the second century BCE (consuls of this name are known for 219, 216, 182, 168, and 50 BCE). In mounting an argument for the early presence of temples to Isis and Sarapis, Takacs favors dating the Valerius evidence to either 182 or 168 and relates it to the Bacchanalia prohibition. The text clearly states that the senate orders that *Isidis et Serapis fana diruenda*, and, when workers do not dare to touch them, the consul himself seizes an axe and beats in the door of a temple.

senatorial decision of 58 BCE forbidding the construction of altars on the Capitol as a sweeping persecution campaign against the cult of Isis is erroneous.” In fact, this same episode witnesses the rebuilding of the Capitoline altars to Sarapis, Isis, Harpocrates, and Anubis by the power of the populace. Even as the senate voted repeatedly to tear down popular altars for the Egyptian gods along with other shrines built at private expense, the members of the second triumvirate allegedly decided in 43 BCE to build a temple at Rome in honor of Isis and Sarapis.¹⁰⁵

Augustus forbids Egyptian *sacra* inside the *pomerium*, on the one hand, while making provisions for the restoration of many privately constructed shrines, on the other. As Orlin remarks, “The emperor’s support for rebuilding the temples of Isis and Sarapis in Rome militates even more strongly against viewing this action as a strike against Egyptian rites or part of a generalized program of hostility toward Egyptian religion.”¹⁰⁶ Nevertheless, Agrippa must renew the ban and even extend its parameters to a mile beyond the *pomerium* already only seven years after the first goes into effect. However frequent and stringent, these proscriptions of Egyptian religious practice were ineffective at curtailing its popular appeal.

Such dynamics of regulation and resurgence are comparable to those that Pauline Ripat highlights for astrology in the same period, and also to those that we have tracked for Judaic practices and practitioners.¹⁰⁷ As with those cases,

¹⁰⁵ For the decision under the triumvirate to build a temple of Isis and Sarapis in Rome, see Cass. Dio, 47.16.

¹⁰⁶ Cass. Dio, 53.2.4 (28 BCE) and 54.6.6 (21 BCE); Orlin, “Octavian and Egyptian Cults,” 236.

¹⁰⁷ Ripat, “Expelling Misconceptions.” See the discussion in chapter two.

administrative actions against Egyptian sites or practices could not have extended to all forms of Egyptian religion, including those that the emperor himself had patronized within the same decade.¹⁰⁸ By what agency or in what form Egyptian *sacra* continue to resurface within the *pomerium* after they have been ousted from its limits our ancient sources do not specify. Takacs views the aim of such measures as the restriction of *sacra* to temples in order to enforce a greater degree of control over them, which underscores the possibility that it is precisely those forms of Egyptian religion that are not linked with temple institutions that were posing problems for administrators.¹⁰⁹ We might take another cue from the comparable situations of astrologers and Judeans and posit that the Egyptian activities at issue involved the particular actors targeted in those instances, namely, ones linked with or furthered by freelance experts.

Unsurprisingly, there is considerable evidence for freelance experts in Egyptian religion in Rome and elsewhere in the empire. In the time of the Julio-Claudians, Alexandrian astrologers were enlisted to reform the Roman religious calendar, Sosigenes in 46 BCE under Julius Caesar and Facundius in 9 BCE under

¹⁰⁸ As with those cases, periodic actions undertaken to suppress Egyptian practices often attract symbolic explanations. As Takács concludes, for example, “The senators of 53 BCE and the soothsayers of 48 BCE might not have seen it in these terms, but their proposals and actions against the cult of Isis and Sarapis were nothing more than reactionary attempts at putting their world back in order through religious purification” (*Isis and Sarapis in the Roman World*, 67). Such an explanation grows increasingly implausible as Egyptian religion gained *sacrum publicum* status at Rome and was implicated increasingly in civic activities, for instance, the incubation of the Flavians at the temple of Isis Campense on the eve of their triumph over Judea.

¹⁰⁹ Takács, *Isis and Sarapis in the Roman World*, 77. I am actually somewhat persuaded by this argument, although it is unclear that this is the actual consequence of the measure.

Augustus.¹¹⁰ Juvenal includes an impersonator of Anubis in his catalog of exotic experts who prey upon women, as well as various Egyptian-themed practices and purification rites in the adjoining sections of the sixth satire. “The highest, most exceptional honor is awarded to Anubis, who runs along, mocking the wailing populace, surrounded by his creatures in linen garments and with shaved heads. He is not the one that asks for pardon whenever your wife does not refrain from sex on the days that should be kept sacred and a large fine is due for violation of the guilt, it is his tears and his practiced mumblings which ensure that Osiris will not refuse to pardon her fault, provided, of course, that he is bribed by a fat goose and a slice of sacrificial cake.”¹¹¹

In another scenario a freelance expert recommends a pilgrimage to Egypt that will culminate in the woman making an offering in Rome’s temple of Isis on the Campus Martius.¹¹² Here we glimpse a freelance expert indirectly working in conjunction with an institutional temple, even if the relationship is one-sided. In the same vein, Porphyry recounts an exorcism performed by an Egyptian priest that Plotinus witnessed at Rome; the event took place in an Isis temple, which the

¹¹⁰ Plut. *Caes.* 59.5; Plin. *HN* 18.211; Wallace-Hadrill, “*Mutatas Formas*,” 58-61.

¹¹¹ Juv. 6.532-541: “If white Io tells her to, she will go to the ends of Egypt and bring back water fetched from sweltering Meroë to sprinkle in Isis’ temple, towering next to the ancient sheepfold. You see, she thinks her instructions come from the voice of [Isis] herself.” Juvenal also appears to reference North African astrologers, whom he mentions separately from Chaldeans and whose predictions women believe to originate from Ammon’s fountain, that is, the oracle of Jupiter Ammon in Libya (6.554-556).

¹¹² Juv. 6.526-530.

Egyptian proclaimed to be the only pure place in Rome, although he was not a member of its priesthood.¹¹³

Lucian lampoons an Egyptian named Pancrates, who surfed the Nile on crocodiles and transformed his staff into a servant, though the same man boasts that he was a sacred scribe in Memphis and spent twenty-three years underground in Egyptian sanctuaries leaning his arts at Isis' hands.¹¹⁴ The same text affirms that 'Egyptian writings' are both plentiful in the second-century and suited to the task of summoning and exorcising restless ghosts.¹¹⁵ Pausanias tells of Amphion of Thebes, who traded in mysterious objects and surpassed even Orpheus in his command of wild animals.¹¹⁶ Apuleius presents Zatchlas, an Egyptian *propheta* and *sacerdos* who raises and converses with a corpse, among the panoply of exotic experts whom Lucius encounters during his pan-Mediterranean misadventure.¹¹⁷ Deriding the miracles of Jesus, Celsus places them on a level with the works of *goētes* who profess to do wonderful miracles, and the accomplishments of those who are taught by the Egyptians, who for a few obols make known their sacred lore in the middle of the market-place and drive *daimones* out of men and blow away diseases and invoke the souls of heroes, displaying expensive banquets and

¹¹³ Porph. *Plot.* 10; Dicke, *Magic and Magicians in the Greco-Roman World*, 230-231.

¹¹⁴ Lucian, *Philops.* 34-35.

¹¹⁵ Lucian, *Philops.* 30-31.

¹¹⁶ Paus. 6.20.18-19.

¹¹⁷ Apul. *Met.* 2.28-29.

dining tables and cakes and dishes which are non-existent and who make things move as though they were alive although they are not really so, but only appear as such in the imagination.¹¹⁸ The second century also witnesses the great rain miracle of Arnouphis, an Egyptian *magos* and companion of Marcus Aurelius, who summoned a storm by means of enchanting various deities, and in particular Mercury, at a crucial moment in his campaign against the Macromani.¹¹⁹ Philostratus credits Apollonius of Tyana with having driven out Chaldeans and Egyptians who had flocked to the western shore of the Hellespont in the wake of a series of earthquakes and were charging ten talents to perform placating rites.¹²⁰ It is perhaps in this vein that Plutarch parses ‘true Isis devotees’, those who bear the sacred writings, clear of all superstition and pedantry, within their souls as though within a casket, from people who merely dress in linen and shave their heads, much as wearing a beard and a coarse cloak does not make one a true philosopher.¹²¹

Despite numerous examples of freelance experts in Egyptian wisdom and practices, when Egyptian ‘priests’ and ‘scribes’ occur in literary or epigraphic sources, such figures are nearly always understood in relation to temples and fixed

¹¹⁸ Origen, *C. Cels.* 1.68; Smith, *Jesus the Magician*, 83.

¹¹⁹ Cass. Dio, 71.8.4.

¹²⁰ Philostr. *VA* 6.41. As Matthew Dickie correctly notes, “The Egyptians present...are best understood to be persons trading on the renown that Egyptian priests had as experts in the divine and in the occult” (*Magic and Magicians in the Greco-Roman World* 159). For this example, see also the discussion in chapter four.

¹²¹ Plut. *De Is. et Os.* 1.3.

authority structures, even when the latter are not clearly in the evidence but must be inferred. That is, a reference to Egyptian *sacrificuli*, to a *sacerdos Isidis*, or to a scribe (γραμματεὺς), is understood to imply some institutional context the likes of which the figure(s) in question may or may not have been associated.¹²² When we bother to look for freelance Egyptian experts, however, they appear with some frequency. While it is, in most cases, difficult if not impossible to determine whether an epigraphic reference to an ‘Egyptian scribe’ even means a kind of religious expert, let alone whether that expert was freelance or held a position within one of Rome’s Egyptian temples or *collegia*, this mode of religiosity should be entertained along with the latter two.

Indeed, specific circumstances in the first centuries BCE and CE seem to have boosted the number of freelance experts in Egyptian religion. As David Frankfurter notes, Roman reforms of the Egyptian priesthood, in effect by the end of the first century BCE, displaced many priests while also upsetting traditional loci of status and religious authority.¹²³ As a result, the Egyptian landscape was filled with freelance experts who might communicate with temple institutions but

¹²² For instance, the Egyptian *sacrificuli* among whom Domitian concealed himself in order to escape from the Capitoline (Suet. *Dom.* 1.2). For epigraphic examples of Egyptian religious experts of ambiguous status, see Jörg Rüpke, *Fasti Sacerdotum: A Prosopography of Pagan, Jewish, and Christian Officials in the City of Rome* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), passim and esp. 152.

¹²³ Frankfurter, *Religion in Roman Egypt*, 198–203. See also Rawson, *Intellectual Life in the Late Roman Republic*, 318: “Alexandria was now truly within the Empire, and Alexandrian teachers and scholars came to Rome (perhaps not the most able, or not for long); but members of the upper class had to have imperial permission to visit Egypt, and thus the city where most of the real intellectual achievements of the period took place—in grammar, medicine, and mechanics—could not attract Roman pupils.”

were not regular features of their operations.¹²⁴ Many of these figures may indeed have been former members of the Egyptian priestly class, forced by the aforementioned changes to broker their religious expertise in Egypt and abroad. It is equally conceivable that the same changes emboldened people who had never held a priesthood to lay claim to authoritative religious titles and forms of expertise, particularly in contexts distant from Egypt.¹²⁵ Similar ambiguities attend experts in Judean religion who claimed titles associated with the Jerusalem temple, particularly in the aftermath of its destruction. Recall, for instance, Juvenal's trembling Judean woman, who is a great (perhaps even 'high') priest(ess) and interpreter of the laws of Jerusalem (*interpretes legum Solymarum et magna sacerdos*); a dubious profession, but nevertheless one that trades on recognized forms of Judean religious authority. One also wonders about evidence for Egyptians and Judean 'scribes' in Rome, for whom we have several epigraphic

¹²⁴ Frankfurter, *Religion in Roman Egypt*, 211; Alan H. Gardiner, "Professional Magicians in Ancient Egypt," *PBSA* 39 (1917): 31-43.

¹²⁵ Dickie makes a similar point about 'priests' and 'magicians' not being mutually exclusive by necessity, though I disagree with the ontological distinction that he holds between the 'religion' of priests and the 'magic' of itinerant magicians: "Egyptian magicians were a known feature of some areas of the Roman world. Many of them will have played the part of priests, and priests of Isis, in particular, will have dressed appropriately in linen, shaved their heads and made much of their holiness, the mysterious nature of Egyptian religion and the powerful forces it knew how to unlock. Not all of the itinerant magicians who presented themselves as Egyptian priests were frauds. A case can be made for the existence in Egypt of persons associated in a more or less official capacity with its temples who exploited the fame that attached to them as magicians and either practiced magic themselves or pretended to be able to teach it. That some of them traveled to foreign parts and turned the fame that they enjoyed as magicians to their own advantage would not be surprising" (*Magic and Magicians in the Greco-Roman World*, 230).

references and who may have claimed a role and form of expertise commonly associated with the Jerusalem temple and Egyptian religious institutions.¹²⁶

For most examples it is challenging, if not impossible, to gauge the credibility of any given claim, or to know whether we are dealing with a priest or scribe who was entirely self-authorized, or whose authority was contingent on some temple or synagogue at Rome. An inscription from Delos illustrates the ambiguity aptly, inasmuch as it attributes the arrival of Sarapis there to Apollonius, an immigrant ‘priest’ from Memphis. Having transported the god’s image to the island, Apollonius installed Sarapis in a rental apartment whence he initiated people into his mysteries until his grandson could finally afford to build the god a proper temple.¹²⁷

The entire process recounted in the text unfolds over the course of many years and even spans a few generations. What is remarkable about this anecdote is that the fate of Sarapis on Delos hung for so long in the balance of a single individual’s activities, and those of his immediate associates. Despite the lapse in time between when the statue first arrives on the island, and when the god finally enjoys a formal cult institution there, the inscription is read as a canonical account

¹²⁶ The designation γραμματεὺς appears, for example, in twelve commemorative inscriptions from the ‘Jewish’ catacomb on Vigna Randanini in Rome, although the dating of these texts and the identification of the complex is contested. See Rutgers, *The Jews in Late Ancient Rome*; David Noy, *Jewish Inscriptions of Western Europe II: The City of Rome* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995); Martin Goodman, “Texts, Scribes, and Power in Roman Judea,” in *Judaism in the Roman World. Ancient Judaism and Early Christianity 66* (Boston: Brill, 2006), 79-90, esp. 80-82.

¹²⁷ IG 11.4. 1299.

of ‘cult migration’.¹²⁸ But what does cult migration even mean during the intervening period in which the mysteries of Delian Sarapis consisted of Apollonius structuring certain practices around this statue in a series of rental spaces? Whether Apollonius had actually held the religious office in Memphis that he professed on Delos is impossible to know; either way the latter activities qualify as freelance expertise until the ‘cult’ had acquired institutional characteristics.

Regardless of their pedigrees, we have numerous examples of self-authorized experts in Egyptian religion, and one might easily imagine that the activities of such experts were the intended target of some regulatory measures aimed at curtailing Egyptian practices, particularly when the same measures were intended against Judaic *sacra* or *ritus*. There are also many indications of distinctive practices, skills, and even bodily comportment that were coded as Egyptian among Roman audiences. Valerius Maximus, for example, tells of Marcus Volusius, a proscribed aedile who manages to escape from the city by assuming *Isiaci habitu* to impersonate an Egyptian priest.¹²⁹ Adopting the same strategy, Domitian passed undetected among a band of Egyptian priests when followers of Vitellius trapped him on the Capitoline.¹³⁰ These stories bear witness to distinctive

¹²⁸ For example, Burkert, *Ancient Mystery Cults*, 38.

¹²⁹ Val. Max. 7.3.8; App. *BCiv* 4.47.

¹³⁰ Tac. *Hist.* 3.74; Suet. *Dom.* 1.2. These examples are also noted by Ripat, who remarks, “The advertisement of [a particular] specialization was undertaken not so much through the practice of the knowledge itself, but rather through observing the fine lines of difference of activity, appearance, or demeanor that defined those who were associated with that knowledge. In other words, it was the external characteristics that suggested one had specialized knowledge or skill” (“Expelling Misconceptions,” 133 and n. 104).

practices, artifacts, and styles of dress associated with Isis religion so that one can speak of an Isiac mode or manner, much as a Pythagorean mode, or a Judaic one. Those who appropriated such characteristics were thus able to lay claim to the domains of expertise to which they pointed, albeit with varying success.

While one might refer to some Judean and Egyptian experts and phenomena at Rome as ‘unauthorized’ in contrast to those who had standing or recourse in the face of regulatory measures, again, I am not suggesting that Roman administrators had a standard set of procedures for authorizing certain actors, Judean or any other example. At the same time, individual edicts might parse a broad category of religious activity in order to take action against a portion of the phenomena that fell within it. Although the Romans considered Judean synagogues to be *collegia*, for example, Julius Caesar allowed them to persist even as he disbanded comparable religious associations of lesser antiquity.¹³¹

To repeat an argument of the previous chapter, for many kinds of specialists we can observe a similar unofficial pattern whereby some were protected on occasions when others of their kind were expelled or otherwise legislated against. The contrast between ‘authorized’ and ‘unauthorized’ specialists was not strict, but involved different sources of legitimacy and authority. It is in accordance with the same logic that writers such as Manetho, Apion, Chaeremon, Josephus and Philo had a vested interest in formulating criteria for ‘authorized’ or ‘legitimate’ forms of expertise in Egyptian and Judean religion, criteria that, for some of these writers,

¹³¹ Joseph. *AJ* 14.213-216; Suet. *Jul.* 42 and *Aug.* 32.

they themselves fulfilled. It was also the case that many ancient authors employed the terms 'Egyptian' and 'Judean' somewhat generically, without parsing them to reflect a more specific subject (i.e., specialists in Judean religion).¹³² In this respect both Egyptian and Judean have many analogues in other examples of ethnic terms that could be defined and applied liberally, but that evoked highly specific kinds of cultural practices; for examples, labels such as Chaldean or Babylonian, which usually called to mind expertise in astrological divination.

In the context of regulation, our evidence suggests that Roman authorities often did have a particular set of 'Judean' or 'Egyptian' practices and actors that they wished to proscribe. Yet to the extent that such specialists overlapped with various social formations and institutions in Rome's ethnic populations, the challenge of isolating the independent specialist phenomenon relative to wider ethnic populations and forms of religion meant that proscriptions and expulsions might affect those wider populations along with specialists and their clientele. Since our sources are either inattentive to or disagree about the exact recipients of most regulatory measures, we cannot know with any certainty how arbitrary or focused these shots were in practice. The reason why they were taken was not

¹³² Dio explains that 'Judean' designates not only people of that ethnicity, but also people of other ethnic backgrounds who adopt Judean practices (Cass. Dio, 37.17.1): "The country has been named Judaea, and the people themselves Judeans. I do not know how this title came to be given to them, but it applies also to all the other peoples, although of alien race, who affect their customs. This kind exists even among the Romans, and though often curtailed has increased to a very great extent and has won its way to the right of freedom in its observances." Dio does not insist upon a precise set of criteria for what it means to affect Judean customs, leaving us to imagine degrees of greater and lesser engagement with ethnically coded practices whose practitioners might all fall under the rubric of Judean by virtue of being associated with them at all.

arbitrary, however, but arose from the same sort of specialist activity that provoked similar actions against other specialists, contingent groups, and artifacts. As we will now explore in the next chapter, a shift that we begin to see toward the end of the first century CE for certain practices that had once carried strong ethnic resonances, might stem in part from the difficulty of parsing ethnically coded religious phenomena and specialists from ethnic populations.

CHAPTER FOUR

From *Magus* to Magician: Rethinking ‘Magic’, ‘Religion’, and ‘Philosophy’

If Juvenal’s sixth satire was a convenient starting point for a discussion of ethnically coded experts and practices, it is in his third satire that readers feel the effects of the surging specialist phenomenon on its own participants. As Juvenal stages an encounter with his friend Umbricius, who is *en route* from Rome to Cumae, the latter complains that there is no longer room in the city for respectable skills and no reward for work. “What can I do at Rome? I don’t know how to tell lies. I can’t praise a bad book if it’s bad and ask for a copy. I’m ignorant of the movement of the stars. I won’t and can’t predict someone’s father’s death. I’ve never examined the entrails of frogs.”¹ Umbricius then vents frustration that customs from the Greek East are so in vogue among wealthy Romans that self-styled experts from that region have procured posts in all of the great houses. “Say what you want him to be. In his own person he has brought anyone you like:

¹ Juv. 3.40-44: *Quid Romae faciam mentiri nescio librum si malus est nequeo laudare et poscere motus astrorum ignoro funus promittere patris nec volo nec possum rnarum viscera numquam inspexi.*

grammaticus, rhetor, geometres, pictor, aliptes, augur, schoenobates, medicus, magus—your *Graeculus* has every talent. Tell him to go to heaven and he will.”²

While much could be said about these passages, they provide a tantalizing glimpse not only of the options confronting anyone who would earn a living on the basis of some form of expertise, but also of the robust profiles of successful experts. For Juvenal, as for Lucian, versatility is more of a vice than a virtue, a sign that one is not truly skilled in any specialized pursuit, but only capable of affecting different specialist guises. Yet the combining of roles and ‘disciplines’ that is for these authors an object of ridicule has an actual basis in our first-century evidence.

Each of the practices that Umbricius mentions—interpreting the movements of the stars, exchanging writings, predicting deaths, interpreting entrails, perhaps even ascending to heaven to receive divine revelation—has already arisen in the context of freelance expertise, as have many of the titles he names (*augur, medicus, magus*). And although I have treated these practices as instances of religion and their purveyors as freelance religious experts, other scholars who have noted the same lines from Juvenal, or who have drawn upon a body of evidence similar to my own, would not consider would them examples of ‘religion’ and ‘religious experts’ but of ‘magic’ and ‘magicians’.³

I will have more to say about issues of definition at the end of the chapter, but for present purposes the example of ‘magic’ provides an ideal bridge from the

² Juv. 3.75-80: *Quem hominem secum attulit ad nos grammaticus rhetor geometres pictor aliptes augur schoenobates medicus magus omnia novit Graeculus esuriens in caelum iusseris ibit.*

³ See, for example, Dickie’s discussion of the passage in *Magic and Magicians in the Greco-Roman World*, 194.

previous chapter inasmuch as the term *magus* long denoted a religious expert from Persia. Through the figure of the *magus* we can trace the first-century transformation of a recognized expert in ethnically coded wisdom and skills into a generic authority on any practice associated with the specialist phenomenon. The same timeline witnesses the formation of a discourse about ‘magic’ whose scope, like its origins, is inextricable from the religion of freelance experts. À propos of the catchall figure that the *magus* would become, the set of evidence that I will consider in this chapter spans a number of native categories including ‘magic’, but also ‘astrology’, ‘mystery religion’, and ‘philosophy’. But my reasons for doing so are quite specific. Apart from the obvious fact that many of the examples that follow are the data for studies of ancient ‘magic’, the figure of the *magus* provides a useful site for observing the convergence of esoteric wisdom, a particular kind of philosophical influence, specialized writings, mysteries, initiation, divination, and immediate engagement with divine beings. By studying different constellations of such practices in relation to a specific kind of religious expert, we are forced to cut across these categories in order to acknowledge and account for the heterogeneous influences present in many specialized offerings. Furthermore, the evolution of the *magus* from an ethnically particular to a generic religious expert allows us to observe how these very innovative combinations might undermine or dilute the ethnic connotations of a particular figure or form of expertise.

I will begin, then, with a discussion of the ethnic connotations of *magus* and *magic*- practices, by which here I simply mean the practices of the *magi* before

the semantic range of this language expanded and began to be used in order to make normative statements about certain religious practices and actors. In a careful study of the term *magus* and its cognates, James B. Rives identifies a pattern in the evolving meaning of the language that coincides with the rise of entrepreneurial religion at Rome. In Latin, *magus* is not attested before the 50s BCE, when it first appears to denote recognized experts in Persian religion. There is a finite set of characteristics that accompanies the *magi*: in addition to their esoteric wisdom and skill in divination, they are said to practice incest, to expose the bodies of their dead to the elements, and to reject the practice of enclosing the gods in temples.⁴ This presentation is consistent with Classical and Hellenistic Greek depictions of *magoi*, which increasingly emphasized the philosophical character of their wisdom, whose origins lay with Zoroaster.⁵ The philosophical character of the wisdom of the *magi* is not lost on the Roman authors, many of whom relate a story about Pythagoras having studied with them.⁶

These general features track with most occurrences of the noun *magus* through the middle of the first century CE. Rives observes that whereas the noun is fairly common in prose, its adjectival forms appear most often in poetry and with a different emphasis.⁷ In the latter context, the word-group rarely conveys ethnic

⁴ Cic. *Div.* 1.46-47, 90-91; *Tusc.* 1.108; *Leg.* 2.26; Rives, “*Magus* and its Cognates in Classical Latin,” 61.

⁵ Rives, “*Magus* and its Cognates in Classical Latin,” 60 and n. 23.

⁶ Cicero, *Nat. D.* 1.43; *Fin.* 5.87; Plin. *HN* 24.156.

⁷ Rives, “*Magus* and its Cognates in Classical Latin,” 58-59. Leaving aside Pliny, who uses both noun and adjective far more frequently than any extant writer before Apuleius, Rives counts forty-three

specificity, but tends to appear as shorthand for a bundle of folk beliefs or ‘superstitions’.⁸ There are a few notable exceptions. Catullus is drawing on ethnographic traditions about the *magi* when he suggests that a *magus* would be born from a man’s union with his own mother, while Lucan joins the poetic tradition of ‘magic’ with the activities of Persian *magi* when he refers to secrets chanted in verse by *magi* and elsewhere appoints them as the rivals of Thessalian witches.⁹ Lucan also attributes *magi* to Egypt and speaks of hieroglyphs as a form of writing that preserves *magicae linguae*.¹⁰ Summarizing his basic conclusions, Rives writes, “Whatever the reason...the Latin adjective *magicus* quickly became disassociated from any particular reference to Persian ritual specialists, and acquired instead a more flexible and evocative semantic range. The noun *magus*, by contrast, remained largely restricted to its original technical meaning. By the second half of the first century, however, the very clear pattern in the use of these words begins to break down.”¹¹

The breakdown to which Rives refers is already evident in the aforementioned examples from Lucan, but is far clearer in Pliny’s encyclopedia of natural history, where the author writes extensively about the *magi* as well as their

examples of the noun *magus* in twelve different prose authors, as opposed to fourteen examples in six poets. In contrast, he finds forty-eight examples of the adjective *magicus* in fifteen poets, as opposed to six examples in four prose authors.

⁸ Rives, “*Magus* and its Cognates in Classical Latin,” 67-70.

⁹ Lucan, *Bell. Civ.* 6.430-432, 6.439-440, 6.577, 8.218-220.

¹⁰ Lucan, *Bell. Civ.* 3.222-324.

¹¹ Rives, “*Magus* and its Cognates in Classical Latin,” 71-71.

associated knowledge and skills. Although I will defer to Rives' discussion of specific passages, what is interesting about the empty lore (*genus vanissimum*) that Pliny attributes to the *magi* is that his contempt for it seems to stem from the fact that its epistemology hovers right on the edge of being 'religious' in our sense, as opposed to being firmly grounded in the form of 'scientific' inquiry that he himself conducts.¹² Even though many of the natural substances whose special properties he explicates are also used in the practices of the *magi*, Pliny is clear to portray their *ars* as the dark side of *medicina*, frivolous, fraudulent, and even insidious.¹³ He also links *magi* with a Latin word-group with similar connotations, that of *venenum* and *veneficium*, to produce a sense that is very different from anything we find in either prose or poetry before this time.

To explain this, Rives turns to a passage in Book 24 where Pliny claims that the first men in his part of the world to discuss the wonderful properties of 'magical' herbs were Pythagoras and Democritus, who followed the *magi*.¹⁴ He then proceeds to investigate several plants described by Pythagoras in a book that others attribute to the doctor Clemporus.¹⁵ As Matthew Dickie has argued, it seems that Pliny has adduced much of his information about the *magi* from pseudepigrapha that circulated under the names of Pythagoras and Democritus, texts that presupposed the tradition that the *magi* were barbarian philosophers

¹² Cf. Martin, *The Corinthian Body*.

¹³ Rives, "Magus and its Cognates in Classical Latin," 62-63.

¹⁴ Plin. *HN* 24.156; Rives, "Magus and its Cognates in Classical Latin," 64.

¹⁵ Plin. *HN* 24.156-159.

with whom Greek philosophers had studied, and presents the contents of such writings as their distinctive wisdom.¹⁶ The same sources seem to have viewed authority in the arcane use of plants, animal substances, and stones as a natural extension of the philosophical tradition inherited from the *magi*.

In his discussion of *magicae vanitates* in Book 30, Pliny himself notes that the *ars magica* began in Persia with Zoroaster but is associated with many other regions, persons, and wisdom traditions, including the wisdom of Greece by way of Orpheus, the wisdom of Judea by way of Moses, and the wisdom of Italy by way of Pythagoras.¹⁷ The same tradition combines elements from *medicina*, *religio*, and the *artes mathematicae* and has enabled a host of miraculous feats and foreign rites. In other words, magic practices are at once ethnically particular and universal on account of this complex genealogy, originating from the *magi* but extensible to all examples of foreign religion and particularly those linked with freelance experts.

Rives concludes that in Pliny's wake *magus* sheds its obvious ethnic frame of reference. Writers after him no longer restrict its meaning to Persian experts and the skills associated with this word-group become effectively limited to two areas: divination and expertise with spirits of the dead.¹⁸ In other words, when writers of the late-first and early-second centuries use *magus* and its cognates they

¹⁶ Dickie, *Magic and Magicians in the Greco-Roman World*, 173-183.

¹⁷ Plin. *HN* 30.1-18. Diogenes Laertius cites Clearchus of Soli on the point that both the Gymnosophists and the Judeans trace their origins to the *magoi* (*Pyth.* 1.9).

¹⁸ Rives, "Magus and its Cognates in Classical Latin," 66.

do not necessarily have Persia in mind, even if the practices these words call to mind bear some relationship to skills for which the Persian *magi* were once known. Thus when Tacitus accuses Libo Drusus of having resorted to the *magorum sacra* and Lolliia Paulina of having consulted *magi* about Claudius' marriage, he uses the word to denote a freelance expert in some form of divination, one that is distinct from the methods of the Chaldeans who also appear in both episodes.¹⁹ The word-group is no longer ethnically coded, even if its attendant forms of religious expertise are still faithful to that usage.

In view of larger patterns in the religion of freelance experts at Rome, Rives' study is of further interest. He proposes that the same pattern of movement away from ethnically coded experts and forms of expertise toward more skill-based usages occurred for two additional examples: the Greek *goēs*, which was recast in Latin as the figures and practices *veneficus/veneficium* and *maleficus/maleficium*, and the *Chaldaeus*, whose ethnically coded form of expertise seems both to have waned and also to have fractured into two new kinds of experts, the *astrologus* and the *mathematicus*, whose purviews were the same but who lacked any ethnic basis.²⁰ Although it would require a detailed study, I tentatively suggest that the same period might witness a similar shift away from the strong ethnic connotations of *ioudaios* (Ἰουδαῖος) and *ioudaikos* (Ἰουδαϊκός) to forms of religion

¹⁹ Tac. *Ann.* 2.27.2, 12.22.1; Rives, "Magus and its Cognates in Classical Latin," 67.

²⁰ Rives, "Magus and its Cognates in Classical Latin," 75. Concerning the waning ethnic connotations of *Chaldaeus*, Rawson notes, "[When] Cicero describes Tarutius as skilled in the theories of the Chaldaeans, the word now had little racial significance, and astrology was clearly often mediated by Egypt (*Intellectual Life in the Late Roman Republic*, 308)."

that involved writings, techniques, and practices for which Judeans were once notable, but whose ethnic origins are either deemphasized or obscure.²¹

Removed from their original ethnic contexts, any of these roles and skills might recombine in novel ways, even with another ethnic frame of reference. Josephus relates a peculiar story in which the Roman procurator Felix employed a Cyprian Judean named Atomos to pose as a *magos* in order to persuade Drusilla, the sister of Agrippa II, to leave her husband for him.²² It is unclear whether Josephus is using *magos* pejoratively or simply to mean that Atomos encouraged Drusilla by performing some form of divination. Acts also mentions a Judean *magos*, Bar-Jesus or Elymas, the resident expert of the Roman governor of Cyprus, Sergius Paulus, whom the author describes as an intelligent man. Here *magos* is certainly intended to discredit Elymas, who opposes the teachings of Paul, Barnabus, and John.²³ The episode is additionally revealing insofar as it implies that Sergius Paulus was receptive to the apostles on account of an existing interest in Judean practices, evident from the fact that he already has one Judean expert in his employ. As a rival of the apostles Elymas might be a *magos* and ‘pseudo-prophet’ (ψευδοπροφήτης), but in view of what we know of Roman aristocratic

²¹ For example, in the practices of Marcion, who deliberately stripped biblical citations and other conspicuously Judean elements from the letters of Paul and his interpretation of Jesus Christ. Read in this way, early Christian writings might furnish an intimate sightline into the sort of ethnic departicularization that Rives observes.

²² Joseph. *AJ* 20.142. I thank Ross Kraemer for the latter reference. Also noted by Rives, “*Magus* and its Cognates in Classical Latin,” 76 n. 55.

²³ Acts 13:6-8.

habits it is more likely that someone in this role would have been an authority on some intellectualizing form of Judean religion.²⁴

Another point to emerge from Rives' study is that any given area of expertise, whether it is ethnically delimited or skill-based, might contain phenomena ranging from highly intellectualizing forms of religion to ones lacking in any intellectual practices. For instance, in addition to skills in divination and necromancy, which might but need not have had an intellectual basis, many references to *magi* continue to characterize their brand of knowledge as an esoteric philosophy of sorts. As we saw in chapter two, Suetonius claims that Nero was a great patron of *magi* and that a *magus* named Tiridates had traveled to Rome in order to initiate the emperor into their mysteries and to instruct him in their wisdom.²⁵ Oddly, Philostratus seems to contradict that report when he claims that Nero was antagonistic to philosophy because he suspected its devotees of being addicted to divination (μαντική), and of being diviners in disguise (ὡς μαντικῆς σχῆμα).²⁶ Nevertheless, he makes much of Apollonius of Tyana's pedigree as one who both studied with *magi* and aligned himself with the teachings of Pythagoras.

²⁴ As I suggested in the introduction, the freelance experts that accompanied Roman aristocrats often infused their religious offerings with philosophical concepts and other intellectual features. Ripat, "Expelling Misconceptions," 115-154, esp. 125. For examples of intellectualizing experts in Judean religion, see chapters three and five.

²⁵ Plin. *HN* 30.14-17; Suet. *Ner.* 13.1.1, 30.2.2; Smith, *Jesus the Magician*, 71-73; Francis, *Subversive Virtue*, 96.

²⁶ Philost. *VA* 4.35; Francis, *Subversive Virtue*, 9.

This particular juncture of Pythagorean philosophy and the wisdom of the *magi* crops up time and again throughout the period of our study. P. Nigidius Figulus, who, as we saw earlier, was himself remembered as a *pythagoricus et magus*, seems to have held the *magi* in high regard.²⁷ Among his numerous writings about religious subjects, at least one presented a cosmology that he attributed to the *magi* and Pliny quotes him several times as his source for the content of their teachings.²⁸ Nigidius is not the only Republican intellectual with Pythagorean leanings. Pliny reports that Varro, who died in 27 BCE, was buried in a clay coffin with leaves of myrtle, olive, and black poplar, in the Pythagorean manner (*Pythagorio modo*).²⁹ The *Aemilii*, one of Rome's most prestigious and ancient patrician families, even claimed Pythagoras as their direct ancestor by way of his son Mamercus, the progenitor of the *gens*, who received the surname 'Aemilius' for the grace and charm of his discourse.³⁰

The involvement of these aristocrats with certain Pythagorean practices is in keeping with a broader trend among Roman elites of the first centuries BCE and CE to claim Pythagorean affiliation, although the implication was not always favorable. In a scathing speech against Publius Vatinius, Cicero accuses him of putting forth the name of that most learned man to mask savage and barbarian

²⁷ Rawson, *Intellectual Life in the Late Roman Republic*, 182 and 292.

²⁸ Rawson, *Intellectual Life in the Late Roman Republic*, 311.

²⁹ Plin. *HN* 35.160.

³⁰ Plut. *Vit. Aem.* 2.1-2. Commentators suggest that Plutarch is equating the Latin name Aemilius with the Greek word αἰμύλιος ('winning').

habits: performing unheard of and impious sacrifices, evoking the spirits of the shades below, and making offerings of the entrails of murdered boys to the *Di Manes*.³¹ Here the accusation of being a ‘Pythagorean’ is clearly redolent of qualities imputed to the *magi*. An ancient commentator on *In Vatinius* attributes Cicero’s comments to spite shared by certain detractors for the less than commendable people who had gathered around Nigidius, although they wished to think of themselves as followers of Pythagoras (*Pythagorae sectatores*).³² Elsewhere he alleges with a markedly negative tone that Ap. Claudius Pulcher, in whose writings Cicero also detects Pythagorean influence, was in the habit of consulting necromancers.³³ Quintus thus qualifies his preceding defense of divination with the following caveat: “I assert, however, in conclusion, that I recognize neither the diviner of lots (*sortilegus*), nor those who prophesy for the sake of profit (*eos qui quaestus causa hariolentur*), nor even necromancers (*psychomantia*), the ones whom your friend Appius made it a practice to consult...for they are not diviners either by knowledge or by skill (*non enim sunt ei aut scientia aut arte divini*).”³⁴

There are several additional examples of Pythagorean intrigue at Rome, many of which shed light onto why people were attracted to wisdom and practices

³¹ Cic. *In Vat.* 6.14; Rawson, *Intellectual Life in the Late Roman Republic*, 310 and n. 62.

³² *Schol Bob. in Vat.* 14: *Hoc ipsum plenissime purgavit atque defendit et non sine laude praetulit in ea oratione quam pro ipso Vatinio scribere adgressus est fuit autem illis temporibus Nigidius quidam vir doctrina et eruditione studiorum praestantissimus ad quem plurimi conveniebant haec ab obtreptatoribus veluti actio minus probabilis iactitabatur quamvis ipsi Pythagorae sectatores existimari vellent.*

³³ Rawson, *Intellectual Life in the Late Roman Republic*, 292.

³⁴ Cic. *Div.* 1.132-135, 140. See the discussion of the passage see Ripat, “Expelling Misconceptions: Astrologers at Rome,” 123-124.

associated with that particular philosopher. Provided that Pythagoras' exilic school had formed on the Italian peninsula and his teachings were known among other philosophers as 'the Italian philosophy', his prestige at Rome was in some sense inevitable.³⁵ According to Pliny, at the beginning of the third century a statue of Pythagoras was erected in the Roman forum in response to a Delphic oracle regarding the Third Samnite War (298-290 BCE) and there it remained until Sulla built the new *curia* on that spot.³⁶ As I mentioned briefly in chapter two, Livy relates a curious episode from 181 BCE involving the discovery at the foot of the Janiculum of two inscribed stone chests, one purporting to contain the body of Numa and the other his books.³⁷ The first chest was found to be empty, but the second yielded two sets of seven books, one written in Latin and the other in Greek. Whereas the Latin books dealt with pontifical law, the Greek set contained a wisdom program that might have been current in Numa's own day.³⁸ Livy then notes, "Valerius Antias adds that they were Pythagorean, confirmation of the common belief, which says that Numa was a pupil of Pythagoras."³⁹ The books

³⁵ Diog. Laert. 8.1.1.

³⁶ Plin. *HN* 34.26; Charles H. Kahn, *Pythagoras and the Pythagoreans: A Brief History* (Indianapolis and Cambridge: Hackett Publishing, 2001).

³⁷ Livy, 40.29.3-14; Andreas Willi, "Numa's Dangerous Books: The Exegetical History of a Roman Forgery," *Museum Helveticum* 55 (1998): 139-172.

³⁸ Livy, 40.29.7.2: *de disciplina sapientiae quae illius aetatis esse potuit*.

³⁹ On the connection between Numa and Pythagoras, see Gruen, *Studies in Greek Culture and Roman Policy*, 159. Gruen notes that a number of ancient writers disputed this claim. Cicero writes, "Indeed, I think it was through [our countrymen's] admiration for Pythagoras, that Numa the king was reputed a Pythagorean by posterity; for, knowing the system and institutions of Pythagoras, and having received from their ancestors the renown of that king for wisdom and integrity, but

circulate for a time and generate considerable interest until the *praetor urbanus* burns them publicly for their perceived potential to undermine *religio* (*dissoluendarum religionum esse*).⁴⁰

Even though the tradition linking Numa to Pythagoras was refuted by several ancient writers, including Cicero, who is nevertheless sympathetic to the reasoning behind the assumption, as Elizabeth Rawson notes, “It [took] probably till the end of the second century [CE] to kill the notion that King Numa had been a pupil of Pythagoras, who lived long after the date ascribed to the Roman king.”⁴¹ Tellingly, in his biography of Numa, Plutarch retains the parallels and similarities that the king shared with Pythagoras.⁴² Nor was Pythagorean lore limited to this one story. As I mentioned in the introductory chapter, King Juba of Mauretania was a great collector of Pythagorean pseudepigrapha that he would procure at Rome and it seems that Pliny drew from comparable materials when he ascribed

ignorant, through distance, of ages and times, they inferred that, because he excelled in wisdom, he was the disciple of Pythagoras” (trans. G. A. Otis; *Tusc.* 4.1.2-3). Dionysius of Halicarnassus also notes the discrepancy in the dates for Numa and Pythagoras, and adds that Croton did not even exist in Numa’s day (*Ant. Rom.* 2.59.1-2). See also Cic. *Rep.* 2.28-29; Livy, 1.18.1-3; Ov. *Fast.* 3.151-154.

⁴⁰ McRae, “The Books of Numa”; Clarence A. Forbes, “Books for Burning,” *TAPA* 67 (1936): 114-125.

⁴¹ Rawson, *Intellectual Life in the Late Roman Republic*, 245-246.

⁴² Plut. *Num.* 8.2-8, 22.34. Gruen summarizes, “Numa and Pythagoras shared an interest in religious institutions; the Pythagoreans placed a premium on silence, Numa gives high honors to Musa Tacita; Numa’s ban on images of the gods corresponded to Pythagorean belief that the supreme deity could not be represented; both sage and ruler discouraged blood sacrifices; Numa’s circular temple to Vesta enclosing the sacred fire parallels Pythagorean belief that the universe revolves around a central fire. Never mind that these comparisons are rather far fetched or erroneous. They reveal the lengths to which Plutarch’s sources went in order to maintain some connection between the revered Roman king and the teachings of a Greek philosophical sect” (*Studies in Greek Culture and Roman Policy*, 160).

certain teachings and practices to the philosopher.⁴³ Cicero even writes of visiting the house where Pythagoras died on a visit to Metapontum.⁴⁴

Practical considerations prevent me from surveying the technical scholarship on Pythagoras' philosophy or addressing the controversial matter of whether or not there was continuity between fifth-century Pythagoreans and the neo-Pythagoreans of the late Hellenistic and Roman periods. But a handful of premises about Pythagorean practices appear often enough in our Roman sources to suspect that they were sufficiently basic and widespread. A number of writers suggest that the Pythagoreans were known for having a special interest in the various kinds of divine beings, not only gods, but also heroes, souls of the dead, and, especially, *daimones*, whom they theorized as a distinct class of beings who were instrumental in mediating between gods and humans.⁴⁵ Pythagoras was also known to have emphasized the immortality of human souls, and is credited with theories about their post-mortem transmigration and reincarnation (μετεμψύχωσις). While he was not the only ancient philosopher associated with

⁴³ Kahn, *Pythagoras and the Pythagoreans*, 90.

⁴⁴ Cic. *Fin.* 5.2; Kahn, *Pythagoras and the Pythagoreans*, 89.

⁴⁵ Macris, "Pythagoras," 32-33. In his writing *Against the Mathematici*, Sextus Empiricus claims that the followers of Pythagoras and Empedocles also held a doctrine of πνεῦμα in which it was conceived as a single breath pervading the entire universe, uniting humans with gods, with one another, and even with irrational animals, an interesting *comparandum* for my discussion in the following chapter (*Math.* 9.127).

such ideas, many writers maintained that these were Pythagoras' original philosophical insights.⁴⁶

I am not interested in the extent to which these concepts reflect a historically plausible or faithful understanding of Pythagorean philosophy. Rather, in much the same way that people in the first century were broadly acquainted with basic characteristics of 'Judean religion' or 'Egyptian religion', regardless of how faithful their expectations were to the religion of actual Judeans and Egyptians, I am interested in how certain understandings of Pythagoras influenced first-century figures and social formations who purported to take up some aspect of his persona, wisdom, skills, or specific teachings.

We know of at least one man named Quintus Sextius who, in the first century BCE, formed a philosophical school at Rome that had ostensible continuities with Pythagorean teachings.⁴⁷ Our only evidence for the group survives in the writings of Seneca, whose own teacher Sotion had been a member. Although the doctrines of the Sextians overlapped substantially with those of the Stoics, they adopted at least two practices with distinctively Pythagorean associations: they strictly adhered to a vegetarian diet and they performed daily self-evaluations in order to take stock of their moral progress. As Seneca describes the latter, a Sextian would ask himself, 'What bad habit have you cured today?'

⁴⁶ E.g., Porph. *Pyth.* 19.8-14. Plato and the Academy incorporated and developed all of these elements. See Walter Burkert, *Lore and Science in Ancient Pythagoreanism* (trans. Edwin L. Minar, Jr.; Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1972).

⁴⁷ The teachings are ostensibly those of Pythagoras, but, again, we can only reliably know what practices were *said* to originate with him during this period.

‘What temptation have you resisted?’ ‘In what respects are you better?’⁴⁸ Cicero also mentions the habit of self-evaluation, which he calls a *Pythagoriorum mos* and regards as a mnemonic exercise.⁴⁹

Among later Greek philosophers who claimed Pythagorean influence, those whose teachings were rooted in mathematical theories attributed to him were occasionally referred to as *mathēmatikoi* (μαθηματικοί), as opposed to those who were called *akousmatikoi* (ἀκουσματικοί) for purporting to follow his oral teachings.⁵⁰ *Mathēmatikos* (μαθηματικός) was also a term for a rank of Pythagorean initiate or student. While it is usually presumed that *mathematicus* is a straightforward synonym for *Chaldaeus* and *astrologus*, one wonders whether at least some of its uses are not, in fact, meant to differentiate a set of ‘astrologers’ whose techniques were likewise alleged to have a basis in Pythagorean theories or forms of divination involving numbers. The first occurrence of the word in Latin appears at the same time as *magus*, also in the writings of Cicero, and coincides with the spike of interest in Pythagorean teachings and practices among Roman aristocrats.

Witnessing an even fuller set of characteristics, a letter attributed to the first-century CE Apollonius of Tyana claims that one receives the following benefits from keeping company with a Pythagorean:

⁴⁸ Kahn, *Pythagoras and the Pythagoreans*, 91.

⁴⁹ Cic. *Senec.* 38; Khan, *Pythagoras and the Pythagoreans*, 92.

⁵⁰ Burkert, *Lore and Science in Ancient Pythagoreanism*, 192-208; Macris, “Pythagoras,” 26.

[K]nowledge about making laws, geometry, astronomy, arithmetic, harmonics, music, medicine, and all forms of godly divination. Then there are the more noble benefits: highmindedness, magnanimity, nobility, tranquility, piety, true understanding of rather than mere opinion about the gods, knowledge about *daimones* rather than mere belief in them, friendship with both gods and *daimones*, self-sufficiency, zeal, frugality, limitation of one's needs, keenness of perception, agility, easiness of breathing, a good complexion, health, fortitude, and immortality.⁵¹

In addition to a number of advantages pertaining to character and health, the author promises that Pythagoras imparts divinatory expertise as well as true knowledge about and interaction with gods and *daimones*.⁵²

Interactions with *daimones* also appear in contexts where Pythagorean influence is not explicit but might be presumed. For instance, one of the witnesses against Libo Drusus was a man named Junius, whom he had solicited to bring forth infernal spirits with incantations.⁵³ I previously noted a story about Tiberius in Cassius Dio wherein the emperor grew so proficient in divination through his studies with Thrasyllus that, when bidden in a dream to give money to a certain man, he was able to recognize that a *daimōn* had deceitfully been summoned to him and put the one who sent it to death.⁵⁴ Even though these practices were liable to competing 'traditions', the specter of Pythagoras often lurks in the

⁵¹ *Ep. Apoll.* 52 [*The Letters of Apollonius of Tyana: A Critical Text with Prolegomena, Translation and Commentary*. Mnemosyne Supplement 56 (trans. Robert J. Penella; Leiden: Brill, 1979)]. The dating and authorship of the letters is controversial and summarized in the introduction to the same volume.

⁵² Cf. 1 Cor 12:1-11 and chapter five.

⁵³ Tac. *Ann.* 2.28.10-11: *donec Iunius quidam temptatus ut infernas umbras carminibus eliceret.*

⁵⁴ Cass. Dio, 15.7.

background of such expertise. While Thrasyllus is remembered foremost as an astrologer, Diogenes Laertius and Porphyry each describe him as a philosopher committed to the principles of Pythagoras and Plato, which he set out in writing.⁵⁵ Likewise, a Pythagorean element characterizes many of the philosophers known as the Middle Platonists, some of whom even called themselves Pythagoreans.⁵⁶

Another application of Pythagorean wisdom is manifest in claims made concerning the rebirth of souls, namely, that people in the first centuries had inherited the souls of notable figures from the past, including Pythagoras' own. A freelance expert named Anaxilaus of Larissa, who is described like Nigidius Figulus as a *Pythagoricus et magus*, was expelled from Rome by Augustus in 28 BCE after alleging to possess the soul of Pythagoras and performing conjuring feats at elite banquets.⁵⁷ The same man either authored or lent his name to a collection of spells that Irenaeus cites when he accuses Marcus, a student of Valentinus and the leader of the eponymous Marcosians, of consulting the *Paignia* of Anaxilaus for tricks that would impress his followers.⁵⁸ The story is probably a lie concocted by Irenaeus to strengthen his accusation of heresy, but it is no less valuable as a witness to the existence of such writings. Pliny, too, describes several conjuring

⁵⁵ Porph. *Plot.* 20.

⁵⁶ For example, the Platonic philosopher Humenius thus referred to himself. See John Dillon, *The Middle Platonists: 80 B.C. to A.D. 220* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1996).

⁵⁷ Plin. *HN* 19.4.23-25, 28.49.177-179, 32.52, 35.50; Iren. *Haer.* 1.13; Euseb. *Chron.* 188.

⁵⁸ Iren. *Haer.* 1.7.1-2. On of the tricks that he accuses Marcus of having performed was making the cups over which he was praying appear red or purple, as though Christ had entered them in response to his entreaty.

methods employed by Anaxilaus, which suggests that a version of the writing that Irenaeus has in mind may have been circulating at Rome for some time.⁵⁹

Although we cannot know whether laying claim to the soul of Pythagoras was a common authorizing strategy among freelance experts, Lucian would have us believe so. Alexander stakes his legitimacy in a number of ways, one of which is by intimating that *he* is the philosopher's reincarnation. As Lucian narrates,

Often in the course of his torchlight ceremonies and the gambols of the mysteries his thigh was bared purposely and showed golden. No doubt gilded leather had been put about it, which gleamed in the light.... There was once a discussion between two of our learned idiots in regard to him, whether he had the soul of Pythagoras, on account of the golden thigh, or some other soul akin to it. They referred the question to Alexander himself, and King Glycon resolved their doubt with an oracle: "Pythagoras' soul now wanes and other times waxes; his, with prophecy gifted, from Zeus' mind takes its issue, sent by the father to aid good men in the stress of the conflict; then it to Zeus will return, by Zeus' own thunderbolt smitten."⁶⁰

Although the ruse of the golden thigh is meant to punctuate Alexander's absurdity, all the more so since, despite an oracle promising that he would live for one hundred and fifty years and then die by a stroke of lightening, the prophet dies

⁵⁹ So thinks Dickie, *Magic and Magicians in the Greco-Roman World*, 173. While this author has a number of useful things to say about Anaxilaus, I disagree with his characterization of Anaxilaus' Pythagoreanism as philosophy leaning toward the occult. In Pliny's various references to Anaxilaus we learn of different methods he employs or teachings that he imparts: wrapping a band of linen around a tree before it is felled in order to release its soul, igniting the excretion of mares on lamp wicks to produce magical appearances of horses' heads, pouring cuttlefish ink into a lamp so that its light utterly vanishes and people appear as black as Ethiopians, and finally, making a sport of passing a wine cup filled with heated sulphur around dinner parties, whose reflection as it flared up cast a deathly pallor on the face of the one holding it.

⁶⁰ Lucian, *Alex.* 40 (trans. A. M. Harmon; LCL). The detail about the golden thigh is rooted in a popular story about Pythagoras having revealed his own golden thigh to Abaris the Hyperborean as proof that he was the very Hyperborean Apollo whom Abaris served. E.g., Porph. *Pyth.* 28, where the author also notes that the story's popularity.

instead from an infection caused by his thigh apparatus, taken with the detail about Anaxilaus, there is reason to suspect Lucian is not making it up entirely. It would appear that either self-authorized experts themselves or people impressed by their abilities located the source of their power in the idea of *metempsychosis* (μετεμψύχωσις); they were not merely inspired by Pythagoras, but might actually be him.⁶¹ Diogenes Laertius expands the concept further, noting that Pythagoras had received the gift of retaining memories in his soul, which the author then traces through several reincarnations in his followers, each of whom could recall not only Pythagoras' own experiences, but also all the ones that his soul had subsequently amassed in its wanderings.⁶²

MacMullen makes note of a comparable instance of authorization, this one involving the late first-century CE expert Julianus and the soul of Plato.⁶³ Our knowledge of Julianus and his son, also named Julianus, is reconstructed from scant references. Entries in the Suda describe the elder as a Chaldean (Χαλδαῖος) and philosopher (φιλόσοφος) and the younger as a theurgist (τοῦ κληθέντος

⁶¹ In this I am reminded of the speculation about the identity of Jesus that runs throughout the Gospel of Mark, picked up by the authors of Matthew and Luke, where he is variously thought to be the Messiah, John the Baptist raised from the dead, Elijah, and a prophet, like the prophets of old (Mk 6:14-16).

⁶² Diog. Laert. 8.4-5.

⁶³ MacMullen, *Enemies of the Roman Order*, 106: "Somewhat later, the elder Julianus, known in Rome as a 'Chaldaean philosopher' and author of a work on [*daimones*] in four books, turned his lore to the benefit of his son of the same name. He "demanded for him an archangel's soul," and "conjoined him, when he was born [under Trajan], to all the gods and to the soul of Plato that abides with Apollo and Hermes." For the supporting references, E. R. Dodds, "Theurgy and its Relationship to Neoplatonism," *JRS* 37 (1947): 55-69, 56 n. 20.

θεουργοῦ Ἰουλιανοῦ), implying that they were known for intellectual prowess.⁶⁴

Other writers who mention the *Julanii* portray them as formidable religious experts with the ability to command souls at will, while a scholiast on Lucian credits the son with having compiled the Chaldean oracles, a collection of hexameter verses purported to have been handed down to him directly by the gods (θεοπαράδοτα).⁶⁵ It is in the context of their transmission that Plato might have played a role; the eleventh-century writer Michael Psellus, who wrote several commentaries on the *Oracles*, suggests that it was with the son functioning as a medium that the elder Julianus was able to extract oracles from that philosopher's soul.⁶⁶

The above stories reveal less about the historical person of Pythagoras or his philosophical doctrines than they do about how his status at Rome and certain concepts and traditions associated with him were germane to religious entrepreneurship.⁶⁷ Indeed, it might have been the very absence of reliable

⁶⁴ Suda, 433 and 434.

⁶⁵ Namely, the fifth-century Neoplatonist philosopher Proclus, Proclus' own biographer, Marinus, and Michael Psellos. See Dodds, "Theurgy and its Relationship to Neoplatonism," 56. For the scholia: *ad Philops.* 12; L. G. Westerink, "Proclus, Procopius, Psellus," *Mnemosyne* 10 (1942): 275-280, 276.

⁶⁶ Henri-Dominique Saffrey, "Les Néoplatoniciens et les Oracles Chaldaïques," *REA* 26 (1981): 209-225, cit. 225; Ruth Dorothy Majercik, *The Chaldean Oracles: Text, Translation, and Commentary* (Leiden and New York: Brill, 1989), 2. See also Philip Merlan, "Religion and Philosophy from Plato's *Phaedo* to the Chaldean Oracles," *JHPh* 1 (1963): 163-176. I thank Sarah Iles Johnston for calling my attention to this reference.

⁶⁷ Cf. MacMullen, *Enemies of the Roman Order*, 100: "Later followers indeed studied [Pythagoras'] philosophy, but turned more and more to the part of his heritage that could be called religion, or even magic. He was accordingly described as being wise through some supernatural receptivity; receptive by the exercise of ascetic piety; pious by the denial of the body toward the liberation of the spirit for travels into new and wider realms of truth. Neopythagorean beliefs in the soul as an

information about Pythagoras that made him so apt a mannequin upon which to drape innovative religious programs and practices.⁶⁸ The same considerations of vacancy and renown made him an important genealogical link for the myriad wisdom traditions and specialties observable at Rome. Pythagoras was the father of 'Italian philosophy', yet his intellectual pedigree was all encompassing. In this vein, Porphyry writes,

As to [Pythagoras'] knowledge, it is said that he learned the mathematical sciences from the Egyptians, Chaldeans, and Phoenicians; for of old the Egyptians excelled in geometry, the Phoenicians in numbers and proportions, and the Chaldeans in astrological theorems, divine rites, and worship of the gods. Other secrets concerning the course of life he received and learned from the *magi*.... Then Pythagoras visited the Egyptians, the Arabians, the Chaldeans, and the Hebrews, from whom he acquired expertise in the interpretation of dreams, and he was the first to use frankincense in the worship of divinities.⁶⁹

In view of the arguments of the preceding chapter, we should recall that not only Pythagoras, but also distant figures such as Orpheus and Moses, and perhaps even

entity capable of independent motion, of action upon the physical world, and of response to invocation in turn contributed to a literature increasingly popular in the second, third, and fourth centuries."

⁶⁸ It was widely known that Pythagoras himself never committed any of his teachings to writing, nor did any direct disciple record his teachings or pen his biography. Diogenes Laertius admits that there are some who insist that Pythagoras left no writings whatsoever, but finds the assertion absurd and attributes to him three books (8.5-6). See Macris, "Pythagoras," 27; Francis, *Subversive Virtue*, 106: "Pythagoras, in contrast to his philosophical contemporaries, lived on more as a personality and legend, and as a literary ideal, rather than in written doctrine and teaching. He was the exemplar, living in the literature of the time, of the type of personal, charismatic leader Peregrinus himself endeavored to become."

⁶⁹ Porph. VP 6, 11 [trans. Kenneth Sylvan Guthrie; *The Pythagorean Sourcebook and Library: An Anthology of Ancient Writings Which Relate to Pythagoras and Pythagorean Philosophy* (ed. David Fideler; Grand Rapids: Phanes, 1988)]. Porphyry also depicts Pythagoras as a philosopher whose audiences included not only men, but also a number of women, a point that he makes on more than one occasion (*Pyth.* 18-19).

Plato, might be enlisted as precedents for the authority and specific practices of contemporary freelance experts.⁷⁰ While any of those figures might be credited with multiple skills, the fact that all three drew their fame from having transmitted divinely inspired writings, laws, or teachings made them especially appropriate figureheads for intellectualizing experts and forms of religion.

Pythagorean influence is also discernible in the persona and practices of Apollonius of Tyana.⁷¹ Like many of the freelance experts we have encountered, Apollonius exhibits a blend of specialties that include but are not limited to divination, self-mastery techniques, and knowledge of divine mysteries, amassed from time spent with Babylonian *magoi*, Indian Brahmins, Hyrcanians, the *gymnoi* (γυμνοί) of Egypt, and priests of famous Greek sanctuaries. He also penned four books *On the Prophecies of the Stars*.⁷² He captivates his patron with descriptions of ancient customs and predictions about the Empire that have been revealed to him by the gods, all the while styling his clothing, grooming habits, and ascetic practices after Pythagoras, whose doctrines and example he strived to emulate.⁷³

⁷⁰ Graf and Iles Johnston, *Ritual Texts for the Afterlife*, 165-184; Smith, *Jesus the Magician*, 114.

⁷¹ For recent and rich discussions of Apollonius of Tyana, see Grant Parker, *The Making of Roman India* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 288-307; Christopher Jones, "Apollonius of Tyana, Hero and Holy Man," in *Philostratus's Heroikos: Religion and Cultural Identity in the Third Century C.E.* (ed. Ellen Bradshaw Aitken and Jennifer K. Berenson Maclean; Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2004), 75-84.

⁷² Philostr. VA 3.41.

⁷³ Philostr. VA 1.32.4; 5. 37. 3; Francis, *Subversive Virtue*, 105: "Apollonius attributes a number of his other ascetical practices to Pythagoras (1.32). The eating of meat not only necessitates shedding the blood of animals but it is also unclear and dulls the mind (1.8). The wearing of linen clothes is also an abstention from butchered animals or their refuse (1.8; 6.11) and is particularly pure and

Yet there is very little in the *Vita Apollonii* on the specific intellectual content of this Pythagorean legacy. Rather, the concern is with the trappings of Pythagoras, whose well-known asceticism legitimates Apollonius' manner of life.

Not surprisingly, Philostratus takes pains to deny that Apollonius was a *magos* and instead places him in a tradition of eminent philosophers such as Empedocles, Pythagoras, Democritus, and Plato, who gained inspiration from *magoi* without being seduced by their art.⁷⁴ The skills and knowledge he possessed, the author insists, were similarly indebted to a clairvoyance stemming *not* from magical arts, but from divine revelation. His intimate relationship with the Flavian emperors does not, however, spare Apollonius from being brought to trial under Domitian on charges of 'magic' (γοητεία). According to Philostratus, the case against him involves his manner of dress, a rumor that he is being called a god, a plague that he forecasted in Ephesus, and an allegation that he sacrificed a boy in order to divine Nerva's prospects of succession.⁷⁵

What little we know of the historical figure of Apollonius points to his participation in the first-century phenomenon of freelance expertise, so it is striking how neatly these charges align with the sort of allegations that this class of

appropriate for discourse, prayer, and sacrifice (8.7.5). Letting one's hair grow and not wearing shoes complete the list."

⁷⁴ Philostr. VA 1.2; 5.12.3; 5.25.1; cf. 8.7.2, 9. Apollonius is initiated into the Eleusinian mysteries at Athens as well as at Epidauros, and makes a habit of introducing religious reform into the great sanctuaries of Greece and Egypt. On the disavowal of 'magic', Francis writes, "Goetes... say that they alter fate by resorting to torturing the spirits of the dead, or by barbaric sacrifices, or by certain charms and ointments...while Apollonius obeyed the decrees of the Fates and foretold only those things that were destined to happen; and he foreknew these things not by *goeteia*, but from what the gods revealed" (*Subversive Virtue*, 97).

⁷⁵ Philostr. VA 4.43, 7.11-15; Francis, *Subversive Virtue*, 127.

actors and activity attracted. Interestingly, the defense that Philostratus ascribes to him was to draw attention to the dearth of evidence showing that he stood to gain from any of his activities, a *sine qua non* for the charge. As Matthew Dickie elaborates, “Apollonius goes on to argue in essence that sorcery, since it is illegal and brings in its train lawsuits, is dangerous and that no one would engage in it unless there was some financial advantage attached.”⁷⁶ In so many words, without proof of interest and profit there can be no allegation of γοητεία. The same logic arises elsewhere in the *Vita*, when, as we saw in chapter three, Apollonius confronts ‘Egyptians’ and ‘Chaldeans’ who had traveled to a region devastated by a series of earthquakes to perform placatory sacrifices for profit. Apollonius drove them away for enriching themselves from the hardships of others and then himself supplicated the relevant deity at no great expense.⁷⁷ While the *Vita* may well reflect third-century practices and interests, Philostratus’ representation is consistent with first-century evidence for the religion of freelance experts.

Apollonius brings us full circle to the complicated relationship between intellectual practices, religious expertise, and allegations of ‘magic’ in the post-Persian usage of *magus* and its cognates. While I suspect that Rives is largely correct to identify divination and necromancy as the principle activities associated with this word-group, it would appear that the term also retained a certain connotation of philosophical wisdom, regardless of whether this was construed

⁷⁶ Philostr. VA 8.7; Dickie, *Magic and Magicians in the Greco-Roman World*, 149.

⁷⁷ Philostr. VA 6.41; *Ep. Apoll.* 35, 48; Dickie, *Magic and Magicians in the Greco-Roman World*, 159.

positively or negatively. In one of the letters attributed to him, Apollonius remarks, “You think that you should call those philosophers who follow Pythagoras *magoi*, and likewise, I suppose, those who follow Orpheus. But I think that even those who follow Zeus should be called *magoi*, provided they are godly and just.”⁷⁸ To the same person he explains, “The Persians call godly men *magoi*. Thus a *magos* is a worshipper of the gods or one who is of a godly nature.”⁷⁹

The fullest explication of these overlapping domains arises in the *Apologia* of Apuleius, who was himself accused of being a *magus et veneficus* and brought to trial for committing offenses that were then associated with *magi*.⁸⁰ Over the course of the defense we learn of the details of these allegations: Apuleius is said to have enlisted *magica malificia* to convince a wealthy widow to marry him, he allegedly caused one of his slave boys to collapse, perhaps in some sort of trance, he sacrificed some birds at night, and he was observed reciting *carmina* and engaging in *venena*, the latter of which involved an unusual species of fish.⁸¹

Apuleius begins his rebuttal with a textured definition of *magus*, whose primary meaning is a sort of Persian priest who, by way of Zoroaster, possesses proper knowledge about rites and other matters concerning the gods.⁸² Yet his

⁷⁸ *Ep. Apoll.* 16.

⁷⁹ *Ep. Apoll.* 17.

⁸⁰ Rives, “*Magus* and its Cognates in Classical Latin,” 55.

⁸¹ *Apul. Apol.* 78.2, 57.2-3, 84.3, 90.1, 29-24.

⁸² *Apul. Apol.* 25.9: *Persarum lingua magus est qui nostra sacerdos.* 26.1-2: *Auditisne magian qui eam temere accusatis artem esse dis immortalibus acceptam colendi eos ac venerandi pergnaram piam*

accusers seem to understand *magus* in its less specialized sense, as a general designation for a person who, through immediate communication with the immortal gods, is able to achieve any desired object or outcome.⁸³ Furthermore, according to Apuleius, all of these characteristics are common reproaches made against philosophers and natural scientists through the errors of the ignorant.⁸⁴ The defense becomes all the more interesting when Apuleius professes to have been initiated into many mystery cults and undergone manifold rites and ceremonies in his ardor for truth and sense of duty towards the gods.⁸⁵

As Rives summarizes the excursus, “[Apuleius] indicates that in popular usage the word *magus* and its cognates implied the use of secret and arcane rituals, chants, and substances, the knowledge of exotic oriental traditions, and the invocation of superhuman powers, especially those of the underworld, in order to achieve specific ends, such as inspiring sexual desire in another person or gaining access to otherwise inaccessible information.”⁸⁶ What is unusual about the text, given its second-century date, is that Apuleius is able to draw upon the full range of connotations that the *magus* word-group had carried in the preceding centuries. In other words, even if its ethnically restricted meaning had waned in the latter

scilicet et divini scientem iam inde a Zoroastre et Oromaze auctoribus suis nobilem caelitem antistiam.

⁸³ Apul. *Apol.* 26.6: *more vulgari eum isti proprie magum existimant qui communione loquendi cum deis immortalibus ad omnia quae velit incredibili quadam vi cantaminum polleat.*

⁸⁴ Apul. *Apol.* 25.

⁸⁵ Apul. *Apol.* 53-56. See the discussion of these passages in chapter one.

⁸⁶ Rives, “*Magus* and its Cognates in Classical Latin,” 57.

part of the first century CE, at least some people, mainly writer-intellectuals, were aware of the Persian origins of the *magus* and the special brand of religious wisdom that this figure once conveyed.

Within the same decades that the *magus* word-group began to acquire a broader, less ethnically particular semantic range we begin to find our earliest Roman evidence for another Persian-themed phenomenon, namely, forms of religion involving Mithras. While the origins of Mithras at Rome have been the subject of considerable debate, befitting the present study, many scholars have traced the cult either to “a forgotten individual of genius” or to a particular “founding group.”⁸⁷ While these theories have different strengths and weaknesses, to the best of my knowledge, none of their proponents has connected the emergence of Mithras in the last quarter of the first century CE with the activities of Persian *magi* in the preceding century. Nor has anyone noted that our evidence for Mithras coincides precisely with the discontinuation of Persian ethnic coding for the same experts.⁸⁸ The connection is all the more interesting in light of later inscriptions wherein *magus* denotes a religious office within some *mithraea*.

In a provocative account of the origins of the mysteries of Mithras, Roger Beck proposes a scenario that is in many ways complementary to my own account

⁸⁷ The theory of a forgotten individual of genius was argued by Reinhold Merkelbach [*Mithras* (Königstein: Hain, 1984), 77, 146-149, 160-161], who drew on the work of Martin P. Nilsson [*Geschichte der griechischen Religion*, v. 2 (München: Beck, 1941-1950), 675. For a particular founding group see Roger Beck, “The Mysteries of Mithras: A New Account of their Genesis,” *JRS* 88 (1998): 115-128.

⁸⁸ Our earliest Roman reference to Mithras occurs in Statius, *Thebaid* 1.719-720, a work written during the reign of Domitian, in which the poet alludes to the god subduing a bull in the ‘Persian cave’: *seu Persei sub rupibus antri / indignata sequi torquentem cornua Mithram*.

of factors that promoted the popularity of Judean religion among Roman audiences. Beck argues that any theory of the foundation of the mysteries must satisfy the following considerations: the foundation scenario must be compatible with the transmission of the mysteries within a relatively short time span to widely separated parts of the empire; the postulated foundation group should be reasonably close in time to the cult's earliest attested dedications and monuments (c. 80-120 CE); the postulated group need not be geographically fixed, that is, it must consist of people who were able to commend themselves to members of the military and elite households, since the earliest phase of Mithras evidence is firmly located in these circles; and the founding group must be a plausible matrix for both Iranian and Western traditions, the latter of which supplied the astrological knowledge apparent in the later evidence for the cult's cosmology and image program.⁸⁹

To satisfy these criteria, Beck proposes that the 'founding group' of Mithras cult as we know it consisted of dependents of the Commagenian kingdom, whose ruler Antiochus IV was deposed in 72 CE.⁹⁰ Not only did the Roman military have extensive contact with Commagenians throughout the Judean and Civil wars, the Commagenian imperial *familia* enjoyed a prolonged period of contact with the Roman aristocracy when members of the dynasty took up residency at the capital following their deposition. As Richard Gordon has shown, it is specifically among

⁸⁹ Beck, "The Mysteries of Mithras," 33-36.

⁹⁰ Joseph. *BJ* 7.243 ('and there they remained, treated with every respect'); Beck, "The Mysteries of Mithras," 37-38.

Roman aristocrats and their dependents that interest in Mithras is first attested.⁹¹

The fact that these mysteries were conveyed through the adapted medium of astrology suggests to Beck that their putative authorship lay in intellectual circles and might even reside in the activities of a single court astrologer, Ti. Claudius Balbillus, thought to be the son of Thrasyllus and whose own daughter married a son of Antiochus IV.⁹²

While there are points of continuity between Beck's theory of the origins of Mithras at Rome and my own theorization of the religion of freelance experts, I am inclined to view forms of religion involving Mithras as an outgrowth of the Persian subset of the specialist phenomenon. Beck begins from the premise that Mithras cult arose from a founding group at a fairly exact historical moment, but we have noted a much longer history of Roman interest in Persian wisdom and practices, as well as a salient presence of experts in Persian religion at Rome. I find his arguments about the figure of Mithras corresponding to the arrival of the Commagenian royal family in the city to be particularly persuasive, to the extent that we have observed comparable enthusiasm for *aegyptiaca* and *iudaica* stimulated during the periods that Cleopatra and the Herodians spent there. I also share Beck's instinct that the combination of learned astrological insights and a cosmology linked to a Persian deity likely emanated from the practices of

⁹¹ See, for example, Richard L. Gordon, "Mithraism and Roman Society," *Religion* 2 (1972): 92-121.

⁹² Beck, "The Mysteries of Mithras," 42-43 and n. 60; idem, "Whose Astrology? The Imprint of Ti. Claudius Balbillus on the Mithraic Mysteries," in *Beck on Mithraism: Collected Works with New Essays* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2004), 323-329.

intellectual experts, who innovatively subsumed methods and concepts from astrology, and perhaps also from philosophy, under a Persian aegis.

But I do not share Beck's insistence upon exactitude. Specialized Persian offerings, as well as the wisdom of the *magi*, seem to have become increasingly composite over the course of the first century CE, so much so that by the time references to Mithras first appear in our literary and epigraphic sources, it is no longer clear what is 'Persian' about either *magi* or *magic*- practices and teachings. Bringing the respective arguments of Rives and Beck together, I would argue that both the ethnic disintegration of the *magus* and the particular bundling of astrology, philosophical ideas about the descent and ascent of souls, and stories about the Persian deity Mithras have a plausible basis within the wider class of religious activity that I have outlined.

Likewise, I see no reason to exclude David Ulansey's arguments that the standard Mithraic image program reflects some degree of awareness about the second-century BCE philosopher Hipparchus' discovery of the precession of the equinoxes and resulting hypothesis of a newly recognized god so powerful that the entire cosmos was completely under his control.⁹³ Beck vehemently rejects Ulansey's analysis of the astronomical configuration encoded in the Mithras tauroctony on the grounds that the group of Tarsian Stoics who embraced the

⁹³ David Ulansey, *The Origins of the Mithraic Mysteries: Cosmology and Salvation in the Ancient World* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1989), 125.

insights of Hipparchus would never “have turned such matters into a religion.”⁹⁴

But when viewed against the backdrop of intellectualizing religious experts, many of whom artfully anchored their religious practices in philosophically and astronomically inflected concepts and explanations, the explanations of Beck and Ulansey have equal purchase. Where I view Ulansey’s theory to be lacking is in its failure to theorize a plausible mechanism for the transmission of Hellenistic intellectual developments into innovative forms of religion in the early empire. Nevertheless, I would argue that intellectualizing religious entrepreneurs supply one such plausible mechanism.

It should also be noted that there is a considerable lag between our earliest references and dedications to Mithras and the earliest *mithraea* that have been excavated at Rome. Even if the arrival of Mithras coincides with the arrival of the Commagenian *familia*, it is not clear to what extent second- and third-century evidence for Mithras cult resemble first-century forms of religion involving the same god.⁹⁵ Rather, the *comparanda* that we have considered should prepare us to expect to find any number of competing Mithras offerings within that interim period. In that vein, locating the origins of Mithras religion within the wider class of specialist activity makes better sense of our range of evidence for this deity. Scholars have struggled to account for evidence of Mithras that does not bear an

⁹⁴ Beck, “The Mysteries of Mithras,” 37 n. 35.

⁹⁵ Indeed, as I will argue in the chapter that follows, our earliest evidence for Christian phenomena suggests that these forms of religion were highly protean in the first and second centuries and bear an uncertain relationship to our earliest archaeological evidence for Christians, which does not appear until the early third century.

obvious relationship to the activities posited of *mithraea*, two clear examples being the so-called Mithras Liturgy of the *Greek Magical Papyri* and the assortment of Mithraic gems and amulets first collected by Vermaseren and recently expanded by Attilio Mastrocinque.⁹⁶ Attempting to sort out the relationship between ‘Mithraism’ and ‘magic’, Jaime Alvar Ezquerra argues that such artifacts must have been commissioned by individuals outside the “mainstream cult”:

For those who were attracted to the mysteries, learning about man’s position in the world called for great preparation with a mentor, a process that gradually revealed part of the mystery. All this took time and money, which some did not have. Consequently, those in a hurry, those who could not afford the costs of initiation, might be prompted to look for a solution to their concerns in other religious or philosophical modes. This is where the magicians came in. What they had to offer might be very close to other routes to power and knowledge, but made fewer demands. Magic thus became a powerful instrument of social control, operating outside official institutions.... The magicians, I suggest, usurped the contents of the mysteries, offering formulae and amulets to answer the demands the mysteries met through complex ritual processes. The examples discussed here, the ‘Liturgy’ and the gems, imply an interpretation along these lines.⁹⁷

Although I have several objections to Alvar Ezquerra’s formulation, I will simply point out that his dichotomy between Mithras cult and ‘magic’ is entirely misleading. All of the evidence that he is trying to explain—gems and amulets, appeals to Mithras in texts such as the *PGM*, as well as later *mithraea* and the

⁹⁶ Hans Dieter Betz, *“The Mithras Liturgy”: Text, Translation, and Commentary* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2003); Attilio Mastrocinque, *Studi sul Mitraismo: il Mitraismo e la Magia* (Rome: Giorgio Bretschneider, 1998).

⁹⁷ Jaime Alvar Ezquerra, “Mithraism and Magic,” in *Magical Practice in the Latin West: Papers from the International Conference Held at the University of Zaragoza 30 Sept.–1 Oct. 2005*. Religions in the Graeco-Roman World 168 (ed. Richard L. Gordon and Francisco Marco Simón; Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2010), 519–549, cit. 546.

initiation schemes they seem to have involved—reflect a predictable set of variations on religious practices involving the figure of Mithras, comparable to the same variety that we have observed among examples of specialized offerings that overlap with respect to a common deity, method, or religious service. Rather than deriving from Mithras cult of the second and third centuries, it seems more likely that gems, amulets, etc. are consistent with earlier and ongoing configurations of Mithras religion, a later form of which was *mithrea*.

Against Ramsey MacMullen, who writes of a decline of specific competencies into inconsistent and blurred usage, a jumbling of ‘magic’ with more rational pursuits, I would argue that first-century developments of the sort that Rives tracks owe much to the growth of the specialist phenomenon within this timeline, and to the competitive dynamics that accompanied the sheer abundance and variety of freelance experts at Rome.⁹⁸ With so many titles, skills, and intellectual influences in the mix, one expects to encounter an expansion in the purviews of certain kinds of experts, the formation of new experts and titles whose corresponding skills nevertheless overlap with others, and exactly the sort of creative bricolage that both Rives and MacMullen identify. The apparent interest of writer-intellectuals in sorting out this mess also makes sense within this context. The assorted wisdom genealogies, ethnographies, encyclopedias,

⁹⁸ MacMullen, *Enemies of the Roman Order*, 128: “[Methods for determining the future] were employed respectively by astrologers, diviners, and prophets or seers, whose titles supplied the vocabulary of legislation: *astrologi* (also called *mathematici* or *Chaldaei*); (*h*)*aruspices* and *augures*; and vaguer terms like *vates*, *vaticinatores*, *coniectores*, (*h*)*arioli*, *prophetai*; later, *magi*, and, pejoratively, *goêtes*. Usage was inconsistent, ideas blurred. Tacitus (*Ann.* 2.27 and 32; 12.22) and Tertullian (*De idol.* 9; *Apol.* 35) show the tendency to jumble prediction and magic together apparently in official documents.”

philosophical investigations and the like that abound during this period do different work, but most aim to provide a coherent account of the religious diversity unfolding before them.⁹⁹ The authority of aristocratic writers such as Cicero and Pliny is not at stake in that enterprise, but an intellectual lacking in attributed status might produce such writings both to demonstrate his learning and to position himself above the landscape of freelance experts that he describes.

The implicit goal of uniting all of these examples—the *magi*, Pythagorean ‘philosophy’, and the origins of Mithras—has been to demonstrate, on the one hand, that there is no data for ‘magic’ apart from the religion of freelance experts and, on the other, that practices associated with *magi* covered the full spectrum from highly intellectualizing forms of religion to the production of amulets, which may or may not have had an intellectual component. One reason why categories such as ‘magic’ prove to be so durable among modern scholars has to do with confusion about ways of classifying religious practices and how to define them in actual practice. In antiquity writers regularly pitted the concept of *religio*, which carried the sense of appropriate relations with or attitudes toward the gods, against the concept of *superstitio*, inappropriate or excessive sensibilities and observances. But these are discursive overlays upon religious phenomena, ways of labeling and organizing different forms of religion that have a complicated relationship to actual things on the ground. In other words, when ancient authors designate an example of religion as *superstitio* that characterization always does

⁹⁹ Two examples that come to mind immediately are Cicero’s *de Divinatione* and *de Natura Deorum*. See also the discussion of genealogies in chapter three.

normative work; it identifies practices and actors that stand in opposition to a good or acceptable version of religion and/or religious authority from the point of view of the author. The boundary between acceptable and unacceptable forms of religion is always in flux and revealing of the author's own position on overarching cultural discourses about religious norms.

By the end of the first century CE the concept of 'magic' came to be used as another option for contrasting normative and non-normative forms of religion, albeit perhaps for a more specific category of practice. As many scholars have demonstrated, there was no law specifically forbidding the practice of 'magic' during the Principate, although the Republican *lex Cornelia de sicariis et veneficis* provided a basis for certain accusations in this vein.¹⁰⁰ When such trials were held, popular stereotypes about 'magic' in the discursive sense might then be invoked in order to impeach the character of the defendant.¹⁰¹ Yet, as I argued in chapter two, the flexible legal category that gradually formed in response to certain practices and actors was not a matter of 'magic' *per se*, but of the assortment of activities linked to freelance religious experts.¹⁰²

In a recent volume dedicated to evidence for 'magic' in the Latin West, Richard Gordon and Francisco Marco Simón recapitulate a basic heuristic

¹⁰⁰ Rives, "Magic, Religion, and Law," 47-67.

¹⁰¹ Richard L. Gordon and Francisco Marco Simón, "Introduction," in *Magical Practice in the Latin West: Papers from the International Conference Held at the University of Zaragoza 30 Sept.–1 Oct. 2005*. Religions in the Graeco-Roman World 168 (ed. Richard L. Gordon and Francisco Marco Simón; Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2010), 1-49, cit. 10-11.

¹⁰² See chapter two.

distinction between “magical practice, which is in principle contextual, local, and goal-oriented, and the cultural discourse about magic, which, at any rate in a complex society covering hundreds, if not thousands, of local traditions, like that of the Empire, is general and protean, constraining and suggestive.”¹⁰³ As the authors suggest, most of these discourses “[represent] magic primarily in terms of its subversive power and illegitimate authority, claims sustained by graphic stereotypes of its supposed agents.” They conclude, “Mainly the discourse and its subtended stereotypes were used, in the manner that dominant discourses usually are used, to limit and control subordinate or marginal practices, by passing them through a grid of persuasive binary oppositions (e.g. legitimate-illegitimate, marvel-magic, good-harm), through inflation of the theme of necromancy, by outright repression (interdiction of ‘magical’ divination; trials, lynchings), by rejecting the others’ right to speak (e.g. Pliny’s ‘Magi’), by belittlement (untrue, ineffective, silly), by commentary, by social appropriation.”¹⁰⁴

I agree that such a distinction holds value insofar as social discourses about ‘magic’ are never straightforward evidence for historical practice, but are relatively differentiated and capable of supporting several different agenda. Unlike the authors, however, I do not share the opinion that such a thing ‘magic’ existed in actual practice and would argue that any affirmation of continuity between aristocratic depictions of ‘magical’ practices and practitioners and what Gordon

¹⁰³ Gordon and Marco Simón, “Introduction,” 5.

¹⁰⁴ Gordon and Marco Simón, “Introduction,” 6.

and Marco Simón refer to as the “marginal religious expertise of all kinds [that] were widespread in the population, the instrumental under-belly of civic religion” is analytically unhelpful for a number of reasons. While the former reveal much about a characteristic ambivalence on the part of those in power concerning religious practices and actors that were not rooted in civic institutions, the principal goal of depicting such practices and actors as ‘magical’ was to naturalize the idea that they were essentially different from the practices and forms of authority indigenous to those very institutions. Yet the persistence of ‘magic’ as a scholarly category distinct from ‘religion’ perpetuates that ideological fiction, however much the relationship between the two has been qualified.

Rather, the definition of religion that I outlined in the introduction to this project admits of those practices that have otherwise been classified as magical in any number of scholarly publications. I suspect that it has been for want of the clear theorization of religious practices that the ontological distinction between ‘religion’ and ‘magic’ has not been thoroughly dismantled. To repeat a methodological point that has resurfaced in a number of guises throughout this dissertation, maintaining such a distinction validates a particular point of view on certain kinds of religious practice while also rendering the apparent significance and pervasiveness of those practices inexplicable.¹⁰⁵ Moreover, there is no consistent scholarly definition of ‘magic’ whose criteria are not at least partially reliant on aspects of such portrayals. Whether the category is understood to

¹⁰⁵ For instance, a similar problem arises when scholars uncritically accept depictions of freelance experts as ‘charlatans’ or ‘hucksters’.

correspond to an ambiguous or illegitimate sphere of rituals, to practices that somehow pervert or invert 'religion', or to exotic rites and techniques that supplement familiar traditions and specialists, the underlying premise remains that 'magical' phenomena and 'religious' phenomena differ in some fundamental respect. Even when such phenomena are arranged on a continuum, 'religion' and 'magic' are imagined as opposing poles whose examples are more or less of one or the other.

In view of these points, one of the arguments of the present chapter is that an adequate theorization of religion encompasses practices not only involving gods but also *daimones*, the dead, anthropomorphic forces, and other beings in the same class, thus eliminating the need for 'magic' as a scholarly category. Insofar as I understand such practices to be *religious* by virtue of involving the imagined participation of that class of beings, we need not make distinctions on the basis of whether the being involved is a chthonic deity or the shade of a dead person. While there might be interesting and important correlations among which beings are invoked to assist with certain practices, or among certain kinds of beings and certain kinds of social formations, patterns in our evidence for religion do not impact the status of the practices themselves.

Nor should we exclude any practices involving this class of beings from our definition of religion on the basis of the particular interests that the practices are intended to serve. If someone consults a freelance expert in order to curse a foe, to locate buried treasure, or to solicit the affections of another person, those interests

are no more or less religious than if someone visits a temple to pray for healing or safe passage during a sea voyage. While there might be implicit or explicit norms about whom one ought to entreat for the fulfillment of a given interest, about where one should do so, or about the appropriateness of the request, the fact remains that the petitioner is pursuing that interest by means of religious practices, that is, practices that involved the imagined participation of gods, ghosts, and similar beings. I make these points in response to a tendency among scholars to differentiate ‘religious’ and ‘magical’ practices at least partly on the basis of the sort of interests that they address, or perhaps on the basis that clear interests are discernable at all.¹⁰⁶

In my view, it is not the job of scholars to evaluate and make judgments about people’s motivations for participating in religious practices, or to presume that ‘real’ religion is a largely disinterested affair. To return momentarily to the critique of social-functionalist definitions of religion that I raised in the introduction, it strikes me that the inclination to cordon off certain kinds of practices because they satisfy ‘private’ needs and desires, or because they are perceived as ‘anti-social’ stems, again, from a notion that religion is ultimately ‘pro-social’, an instrument for producing social cohesion. According to this model, any practice involving gods that does not promote shared social values and group solidarity, or that seems antagonistic to those goals, cannot be an example of ‘religion’ but must be something else. That is, if religion is essentially a communal

¹⁰⁶ For example, Rives, who theorizes the legal category of Paulus as a matter of “religious deviance” (“Magic, Religion, and Law,” 67).

thing, then anything that resembles religion but that does not contribute to the proper ordering and maintenance of society is either a corruption of 'good' religion (i.e., 'bad' or 'illicit' religion) or it warrants an entirely separate category ('magic').

This problem is pronounced, for example, in Robert Parker's treatment of religious professionals, whom he characterizes as practitioners of 'unlicensed religion'.¹⁰⁷ For Parker, who is explicit about his indebtedness to structuralism, public cults were emblems of tradition and respectability and vital to the health of Athens. In contrast to the priests and priestesses of those cults, whom he considers 'amateurs', religious professionals were marginal and shady on account of their special expertise, traders in 'free-enterprise religion'.¹⁰⁸ The implication of their activities can be summed up as follows: "religious professionals introduce magic" into a society whose religion is otherwise primarily about reinforcing norms and complementary social structures.¹⁰⁹ "There were...amateurs in cursing as well as professionals and semi-professionals. But it is the professionals who disseminate and popularize and as it were drive the practice. Of all the religious activities conducted in Attica, those of bewitchment and cursing are at the furthest extreme from civic norms. And (at least for Plato) it is in the knapsack of a religious specialist that black magic enters cities."¹¹⁰

¹⁰⁷ Parker, *Polytheism and Society at Athens*, 116-135 ("Those Who Make a Profession Out of Rites': Unlicensed Religion, and Magic").

¹⁰⁸ Parker, *Polytheism and Society at Athens*, 116.

¹⁰⁹ Parker, *Polytheism and Society at Athens*, 5.

¹¹⁰ Pl. *Leg.* 933e; Parker, *Polytheism and Society at Athens*, 121-122.

Interestingly, Parker articulates a position on ‘magic’ that is not so unlike my own: he agrees that it refers to no objective reality and differs from ‘religion’ only by negative social evaluation.¹¹¹ But there is continual slippage throughout his book between how the Athenians themselves delineated forms of religion that were ‘good’ for society from those they perceived as ‘bad’, and where we ourselves would mark the boundary between the two. The underlying issue seems to be that Parker’s structuralist understanding of religion admits only for those forms that were, in fact, ‘good’ for society, with ‘good’ no longer construed as a product of discourse but now as the essence of his definition. Since neither religious professionals nor the ‘magical’ practices with which they were commonly linked match that definition, ‘magic’ necessarily acquires some objective status.

Wandering seers with spells in their bags knocked at doors only because those doors were sometimes opened.... By framing a discussion of magic within a discussion of religious professionals I have not wished to deny these evident truths. The point is one about structure and tradition (for magic too has traditions). On the one side we have cults of the city, administered by publicly appointed priests. On the other side we have elective religion in all its forms. Elective religion is more directly responsive to the wishes of the individual than are the cults of the city.... What priests, magistrates, and exegetes, assembly and the rest are to the cults of the city, that the religious professionals are to informal or elective religion.

¹¹¹ Parker, *Polytheism and Society at Athens*, 122: “Magic, it is generally agreed today, refers to no objective reality; magic differs from religion as weeds differ from flowers, merely by negative social evaluation. The study of magic is a study of the religious practices disapproved of in a given society, or a particular set of them; for ‘bad religion’ has different forms, some activities being laughed at as merely silly (‘superstition’), others condemned as wicked and dangerous. All we can do is analyse what practices are censured on what grounds, and then to seek explanations for these choices. Some practices so censured may turn out to be ones which we would not think of classifying as magical (not that ‘our’ unreflective use of the term magic is at all stable; varying explicit or implicit binary oppositions—to science, to religion, to everyday reality—push it this way and that).”

Disapproving remarks about the religion of the city are almost unknown. About almost every form of elective religion they are commonplace.¹¹²

I bring Parker back into the present discussion in order to demonstrate the inseparability of freelance religious experts from the religion-magic debate, and also the slippage between ancient religious norms and scholarly theorizations of religion. Whereas 'religion' contributes to structure and tradition, 'magic' appeals exclusively to individual interests. One also gets the impression from his remarks about 'black magic' that while Parker admits to people having certain proclivities to 'anti-social' behavior, it is only by means of religious professionals who catered to interests that cut against the grain of civic norms that 'elective religion' or 'magic' was able to form in opposition to 'religion'. Ultimately, his insistence upon the cohesive and normative functions of religion is at odds with his awareness that 'religion' and 'magic' only differ from the evaluative perspective of 'Athenian society', which is synonymous with the opinions of writers such as Plato; they are also different from the perspective of the scholar whose definition of religion excludes both religious professionals operating outside civic cults and the 'magical' practices they brokered.

Another matter to address is the prominence of women in accounts of 'magical' practice. Although we come across several examples of women participating in the religion of freelance experts, as both brokers and enthusiastic consumers, they occur most regularly in conjunction with the sort of interests and

¹¹² Parker, *Polytheism and Society at Athens*, 134.

practices that ancient and modern commentators alike tend to classify as ‘bad’, ‘subversive’, ‘anti-social’, or ‘deviant’ forms of religion. As Kimberly Stratton notes, our Roman-period sources often depict female religious experts (whom she refers to as ‘witches’) as grotesque, predatory, libidinous, and sexually depraved.¹³ More often than not they are dedicated to frivolous yet transgressive affairs, whether they pursue them out of self-interest or on the behalf of their clients.

Undoubtedly, the pervasive tendency among ancient writers to malign the activities of self-authorized specialists is most acute for women who acted in that role; indeed, Stratton argues that they were demonized to a much greater degree than their male counterparts.

But these stereotypes about female practitioners of ‘magic’ are continuous with the charges levied against all participants in the religion of freelance experts. Moreover, the intensification of such stereotypes where women are concerned might have a basis in the fact that, like freedpersons and foreigners, women enjoyed greater opportunities for religious participation in this class of activity than they did in other religious institutions at Rome. In chapter two, for example, we confronted several Roman women charged with consulting freelance experts; I also noted the unprecedented number of executions of *venenarii* and *maleficii* allegedly ordered by Tiberius, forty-five men and eighty-five women, during a

¹³ For a survey of depictions of female religious experts in Roman-period literature, see Kimberly B. Stratton, *Naming the Witch: Magic, Ideology, and Stereotype in the Ancient World* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2007), 79-96.

period especially concentrated with efforts to curb specialist influence in the city.¹¹⁴ Stratton's insightful efforts to disentangle discourses about women and 'magic' from the actual activities that undergird them align well with my own efforts to separate discourses about 'magic' and 'magicians' from the religion of freelance experts. But beyond the various norms she views as having shaped stereotypes of the 'wicked' woman, I would suggest one of the stakes in thus depicting female experts was that they were, in fact, a notable and influential presence within the independent specialist phenomenon.

In conclusion, I would like to return to the anecdote from Juvenal with which I began this chapter, one detail of which, the coupling of freelance experts and households, presages some of the issues in the next chapter. Lucian has even more to say about people at Rome who strive to enter families and serve for hire as some kind of educator. As to their motives for seeking such positions, he lists reasons such as escape from poverty (a state which, in his view, most experts exaggerate), the pursuit of pleasure, and the status of associating with people of noble birth and high position.¹¹⁵ As to the motives of would be patrons, Lucian insists that it is all about appearances. "Truly, [a patron] does not want you for that purpose [sc. knowledge] at all, but as you have a long beard, present a distinguished appearance, are neatly dressed in a Greek mantle, and everybody knows you for a *grammatikos* (γραμματικός), or a *rhētor* (ρήτωρ), or a philosopher

¹¹⁴ Chron. ann. ccliv MGH IX, 145; Dickie, *Magic and Magicians in the Greco-Roman World*, 154.

¹¹⁵ Lucian, *De merc.* 5, 7, 9 (trans. A. M. Harmon; LCL).

(φιλόσοφος), it seems to him the proper thing to have a man of that sort among those who go before him and form his escort.”¹¹⁶ Women, too, are keen on having men of education living in their households on a salary and following their litters, since it adds to their other accomplishments if they are said to be cultured and interested in philosophy.¹¹⁷

The alternative picture that he sketches is one of freelance experts vying daily to get a foot in the door of Roman households, of bribing doormen and other servants in the hope of gaining an audience for their particular offerings, and all the while jostling with rivals who are competing for the same opportunity.¹¹⁸ For one who has managed to attach oneself to a household, the picture is even grimmer as intellectuals contend with eunuchs and dancers for favor. “You would put up with it if you had to act the part of a *magos* or a *mantis* or one of those fellows who promise legacies amounting to many thousands, governorships, and tremendous riches; you see that they too get on well in their friendships and are highly valued. So you would be glad to adopt one of those roles in order not to be entirely despicable and useless; but even in them, worse luck, you are not convincing.”¹¹⁹ Notwithstanding, a position within an elite household incurs envy and before long some slanderous charge of seduction or another is brought before the patron, who is by then glad to receive charges against his resident intellectual

¹¹⁶ Lucian, *De merc.* 25.16-31.

¹¹⁷ Lucian, *De merc.* 36.

¹¹⁸ Lucian, *De merc.* 11.

¹¹⁹ Lucian, *De merc.* 27.14-21.

in order that he might be rid of him.¹²⁰ The scandal of the dismissal, exaggerated by conjecture about adultery, poisonings, and so on, ensures that he will never find another post.¹²¹ Lucian concludes, “Many who have entered households, to make up for not knowing anything else that was useful, have professed to supply predictions, philters, love-charms, and incantations against enemies; yet they assert they are educated, wrap themselves in a philosopher’s mantle, and wear beards that cannot be lightly sneered at. Naturally, therefore, they entertain the same suspicion about all of us on seeing that men whom they considered excellent are that sort, and above all observing...their servile attitude toward profit.”¹²²

As with all of Lucian’s writings, these remarks must be taken with a grain of salt. But they illustrate a common manifestation of freelance expertise that occurred not in marketplaces or at the circus, but in households. Whether in the form of episodic visits or a more regular position, it would seem that the Roman household was one type of social formation with which specialists regularly overlapped. One’s role within that context might have an intellectual premise, but being a sort of teacher was not mutually exclusive with practices such as divination, forecasting, healing, and beseeching gods and similar beings—in fact, such abilities might only heighten one’s attractiveness and promote the recognition of one’s knowledge as profound, true, and efficacious. As Dickie surmises, wonder-working specialists were something of a commonplace in cities

¹²⁰ Lucian, *De merc.* 30.1-6.

¹²¹ Lucian, *De merc.* 40.1-6.

¹²² Lucian, *De merc.* 40.12-23.

such as Rome, but “what [gave] them their entrée to the salons of the rich [was] their education.”¹²³

Not only do the dynamics to which Lucian speaks confirm many of the insights the preceding chapters—rivalries among freelance experts of all varieties, the kinds of charges that were brought against them, often by the same rivals, innovation and versatility, especially in combination with intellectual skills—they also capture some of the interests involved in participating in this class of activity, as either a purveyor or consumer of religious expertise. Most importantly, they set the stage for my discussion in the forthcoming and final chapter, where we will have an opportunity to observe how they bore out in actual practice. Like many of the experts whom Lucian ridicules, Paul is a sort of religious expert whose authority and legitimacy stem in part from intellectual skills, but who also professes expertise in divination, the interpretation of prophecies, and the discernment of spirits (πνεύματα), even wisdom derived from heavenly ascent, among other skills. He also seems to have delivered his teachings to households and other existing social formations, which he would then attempt to mold into his own groups. Unlike other experts with comparable interests, however, Paul has been excerpted from the wider context of the religion of freelance experts and made to appear singular by virtue of his afterlife in the history of Christianity.

¹²³ Dickie, *Magic and Magicians in the Greco-Roman World*, 198.

CHAPTER FIVE

Paul, A Rare Witness to the Religion of Freelance Experts

In the preceding chapters I have mounted a case for the salience of freelance experts at Rome, and of religious experts specifically, for the plentitude of ethnically coded experts and forms of religion within the wider specialist phenomenon, and for the protean character of many specialized offerings. The evidence sustaining each chapter has, in turn, yielded insight into distinctive characteristics associated with this class of religious activity. As to its dynamics, I have isolated currents such as competition and innovation. As to common strategies by which specialists navigated these dynamics, I have tracked things such as authority claims, mythmaking, cultivated exoticism, the construction of composite offerings, and the enlistment of unfamiliar, or unfamiliar aspects of, gods, god-like beings, or forces. In the fourth chapter, I considered in greater detail how ethnic frames of reference, ethnically coded skills, services, and even writings or ways of writing might interact in complex ways with certain intellectual practices. The principal examples of such interactions included the increasingly blurred line between ‘magic’ and certain kinds of philosophy in practices and wisdom attributed to the Persian *magi*, and, finally, in the convergence of ethnic

coding, specialized astrological knowledge, initiation and other possible influences in the newly forged mysteries of Mithras. The same interactions occurred in chapter three, where I presented evidence for the practices of freelance experts in Judean religion, many of whom harmonized a concept of Mosaic law with philosophical techniques for self-mastery.¹

The majority of information informing our picture thus far, however, reflects external perspectives on this class of activity, many of which are biased against it and leave us to piece together how the dynamics, skills, and strategies associated with the religion of specialists bore out in practice. Though rarely framed in this way, one of the best example we have of firsthand evidence for the religion of specialists, and for Judean examples in particular, are the letters of Paul.² Due largely to the theological interests that have motivated many studies of these texts, Paul is often cast as a spiritual *tour de force*, a religious actor ultimately lacking in exact social *comparanda*. Even publications that recognize certain affinities between Pauline ‘communities’ and other first-century social formations nevertheless presume that the former were essentially unique.³

¹ The important case for which appears in Stowers, *A Rereading of Romans*, 42-82. I would also like to thank Stan Stowers and the students in his “Issues in Pauline Studies” seminar for providing useful feedback on a penultimate version of this chapter.

² Another important example is the writings of the Dead Sea Scrolls Community, which I will only be able to discuss briefly in this chapter. For an important study of these texts and their salvation program, see Aaron Glaim, “Reciprocity, Sacrifice, and Salvation in Judean Religion” (Ph.D. Dissertation; Brown University, 2013).

³ For example, the study of James Hanges, who marshals interesting evidence for cults founded by what appear to be freelance experts yet maintains a degree of uniqueness for the Pauline communities (*Paul, Founder of Churches*). One notable exception is my classmate Jennifer Eyl’s

In my view, such comparisons have not been optimally executed for lack of a broader but well defined context that accommodates not only Paul's practices, but also those of the full range of actors with whom he bears similarities: experts in Judean religion and other ethnically coded forms of religion, mystery initiators, diviners, and philosophers, among others. Without this class of activity or a theorization of its dynamics, comparisons between Paul and contemporaneous actors and phenomena are liable to be executed along lines that are either somewhat arbitrary, or that stop short of the redescription that such studies might otherwise yield.⁴

To the contrary, locating Paul amidst a delimited set of self-authorized experts expands our body of relevant evidence with a clear and specific purpose. On the one hand, Paul's letters provide a rare and intimate sightline into how seamlessly assorted influences might be interwoven into a composite religious program that demonstrates a need for the specific services he is offering. His letters furnish intimate examples of how the religion of freelance experts worked, thus enriching our picture of the wider class. On the other hand, considering him as a participant in that phenomenon helps us to understand why he was a recognizable figure whose teachings and practices were attractive to his

study of Paul's divinatory practices ["By the Power of Signs and Wonders: Paul, Divinatory Practices, and Symbolic Capital" (Ph.D. Dissertation; Brown University, 2012).

⁴ An argument I developed in an unpublished conference paper: "Restoring the Material to 'Material Cultural Approaches': Ontological Inconsistencies in Explaining Pauline Reception," (Unpublished Conference Paper; SBL Annual Meeting, 2011).

audiences.⁵ This is a different and more historically comprehensible explanation for his activities than others that consider him foremost as theologian of the new Christian religion, whose appeal lay in the obvious spiritual value of his gospel. Likewise, treating Paul as a freelance expert in ‘Judean religion’, whose rivals were both other freelance experts, including philosophers, may also introduce new interpretive possibilities for some of the content of his letters.

In order to ground the trajectory of my arguments for approaching Paul in this way, I will remind readers that we have moved from varieties of religious specialists in the first century, to evidence for Judean religious specialists, and now to Paul as one such Judean religious specialist, a highly innovative one whose authority stems in part from having received divine instructions that allow him to adduce novel interpretations of Judean writings. Also relevant to our discussion is the observation from the third chapter that ‘biblical’ materials were not only in wide circulation in the first-century Roman world, but they were also commonly linked with the activities of freelance experts in Judean religion. We inherit many witnesses to the prophetic and ethical value of these writings, as well as examples

⁵ The precise sense in which I am using these categories is best articulated by Stowers, who defines them as follows: “Recognition is not all or nothing, but a matter of making more or less sense. It often entails some degree, or lack, of legitimacy or social capital. Attraction is the process of recognizing some sort of mutuality of interests that can be the basis for individuals or groups engaging in common practices or entertaining the possibility. In the latter it is to be assumed that individual participation is differential and that individuals do not bring exactly the same skills, understandings, and so on, to practices in common with others, even while they share certain common practical understandings with all those who participate in a particular piece” [“Kinds of Myths, Meals, and Power: Paul and the Corinthians,” in *Redescribing Paul and the Corinthians* (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2011), 105-149, cit. 108].

wherein people appealed to their notional authority even without engaging the actual texts.

In this chapter, then, I will redescribe Paul and his writings with a view to the picture of entrepreneurial religion that we have been assembling, a methodology that has been adumbrated by the evidence and analysis of the preceding chapters. What will emerge is that Paul's letters bear witness firsthand to nearly all of the aspects of this class of activity that we have examined. Although the reading that I am proposing requires that we disaggregate Paul's religious program—that is, the specific services he offered and the teachings that explicated their significance—in order to examine his practices and their effects in relative isolation, it is only possible to do so from a heuristic perspective. In fact, one of the conclusions of this chapter will be that Paul's teachings were thoroughly enmeshed with and inseparable from his services. *À propos* of the geographical focus of this dissertation, my analysis will favor evidence from Paul's letter to the Romans, though only slightly, inasmuch as the material that demonstrates his continuities with other freelance experts appears in all of his authentic epistles.⁶

Before turning our attention to the content of Paul's religious program, I would like to begin by examining the positions that he seems to have taken in order to locate himself intelligibly but also exclusively in a competitive field of specialized offerings. Let us provisionally call these considerations of recognition

⁶ Notably, as we will see, some of the aspects that we will consider are conspicuously absent from Pauline pseudepigrapha. This is the case with Paul's economic activities, which receive attention in all of his letters but Philemon yet which occur neither in the disputed or pastoral epistles, nor in Acts.

and differentiation Paul's twofold prerogative, since I will theorize plausible motivations and outcomes of his practices on the basis of the evidence that we have examined thus far.

On the one hand, Paul presents himself to his audiences and seems to be recognized by them as an authoritative expert not only in religious practices, and specifically, in religious practices associated with Judeans, but also in certain kinds of intellectual practices that need not be mutually exclusive with Judean expertise, but which gesture beyond that single frame of reference. On the other hand, he distinguishes his own authority, expertise, and services both from the offerings of rival Judean experts and from the skills and teachings of other writer-intellectuals. This is not to suggest that the roles of Judean religious expert and writer-intellectual were mutually exclusive. To the contrary, we know from the evidence discussed in chapter three that Judeans were commonly implicated in textually dependent or intellectualizing forms of religion at this time. Nevertheless, his practices would have had multiple resonances among the individual members of his audiences, depending on their own skills and reference points.

With respect to the first matter, demonstrating expertise in Judean religion, Paul adopts a number of strategies consonant with what we know of other Judean experts. He speaks authoritatively about Judean practices such as law observance, dietary restrictions, and circumcision; he cites or references Judean writings; he proposes novel but knowledgeable interpretations of episodes from Israelite epic; he alleges to have undergone dedicated training in ancestral teachings; and he

aligns himself with a specific interpretive group by claiming to be a Pharisee in matters of the law.⁷

Paul's repeated assertion that he is either a Judean or can boast any other ethnic designation tied to Judean religion furnishes a natural authority claim in and of itself, since the god of Israel's preference for his people seems to have been widely known. He thus wastes no opportunity to assert his ethnicity, however it may be cast: "Whatever anyone dares to boast of...I also dare to boast of that. Are they Hebrews? So am I. Are they Israelites? So am I. Are they descendants of Abraham? So am I" (2 Cor 11:21-22). And elsewhere: "Has God rejected his people? By no means! I myself am an Israelite, from the seed of Abraham, of the tribe of Benjamin" (Rom 11:1). And elsewhere still: "If anyone else has reason to be confident in the flesh, I have more: circumcised on the eighth day, from the people of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew from the Hebrews; as to the law, a Pharisee; as to eagerness, a pursuer of the assembly; as to righteousness while being under the law, without reproach" (Phil 3:4-6). Interestingly, while he does on occasion refer to himself as a *ioudaios*, he is far more likely to frame his ancestry using language and categories with a textual basis: he is an *Israelite*, a *Benjaminite*.⁸

⁷ Phil 3:5.

⁸ In other words, Paul might have articulated his own genealogy in this way in combination with his other exegetical interests. I thank my classmates Aaron Glaim and Daniel Picus for a stimulating discussion of the matter, which was enhanced considerably by their combined knowledge of the Hebrew Bible.

We might expect that Paul also had a considerable stake in confirming the special benefits that Judeans enjoy by virtue of their privileged relationship with their god, and indeed he emphasizes such points most clearly and most often in his letter to the Romans. “What extraordinary capability has the Judean? Or what is the value of circumcision? Much in every way. For first the Judeans were entrusted with the oracles of God” (Rom 3:1-2).⁹ Equally, “They are the Israelites, to whom [belong] the adoption, the glory, the inheritance, the code of laws, the divine service, and the promises; to them belong the forefathers and from them comes the anointed one” (Rom 9:4-5). That is to say, ethnic Judeans share a kinship and special relationship with the god of Israel, symbolized through bodily practice, and on account of which he transmitted exceptional written knowledge, a program of self-mastery, and a certain religious disposition to them. They also trace their ancestry to epic protagonists such as Abraham and David, who are central to Paul’s mythmaking as the genetic ancestors of Christ.¹⁰

We have seen that most if not all of these features of ‘Judean religion’ were consistent and somewhat commonplace in non-Judean writings of the Hellenistic and Roman periods, so it makes sense for Paul’s recognition as a sort of expert in

⁹ My translation of *prasson* as ‘extraordinary capability’ or perhaps ‘extraordinary quality’ is explained in the forthcoming discussion of Gal 1:13-14. Significantly, Paul seems to use this word to denote extraordinary specialized skills or benefits, a sense that fits well with the positive aspect of stereotypes about the distinctive religious practices of ethnic peoples that Roman audiences seem to have held. In other words, in asking what extraordinary quality has the Judeans, Paul seems to confirm that Judeans are, in fact, thought to have some extraordinary benefit on account of their ethnic status and distinctive religious practices.

¹⁰ Caroline Johnson Hodge, *If Sons, Then Heirs: A Study of Kinship and Ethnicity in the Letters of Paul* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007).

Judean religion to fulfill such expectations, foremost of which is intimate knowledge about the Judean inspired writings. As I argued in chapter three, it is not accidental that the Judean experts whom we encounter in Josephus and Juvenal all appear to have based their authority on familiarity with Judean sacred texts or textual episodes, whether they enlisted texts for technical purposes such as skilled exegesis, allegorical interpretation, or divination, or only appealed to knowledge of the Judean writings in order to authorize another form of expertise.

In this regard Paul is no different. He appeals on no less than thirty-one occasions to ‘what is written’ (καθὼς γέγραπται) and invokes either the authority of ‘the law and the prophets’ (ὑπὸ τοῦ νόμου καὶ τῶν προφητῶν) or things foretold through the prophets in the holy writings (διὰ τῶν προφητῶν ἐν γραφαῖς ἁγίαις; διὰ τε γραφῶν προφητικῶν).¹¹ He also anchors key aspects of his religious program in special exegeses of textual episodes, particularly ones involving Abraham and Moses. Furthermore, many of the verses he cites and the episodes from which he adduces novel interpretations either arise from a text authored by a prophet—e.g., from Isaiah or Habbakuk—or are extrapolated from a story rich in divinely issued miracles and prophecies—the Abraham cycle or the wilderness wanderings of the Israelites. With a view to the considerable interest in Judean texts that we observed in chapter three, the fact that Paul favors writings whose prophetic content is especially pronounced suggests an affinity with a much broader trend in

¹¹ Rom 3:21 (‘the law and the prophets’); Rom 1:2 and 16:26 (things foretold by the prophets in the Judean writings).

the use and perceived value of these materials.¹² The preponderance of his ‘as it is written’ (γέγραπται) citations occur in the letter to the Romans and it is in the same letter that he makes the most explicit connection between his religious program and prophecies that he has discovered within these writings.¹³

In addition to, or perhaps in conjunction with, the prophetic value that he ascribed to Judean texts, Paul also resembles first-century Judeans such as Josephus and Philo who conceived of the ‘law of Moses’ as a sort of constitution for the Judean way of life, with a focus on religion and ethics.¹⁴ A number of Judean writers allied such a concept of the law and law observance with Greco-Roman philosophical teachings about self-mastery in order to present Judeans as a uniquely self-mastered people. As Stanley Stowers notes, it was quite common for Judean teachings to be presented as a divinely transmitted and superior program for controlling the passions and desires, in contrast to the laws of other peoples, which only nourished the passions while also promoting vices.¹⁵ So widespread was this concept that “when gentiles heard Jews talk about the advantages of and virtues produced by the law of Moses, they were hearing a familiar topic.”¹⁶

¹² See the discussion in chapter three.

¹³ Sixteen occurrences, compared to eleven in the combined Corinthian epistles and only four in Galatians.

¹⁴ Stowers, *A Rereading of Romans*, 35-36.

¹⁵ Stowers, *A Rereading of Romans*, 58-59. The argument about the laws of other peoples promoting and multiplying passions and vices is in this instance Philo’s (*Sacr. Abel* 15).

¹⁶ Stowers, *A Rereading of Romans*, 63.

This is not to suggest that all Judeans held such a concept of the law, or any concept of *the law* for that matter. There is reason to think that this particular characterization of Judean writings was the project of writer-intellectuals and that groups who thus envisaged the law assigned somewhat idiosyncratic values to it. Not unlike how each philosophical school developed teachings that corresponded to shared concepts of physics, logic, and ethics, yet varied considerably with respect to how those concepts were developed and emphasized, we might imagine a comparable range of variety in how Judean writer-intellectuals elaborated the law's import and prescripts.¹⁷ Josephus conveys such an impression in his tidy description of the Pharisees, Sadducees, and Essenes, and the number of possible position-takings on the law multiplies exponentially when one considers that any of those designations might be claimed by a great number of specialists and social formations.¹⁸ The latter scenario would not be unlike that of self-authorized philosophers, augurs, or *haruspices* aligning themselves with a recognized school

¹⁷ Similarly, much as one could use the term *logos* and its cognates in a general sense, to encapsulate any and all of the teachings of a particular philosophical group, I suspect that *nomos* had a comparably elastic meaning in reference to any and all teachings and practices associated with Judeans.

¹⁸ Josephus claims that the Pharisees numbered 6,000 individuals at the end of the 1C BCE, a figure that speaks to a diffusive, loosely coordinated group rather than a coherent institution whose membership was guarded. The sense of the Pharisees that I am proposing accords with their depiction as principal opponents of Jesus in the gospels. For instance, the author of the *Gospel of Matthew* famously remarks, "Woe to you scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites, for you traverse sea and land to make a single proselyte, you make him twice as much a child of hell as yourselves" (23:15). For a discussion of Pharisees in the context of the religion of freelance experts, see Martin Goodman, "Jewish Proselytizing in the First Century," 93-116. On the Essenes, see John J. Collins, *Beyond the Qumran Community: The Sectarian Movement of the Dead Sea Scrolls* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2010).

or religious institution, but whose relationship to that institution, to its teachings or practices, and to other self-authorized experts is unclear.

Although Paul offers his own take on the law, on the nature of its requirements, and on what it means to observe them, we know less about the similarities between his understanding and the understandings of other Judean writer-intellectuals at the level of specifics. Equally, I would argue that while his admission to having been a Pharisee in matters of the law *might* mean that he was a recognized member of the body that Josephus portrays—a political-religious interest group who tried to influence Judean aristocrats and civic practices—it is equally plausible that he might have participated in an idiosyncratic social formation that yoked itself to the authority and recognition of that group, yet whose own teachings may or may not have matched the ones Josephus attributes to the Pharisees.¹⁹ Either way, in keeping with my brief discussion in chapter three of the Pharisees active at the Herodian court, some, if not all, of these religious experts fold into the class of activity that I am theorizing.

What can be said with a higher degree of certainty is that Paul claims to have worked within a mode of Judean religiosity that involved the specialized interpretation of Judean writings, and that his interpretive strategies overlap with two sets of intellectual practices with which Judeans were commonly linked: emphasizing the inspired character of these texts in order to adduce prophecies and mysteries from them, and proffering a philosophically informed concept of the

¹⁹ Phil 3:4-6. For this characterization of the Pharisees see Stowers, *A Rereading of Romans*, 77.

law as a rigorous ethical program. These sets of practices were neither mutually exclusive, nor were they exclusive to freelance experts in religion and philosophy. Nevertheless, there was a strong correlation between such approaches to Judean writings and the activities of self-authorized Judean specialists.

Although the practices in question are evident in his present activities, Paul alleges to have considerable experience in this mode of religiosity. In Galatians 1:13-14 he writes, “You have heard, no doubt, of my earlier mode of life in Judaizing (ἐν ἰουδαϊσμῷ). I vehemently pursued the assembly of God and endeavored to destroy it. I advanced in Judaizing beyond many of my group who were of the same grade, for I was remarkably more eager for my ancestral teachings.” What Paul means by having advanced *en ioudaismō* has been the subject of considerable debate. Steve Mason’s recent analysis of the term has drawn attention to its connotation of adopting cultural practices other than one’s own, “of aligning oneself with something exotic or alien.”²⁰ Comparing occurrences of *ioudaismos* (ἰουδαϊσμός) with parallel terms derived from other ethnic roots—*hellēnismos* (ἑλληνισμός), for example, which refers not to a static system of culture, but a deliberate movement away from one’s native traditions in favor of Greek ones—he argues that it refers to the promulgation of notably Judean practices, especially ones such as circumcision and law observance, among non-ethnic Judeans.²¹

²⁰ Mason, “Jews, Judaeans, Judaizing, Judaism,” 462-463. Mason has a more robust notion of what such adoption would have entailed, which I would temper with the remarks I made in chapter two, regarding John Scheid’s work on the *graecus ritus*.

²¹ Mason, “Jews, Judaizing, Judaism,” 464-466.

Nevertheless, Mason views the instances of ‘to Judaize’ (ἰουδαΐζειν) that occur in Galatians as a distinctively ‘Christian’ usage of the term in narrowly restricted contexts.²² While his interpretation improves upon a number of longstanding assumptions both about the nature of the activities to which Paul is referring—for instance, that Paul was deeply committed to Judaism, that he strived to better understand the practices and thought of his people through intense study of ancestral tradition, and that he took great pride in his advanced standing in Judaism—and about the normative status of those imagined activities for first-century Judeans, the degree to which Paul marks a shift in the meaning of *ioudaismos* depends in part on how we imagine him fitting into a wider landscape of Judean religious activity.²³

This is not to suggest that Mason is wrong to think that Paul is using the term to mean something other than that he was originally of another ethnic background but adopted Judean practices, which would be hard to square with passages where he makes much of his ethnic credentials. Mason examines other instances where Paul uses this language and usefully concludes, first, that his notion of *ioudaizein* is closely tied to circumcision and law observance and, second, that he understands it to encompass both sides of the Judaizing equation, not only non-Judeans who adopt Judean practices, but also those Judeans who would compel them to do so, as he accuses Cephas of doing in Galatians 2:14. But

²² Mason, “Jews, Judaizing, Judaism,” 461.

²³ For the older view, see the remarks of Hans Dieter Betz’ in his *Hermeneia* commentary on Galatians [*Galatians: A Commentary on Paul’s Letter to the Churches in Galatia* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1979), 67-68].

whereas Mason restricts Paul's declaration of time *en ioudaismō* to the problem confronting the Galatians—that is, he admits to having once been *en ioudaismō* in order to model how the Galatians should similarly abandon Judaic practices and choose to follow Christ—I am not persuaded that the strongest reading of Galatians 1:13-14 lies in construing Paul's time *en ioudaismō* as a rhetorical device indicating a period when he shared the same mindset as Cephas and James.²⁴ Rather, it seems that Paul uses the language of *ioudaizein* to describe the activities of Judeans who possess some specialty in Judean practices and writings, although we cannot know whether that specialty necessarily involved non-Judeans as it does in Galatians, or might refer to a particular subset among Judeans.²⁵

What I would propose is that Paul's time *en ioudaismō* involved participation in some sort of social formation dedicated to the specialized interpretation of Judean writings, possibly but not necessarily in conjunction with the proactive diffusion of Judean practices. While that social formation might go hand and hand with Paul's claim in Philippians to have been a Pharisee and with Josephus' description of the activities of this group, the more important point is that his prior activities, Pharisaic or not, are consistent with freelance, self-authorized religious expertise. The proposition fits within the wider class of activity that we have been mapping, but gains further support from philological

²⁴ As Mason seems to suggest ("Jews, Judaizing, Judaism," 469).

²⁵ It seems that this even fits Mason's characterization of the term and its cognates as they appear in 2 Maccabees. For instance, when Judas Maccabeus calls for the support of his relatives who had remained ἐν τῷ ἰουδαϊσμῷ, the implication is that these people had great loyalty or even specialty in Judean practices, so much so that they become responsible for bringing back other Judeans and reinstating the law (8.1) (Mason, "Jews, Judaizing, Judaism," 467-468).

analysis of the language of Galatians 1:13-14. Paul refers to his activities as a particular ‘mode of life’ (ἀναστροφή), he describes his advancement using a verb associated with philosophical progress (προκόπειν), and he seems to allude to having a specific grade or rank within some group (συνηλικιώστης ἐν τῷ γένει μου) even if he showed greater aptitude and eagerness for the ancestral teachings than others in his cohort (περισσοτέρως ζηλωτὴς ὑπάρχων τῶν πατρικῶν μου παραδόσεων).²⁶

The *hapax legomenon*, *sunēlikīōstēs*, is usually taken literally to mean people of the same age as Paul, but would be a puzzling choice of words for articulating a simple age relationship. Paul enlists age metaphors elsewhere to discuss the *pneumatic* progress of the people in his own groups—for instance, when he reminds the Corinthians of a time when he could not speak to them as *pneumatic* people (ὡς πνευματικοῖς), but rather as fleshly people (ὡς σαρκίνοις), as infants in Christ—it is plausible that *sunēlikīōstēs* carries the sense not of people of the same age as Paul, but of people who were of the same grade or *en ioudaismō*.²⁷ With the adverb *perissoterōs* (περισσοτέρως), which, in reference to persons, implies an extraordinary or remarkable ability for learning, that the person in question is exceedingly wise or curious, he seems to be suggesting that he possessed a higher degree of skill or knowledge than befitted his station.²⁸

²⁶ Betz, *Galatians*, 68, n. 114; Gustav Stählin, “προκοπή,” *TDNT* 6.703-19.

²⁷ 1 Cor 3:1.

²⁸ *LSJ*, s.v.

As we saw in chapter one, voluntary associations of all stripes had internal hierarchies and idiosyncratic terminology for denoting offices, functions, and ranks within their groups. I would hypothesize that *sunēlikīōstēs* might furnish yet another example of language used to designate a rank or level of achievement within a specific group, not unlike Mithras cults differentiated the initiation grades of their members. The case for this reading is stronger since *sunēlikīōstēs* is combined with *prokopein*, again, a word commonly used to chart moral or other forms of philosophical progress. This is not to say that the form of progress in question necessarily had those exact overtones, but that an analogous concept of maturation and advancement according to the practices of a particular group accounts both for Paul's representation of his earlier mode of life and for his statements about the standing of his own followers.²⁹

Together, these lexical suggestions amount to an alternative picture of Paul's time *en ioudaismō*, one in which he participated in a group devoted to the study of Judean writings and other intellectual activities. Within this scenario his

²⁹ See Laura Dingeldein, "Paul and Moral Development in Early Christianity: Who Has the Mind of Christ?" (Ph.D. Dissertation; Brown University, 2014). In keeping with this interpretation, we might also consider the more general meaning of 'kind', 'sort', or 'group' for ἐν τῷ γένει μου in favor of the ethnic connotation of γένος, on account of which the statement is read, perhaps not incorrectly, as 'of my own people'. Of the term's six occurrences in Paul's writings, only one instance explicitly carries the latter connotation, Philippians 3:5, where he reminds readers that he is from the people of Israel (ἐκ γένους Ἰσραήλ), while 2 Corinthians 11:26 seems to do so implicitly, when Paul recounts resistance he encountered from his own people, as well as from the gentiles (κινδύνους ἐκ γένους, κινδύνους ἐξ ἔθνων). Notably, both of these instances of γένος follow the preposition ἐκ and are accompanied by further ethnic qualification—the people of Israel, or to contrast Paul's people with gentiles. Apart from the Galatians example, everywhere else he uses γένος to mean kinds or classes (In 1 Cor 12:10, 1 Cor 12:28, and 1 Cor 14:10). My larger redescription does not depend on taking γένος in this way, but the more restricted sense of kind or group fits well with that scenario. Since Galatians 1:1 does not use ἐκ but ἐν, paralleling ἐν Ἰουδαϊσμῷ, we might entertain the possibility that by ἐν τῷ γένει μου Paul has in mind other people in the group ἐν Ἰουδαϊσμῷ. I raise this as more of an observation than an argument, with full admission that the parallel is forced.

admission of having then ‘persecuted’ the assembly of God has a somewhat different tenor. As we have seen in the preceding chapters, rivalries between freelance experts were rife in the first century and most acute among intellectualizing experts who could impeach one another’s teachings through the production of writings. When Paul recounts having ‘pursued’ or ‘gone after’ the assembly, I am inclined to construe his meaning along the lines of intellectual competition between like specialists, as opposed to casting it in language suggestive of inter-religious tension or the top-down suppression of a new religious movement. At the very least, *diōken* (διώκειν) should not be translated ‘to persecute,’ an option reserved exclusively for New Testament occurrences of the word, in favor of one of its more neutral alternatives. But the same verb carries the additional sense of ‘to prosecute,’ ‘to impeach,’ or ‘to accuse,’ which fits well with the image of Paul trying to thoroughly discredit the teachings or claims of a rival group of Judean specialists. The additional emphasis that he places on having tried to destroy or ruin (πορθέω) the assembly does not, in my opinion, undermine that reading and can be attributed without difficulty to his rhetorical aim in raising the matter.

We need not look far afield to find an example of a roughly contemporary Judean religious group whose organization and practices lend credence to the interpretation of Galatians 1:13-14 that I am proposing; the Dead Sea Scrolls provide several indications of these characteristics. *The Rule of the Community* (1QS) 6.8-11 speaks to internal differentiation among group members according to rank when

the following instructions are given concerning gatherings: “This is the rule for the session of the Many: each (member) in his order. The priests shall sit first, the elders second, and the rest of all the people shall sit each (member) in his order. And thus they shall be asked concerning judgment, concerning any counsel, and (any)thing which is for the Many, each man presenting his knowledge/teaching to the council of the Community. No man may speak...before one whose registered rank is before him.”³⁰ Not only does this rule speak to the organization of group members into different orders, but it also implies that each order corresponds to teachings or a degree of knowledge befitting its hierarchical rank within the group. While some ranks might actually correspond to attributed forms of status—it is possible, for example, that some of the priests within this group may have belonged to families of priestly descent—one gets the impression from the Damascus Document that many of the ranks within the group reflect status acquired through textual study.

1QS is also explicit about the prominent role of intellectual practices in the religious activities of the Community. Numerous references promote study of the Instruction (תורה), and refer to teachings revealed from these writings that exhort members to ethical conduct: truth, righteousness, justice, fealty, and circumspect walking, to keep faithfulness, and to pay for iniquity by works of judgment and

³⁰ *The Dead Sea Scrolls*. Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek texts with English translations. Vol. I: *Rule of the Community and Related Documents* (ed. James H. Charlesworth; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck; Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1994).

suffering affliction.³¹ Where there are ten members there must not be lacking a man who studies the Instruction day and night continually, each man relieving the other.³² As the author(s) explain, the writings known within the group as the Instruction contain secret teachings that are revealed through the intense study of individual members and then shared with the rest of the group. Central concepts and practices of the group derive from one such interpretation, of Isaiah 40:3.

Everything which has been concealed from Israel and is found by somebody who studies—he shall not conceal it for fear of a backsliding spirit. When these become the Community in Israel they shall separate themselves from the session of the men of deceit in order to depart into the wilderness to prepare there the Way of the Lord; as it is written: “In the wilderness prepare the way of the Lord, make level in the desert a highway for our God.” This (alludes to) the study of the Instruction wh[ic]h he commanded through Moses to do, according to everything which has been revealed (from) time to time, and according to that which the prophets have revealed by his Holy Spirit (1QS 8:10-16).

This verse not only justifies the location and arrangement of their social formation—they have separated themselves from the so-called men of deceit and departed into the wilderness—it also furnishes a concept, ‘the Way of the Lord’, that seems to encapsulate all of the group’s activities.³³

To be clear, the Dead Sea Scrolls Community is not the only Judean social formation that would have fit the same general characteristics that I have isolated

³¹ E.g., 1QS 1.9, 8.1.

³² 1QS 6.6-8.

³³ The oft-repeated phrase the ‘Community in Israel’ also provides an interesting *comparandum* for Paul’s γένος ἐν Ἰουδαϊσμῷ. The Community in Israel is at once ethnically continuous with but also distinct from all of Israel, from whom God has concealed secret teachings that can only be revealed by specialized study.

for comparison with Paul's earlier practices. Textual skills and knowledge, as well as interpretive practices, seem to have been central to activities of other Judean groups in the first century, where they are also likely to have gone hand in hand with schemes for organizing degrees of learning. Nor am I suggesting that Paul was a member of that particular group. Rather, I suggest the Community as one example of a type of Judean social formation whose practices are consistent with the sort of scenario that I am proposing, and one for which our evidence happens to be of a comparable quality to the Pauline epistles.

The final rule from 1QS that supports my reading of Galatians 1:13-14 concerns the matter of making public the teachings and revelations of the group in order to contend with rivals or perhaps to critique the practices and authorities of the Jerusalem temple. In 9.12-14 members are reminded of the qualities of the Master, who has learned all the understanding which has been found according to the times and the statute of the Endtime, and who shall separate and weigh the Sons of Righteousness according to their spirits. Presumably this eschatological scenario is the crux of the Community's revealed knowledge and much is at stake in confining the knowledge of these mysteries to its own initiates. Thus, the following statement enjoins members from debating their merits with outsiders: "But one must not argue nor quarrel with the men of the pit, so that the counsel of the Instruction might be concealed in the midst of the men of deceit. One must

argue with true knowledge and righteous judgment (only with) the chosen of the Way, each according to his spirit and according to the norm of the Endtime.”³⁴

What interests me about this rule is that it implies a habit of specialists in Judean wisdom publicly proclaiming their respective teachings, revelations, or textual interpretations either to contend with other self-authorized experts or else to challenge the practices of institutional religious officials. Unlike the Community, however, whose leaders view the temple priesthood as their principal adversaries, Paul’s rivals in both prior and present pursuits seem to be other self-authorized experts. Recall my suggestion that we might read Paul’s testimony of having ‘gone after’ or ‘tried to discredit’ the assembly of God through the same lens, in light of the preponderance of allusions to intellectual stakes that appear in the verses in question. Such efforts to defend one’s own interpretations of Judean writings and to impeach those of others are at home within a particular class of religious activity, one populated by experts engaging in the same intellectualized forms of religion that emerge both from Dead Sea Scrolls and from Paul’s letters. In much the same way that 1QS warns against thus engaging with the men of the pit for fear of revealing knowledge that God has intentionally concealed from them, we might imagine Paul disputing the claims of the assembly of God in defense of the specialized interpretations of his own former group. I would also suggest that a similar dynamic accounts for the situation that Paul describes in Galatians 2:4, of ‘pseudo-brothers’ secretly brought in to spy on a private meeting

³⁴ 1QS 9.16-18. The instruction against quarrelling with men of the pit also appears in MS D, where the phrasing is “A man should not argue and should not quarrel.”

of the apostles, where the concern was comparable to that in 1QS 9.17 of men of deceit acquiring the Community's concealed knowledge and possibly even using that knowledge to inform against them.³⁵ The emphasis that the Community places on concealing its revealed knowledge contrasts with Paul's desire to make the mysteries of Christ known to all gentiles, but his letters are not entirely absent of such rhetoric. For instance, he urges the Corinthians to avoid being yoked together with the unfaithful (ἀπίστοις), "For what do righteousness and lawlessness have in common, or what association has light with darkness? What concord has Christ with Beliar, or what share has faithfulness with unfaithfulness? And what agreement does the temple of God have with idols? For you are the living temple of God" (2 Cor. 6:14-15).

Such a picture is continuous with places in Paul's writings where he invokes other kinds of Judean experts as rhetorical opponents in order to dismantle their claims and practices. As Stanley Stowers has shown, in Romans 2:17-29 Paul employs speech-in-character to create an imaginary apostrophe to a fictitious Judean interlocutor, a device that appears commonly in diatribe and often takes as its object a pretentious teacher or student of philosophy.³⁶

If you call yourself a Judean and rely on the law and proclaim to be in God and know his will and, having received instruction from the law, assay different positions, and persuade yourself that you are a guide for the blind,

³⁵ A phenomenon that harkens back to the discussion in chapter two of the role of informers in identifying and offering evidence against participants in religious activities already under investigation by Roman magistrates.

³⁶ Stowers, *A Rereading of Romans*, 144-145.

a light for those who are in darkness, an educator of the senseless, a teacher of children, having in the law the semblance of knowledge and truth, you, therefore, who teaches others, will you not teach yourself? While you command publically 'Do not steal', do you steal? As you are saying 'Do not commit adultery', do you commit adultery? As you are declaring the images abominable, do you rob temples/the temple? You who proclaim in the law, do you dishonor God by deviating from the law? For, as it is written, "The name of God is blasphemed among the gentiles because of you all."

The first thing to note about this passage is that it, too, resonates with one set of intellectual practices commonly linked with Judeans, namely, instruction in ethical tenets stemming from a concept of the law as a program for self-mastery and a repository of truth and understanding. This Judean is presented as an instructor in moral matters. And in keeping with the sense of Galatians 1:13-14 that I have advocated, Paul describes him as one who scrutinizes other positions, by which we might infer that he means other ethical programs and teachings that purport to transmit rarified forms of knowledge. In so doing, Paul also confirms many of the characteristics of ethnically coded practices that we have already encountered: the teacher alleges to have a special relationship with God by virtue of being an ethnic Judean, he claims special expertise in the law on this basis, and offers teachings predicated on Judean writings.

One effect of adopting this rhetorical mode is that certain of Paul's readers would have heard the dialogue as 'philosopher talk', familiar from settings such as a market or stoa where teachers publicly addressed students. Furthermore, there is an unmistakable undertone of charlatanry in the charges levied against these fictive opponents. Stowers cites places in Plutarch and Epictetus where each chides

the superficiality, improper motivations, and ambition of would-be teachers, who might study philosophy but cannot apply it in practice.³⁷ But this particular teacher is no ordinary philosopher; he is a teacher of Judaic wisdom and practices and one whose students are gentiles. It is therefore striking that Paul expands the scope of philosophical diatribe to denounce his opponent using the same stock charges that Josephus levies against the Judean deceivers at Rome: accusing him of theft, of improper relations with married women, of despoiling temples or *the* Temple, and of sullyng God's reputation among non-Judeans through his actions.³⁸

While Paul's teacher serves a clear rhetorical purpose, this does not alter his verisimilitude to real actors at Rome, namely, Judean wisdom teachers and other kinds of religious experts, who would have been both intelligible and plentiful to his audience there.³⁹ As with his foregrounding of prophecies, the concentration of references to the law and to the Israelites in Romans makes sense in light of the evidence we have considered for the salience of Judean experts, writings, and other

³⁷ Stowers, *A Rereading of Romans*, 146-148.

³⁸ Also noted by Lloyd Gaston, who suggests that Paul may have Fulvia incident in mind when he thus accuses the Judean teacher: "What then is the meaning of the three accusations of theft, adultery, and robbing temples? The strange last case is the most absurd if one is thinking of a universal indictment; as Sanders says, 'Did [all Jews] rob temples?' No, but four did, and it may be that Paul even has that specific case in mind. The scandal of swindling the proselyte Fulvia of gifts she was sending to the Jerusalem temple in C.E. 19 was great enough to have at least four thousand Jews expelled from Rome, something serious enough to have been long remembered. It was also a great setback to the missionary enterprise" [*Paul and the Torah* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1987), 138-139].

³⁹ Pace Arnal, who views this as a general rhetorical address aimed at anyone of Israel who could ever behave unrighteously despite having the law [William E. Arnal, "Bringing Paul and the Corinthians Together? A Rejoinder and Some Proposals on Redescription and Theory," in *Redescribing Paul and the Corinthians* (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2011), 75-104, esp. 90].

distinctively Judean practices in first-century Rome.⁴⁰ In other words, Paul's recognition as a plausible expert in Judean religion would have been all the more dependent on engaging satisfactorily with notions of what 'Judean religion' entailed in a place of widespread and intimate familiarity with such experts and practices. Taking positions on those predictable features—matters of law observance, circumcision, the interpretation of Judean writings, and so forth—locates Paul intelligibly within this particular subset of freelance expertise, even if the positions that he takes differ from the teachings of his rivals.⁴¹

While there will be more to say about Paul's literary activities, the point in bringing them up here is to suggest that his status as an ethnic Judean predisposed him to fashion his religious expertise along the lines of skills and practices for which Judeans were best known, many of which involved their holy writings. Moreover, the particular writings that he utilizes as well as how he utilizes them have parallels in the instruments and practices of other freelance experts in Judean cultural offerings, whether diviners of prophecies, teachers of ethics, or some combination thereof.⁴² Although Paul creates an innovative work-around for the

⁴⁰ See the arguments of chapter three.

⁴¹ Cf. Gaston, *Paul and the Torah*, 139: "Paul is not accusing all Jews but Jewish missionaries, and he is accusing not all missionaries but only some...But most importantly he does not speak of Jewish 'theology' but of the bad effect such activity has for attracting proselytes." While I have already critiqued the categories of 'conversion' and 'proselytism' with which Gaston is working, I do not disagree with the general thrust of his point, that Paul's comments are aimed specifically at rival experts in Judean religion.

⁴² Our ability to appreciate these points of continuity owes much, of course, to scholarship growing out of the 'new perspective' on Paul, which has significantly recast whatever negative or contradictory statements he once appeared to make about Judeans and Judean practices.

ethnic particularity of ‘Judean religion’, one that extends the special relationship that Judeans share with their native deity to non-Judeans, a significant measure of his expertise lies in maintaining and even exaggerating his own ethnic status for the sake of his recognition and appeal among people already interested in foreign or otherwise novel religious teachings or services, and all the more so for participants in Judean versions thereof.⁴³ Paul’s “kindred according to the flesh” are thus integral to his entrepreneurial interests; the cachet of his ethnic status is a prerequisite for his traction and success.

But, again, Paul’s seems to be a twofold prerogative and differentiating himself from rival Judean experts, and also from other varieties of experts, involves innovating upon those basic features while insisting upon the priority of his own scheme. This is not to suggest that there was any typical or ‘orthodox’ arrangement of Judean practices among freelance experts. To the contrary, the evidence that we considered in chapter three suggests that fulfilling general expectations about foreign religion left any given expert free to introduce other elements into his or her program at will. Paul devises a religious program in which predictable features of Judean religion are present but not ethnically particular, in which Judean writings are an indispensable source of authority but support novel interpretations that justify and even necessitate his religious services.

One of Paul’s innovations lies in the story he tells about the Judean writings, namely, that God has laced them with secret eschatological wisdom,

⁴³ See the discussion of chapter three.

cryptic indications of his impending designs for the present order.⁴⁴ As an ethnic Judean Paul, too, possesses natural authority about these writings and the special knowledge they contain. Unlike other Judeans, however, Paul has received certain mysteries from God that illuminate new dimensions of meaning within them. He alludes to at least two means by which he came to receive these mysteries: through a direct revelation of the resurrected Christ and elsewhere when “someone he knows,” presumably Paul himself, was swept up to into a heavenly realm where he saw and heard secret things.⁴⁵

As a result, he is now able to adduce esoteric knowledge from the Judean writings that is of particular significance for non-Judeans, “a mystery kept secret for long ages but now disclosed through the prophetic writings made known to all the gentiles,” a form of salvation made available through Jesus Christ.⁴⁶ While the Judeans continue to read the old covenant with a veil over their minds, the same veil that Moses put over his face in order to keep them from gazing at the end of the glory that was being set aside, those who accept Christ are able to see the glory with unveiled faces.⁴⁷ “When one turns to the Lord, the veil is removed” (2 Cor 16). As I suggested in chapter three, not unlike Orphic *bricoleurs*, who drew on and creatively combined elements from the vast repertoire of themes from Greek myth, Paul’s mythical artifice is tailored to initiation into the mysteries of

⁴⁴ 1 Cor 2:7: “God’s wisdom, secret and hidden, which God decreed before the ages for our glory.”

⁴⁵ Rom 3:1-2, 1 Cor 15:8-9 (the revelation of Christ); 2 Cor 12:2-4 (the visit to the third heaven).

⁴⁶ Rom 16:25-26; Rom 3:21-22.

⁴⁷ 2 Cor 3:13-15.

Christ.⁴⁸ The parallel is strengthened when he exhorts his audiences to think of his retinue as “servants of Christ and stewards of God’s mysteries” (1 Cor 4:1). Of course, while the *content* of his particular secrets might have been novel, Paul is hardly unique among first-century Judeans in adducing mysteries and prophecies from scripture and otherwise receiving messages from God through revelations, dreams, or other methods of divination.

Having received these mysteries concerning the gentiles, Paul makes it his ambition “to proclaim the *evangelion*, not where Christ has already been named, so that I do not build upon someone else’s foundation, but as it is written, ‘those who have never been told of him shall see, and those who have never heard of him shall understand’” (Rom 15:20-21). Both this citation of Isaiah 51:15 as well as the citation of Habbakuk 2:4 in Romans 1:17 seem to be ciphers for Paul’s religious program writ large, keys that he has extrapolated from prophetic sources and imbued with special meanings that justify his present activities.⁴⁹

In the interest of teaching the *evangelion*, he exhibits impressive flexibility: “To the Judeans I became as a Judean, in order to win Judeans. To those under the law I became as one under the law (though I myself am not under the law) so that

⁴⁸ Graf and Iles Johnston, *Ritual Texts for the Afterlife*, 94-136. For a redescription of Paul as sort of *bricoleur* see Arnal, “Bringing Paul and the Corinthians Together?” 80-82.

⁴⁹ The fact that many of his quotations do not agree exactly with the Greek of the received versions of these texts may even reflect his own reading of the verse, especially in Romans 2:24, where he seems to substitute the Judean teacher for gentiles as the subject of the condemnation—to “the name of God is blasphemed *among the gentiles* because of you”—when comparable statements in Isaiah 54 and Ezekiel 36:20 both refer to Egyptians, Assyrians, and other peoples profaning the name of God of their own accord. An equally likely explanation is that Paul is either drawing upon a familiar expression without necessarily calling to mind its textual basis, or that he knows a version of one of the texts where it occurs that contains a variation on the verse.

I might win those outside the law. To the weak I became weak so that I might win the weak. I have become all things to all people, that I might by all means save some” (1 Cor 9:20-22). As Abraham Malherbe has shown, the statement is a variation on a well-known philosophical *topos* developed most fully by the Cynics, who viewed the ideal teacher as one capable of adapting his or her approach to the moral condition of each person or group.⁵⁰ In the context of his activities Paul’s range presents him as the sort of teacher who is both willing and able to cater to the *pneumatic* progress of any gentile, irrespective of the inherently flawed gentile condition that he diagnoses in Romans 1:18-2:5 or any other conceivable criterion. A comparable statement occurs in 1 Thessalonians 2, where he likens himself to a gentle nurse patiently committed to the individual progress of members of his group while among them, an image commonly employed by Cynics to characterize the ideal philosopher, as opposed to the overly harsh methods of ones who confused reviling (λοιδορία) with the practice of frank speech (παρησία), or to the abusiveness of ‘charlatans’, who made up for a lack of substance by railing at the crowd.⁵¹

While the weight of the goal of moral progress within Paul’s program remains to be seen—that is, to what extent he emphasizes the moral condition of

⁵⁰ Abraham J. Malherbe, “Antisthenes and Odysseus, and Paul at War,” in *Paul and the Popular Philosophers* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1989), 91-119; Clarence E. Glad, *Paul and Philodemus: Adaptability in Epicurean and Early Christian Psychagogy*. Supplements to Novum Testamentum 81 (Leiden and New York: Brill, 1995).

⁵¹ Abraham J. Malherbe, “‘Gentle as a Nurse’: The Cynic Background to 1 Thessalonians 2,” in *Paul and the Popular Philosophers* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1989), 35-48, esp. 40-41.

his audience members relative to other practices—the philosophical discourse of adaptability is germane to portraying himself not only as an expert for any and all people, but also as a Judean expert of value for non-Judeans. Furthermore, Malherbe demonstrates that Paul’s choices of language and concepts do not convey the impression that he is equivalent to just any philosopher; he styles himself using the precise images (the gentle nurse, Odysseus) and characteristics (disinterest, willingness to undergo suffering for the sake of his truthful teachings) that contemporary writers enlisted to differentiate ‘good’ philosophers from wandering ‘charlatans’ or ‘hucksters’ of the sort who were plentiful especially in large cities.⁵² Of so-called Cynic versions of this type, Dio Chrysostom writes, and in so writing positions himself as the arbiter of Cynic norms: “They must make a living.... Posting themselves at street corners, in alley-ways, and at temple gates, they pass around the hat and deceive lads and sailors and crowds of that sort by stringing together puns and philosophical commonplaces and ribald jokes of the marketplace.”⁵³

⁵² A point that Malherbe revisits in a number of pieces: “*Mē Genoito* in the Diatribe and Paul,” in *Paul and the Popular Philosophers* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1989), 25-33, esp. 32 where he argues that Paul’s way of rejecting an objection or false inference is “more characteristic of the type of schoolroom instruction in which Epictetus engaged than street corner preaching”; idem, “Gentle as a Nurse,” 41, 45-47.

⁵³ Dio *Orat.* 77/78.34-35 (trans. Malherbe, “Gentle as a Nurse,” 38 and n. 20). Compare these sentiments with Paul’s caution about any who would oppose the teachings that the Romans have learned, people who do not serve Christ, but their own bellies, and who by golden speech (χρηστολογία) and flattery (εὐλογία) beguile the hearts of the simple-minded (Rom 16:18). Note the parody on Dio’s own epithet, which was not uncommon appellation for notable Greek rhetoricians and philosophers, and Paul’s accusation of golden speech. On the accusation of serving their bellies see Karl Olav Sandnes, *Belly and Body in the Pauline Epistles* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004).

Dio's parsing of types of Cynic philosophers, as well as Paul's more general parsing of varieties of freelance experts by means of philosophical discourses would have accomplished at least two goals among their respective audiences: the author is appointed as a sort of authority on the practices in question at the same time as any purported authority whose practices contrast or fall short of the proposed norms is marginalized. Malherbe elaborates, "The common marketplace preachers are accused of error (*apatē, planē*), flattery (*kolakeiai*), and preaching for reputation (*doxa*) and money (*chrēmata*), and to satisfy their sensual appetites (*hēdonē*). A special complaint is that the transients were sometimes brutally harsh rather than seeking to benefit their hearers."⁵⁴ This is not to suggest that Dio and Paul understood their characterizations of 'bad' philosophers in exactly the same way, but that both utilize a strategy known from philosophical discourses as a tool to differentiate competitive landscapes of similar offerings. Unlike Dio, whose interest appears to lie in setting institutional boundaries for Cynic philosophy, I see Paul using this tool to shore up his authority as an intellectual *religious* expert, whose *religious* program contends with but ultimately surpasses philosophical teachings.⁵⁵ Beyond exhibiting the marks of a 'good' philosopher, he again has the

⁵⁴ Malherbe, "Gentle as a Nurse," 45.

⁵⁵ Cf. Malherbe, who notes, "Paul adopts a manner of exhortation that most likely was familiar to his readers, and he uses popular philosophical traditions with which they can be expected to have been familiar, yet he does so in a way different from philosophical preachers of his day ["Exhortation in 1 Thessalonians," in *Paul and the Popular Philosophers* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1989), 49-66, cit. 50.

additional, if not primary, distinction of having received his teachings not from any human source, but directly from God through a revelation of Jesus Christ.⁵⁶

We are not in a position to judge whether Paul consciously appropriated different discursive modes, whether he deliberately assumed a number of specialist guises, or whether he designed an intentionally robust religious program. These elements of his self-presentation might reflect conscious choices that he made to cater to different audience members, or they might reflect his own self-understanding. But such elements are observable in Paul's letters and we can use them to imagine how he would have been received by his audiences and how they would have promoted his broad recognition, regardless of whether their primary frame of reference for his practices was that of Judean prophets, Judean ethical teachers, philosophers, textual diviners, or mystery initiators.

It is worth reiterating that none of those roles are mutually exclusive. Yet teasing out the different ways in which Paul's self-presentation might have been received helps us to see how he positioned himself within the wider landscape of freelance experts. To the extent that many freelance experts devised composite programs, we must avoid being dogmatic in our depictions of any of these types. Paul is a kind of expert in Judean practices but he also demonstrates facility with practices and concepts generally associated with philosophers and other kinds of

⁵⁶ E.g., Gal 1:11-12. I agree in one sense with Malherbe's distinction between Paul's grounding of the ethics that he espouses in religion, but not fully with the conclusion that he is unconcerned with the use of reason or the nature of character development because he prefers the sanctified rather than the rational life ("Exhortation in 1 Thessalonians," 61). Rather, I understand Paul to be subordinating the alleged benefits of philosophical practices to the benefits conferred by divine *pneuma*, a material and mindful substance that people receive through baptism and that will, in turn, promote ethical behavior.

teachers, as well as with initiators in the mysteries of foreign gods. He assembles his program from markedly Judean practices, exegesis and prophecy from Judean writings, contemporary philosophical doctrines, ethics, and initiation and purification rites. All of these elements, which could be parceled into categories such as mystery cults, philosophy, Judaism or Christianity, are mutually entailing.

Paul's second prerogative is all the more pronounced in his direct denunciations of rivals or opponents, who recur variously throughout his letters and whom he maligns with accusations that resemble Dio's depiction of marketplace philosophers, as well as Josephus' and Lucian's depictions of 'pseudo-prophets'.⁵⁷ He admonishes peddlers of God's word, super-apostles who proclaim another Christos and another gospel, pseudo-apostles, dogs, evil-workers, mutilators of the flesh (circumcisers), Judaizers, people claiming legitimacy as Hebrews, Israelites, and descendants of Abraham, and people teaching another Christ, another *pneuma*, and a different *evangelion*.⁵⁸ In 2 Corinthians 11, he writes, "I am not in the least inferior to these super-apostles (ὑπερλίαν ἀπόστολοι). I may be untrained in speech but not in knowledge.... Such boasters are false apostles (ψευδοαπόστολοι), deceitful workers (ἐργάται δόλιοι), disguising themselves as

⁵⁷ Although Paul uses his own distinctive nomenclature, referring to 'pseudo-brothers' and 'pseudo-apostles', there is equivalence both in the effect of his denunciations and even partially in the kind of denunciation (someone is a *pseudo* version of the role in question).

⁵⁸ E.g., 1 Cor 4:19; 2 Cor 11:4-5; 2 Cor 11:22-23; Gal 1:6-9, 3:1; Rom 16:17-18; Phil 3:2-4, 3:18-19.

apostles of Christ. And no wonder! Even Satan disguises himself as an angel of light.”⁵⁹

Many of Paul’s references to rivals are explicit, as when he tells the Corinthians, “I will stay in Ephesos until Pentecost, for a wide door for effective work has opened to me and there are many opponents (ἀντικείμενοι πολλοί)” (1 Cor 16:8-9). On some occasions he even provides a sense of the terms of such rivalries, for instance, in Galatians, where he is responding to a scenario in which other authorities on Christ have insisted that people who already received his teachings must adopt Judaic practices. Other references to rivals or competitive dynamics are subtler. Paul’s statement in 1 Corinthians 15:32, that he fought with beasts at Ephesus, has been taken literally to mean that he faced wild animals in the arena and figuratively to refer to a battle with the opponents he mentions in 16:8-9. While the latter sense is more plausible, Malherbe calls our attention to a more nuanced connotation of the expression. Among philosophers of the first and second centuries CE, fighting and killing wild beasts was a popular metaphor both for internal struggles against the passions and pleasure of the flesh, and also for characterizing a philosophical or religious opponent.⁶⁰ The second usage had an additional anti-Epicurean cast since this school was regularly charged with living a

⁵⁹ 2 Cor 11:5, 13.

⁶⁰ Abraham J. Malherbe, “The Beasts at Ephesus,” in *Paul and the Popular Philosophers* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1989), 79-89, esp. 82-86.

bestial life.⁶¹ The habit of describing rivals in terms resonant of Epicureans is not unknown in Judean and Christian literature of the period, and also crops up with an interesting twist in Lucian's *Alexander*, where the most vocal objectors to the prophet's new shrine are Epicureans and Christians.⁶² Here and elsewhere it is valuable to note Paul's persistent tendency of using, in addition to more direct denunciations, subtle devices to depict his rivals primarily as other kinds of intellectuals.⁶³

Assorted publications have taken up the topic of Paul's rivals on the basis that their quantity and character inform our reconstruction of the 'early Church'.⁶⁴ The range of identifications to emerge from these studies is remarkable and includes, but is not limited to, proponents of Petrine Christianity, whose Jacobean/legalism clashed with the Hellenistic/libertine thrust of Pauline

⁶¹ E.g., Lucian *Bis acc.* 20 and *Fug.* 19. Malherbe, "The Beasts at Ephesus," 84-86. Malherbe points to other places in Paul's writings that indicate awareness of and deliberate engagement with this bias, such as his quotation from Isaiah 22:13, "Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die," would have been reminiscent of the cavalier slogan attributed to the Epicureans by their critics, and when he describes the immorality of the Israelites in 1 Corinthians 10:7 as *phagein*, *pein*, and *paizein* ("eating," "drinking," and "playing").

⁶² See Richard Jungkuntz, "Fathers, Heretics, and Epicureans," *JEH* 17 (1966): 3-10; Malherbe, "The Beasts at Ephesus," 87-88 and n. 72. Lucian, *Alex.* 25, 38.

⁶³ As Malherbe notes of the language of 2 Cor 10, "The reasonings (*logismoi*) of his opponents are the fortifications that protect their every thought (*pan noēma*) against the knowledge of God (*gnōsis tou theou*). On the surface, this appears to be an intellectual confrontation: Paul proclaims the knowledge of God which overpowers the corrupt thoughts of his opponents" ("Antisthenes and Odysseus, and Paul at War," 118).

⁶⁴ This was the assumption and objective of F. C. Baur in his two volume work *Paul, the Apostle of Jesus Christ—His Life and Work, His Epistles and Doctrine* (2nd ed.; trans. Eduard Zeller; London: Williams and Norgate, 1876; reprinted Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2003). For an overview of scholarly interpretations of the opponents see: E. Earle Ellis, "Paul and his Opponents: Trends in the Research," in *Christianity, Judaism, and other Graeco-Roman Cults I* (ed. Jacob Neusner; Leiden: Brill, 1975), 264-273; Jerry L. Sumney, "Studying Paul's Opponents: Advances and Challenges," in *Paul and His Opponents. Pauline Studies 2* (ed. Stanley E. Porter; Leiden: Brill, 2005), 7-58.

Christianity, the Jerusalem apostles, Judaizers, Gnostics, Gnostics influenced by the Essenes and mystery religions, Pneumatics, divine men, syncretists, traveling preachers, non-Christian teachers, Cybele-Attis cult eunuchs, Platonists, Pythagoreans, ascetics, and practitioners of magic.⁶⁵ The same set of possibilities encompasses rival teachers or movements as well as members of Paul's groups who were susceptible to such countervailing doctrines.⁶⁶

While scholars have moved away from the presupposition that there is only one sort of opposition to Paul in the early Church, most maintain that Paul's rivals were members of groups and that 'the Church' is a manifest presence in such encounters, whether the opposition occurred within it or whether it came from outside groups.⁶⁷ And while greater caution is exercised in seeking parallels between Paul's language for describing adversaries and specific groups that were present in his historical environments, there is still considerable speculation about the 'belief-systems' of his rivals.⁶⁸ Neither do I think that a normative institutional

⁶⁵ Some scholars also propose specific and stable referents for certain terms that Paul uses to denounce rivals, suggesting, for example, that 'super apostle' corresponds to the Jerusalem apostles while 'pseudo-apostle' refers to his opponents in Corinth. For the discussion of and the corresponding bibliography for each of these propositions see Sumney, "Studying Paul's Opponents"; N. H. Taylor, "Apostolic Identity and the Conflicts in Corinth and Galatia," in *Paul and His Opponents*. Pauline Studies 2 (ed. Stanley E. Porter; Leiden: Brill, 2005), 99-123, esp. 118 and n. 90.

⁶⁶ See the discussion in Stowers, "Kinds of Myths, Meals, and Power," 107-108.

⁶⁷ E.g., Sumney, "Studying Paul's Opponents," 47.

⁶⁸ Attributing these radically different reconstructions to a flawed, inconsistent, and at times circular methodology, Sumney concludes, "The conversation between Christians and other religious movements of the time should be assumed, but we cannot assume that Christians simply import the view of another group whole cloth. By exercising more caution in this aspect of our method, we may be able to achieve more certainly (though perhaps less specificity) about the situations particular letters address, and more clarity about the shape of the early Christian

backdrop for his activities, that is, a coordinated ‘movement’ or ‘Church’ is evident in Paul’s letters, nor do I think it is productive to discuss his opposition as a matter of conflicting beliefs or doctrines, irrespective of whether these are cast as intramural or extramural disagreements.

The first assumption implicitly invokes the category ‘Christianity’, when Paul suggests that authorities on Christ offered competing versions of pliable concepts and practice that had yet to stabilize into any form with clear priority at the time he wrote.⁶⁹ It also implies concepts of orthodoxy and heresy that are likewise anachronistic, insofar as, by opposing Paul, these false teachers are cast as the corrupting agents of a tradition that extended back to the teachings of Jesus and his immediate followers. As Stowers argues, “If Paul and the apostles preached the gospel and that led to conversion and the formation of communities, then deviation from the unity of belief and sentiment implied in the concept of community must be like heresy. It was departure from an original state of purity in

movement” (Sumney, “Studying Paul’s Opponents,” 58). While I am sympathetic to recent critiques of the desire to make definite correlations between rivals, about whom Paul speaks so sparingly, and specific known actors or groups, I am more skeptical about the unexamined notion of a choate ‘early Christian movement’ whose shape can be clarified by abiding stricter limits on how we identify true opponents and their ‘belief systems’.

⁶⁹ One notable exception to this assumption is Wayne A. Meeks, *The First Urban Christians: The Social World of the Apostle Paul* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1983), 132: “The earlier apostles, in Paul’s terms, were in fact a large and, so far as we can see, not well-defined group.” Although his letters are themselves instruments for attempting to achieve such stability and priority, there are indications throughout them that Paul encountered substantial pushback both from the groups he hoped to forge and also, so it would appear, from rival experts of many varieties. Although I will discuss the nature of the pushback Paul encountered from his own groups at a later point in this chapter, for fuller discussions see the paired pieces of Jonathan Z. Smith, “Re: Corinthians,” in *Redescribing Paul and the Corinthians* (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2011), 17–34 and Stowers, “Kinds of Myths, Meals, and Power,” *passim*.

thought and action.”⁷⁰ The second assumption contains two parts: first, that contestations among Christ authorities, or between Christ authorities and ‘outside’ opponents, were a matter of conflicting beliefs, as opposed to a matter of different authorizing strategies, claims, and practices; and second, that such beliefs originated from groups or movement as opposed to independent actors.⁷¹ Not only is it the case that many freelance experts were unattached to regular groups, but our evidence also suggests that many did not participate in the production of ‘beliefs’ of the sort that some scholars have in mind in their reconstructions. The fact that Paul presents himself and some opponents as kinds of intellectuals provides some indication that the subset of freelance expertise he inhabited was prone to making elaborate claims and devising robust religious or philosophical programs.⁷² But such emphases need not occur in every specialized offering, nor did any given offering encapsulate the positions of a larger movement.

⁷⁰ Stanley Stowers, “The Concept of ‘Community’ and the History of Early Christianity,” *MTSR* 23 (2011): 238-256, esp. 243.

⁷¹ These assumptions are less pronounced in N. H. Taylor’s contribution to the same volume of essays, where the author argues, “[T]he parties Paul opposes must be examined individually, and not defined exclusively in terms of their own broader theological, missiological, and ecclesiastical agenda. I wish to argue also that the conflicts reflected in the Pauline literature cannot be understood in terms of doctrinal differences. Rather, the central issue is one of legitimate teaching and disciplinary authority in and over the early Christian communities. Paul’s letters are assertions of authority, and claims to legitimacy where is contested” (“Apostolic Identity and Conflicts,” 99). Nevertheless, Taylor still presumes a coordinated Christian movement and institutional structures (e.g., the church at Antioch) that conferred authority and legitimacy on certain apostles and challenged the claims of others.

⁷² Stowers, “Kinds of Myths, Meals, and Power,” 108: “Paul does have some interest in religion with a certain focus on right and wrong positions, but one can explain his interest only within the social conditions of a field of intellectualist competition.” Also Meeks, *The First Urban Christians*, 104: “Paul and the other founders and leaders of those groups engaged aggressively in the business of creating a new social reality. They held and elaborated a distinctive set of beliefs, some of them expressed in dramatic claims that proved pregnant with metaphor.”

The context of the religion of freelance experts, which has been absent from these valuable discussions, offers a plausible social setting for competition between self-authorized independent actors, who might communicate in any number of ways with one another and with other groups and institutions. Thus framed, Paul's rivalries need not involve hypotheses about certain actors, circumstances, or points of disagreement, the details of which are conjectural and quickly supplanted by another unverifiable hypothesis. Nor must we have an exact definition of what constitutes opposition or opponents because complex competitive dynamics were fundamental to this class of activity.⁷³ Whether we train our lens on the wider phenomenon of specialized offerings or focus it more narrowly on varieties of Judean experts, on varieties of writer-intellectuals, on varieties of mystery initiators, or on varieties of authorities on Christ, we may discuss competitive dynamics in Paul's letters without needing either to reconcile these with a concept of 'the Church' or to identify specific opposing figures, groups, or 'beliefs'.⁷⁴

Similarly, Paul's efforts to distinguish himself from other types of freelance experts do not require that he was explicitly accused of acting a particular type,

⁷³ A concern raised by Stanley E. Porter in "Did Paul Have Opponents in Rome and What Were They Opposing?" in *Paul and His Opponents*. *Pauline Studies 2* (ed. Stanley E. Porter; Leiden: Brill, 2005), 149-168.

⁷⁴ Like Paul himself, many freelance experts devised composite programs and services that would be impossible to reconstruct without the same kind of evidence we have for his own, namely, a series of letters he wrote to reinforce those teachings. The notion that we can recover the detailed positions of specific actors from the language he uses to denounce them is flawed on those grounds alone, but all the more so when we recall that Paul's discursive characterizations of opponents is potentially as biased as Lucian's portraits of Alexander and Peregrinus. He has a personal stake in maligning or distorting their activities and in a manner that reinforces his own authority.

but do suggest there were other such experts in the cities where he operated, with whom he was in competition.⁷⁵ There are a few occasions on which Paul does seem to be responding to criticisms leveled against him by rivals, for instance, in 2 Cor 10:1-6, where he uses imagery of weapons and fortification to refute the charge against him by “certain persons who reason that we are conducting ourselves according to the flesh (κατὰ σάρκα περιπατοῦντας)” (2 Cor 10:2).⁷⁶ Here the accusation seems to be one of inconsistency, either in teachings or in behavior, and possibly also of interest; he uses comparable language of the worldly resources (σαρκικά) that he solicits on behalf of holy people (ἅγιοι) residing in Jerusalem in exchange for the pneumatic resources (πνευματικοῖς) that they have generously shared.⁷⁷ Although scholars have shied away from any appearance of interest or profit in Paul’s activities, it would be wholly unsurprising in the context of specialist activity if rivals were to denounce him in such terms, irrespective of whether or not there was merit to the accusation.

Competitive interests also account for the different positions that Paul takes on notable Judean practices such as law observance and circumcision. Since Paul’s audiences seem aware of stereotypical features of Judean religion, it makes sense

⁷⁵ Cf. Malherbe, “Gentle as a Nurse,” 37; Martin Dibelius, *An die Thessalonicher I.II. An die Philipper*, HNT 11, (3rd ed.; Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr [Paul Siebeck], 7-11; Günther Bornkamm, “Faith and Reason in Paul,” in *Early Christian Experience* (trans. P. L. Hammer; New York: Harper & Row, 1969), 45, n. 22.

⁷⁶ For an overview of the debates about the meaning of the accusation see Gerd Thiessen, *The Social Setting of Pauline Christianity: Essays on Corinth* (trans. and ed. John H. Schütz; Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1982), 64 n. 44; Malherbe, “Antisthenes and Odysseus, and Paul at War,” 113-114.

⁷⁷ Rom 15:25-28; 1 Cor 9:11-12.

that he would stake a position on notable Judean practices, regardless of whether he is advocating or opposing them.⁷⁸ Interestingly, Paul seems to temper his stance on those Judean practices that he himself does not advocate in certain contexts, perhaps ones where entrepreneurial competition was fiercer and he ran a greater risk of alienating people who were already participating in some form of Judean religion. This suggestion is not incompatible with other interpretations of the same evidence. For instance, John Gager has argued that the more favorable characterization of the law and Israel that we encounter in Romans is an attempt to counteract a real or potential misinterpretation of his statements in Galatians, where he is critical of the law and circumcision because the recipients of his own teachings have been persuaded by other experts that they must become law observant and undergo circumcision.⁷⁹

But I would reframe Gager's observation in terms of the categories of recognition and attraction that I have been using. Rome was a city with a sufficiently critical mass of Judean experts that they could be cast without gloss in satires about 'charlatans' or about *superstitio*; they and their practices were broadly familiar among Roman audiences. So we must keep in mind, first, that

⁷⁸ This is not to suggest that there was some typical program that Judaizers endorsed for gentiles interested in Judean religion.

⁷⁹ John G. Gager, *Reinventing Paul* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), 103: "It is difficult to escape the impression that much of Romans is designed to correct misreadings of Paul's position on certain basic problems—the law of Moses and Israel, the law and Gentiles, Christ and Israel—misreadings stemming in part from the letter to the Galatians itself." For the notion that Paul's reputation in Galatia had preceded him at Rome see J. Lewis Martyn, *Galatians: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*. Anchor Bible 33A (New York: Doubleday, 1997), 30-34. Gaston, *Paul and the Torah*, 134.

Paul is styling himself as a sort of Judean expert among others and, second, that he is appealing to an existing group of people whom he did not form, who appear to be interested in and knowledgeable about Judean things in their own right and even to have already received certain teachings about Christ. By taking too critical a position on familiar features of 'Judean religion' he risks forfeiting his own credibility in that subset of expertise and also alienating people who might only be open to him because of their prior interest in *iudaica*.⁸⁰ Moreover, Paul's own religious program is still reliant on any number of Judean practices or elements: the Judean god, the authority of the Judean holy writings, the ancestry of Abraham, and the anointed one (Christos) of the Judeans. The discussion in chapter three allows us to imagine a fairly broad range of possibilities for what shape the latter might have taken, as opposed to the more rigid picture of a synagogue of god-fearers that many scholars have supplied as Paul's primary audience at Rome.

The same argument extends to positions that Paul takes on practices that are not necessarily or exclusively Judaic, but might be linked more generally with various kinds of esoteric wisdom. Paul is clear that the wisdom and knowledge his mysteries impart are superior to philosophical and other novel teachings, but not so different that people already interested in intellectualizing forms of religion

⁸⁰ Gal 3:19-22; Gager, *Reinventing Paul*, 103-105.

would not recognize him as someone operating within the same niche.⁸¹ Some of the specific scenarios that he addresses in that letter jibe with the general climate that we surveyed in chapter two. Consider, for example, his instructions regarding the matter of special food practices:

Welcome those who are weak in faithfulness, but not for the purpose of quarreling over opinions. Some believe in eating anything, while the weak eat only vegetables. Those who eat must not despise those who abstain, and those who abstain must not pass judgment on those who eat, for God has welcomed them. Who are you to pass judgment on the servants of another? It is before their own lord that they stand or fall... Some judge one day to be better than another, while others judge all days to be alike. Let all be fully convinced in their own minds. Those who observe the day, observe it in honor of the Lord. Also those who eat, eat in honor of the Lord, since they give thanks to God, while those who abstain, abstain in honor of the Lord and give thanks to God (Rom 14:1-6).⁸²

It is impossible to know whether Paul is here attempting to reconcile a variety of positions within a circle of participants in some form of Judean religion or has in mind the wider variety of foreign practices observable at Rome, but his conciliatory position is appropriate for a context wherein novel forms of religion abounded and competition for followers was rife.⁸³ At the same time, by

⁸¹ Stowers, "Kinds of Myth, Meals, and Power," 117; Ron Cameron and Merrill P. Miller, "Redescribing Paul and the Corinthians," in *Redescribing Paul and the Corinthians* (ed. Ron Cameron and Merrill P. Miller; Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2011), 245-302, esp. 252 and 266-269.

⁸² On the juncture of vegetarian practices and the class of activity in question, see Sen. *Ep.* 108, where the author recounts his youthful enthusiasm for Pythagoras and reincarnation, on account of which he abstained from meat. See Robert M. Grant, "Dietary Laws among Pythagoreans, Jews, and Christians," *HTR* 73 (1980): 299-310.

⁸³ Contrast this stance with that one he takes in Galatians, where he accuses them of having been stirred up by people wishing to alter the gospel of Christ (Gal 1:6-9). As many have noted, in this latter he is more vitriolic about the law, alleging that any gentiles who embrace it are under a curse

demonstrating skills and knowledge in so many areas of expertise Paul comes across as a legitimate distributor of offerings that are at once comparable to and demarcated from the teachings and services of other specialists. As Stowers writes, “The core of Paul’s legitimacy...derived rather from his skillful display of abilities native to the game or field such as his education in ancient books; his interpretive skills; his reading, writing, and speaking abilities; and his pneumatic demonstrations, whatever those were.”⁸⁴ Nevertheless, “apart from broad terms of debate within the field such as the nature of the cosmos and its elements, critique of traditional religion and the nature of the gods, ancient epic and ancestry, and the therapy of the passions as a means to self-mastery, the specifics of Paul’s discourse were probably unfamiliar and therefore both exotic and esoteric.” In other words, his religious program was at once continuous with skills, services, and concepts indigenous to certain kinds of specialized offerings, but tinged with novelty and exoticism.

The final point of continuity between Paul’s writings and the wider specialist phenomenon is that they exhibit traces of several of the dynamics we have seen already with respect to Roman efforts to regulate the activities of freelance experts. On several occasions he mentions the suffering he endures in

(Gal 3:10). Also, Gal 5:2-4: “Listen! I, Paul, am telling you that if you let yourselves be circumcised, Christ will be of no benefit to you. Once again, I testify to every man who lets himself be circumcised that he is obliged to obey the entire law, you who want to be justified by the law have cut yourselves off from Christ.” Regardless of how strong his position when decrying opponents elsewhere, to the Romans Paul insists that the law is not opposed to God’s promises, but has a role even within his own religious program.

⁸⁴ Stowers, “Kinds of Myth, Meals, and Power,” 141-142.

order to spread the gospel of Christ, for instance, in his letter to the Philippians, which he is thought to have written during a period of incarceration, presumably at Rome. Here he reports that imprisonment has actually furthered his agenda, as the entire imperial guard knows he suffers for Christ. It has also spawned imitators, who proclaim Christ from envy, rivalry, and selfish ambition.⁸⁵ In this report and elsewhere Paul anchors his legitimacy in the hardships he has endured as an apostle, all of which have parallels in the kinds of penal measures that Roman administrators employed to curb specialist influence.⁸⁶

John Fitzgerald has demonstrated both that Paul's 'catalogue of hardships' has affinities with contemporary philosophical discourses, and that he proffered sufferings as proof of his pure motives for spreading his religious program.⁸⁷ But as was the case for the philosophers and other self-authorized experts whom we encountered in chapter two, public stricture carried the dual advantages of confirming the sincerity and truth of one's teachings, and also galvanizing the

⁸⁵ Phil 1:15-17.

⁸⁶ Paul's claims to having endured such suffering are several: 1 Cor 15:31-32 (where he claims to have fought with wild animals at Ephesus, although this may be a metaphor for struggling with the passions); 2 Cor 1:8-10 (where he claims to have received a sentence of death in Asia); 1 Thess 2:2-3 (where he claims to have suffered and been shamefully mistreated at Philippi).

⁸⁷ John T. Fitzgerald, *Cracks in an Earthen Vessel: An Examination of the Catalogues of Hardships in the Corinthian Correspondence* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1988). Malherbe also notes that while Paul's hardships may be viewed as demonstrations of weakness—indeed, ironic references to his own weakness enclose the list of hardships in 2 Cor 11:21-29—he also invokes them in order to take the opportunity for the demonstration of God's power ("Antisthenes and Odysseus, and Paul at War," 117 and n. 154). This is not unlike the point above about how Paul's divine authority is an additional source of distinction from even 'good philosophers'. See also Ragnar Leivestad, "'The Meekness and Gentleness of Christ' 2 Cor. 10:1," *NTS* 12 (1966): 162.

reputations of those who received such punishments.⁸⁸ His particular hardships also correlate with the specific kinds of punishments that we examined in that chapter. In 2 Corinthians 11, he asks of potential rivals: “Are they ministers of Christ? [I am] a better one: with far greater labors, far more imprisonments, with countless floggings, and often near death. Five times I have received from the Judeans the forty lashes minus one. Three times I was beaten with rods. Once I received a stoning” (2 Cor 11:23-25).⁸⁹ In this case Paul invokes hardships explicitly for the purpose of posturing with a view to entrepreneurial rivals. In the same letter he mentions narrowly escaping Damascus as its ethnarch, Aretas, searched the city for him.⁹⁰ We should not forget that the author of Acts introduces Paul’s colleagues, Priscilla and Aquila, as two *ioudaioi* who had recently arrived in Corinth from Rome after Claudius expelled all *ioudaioi*.⁹¹ As I argued in chapter three, such measures were not intended against all Judeans, but against those Judeans who engaged in precisely the sort of religious activities that Paul and his acquaintances seem to be furthering.

Paul alludes similarly to the suffering endured by his purported communities. Since he is not as specific about the adverse circumstances of his

⁸⁸ Consider, for example, the Cynic Theogenes’ endorsement of Peregrinus, which guards against accusations of vainglory by recounting how Proteus was imprisoned in Syria and banished from the city of Rome. Lucian, *De mort. Peregr.* 4. Pauline Ripat makes similar observations about the proportionately greater fame and perceived efficacy of the astrologer who has been expelled from Rome (“Expelling Misconceptions,” 136-141).

⁸⁹ The fact that Paul alleges to have received punishments from other Judeans suggests that he continued to interact with other Judeans and to frequent places where he was conspicuous to them.

⁹⁰ 2 Cor 11:32-33.

⁹¹ Acts 18:2.

correspondents as about his own, it is impossible to know whether they were facing real difficulties on account of their involvement in his practices or whether appeals to shared suffering are largely in the service of his group-making interests since these references are often followed by entreaties for believers to be of the same mind and in full accord.⁹² Notwithstanding, he enjoins them to abstain practically from suspicious activity of the sort for which Roman authorities penalized independent specialists and their participants on other occasions. Romans contains a lengthy aside in which he insists God wishes for people to remain subject to governing authorities, and also to pay their taxes, for these authorities are God's servants to whom honor and respect are due.⁹³

As expulsions and other efforts to regulate freelance experts were often enacted for the perceived or potential complicity of these actors in socially subversive behavior, Paul's exhortations to uphold civic responsibilities seem to guard against obvious consequences of participating in a class of religious activity that drew such attention.⁹⁴ Being privy to the wider context of Roman efforts to legislate against these actors reframes how we understand his instructions, as well as his hasty disavowal of slanderous charges.⁹⁵ As I suggested above, Paul's

⁹² E.g., Phil 2:2-5; 1 Thess 2:13-16.

⁹³ Rom 3:1-7; 1 Thess 4:11-12: "We urge you...to aspire to live quietly, to mind your own affairs and to work with your hands as we directed you, so that you may behave properly toward outsiders and be dependent on no one."

⁹⁴ A similar principle obtains when he instructs the Corinthians to "give no offense to Judeans or to Greeks or to the assembly of God," (1 Cor 10:32) the sort of conspicuous behavior that likely stimulated opportunities for anonymous informing about rivals.

⁹⁵ Rom 3:8.

reference to false brothers secretly brought in to spy on a Christ meeting in Jerusalem further resonates with our earlier discussion of the mechanisms by which such measures were enacted on the ground, namely, with the role of anonymous informants on problematic activity that would otherwise be difficult to identify for purposes of investigation and the enforcement.⁹⁶

Indications of participation in the phenomenon of entrepreneurial religion are woven throughout Paul's letters and the above examples are intended as but a partial case for thus situating his activities. Having devoted ample space to arguing for his membership in the wider field of specialized offerings, however, I would like to consider the specific services that he offered as a kind of expert in religion. While each of these services is supported by extensive mythmaking, for the sake of manageability, I will instead offer some preliminary suggestions about what work the salvation scheme that he crafts is doing for Paul *quo* religious entrepreneur.⁹⁷

⁹⁶ Gal 2:4-5. In this we are reminded of the role of anonymous informants on proscribed or suspicious activity as reported by Pliny the Younger regarding the Christians, and by Dio regarding Nerva's alleviation of Domitian's unjust and oppressive investigative tactics (Plin. *Tra.* 10.97.2; Cass. Dio, 68.1.2). This interpretation of the Galatians incident is largely shared by Mark D. Nanos, who argues for the "thoroughly intra-Jewish nature of the social setting and polemic of Paul and the other early believers in Christ of the period" (90). In other words, Nanos imagines a scenario in which rival Judean groups, such as the one Paul had once participated in, intruded into the meeting of the Assembly in order to investigate and inform on its claims. I would slightly modify his discussion in order to align it more closely with the discussion of informants in chapter two but agree with many of his larger points. Mark D. Nanos, "Intruding 'Spies' and 'Pseudo-Brethren': The Jewish Intra-Group Politics of Paul's Jerusalem Meeting (Gal 2:1-10)," in *Paul and His Opponents*. Pauline Studies 2 (ed. Stanley E. Porter; Leiden: Brill, 2005), 57-97.

⁹⁷ Cf. Arnal, "Bringing Paul and the Corinthians Together?" 83: "[Paul's] use of the Christ myth is opportunistic, offered to solve a very particular problem that is a function of Paul and his context."

Stanley Stowers proposes a useful summary of Paul's major mythic elements, which I will recapitulate in full.⁹⁸

- Ancient prophecy said that a descendent of Abraham, ancestor of the lineage chosen by the true God of the cosmos, a righteous forebear out of a world of sinful nations, would bring a great blessing to the other peoples someday.
- It was part of the plan of this God that Paul would be appointed to teach the non-Jewish peoples about this promise and its fulfillment.
- This blessing makes non-Judean into descendents of Abraham by means of their penetration by the divine *pneuma* that God used to refashion Jesus Christ when he raised him from the dead. Divine *pneuma* interacts with ordinary human *pneuma*, but is a vital substance of vastly superior quality, the highest of all substances in the cosmos.
- Christ is the *pneuma*-bearer whose heroic martyrdom became an occasion for God to reconcile the world's peoples to himself and to perfect the human species.
- Since Christ was "in Abraham" as seed and Gentile believers through baptism gain a material connection to Christ, having a part of his *pneuma* (or: participating in his *pneuma*), they have a material contiguity with Abraham back through the lineage of Christ just like any descendent.
- At the end of the current phase ordained for the cosmos, divine *pneuma* will entirely replace flesh (*sarx*) and blood in the constitution of the human person. Until then, divine *pneuma* only mixes or communicates with human *pneuma*, but gives special powers to such people who are not able to understand that their true selves are pneumatic and not of flesh.

With this overarching framework in mind, let us consider how certain components of Paul's mythmaking further contributed to his recognition and attractiveness and also created a need for the services he offered.

Over the course of his letters, Paul implies that the present condition of the gentiles is not only inherently flawed, but has also deteriorated drastically as the result of particular human actions. In his letter to the Romans, Paul depicts a time

⁹⁸ Stowers, "Kinds of Myth, Meals, and Power," 123-124.

when God's power and divine nature were self-evident in his creation.⁹⁹ Everything that could be known about god was plain to humans, because he had embedded such understanding (νοόμενα) in the perfection of the world they inhabited.¹⁰⁰ Over time, however, humans moved away from this intuitive truth. "Claiming to be wise (σοφοί) they became foolish (ἐμωράνθησαν)," futile in their thoughts and with darkened, senseless hearts.¹⁰¹ They exchanged the glory of an immortal god for images cast in human and animal likenesses, preferring to worship the creation rather than the creator.¹⁰² Since people no longer possessed proper truth and understanding about God, he, in turn, gave them up to the desires of their hearts (ἐν ταῖς ἐπιθυμίαις τῶν καρδιῶν αὐτῶν), to debased minds, to the evils of impurity and of degrading passions.¹⁰³ They were filled with every kind of vice and even encouraged one another in such behavior.¹⁰⁴ Women exchanged natural intercourse for unnatural (τὴν φύσικην χρῆσιν εἰς τὴν παρα φύσιν); likewise, men gave up natural intercourse with woman and were consumed with passion for one another (ὁμοίως τε καὶ οἱ ἄρσενες ἀφέντες τὴν πυσικὴν χρῆσιν τῆς θηλείας ἐξεκαύθησαν ἐν ὀρέξει αὐτῶν εἰς ἀλλήλους).¹⁰⁵

⁹⁹ Rom 1:20.

¹⁰⁰ Rom 1:18-19.

¹⁰¹ Rom 1:18.

¹⁰² Rom 1:23-25.

¹⁰³ Rom 1:24-31.

¹⁰⁴ Rom 1:29-32.

¹⁰⁵ Rom 1:26-27.

While this myth of decline may bear some relationship to biblical stories about the degeneracy of humanity, it is equally evocative of other cosmologies current in Paul's day.¹⁰⁶ That he anchors the myth in recognizable philosophical language and concepts—most notably, in staging an order in which divinity was naturally apparent to people, in casting their turn from God in mental terms, and in diagnosing the fallen state of humanity as surrender to unbridled passions and vice—does not exclude the 'biblical' version. Nevertheless, the story that Paul tells gestures beyond a single frame of reference. If one were to listen to or read the myth without awareness of the Genesis narrative, it would as likely be reminiscent of explanations in this vein originating from certain philosophical discourses. As Stowers has pointed out, stories about the degeneration of humanity were important in the thinking of different philosophical schools, Stoics, Cynics, Epicureans, although explanations and correctives for the flawed moral psychology of humans varied within each narrative.¹⁰⁷ To tie this observation back to the first chapter, Stowers further notes that themes of primeval degeneration and a sinful age combined with expectations of return to or the advent of a new golden age

¹⁰⁶ For example, the tower of Babel and the wickedness that preceded the great flood.

¹⁰⁷ Stanley K. Stowers, "Paul's Four Discourses about Sin," in *Celebrating Paul: Festschrift in Honor of Jerome Murphy O'Connor, O.P., and Joseph A. Fitzmeyer, S.J.* The Catholic Biblical Quarterly Monograph Series 48 (ed. Peter Spitaler; Washington, D.C.: The Catholic Biblical Association of America, 2011), 100-127: "In talking about sin, Romans exhibits an approach that dominated important intellectual strains of Greek, Roman, and Jewish culture of assuming an age where people naturally worshipped in the right way, then, the onset of some pattern of religious and moral degeneration, sometimes with a discussion of law. This discourse figures the current moral and religious state of the world as a result of this history" (113).

were especially pronounced during the reign of Augustus and in its aftermath, owing to their centrality in his imperial ideology.¹⁰⁸

That Paul has these kinds of discourses in mind gains extra support from a statement in his letter to the Corinthians: “For it is written, ‘I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and the discernment of the discerning I will thwart.’ Where is the one who is wise (σοφός)? Where is the scribe (γραμματεὺς)? Where is the debater of this age (συζητητῆς τοῦ αἰῶνος)? Has God not made foolish the wisdom of the world (οὐχὶ ἐμώρπανε ὁ θεὸς τὴν σοφίαν)?” (1 Cor 1:19-22). Not only does the trajectory and language of this story evoke a philosophical frame of reference, we can see from the preceding statement that Paul associates particular kinds of first-century figures—the sophist, the scribe, the debater—with the mistaken pursuits of wisdom that led humans astray. Stowers notes additional reverberations in the incorrect forms of religious practice that humans adopted, depicting god(s) in the form of humans (i.e., Greeks and Romans), birds (i.e., Egyptians), four-footed animals (i.e., Egyptians, ‘Canaanites’), or reptiles (i.e., Egyptians).¹⁰⁹ As with the intellectualizing specialists whom he calls forth by type, each of Paul’s examples of misguided theology resonates with exotic religious practices in vogue in his day, often made available by freelance experts. This is not to conclude that his critique implies *only* such actors, but to point out that these concepts are not neutral and would have summoned to mind specific phenomena from his audience’s urban

¹⁰⁸ Stowers, *A Rereading of Romans*, 110.

¹⁰⁹ Rom 1:23; Stowers, “Paul’s Four Discourses About Sin,” 112.

environment. Moreover, he gathers an enormous number of temples, monuments, images, and figures that would have been familiar in cities such as Rome into a monolithic critique of the erroneous wisdom and idolatry of all the nations.

In 1 Corinthians Paul tells another sort of story of disobedience to God, and one that heralds the arrival of the law. In this account the Israelites, too, came to set their hearts upon evil things during their wanderings in the wilderness (ἔινει ἡμᾶς ἐπιθυμητὰς κακῶν, καθὼς κάκεῖνοι ἐπεθύμησαν).¹¹⁰ They began to worship idols and to consume idol meat (εἰδωλολάτραι γίνεσθε καθὼς τινες αὐτῶν, ὥσπερ γέγραπται, Ἐκάθισεν ὁ λαὸς φαγεῖν καὶ πεῖν καὶ ἀνέστησαν παίζειν).¹¹¹ Some also began to indulge in illicit intercourse (τινες αὐτῶν ἐπόρνευσαν), with the result God struck down twenty-three thousand in a one day.¹¹² What is more, Paul relates that prior to this act of disobedience the Israelites had been baptized by Moses while under the cloud that was God's manifest presence among them, an act that imparted divine *pneuma* to them. The portion of divine *pneuma* that they received was further cultivated by pneumatic food and drink that Christ himself made available to them during their wanderings.¹¹³ While the significance of these practices is only illuminated subsequently by Paul's own religious services, readers

¹¹⁰ Rom 10:6.

¹¹¹ 1 Cor 10:1-7. The translation of πνευματικόν as 'spiritual' has been challenged by a number of recent publications, especially those that argue for Paul's indebtedness to philosophical concepts with respect to how *pneuma* factors into his religious program.

¹¹² Rom 10:1-5; 1 Cor 10:8-9.

¹¹³ 1 Cor 10:1-5. This pneumatic food and drink is made available to them by the Christos, who is not yet, at this point in mythic time, Jesus Christos.

familiar with the latter are able to infer that through baptism and the transmission of divine *pneuma* through special food and drink, Christ, working through Moses, extended the same religious services to the Israelites that he now offers to gentiles. To reconcile the Israelites to him, God transmits to Moses a law instructing them about how to live virtuously. As the law of God, it is pneumatic, holy, just, and good.¹¹⁴

Paul's stories of disobedience to God both trade on a number of common philosophical assumptions about human nature that enabled both diagnoses of the flawed moral condition and also its remedy.¹¹⁵ Humans once lived in right relation to God, possessing truth and understanding, but were led astray by incorrect ideas about divinity and other mortal inclinations. But whereas the Israelites might be restored to God by means of the law, the gentiles still exist in a state of helpless enslavement to their passions and desires; their fleshly bodies are impure instruments of wickedness, prone to every vice. "Now, the works of the flesh are obvious: fornication, impurity, licentiousness, idolatry, sorcery, enmities, strife, jealousy, anger, quarrels, dissensions, factions, envy, drunkenness, carousing, and things like these" (Gal 5:19-21).

Whereas, for the Judeans, the law is a program for the mind, teaching it how to control the appetites of the flesh, for the gentiles, whose minds are

¹¹⁴ E.g., Rom 7:14.

¹¹⁵ Often referred to as Paul's anthropology in modern scholarship. See, for example, Geurt Hendrick van Kooten, *Paul's Anthropology in Context: The Image of God, Assimilation to God, and Tripartite Man in Ancient Judaism, Ancient Philosophy, and Early Christianity* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2008).

constantly torn between a desire for ethical conduct and bodily impulses to sin, the law imparts knowledge about sin that only excites the human passions.¹¹⁶ Emma Wasserman has argued persuasively that Paul's depiction of the disempowerment of reason at the hands of the passions can be best understood in light of Platonic discourses about extreme immorality, conceived as the death of the soul.¹¹⁷ Noting his use of Platonic language that corresponds to the soul's three parts—mind (νοῦς) and inner man (ἔσω ἄνθρωπος) for its reasoning part, the desires and passions (ἐπιθυμίας and πάθη) of its non-rational appetitive part, and various terms for the desires of and emotions produced by its non-rational spirited part—she situates him among ancient writers who reflected upon human moral psychology in order to diagnose and prescribe remedies for its problematic state.¹¹⁸ The scenario that Paul depicts in Romans 7 is consistent with what happens to the rational part of the soul when bad passions and appetites take over.¹¹⁹ In keeping with Platonic moral accounts, the soul's reasoning faculty desires wisdom in the

¹¹⁶ Rom 7:7-8, 20, 23. Also, Romans 2:20, in Paul's depiction of the one who calls himself a Ἰουδαῖος, "having in the law the embodiment of knowledge and of truth (ἔχοντα τὴν μόρφωσιν τῆς γνώσεως καὶ τῆς ἀληθείας ἐν τῷ νόμῳ).

¹¹⁷ Emma Wasserman, "The Death of the Soul in Romans 7," *JBL* 126 (2007): 793-816. See also, Stowers, "Paul's Four Discourses about Sin," 123-124.

¹¹⁸ Wasserman, "The Death of the Soul in Romans 7," 800.

¹¹⁹ Rom 7:14-23: "For we know that the law is pneumatic; but I am of the flesh, sold into slavery under sin. I do not understand my own actions. For I do not do what I want, but I do the very thing I hate. Now if I do what I do not want, I agree that the law is good. But in fact it is no longer I that do it, but sin that dwells within me. For I know that nothing good dwells within me, that is, in my flesh. I can will what is right but I cannot do it. For I do not do the good I want, but the evil I do not want is what I do. Now if I do what I do not want, it is no longer I that do it, but sin that dwells within me. So I find it to be a law that when I want to do what is good, evil lies close at hand. For I delight in the law of god in my inmost self, but I see in my members another law at war with the law of my mind, making me captive to the law of sin that dwells in my members."

form of the law (the law of God, but also, the law of the mind), while the soul's non-rational parts desire fleshly, unlawful objects and honors, and always in excess.¹²⁰ The sinful gentile condition is thus one of perpetual, violent internal tensions within the soul, culminating in the mind's total defeat.¹²¹ The special status of the law is not undermined by this characterization, but it throws into relief the challenges that gentiles will have abiding it in light of their weak and sinful nature.¹²²

Paul's depiction of total moral failure sets up the essentiality of his salvation scheme, and, in particular, the role of divine *pneuma* in purifying and refashioning these otherwise helpless minds and bodies. The difference between Paul and a writer like Philo, whose metaphors of sin also employ Platonic moral psychology, is that Paul is utilizing this philosophical discourse to justify the religious services he is offering, while also superseding those of other intellectualizing specialists.¹²³ It is also important to recognize that in utilizing philosophical concepts, discourses, and techniques, Paul is not beholden to a clear set of rules or a systematic philosophical program.¹²⁴ Rather, he is free to poach and to elaborate

¹²⁰ Wasserman, "The Death of the Soul in Romans 7," 801.

¹²¹ Wasserman, "The Death of the Soul in Romans 7," 814.

¹²² Stowers, "Paul's Four Discourses about Sin," 116: "Just as [Romans] chap. I explains how God handed the Gentiles over to wickedness, so ch. 9 explains how God has caused the Jews to be disobedient, ending with a quotation from Isaiah, in which God says that he is planning to make his people stumble (28.16 and 8.14 in Rom 9:33)."

¹²³ Wasserman, "The Death of the Soul in Romans 7," 808-809, 811.

¹²⁴ Nor does this mean that Paul lacks proper understanding of Platonic philosophy, or any of the other intellectual influences present in his writings.

concepts that are convenient to his larger agenda.¹²⁵ He also has considerable flexibility to develop and hone connections between aspects of his program without condensing these into coherent theories.¹²⁶

Pursuant to Paul's diagnosis of human nature, his story arrives at a clear picture of the gentile predicament. God has become so enraged by the sinful condition of the gentiles that he has plotted an impending day of judgment. The law will not be sufficient to spare them since their condition is so aggrieved that they are incapable of fulfilling its requirements. Only those gentiles who have received a portion of God's own *pneuma*, made available to them by Christ, will be spared the consequences of his judgment.¹²⁷ This requirement of salvation is not characteristic of Judean religion, or of all forms of entrepreneurial religion, but is contingent upon a robust set of representations and justifications—people have done something horrible, God is furious, everyone is in big trouble, and there is only one way to avoid this inevitable course. Having laid out a scheme in which the Christos will transform the faithful in preparation for an impending day of judgment, it falls to Paul to prepare gentiles for this apocalyptic event. The obvious question to emerge from the scenario he depicts concerns the specifics of how precisely people will be prepared to withstand God's judgment. Conveniently for

¹²⁵ Stowers, "Paul's Four Discourses about Sin," 101: "Discourses do not respect boundaries that writers and authorities claim for, or seek to impose upon, particular populations (e.g., thought of as Syrians, Greeks, Judeans, Romans, Christians)...Such discourses above all circulated among networks of literate (often elite) specialists, and the networks crossed ethnic boundaries."

¹²⁶ Stowers, "Paul's Four Discourses about Sin," 100.

¹²⁷ Stowers, "Kinds of Myth, Meals, and Power," 115.

Paul, he alone knows how it is to be attained; he thus shows his religious program to be both exclusive and also direly imminent.¹²⁸

The remedy that Paul provides not only cures people of their inherent sinfulness, but also transforms their bodies from perishable to imperishable substance that will become immortal. Through a special rite called baptism people can be initiated into the mysteries of the Christos. As they undergo this rite, initiates effectively die to sin, as did Jesus upon his crucifixion.¹²⁹ Moreover, they are baptized into the body and lineage of the Christos in both its crucified and resurrected forms.¹³⁰ Just as sin and death no longer have dominion over Jesus Christ, initiates must consider themselves also to be dead to sin and alive in his new kind of body.¹³¹ Even though some among them were wrongdoers prior to baptism, through this rite they are washed, sanctified, and justified in the name of the Jesus Christ and in the *pneuma* of God, in order that they will be able to inherit his kingdom.¹³² They can even secure baptism for people who are already dead, and Paul assures his audiences that they need not grieve for their dead as do other people, who have no such hope of resurrection.¹³³ The latter theme crops up

¹²⁸ Stowers, "Kinds of Myth, Meals, and Power," 110: "[I]ndividuals under specific social conditions produce and interpret myths.... A mythmaker is often best thought of as a kind of entrepreneur attempting to produce and shape groupness."

¹²⁹ Rom 6:6-11, 12:1.

¹³⁰ Rom 6:3-5.

¹³¹ Rom 6:11-14, 10:6-10.

¹³² 1 Cor 6:9-11.

¹³³ 1 Thess 4:13-16; 1 Cor 15:29-55.

severally in Paul's writings, suggesting that it was an attractive benefit for some of the people who were receptive to his program, even if the notion of resurrection also seems to have been a point of resistance, skepticism, or confusion for others.¹³⁴

The death enacted by baptism is not merely metaphorical but has real physiological implications, since during the rite God pours his own divine *pneuma* (πνεῦμα) directly into one's hearts.¹³⁵ Recent studies of Paul's concept of *pneuma* have demonstrated, on the one hand, its indebtedness to the Stoic doctrine of *pneuma* and, on the other, the centrality of philosophical concepts to Paul's cosmology, initiation model, and resurrection scheme.¹³⁶ I am persuaded that he understands *pneuma* to be a material substance with varied applications: it has transformative properties, it is revelatory of divine things, it enables special activities, and more basically, it is constitutive of human beings and all matter.¹³⁷ As Caroline Johnson Hodge has shown, the concept of *pneuma* was a useful tool for working through the theological dilemma of how to forge an aggregative genealogical connection between gentiles and Jews.¹³⁸ For Paul, faithfulness in Christ is not simply a program of behavior *modeled* on the behavior of Abraham. In his version of the Abraham myth, faithfulness, righteousness, and the inheritance

¹³⁴ Smith, "Re: Corinthians," passim; Stowers, "Kinds of Myth, Meals, and Power," 125-166.

¹³⁵ Gal 4:6; Rom 8:14-17.

¹³⁶ The central thesis of Troels Engberg-Pederson in *Cosmology and Self in the Apostle Paul*.

¹³⁷ Engberg-Pederson, *Cosmology and the Self in the Apostle Paul*, 18.

¹³⁸ Johnson Hodge, *If Sons, Then Heirs*, 67.

God promised him are transmitted through Abraham's seed to his offspring Christ, and then to the gentiles through baptism into Christ. The physiological reception of *pneuma* is critical to this adoption process, as it transforms gentiles into heirs of God's promise.¹³⁹

Although baptism commences a process of bodily transformation that will culminate in immortality when Christ returns on God's day of wrath, initiates do not acquire imperishable selves all at once, but cultivate them gradually. "God establishes us with you in Christ, by putting his seal on us and giving us his *pneuma* in our hearts as a first installment" (2 Cor 1:22). Thus while receipt of divine *pneuma* is a guarantee that God will prepare them to be judged, they are not yet pneumatically mature, but must continue to cultivate their divinity through basic yet highly meaningful practices.¹⁴⁰ Paul describes this process by which divine *pneuma* actively transforms mortal selves as sanctification (ἁγιασμός, from the verb ἁγιαζειν, 'to make holy, consecrate; to purify, cleanse'), and insists that it will only progress if initiates adhere to his instructions.¹⁴¹ Although all things may now be permitted for gentiles who achieve salvation apart from the law, not all

¹³⁹ Johnson Hodge, *If Sons, Then Heirs*, 73: "*Pneuma* in Paul is multivalent and shifting. Other Jewish writers use the term *pneuma* in a similarly flexible way [employing] diverse interpretations creatively, depending on their particular argument. These authors treat the spirit as if it can be attached to any entity or concept, somehow embodying the essence of the thing to which it is attached.... Both Paul's letters and [other Jewish texts] reflect a conception of *pneuma* as generative, mobile, and divine. The same characteristics are found in descriptions of *pneuma* present in the works of philosophers and medical writers." Support for Johnson Hodge's adoption argument occurs especially in Gal. 3-4 and Rom. 6-8.

¹⁴⁰ 2 Cor 5:5.

¹⁴¹ 1 Thess 5:23.

things promote their *pneumatic* progress.¹⁴² Thus Paul encourages his audiences to comport themselves in accordance with tenets that the law teaches, as they are now able to do by virtue of sharing not only Christ's body but also his mind.¹⁴³ Like athletes, who exercise self-control in all things, they should control their bodies and receive not the perishable wreath of athletes, but an imperishable reward.¹⁴⁴

Some of Paul's instructions involve a special meal, which people who are 'in Christ' should consume together to reinforce their collective participation in his body.¹⁴⁵ These practices, too, are ascribed special significance and even have physiological consequences if they are not abided in a precise manner.¹⁴⁶ As he instructs the Corinthians, when they consume the bread and blood of Christ they should infer deeper understandings from otherwise familiar meal practices.¹⁴⁷ He

¹⁴² 1 Cor 10:23. Paul is consistent in using the verb οἰκοδομεῖν and related word forms to describe the process of sanctification by which initiates cultivate their divine stuff and slowly transform.

¹⁴³ Rom 3:28. C.f. 1 Cor 2:16; Phil 2:5. 1 Thess 4:1-8: "You learned from us how you ought to live and to please God... For you know what instructions we gave to you: that you abstain from fornication, that each of you know how to control your own body in holiness and honor, not with lustful passion like the gentiles that do not know God, that no one wrong or exploit a brother in this matter, because the lord is an avenger in all these things, just as we have already told you beforehand and solemnly warned you. For God did not call us to impurity but in holiness."

¹⁴⁴ 1 Cor 9:25-27; 2 Cor 7:1.

¹⁴⁵ Stowers, "Kinds of Myth, Meals, and Power," 127-139. See also Stanley K. Stowers, "What is Pauline Participation in Christ?" 91-105.

¹⁴⁶ Stowers notes, "The person who does not distinguish the body, that is, perform an action with a certain social and ideological disposition, will bring down the judgment of the God who is present in that ritualized eating environment. Paul explains that many have been weak and sick and some have even died *because they ate the bread and drank the cup without this disposition* ("Kinds of Myth, Meals, and Power," 134, emphasis added).

¹⁴⁷ Stowers elaborates, "The truths of Pauline Christianity are not common everyday truths about the disposition of one's social group(s) and the signs seen in the cooking and eating of an animal, but they are truths about a person's interior, soul and mind, and the relation of these to the cosmos" ("Kinds of Myth, Meals, and Power," 139).

draws an explicit analogy between these meal practices and the precedent of the Israelites, who were similarly baptized by Moses and sustained in their wanderings by pneumatic food and drink, but then lapsed into sin.¹⁴⁸ To avoid this risk, his initiates must obey various ethical injunctions.¹⁴⁹ Importantly, while Paul's letters advocate many of the same techniques for self-mastery that were enlisted by first-century philosophers, within his program such practices are only enabled by the power of *pneuma*. In other words, it is only by virtue of having received and continuing to cultivate divine *pneuma* that gentiles might be purified and transformed from an inherently sinful state into another that is equipped to pursue ethical behavior.

Not only does Paul wield expertise on account of the divine *pneuma*, upon its receipt people in Christ acquire *charismata*, or special capabilities, that are bestowed upon them by the same substance.

Now there are varieties of *charismata*, but the same *pneuma*; and there are varieties of services, but the same Lord; and there are varieties of activities, but it is the same God who activates all of them in everyone. To each is given the manifestation of the *pneuma* for the common good. To one is given through the *pneuma* the utterance of wisdom, and to another the utterance of knowledge according to the same *pneuma*, to another faith by the same *pneuma*, to another skills of healing by the same *pneuma*, to

¹⁴⁸ 1 Cor. 10:1-4, 16-22.

¹⁴⁹ 1 Cor 10:6-12: "Now these things occurred as examples for us, so that we might not desire evil as [the Israelites] did. Do not become idolaters as some of them did; as it is written, 'The people sat down to eat and drink, and they rose up to play.' We must not indulge in sexual immorality as some of them did, and twenty-three thousand fell on a single day. We must not put Christ to the test as some of them did, and were destroyed by serpents. And do not complain as some of them did, and were destroyed by the destroyer. These things happened to them to serve as an example, and they were written down to instruct us, on whom the ends of the ages have come."

another the working of miracles by the same *pneuma*, to another prophecy, to another the discernment of *pneumata*, to another various kinds of tongues, to another the interpretation of tongues. All these are activated by one and the same *pneuma*, which allots to each one individually just as the *pneuma* chooses. (1 Cor 12:4-11)

Of great interest is the fact that each of the skills that the *pneuma* activates has corroboration among specialized services we encounter in other examples of entrepreneurial offerings: healing, prophecy, miracle working, different kinds of knowledge claims, facility in strange languages, and so on. Paul's audiences are to understand that they have accrued every conceivable specialty by virtue of participating in a comprehensive religious program. "In every way you have been enriched in [Christ Jesus], in speech and knowledge of every kind (ἐν παντὶ λόγῳ καὶ πάσῃ γνῶσει)...so that you are not lacking in any talent (ἐν μηδενὶ χαρίσματι) as you await the revealing of our Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Cor 1:5-7). Yet, just like self-mastery, each one of these skills now depends on the receipt of divine *pneuma*.

Those who enjoy *charismata* are not meant to employ these skills beyond the group, but only for the purpose of fortifying it.¹⁵⁰ "When you come together each one has a hymn, a teaching, a revelation, a tongue, or an interpretation. Let all things be done for building up (πρὸς οἰκοδομὴν)" (1 Cor 14:26). The special skills also differ according to one's status within the group, presumably, meaning one's maturity with respect to his or her *pneumatic* transformation.¹⁵¹ We can imagine

¹⁵⁰ 1 Cor 14:3-6, 12.

¹⁵¹ Rom 12:6-8; 1 Cor 14:12. Similar logic seems to obtain for Paul's distinctions between the strong and the weak, and their respective levels of proper knowledge. In fact, God has appointed in his various assemblies a hierarchy of roles, so that first come apostles, then prophets, then teachers,

without much difficulty how bestowing specialized capabilities upon his participants might begin to undermine Paul's status among them. To shore up his own authority, he insists that anyone who claims to prophesy or to be *pneumatic* should not be recognized unless they conform exactly to his instructions.¹⁵² Similarly, "No one speaking by the *pneuma* of God ever says 'Let Jesus be cursed' and no one can even say that Jesus is Lord except by the holy *pneuma*."¹⁵³ Any person who would contradict these teachings serves his or her own appetites, deceiving the hearts of the simple-minded smooth-talk and flattery.¹⁵⁴ Despite his own ambitions to spread the mysteries of Christ, Paul never encourages his followers to share his teachings and other practices with outsiders; all of this seems to remain only in his own purview.

In exchange for the comprehensive religious program he offers, Paul shies away from directly requesting compensation; indeed, his claims about his own integrity and the value of his message seem to require a disinterested countenance. In 1 Thessalonians 2:3-5, he assures his audience, "Our appeal does not spring from deceit, or impure motives, or trickery, but just as we have been approved by God to be entrusted with the message of the gospel, even so we speak not to please mortals, but to please gods.... We never came with words of flattery or a pretext for

then deeds of power, then healing, then forms of assistance, then leadership, and then, various kinds of tongues.

¹⁵² 1 Cor 14:37-38; Meeks, *The First Urban Christians*, 113-114.

¹⁵³ 1 Cor 16:8-9.

¹⁵⁴ Rom 16:17-18.

greed.” Likewise, he makes frequent appeals to having received his gospel not from a human source or through any teaching but through a revelation of Jesus Christ.¹⁵⁵ Although we have already examined the force of this claim as a mode of authorization for Paul’s religious expertise, here it also sets him apart from other experts whose reasons for offering religious teachings and services are questionable. “For we are not peddlers of God’s word like so many; but in Christ we speak as persons of sincerity, as persons sent from God and in his presence” (2 Cor 2:17). The opposition he constructs is clear: ‘peddlers’ of religious teachings are motivated by self-interest, whereas Paul and his associates act in the service of God and have no additional motivations beyond spreading his *evangelion*.

Yet Paul is clear that he is entitled to support, regardless of whether or not he chooses to accept it. He asks the Corinthians, “If we have sown pneumatic resources (πνευματικά) in you, is it too much if we reap your worldly resources (σάρκικά)? If others share your possessions should we not more?” (1 Cor 9:11-12). And earlier in the same letter, “Is it only Barnabas and I who have no right to refrain from working for a living? Who at the time pays the expenses for doing military service? Who plants a vineyard and does not eat any of its fruit? Or who tends a flock and does not get any of its milk?” (1 Cor 9:6-7). Paul then likens himself to a priest, insisting, “Those who are employed in the temple service get their food from the temple, and those who serve at the altar share in what is

¹⁵⁵ Gal 1:11-12.

sacrificed at the altar. In the same way, the Lord commanded that those who proclaim the gospel should get their living through the gospel” (1 Cor 9:13-14).

Paul is far more ambivalent about soliciting compensation in exchange for the religious services he provides than he is about other economic practices, namely, soliciting support for the collection for the holy people in Jerusalem. While he often denies having made use of the former entitlement, repeated reminders of his right to support himself by means of his expertise underscore the now familiar problem of interest in self-authorized forms of religious expertise. Although Paul’s refusal of support is often noted, Wayne Meeks reminds us that it is not absolute, for there are indications that he anticipated assistance from them for travel expenses. “In 1 Cor. 16:6 he tells of his plans to stay a time with them, perhaps over the winter, ‘that you may send me on my way [*propempsēte*] wherever I may go’. The same expectation is voiced in 2 Cor. 1:16 for his journey to Judea, and he requests the same service in the meantime for Timothy (1 Cor. 16:11). Malherbe has argued that in such a context *propempein* generally ‘means to equip him with all things necessary for the journey,’ which would involve some financial outlay.”¹⁵⁶ Likewise, in his letter to the Philippians Paul renews his gratitude for ‘help’ they sent him once and again in Thessalonica, which a number ancient

¹⁵⁶ Meeks, *The First Urban Christians*, 66; Abraham J. Malherbe, “The Inhospitability of Diotrophes,” in *God’s Christ and His People: Studies in Honour of Nils Alstrup Dahl* (ed. Jacob Jervell and Wayne A. Meeks; Oslo, Bergen, and Tromsø: Universitetsforlaget, 1977), 222-232, cit. 230 n. 11. See also Ronald F. Hock, *The Social Context of Paul’s Ministry: Tentmaking and Apostleship* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1980).

authorities read explicitly as ‘money for my needs’.¹⁵⁷ He then elaborates, “Not that I seek the gift, but I seek the fruit which increases to your credit. I have received full payment and more; I am filled, having received from Epaphroditus the gifts you sent, a fragrant offering, a sacrifice acceptable and pleasing to God. And my God will supply every need of yours according to his riches in glory in Jesus Christ” (Phil 4:17-19).

I raise the matter of financial support not to impeach Paul, but rather to draw attention to the complicated issue of compensation in entrepreneurial religion. As I have argued, certain interests undergird any form of religious activity and there were clear incentives attached to holding positions of religious authority in antiquity, as in modernity.¹⁵⁸ Yet there were important differences in the degree to which interest could be misrecognized within institutional religious contexts, as opposed to among freelance religious experts. Since we are not in a position to access the complex thoughts specialists likely had about such matters, we can only attend to the implications that their activities carried and the strategies that they adopted in order to counteract those implications. In other words, it matters not whether a religious expert like Paul consciously pursued such interests, or whether he did so subconsciously. What does matter is that status and prestige are

¹⁵⁷ Phil 4:16.

¹⁵⁸ For example, although priestly office was an integral component of the Roman *cursus honorum* and thus essential to the career advancement and power of Roman social elites, civic religious authority was cast in terms of honor, responsibility, and even manliness, while its individual perquisites were subordinated to the interests of the state. Without such an apparatus the apparent interests of self-authorized experts were more exposed, available to scrutiny regardless of whether they themselves might even be able to recognize let alone admit to being motivated by a desire for livelihood, status, or prestige.

observable outcomes for the kinds of practices in which he engaged, that the undisguised benefits attached to religious entrepreneurship provided fodder for its critics, and that his efforts to deflect the fraught connotations of brokering religious expertise not only fit the dynamics of this class of religious activity, but also match the solutions adopted by other freelance experts: rejecting benefits or patronage, proving one's self-sufficiency, accusing rivals of profit-mongering and insincerity, and so on. He, like other participants in this class of activity, is always hovering right at the edge of legitimacy.

If Paul's ambivalence about the appearance of interest is predictable in view of the class of activity in which he participated, even more predictable are the efforts on the part of his ancient interpreters to eliminate, minimize, or transform even the hint of such interests in his activities. Although economic concerns appear in nearly all of the Pauline epistles presumed to be authentic, they are conspicuously absent from the letters attributed to him pseudepigraphically, and also from Acts' portrayal of Paul's activities.¹⁵⁹ The for-profit connotation of religious professionals was a source of consternation both among social elites, whose incentives for holding religious office were more concealed, if no less instrumental, and among critics such as Josephus and Lucian, whose literary depictions of freelance experts were themselves highly self-interested. In the latter case, the trope of the financially and/or sexually exploitative specialist was

¹⁵⁹ A point made by Mark Kiley in *Colossians as Pseudepigraphy* (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1986), 46-47 and taken up by David J. Downs in *The Offering of the Gentiles: Paul's Collection for Jerusalem and Its Chronological, Cultural, and Cultic Contexts*. Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament 2. Reihe 248 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2008), 1, 63-72. Again, donations are imputed to the Galatians if not mentioned explicitly in Paul's letter to them.

sufficiently widespread that it was readily available to any who would distinguish their own expertise from that of rivals, even among writers and intellectuals competing for niche forms of prestige. Indeed, Paul invokes the same tools for casting himself in a positive light while simultaneously differentiating himself from dubious rivals, for instance, when he indicts the ‘super-apostles’ for their professional status, whereas he is a mere amateur (ιδιώτης), and for accepting support from the Corinthians.¹⁶⁰

This reading of Paul’s letters does not pretend to be a comprehensive representation of his religious program, both because it was impressively complex and our record of it incomplete, and because the program was likely never rigorously systematic in the first place. But we have been able to isolate a number of specific religious services within that program that are in keeping with others we have examined in the preceding chapters. Located within the wider phenomenon of specialist religion, Paul’s letters provide a rare and intimate sightline into how seamlessly assorted influences might be interwoven into a composite religious program that demonstrates a need for the specific services he is offering: purification, essence change, self-mastery, salvation, and immortality, all of which are accomplished by means of the receipt of God’s own essence made available to gentiles through Christ. While the language (baptism, *charismata*, *pneumatikos*, etc.) and explanations for these services might be somewhat idiosyncratic, rectifying Paul’s own categories in order to redescribe them as kinds

¹⁶⁰ 2 Cor. 11:6, 11:20.

of religious practices allows us to compare and contrast his practices with the offerings of other specialists. Inversely, viewing Paul as a participant in that phenomenon helps us to understand why he was a recognizable figure whose teachings and practices were attractive to his audiences. This is a different and more historically comprehensible explanation for his activities than others that view him foremost as theologian of the new Christian religion, whose appeal lay in the obvious spiritual value of his gospel.

In returning the broader class of freelance experts in religion and other services, we should also keep in mind the likelihood of a considerable gap between what Paul wanted his correspondents to do, and what they actually thought or did.¹⁶¹ After all, many aspects of his programs fit prior frames of reference and are not incomparable with known theological narratives or entrepreneurial offerings. It stands to reason that people employed local concepts to situate aspects of his mythological narratives and religious offerings, and also as they made sense of his instructions. As Ron Cameron and Merrill Miller suggest about the Corinthians, “If we acknowledge the capacity for experimentation with multiple modes of religion, we should expect that one of the forms that Corinthian response to Paul would take would be their own experiments in mythmaking and ritual related to their own differentiated social interests.”¹⁶² We have abundant evidence for ancient Romans adjusting their religious practices creatively, reconciling novelty and

¹⁶¹ Stowers, “Kinds of Myth, Meals, and Power,” 112.

¹⁶² Cameron and Miller, “Redescribing Paul and the Corinthians,” 257.

innovation with entrenched social commitments and particular interests. The same processes of resistance and negotiation would have obtained for Paul's audiences, who shared the same cultural reference points.

With respect to the question of what drew people to Paul's religious program and services, I remind readers of the insights of preceding chapters that investigate enthusiasm for *iudaica* in places like Rome, as well as the range of interests that people attempted to satisfy through participation in entrepreneurial forms of religion. Whether his audiences were persuaded entirely by his rather elaborate schema is a question we cannot answer, though there are several indications in his letters of resistance, and also to benefits of Pauline participation that people might have enjoyed even without assenting to his entire salvation program. It is possible that some of Paul's interlocutors were wholly uninterested in that narrative but *were* receptive to his teachings because they were interested in consuming foreign *paideia*.¹⁶³ Through Paul's offerings people acquired any of the following: mysterious wisdom and textual knowledge, contact with God or gods through divination, special talents, health or healing, and an escape from death with the prospect of immortality, even by means of resurrection for any who have already died or might die before the return of Christ.

It is impossible to know to what extent other Judean specialists claimed to transmit the *pneuma* of God or of Christ, given the rare insider perspective that the survival of Paul's letters offers, but, as I suggested in chapter three, there are

¹⁶³ Stowers, "Kinds of Myth, Meals, and Power," 142; Cameron and Miller, "Redescribing Paul and the Corinthians," 293.

indications that others at least pursued authority along similar lines. Judging from Paul's adamant avowal that he, too, is a descendent of Abraham it would appear that other Judean experts claimed the same ancestry; it is not impossible that some even crafted genealogical myths involving Abraham, as he did.¹⁶⁴ There is no proof that *pneumatic* transformation was part of the examples of baptism that we considered earlier, but we can certainly find first-century *comparanda* for the concept of *pneuma* as a transformative agent, on the one hand, and for the purifying significance of baptism, on the other hand, even if it was Paul himself who joined the concept with baptism and also with a figure of *the* Christos in quite this way. But his practices are neither unique nor even especially rare among self-authorized experts in Judean religion, or among other experts in alien or otherwise novel religious teachings and services. In particular, many of the ideas and motifs that Paul enlists occur among Judean social formations whose practices involved debate and taking positions about current issues of scriptural and other forms of interpretation. Paul's concept of the Christos overlaps with ideas of divine kingship that appear in other Judean writings, including the the Dead Sea Scrolls, though with a considerably different emphasis.¹⁶⁵ But we should expect these affinities, inasmuch as being recognized as a legitimate authority in a particular field, in this case, in specialized forms of Judean religion, one must work out of some 'tradition'

¹⁶⁴ E.g., 2 Cor 11:22.

¹⁶⁵ Adela Yarbro Collins and John J. Collins, *King and Messiah as Son of God: Divine, Human, and Angelic Messianic Figures in Biblical and Related Literature* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2008).

while also introducing new intellectual or other influences that are shown to be extensions of some branch of that tradition.

One persistent argument for Paul's uniqueness as a first-century religious actor is that he formed and maintained 'communities' dedicated to his teachings, whereas other freelance experts did not share this interest.¹⁶⁶ We have already examined several examples of his strategies for reinforcing a sense of groupness: depicting his audiences as members of a single body who are essentially similar to one another and essentially different from other people, appealing to their common experiences of suffering and obligation, reminding them of mysteries and an impending apocalyptic scenario that they alone understand, and using letters to iterate his particular teachings.¹⁶⁷ Yet Paul is not the only expert whom we have considered with such interests. The Dead Sea Scrolls Community sought to implement a high degree of social cohesion and, as I argued in the previous chapter, so did the experts who appear to have established groups dedicated to the Persian god, Mithras. We also glimpse Paul interacting with the some of the

¹⁶⁶ For the resemblance of Paul's groups to other first-century social formations see Meeks, *The First Urban Christians*, 74-110; John S. Kloppenborg, "Greco-Roman *Thiasoi*, the *Ekklēsia* at Corinth, and Conflict Management," in *Redescribing Paul and the Corinthians* (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2011), 187-218; Stanley K. Stowers, "Does Pauline Christianity Resemble a Hellenistic Philosophy?" 219-243.

¹⁶⁷ Meeks provides a thorough overview of words, phrases, and concepts that promote group boundaries and cohesion, (*The First Urban Christians*, 85-92). In 174-178 of the same work he specifically discusses the relationship between apocalyptic and social cohesion. Also Stowers, "Kinds of Myth, Meals, and Power," 148.

religious phenomena that we anticipated in chapter one: households and other existing groups, perhaps kinds of voluntary associations.¹⁶⁸

Like any of the other features of his practices that we have considered, Paul's interests in forming tightly knit groups whose members shared common thought and practices might have been relatively rare within the specialist phenomenon, but they are not unique. As Stowers has argued, it is the scholarly habit of referring to Pauline and other early Christian social formations as 'communities' that ultimately makes them incomparable with other first-century groups.¹⁶⁹ In his view, two things are clear from Paul's writings, "[First], Paul very much wanted the people to whom he wrote to be a community, and he held a theory saying that God had miraculously made them into a community 'in Christ'; second, [these people] never did sociologically form a community and only partly and differentially shared Paul's interests and formation."¹⁷⁰ Rather, their degree of organization was likely comparable to that of any other social formation engendered by a freelance expert with similar interests. The need to normalize our picture of Pauline and other Christian social formations is all the more pressing in view of the fact that the idea of 'community' is typically contrasted with a

¹⁶⁸ Stowers, "Kinds of Myth, Meals, and Power," *passim*.

¹⁶⁹ Stowers, "The Concept of 'Community' and the History of Early Christianity," 238: "The way the concept of 'communities' and 'community' is deployed in scholarship hinders historical work on early Christianity, especially if early Christianity is to be treated as a normal human social phenomenon studied in the non-sectarian university."

¹⁷⁰ Stowers, "Kinds of Myth, Meals, and Power," 109.

grotesque and abhorrent picture of the wider social world that early Christians sought to escape.¹⁷¹

The Pauline epistles do bear witness, however, to the considerable amount of work that might go into establishing and regularizing groups, and of the kinds of strategies a specialist might employ in order to realize such an ambition. Among other strategies that we have examined, Paul repeatedly reminded people that they were ontologically like one another and unlike other people, and that this new status transcended any ethnic, gender, or social divisions that otherwise divided them.¹⁷² I would extend Stowers' critique even further to suggest that communities are never things that exist in the world, but rather, that the image of community is invoked as an ideal in an effort to evoke real social formations with an optimal degree of cohesion and compliance with the conditions a given group-maker envisions.

In conclusion, I would like to preempt the possibility that some who read the arguments of this chapter might wonder whether the upshot is that Paul was really a 'charlatan'. There are at least two problems with this question, both of which limit the response to an either/or proposition: *Either* we accept Paul's self-presentation as a sincere and disinterested servant of God, *or* we take it on the authority of his so-called opponents and place him in the company of Josephus'

¹⁷¹ On the imagined sensibilities of the members of Paul's groups see, for example, Carolyn Osiek and David L. Balch, *Families in the New Testament World: Households and House Churches* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 1997); Peter Oakes, *Reading Romans in Pompeii: Paul's Letters at Ground Level* (Minneapolis, MN: 2009).

¹⁷² Stowers, "The Concept of 'Community' and the History of Early Christianity," 242.

‘pseudo-prophets’. But many scholars have been all too ready to embrace the biases of ancient authors such as Josephus, Lucian, and Juvenal, each of whom had stood to gain from depicting freelance experts in a negative light.¹⁷³ At the same time, they have taken Paul’s own claims largely at face value—both those he makes about himself and his denunciations of rival religious experts—when the same benefit of the doubt tends not to be given to comparable first-century actors.

I would imagine, however, that many of the religious specialists we have encountered in this study were persuaded by the value and efficacy of their own claims, skills, and teachings. That Paul’s activities and motives seem more defensible has everything to do with the nature of our evidence. We have his own writings, in which he controls how he represents and justifies his practices, as well as a rich and favorable historiography about him whose authors seem to have consciously eliminated whatever connotations of interest that do appear in his writings. Neither of these bodies of evidence supplies reliable criteria for adjudicating self-understanding or sincerity, but nor do the portrayals of freelance religious expertise furnished by Josephus and Lucian. My own efforts to locate Paul within the wider class of religious activity that I have delimited are not meant to cast suspicion upon him, but rather, to demonstrate his affinity with other participants therein. In other words, I am tacking between the either/or paradigm, to establish an alternative course that does not require evaluating Paul’s sincerity,

¹⁷³ Stowers, “Kinds of Myth, Meals, and Power,” 115-116.

or, for that matter, deciding whether he consciously made choices that promoted his recognition and attraction.

CONCLUSION

The Religion of Freelance Experts and the Problem of Christian Origins

In this dissertation I have isolated a particular class of religious activity, the religion of freelance experts, within Rome's variegated religious landscape and argued both for its salience in the first century and for the influence of its participants on larger dynamics of religious innovation and change in this period. In considering the variety of practices that comprised specialized offerings, as well as the different kinds of social formations that might arise from specialist activity, I have attempted to model an approach to this phenomenon that is not beholden to the boundaries of problematic scholarly categories. Rather, theorizing religion as a matter of practices that involve understandings about and the imagined participation of gods and similar beings allows us to juxtapose and compare examples of such practices wherever they occur. Narrowing our focus to examples of religion that were promulgated by self-authorized experts in practices perceived by certain audiences to require special knowledge or skills, sometimes to provide benefits that were unusual or otherwise difficult to obtain (secret information, foreknowledge, self-improvement, a favorable afterlife), or to be exotic or novel,

positions us to theorize a particular set of evidence wherein a vast assortment of methods, ideas, and cultural influences intersected.

The various examples of entrepreneurial religion that we have considered also provide some sense of how we would map or propose a typology for this class of activity. First and foremost, I have argued that freelance religious experts were but one subset of a wider class of emergent experts in other specialized areas such as ‘medicine’, ‘law’, and ‘philosophy’. To the extent that these areas of expertise were porous and interwoven, we should expect to encounter a considerable degree of overlap in the practices of freelance experts in *religion*, as I have defined this category, and the practices of those experts. True to form, the evidence that we have examined reveals a number of possible affinities between religious experts and experts of other varieties, for instance, on the matter of ethical teachings or in methods of healing. Such overlap is especially apparent for the subset of religious experts whom I have referred to as ‘writer-intellectuals’, whose offerings were either related to their learning (e.g., prophecies divined from writings) or were the writings themselves. Hence I have insisted that religion is a matter of “more and less” as opposed to absolute criteria or essence.

As I noted in the introduction, whereas some experts had nothing to do with books and the wider world of intellectual activities, others were deeply enmeshed in the discourses and practices of intellectual circles. On the one hand, the enlistment of writings in the context of entrepreneurial forms of religion is not altogether different from the enlistment of any other sort of artifact (astrological

charts or horoscopes, divining paraphernalia, etc.) that might be implicated in the same general context. This aspect of writings is important, inasmuch as texts are often treated as repositories of abstract ideas and discourses rather than as material objects that encoded a range of social practices. While there is considerable room for mapping the literary landscape of this subset of religious experts, framing them thus encourages us to think about the kind of work that writings might accomplish for someone with entrepreneurial interests. Paul wrote prolifically to his purported communities as part of an ongoing effort to remind them of his religious program, to reinforce the significance of certain practices, to inculcate groupness, and to contrast his own activities with those of rivals. Letters were thus indispensable tools for fostering his entrepreneurial ambitions. In a different but related vein, Tacitus recalls an astrologer named Pammenes, who ran a mail-order business in horoscopes while in exile on a Cycladic island and even commanded a pension from one of his wealthy clients.¹

On the other hand, distinct socio-cultural factors not only shaped those experts who utilized writings in their religious offerings, but also tied them to other writers and readers.² This wider field of intellectuals transected the class of religious activity that I have theorized; it simultaneously included other kinds of writers who were playing roughly the same game as intellectualizing religious experts, yet who might differ from them considerably with respect to the nature of

¹ Tac. *Ann.* 16.14.

² Stowers, "The Religion of Plant and Animal Offerings," 35-56.

their legitimacy (attributed versus earned), to their wealth, to dynamics of power, and also to the application of their intellectual activities. In other words, the category of religious entrepreneur cuts across some activities that had different social locations and involved different types of practices.

Attention to the requisite preconditions for intellectualizing forms of the religion of freelance experts should not, however, overshadow other prominent subsets of this class of religious activity, populated by experts who had no intellectual or philosophical pretensions. While some of our best evidence for the independent specialist phenomenon survives in the form of writings that arose from it, I have tried to be mindful of the range of strategies available to experts who were not writer-intellectuals but who nevertheless faced the same general challenge of recognition and legitimacy that confronted all of its participants. Some seem to have modeled their offerings on the practices of well-known religious institutions while others catered to exotic or ethnic intrigue in their self-styling. Those who were able to do so might even have invoked the prestige and perceived power of *writing* in their practices, while others enlisted curiosity items, strange images, materials with unusual properties, and so on.³ Although making determinations about whether an object was an instrument of religious entrepreneurship can be a tenuous enterprise, this interpretive possibility might be applicable to the lot of small finds that have been excavated from religious sites.

³ For a rich discussion of the power of writing, which may or may not entail the degree of literacy implied in the preceding paragraph, see David Frankfurter, "The Magic of Writing and the Writing of Magic: The Power of the Word in Egyptian and Greek Tradition," *Helios* 21 (1994): 189-221.

The most important point, however, is that all of the artifacts enlisted in specialized offerings can and should be theorized as part of a continuum that also includes writings. Occupying one end of that spectrum, I would place the products of intellectual practices pursued in the context of religious activity: esoteric texts read and produced by highly literary experts, the Pauline epistles, and other examples of religious writings that marshaled philosophical language and concepts. These writings might overlap with or differ in degree from other kinds of texts that were purposed for religious entrepreneurship: freely circulating Sibylline oracles and prophecies, ‘biblical’ materials that were being read in the same way, and also collections of spells or sayings of the sort that appeared frequently in the preceding chapters. Here I would arrange, for example, so-called ‘magical’ writings such as the *Greek Magical Papyri* or the *Theban Magical Library*—texts whose ‘intellectual’ content varies but which should nevertheless be treated as manifestations of literate specialist activity. Comparable intellectual practices or skills might produce astrological charts, horoscopes, and related instruments that should be included among those other writings and likewise organized according to degree of expertise. Further along the continuum lie a range of inscribed objects whose quality of writing or calculation (astrological or numerological) also differs in degree: *defixiones*, prayers, amulets and other items incised with strings of exotic characters, lots and other divining devices, and so forth. Throughout this study I have used the concept of the notional authority of writing to characterize instances wherein freelance experts who were not skilled in intellectual practices

nevertheless utilized writing—for instance, by reproducing strange alphabets—to the best of their abilities.⁴ And on the opposite end of the spectrum fall those artifacts that were not associated with writings or intellectual practices in any way, but whose purveyors employed alternate methods and performances for demonstrating their special knowledge and skill.

While not every freelance expert traded on exoticism or novelty or wielded multiple forms of expertise, the heightened visibility of those who did so during the period of this study suggests that specific dynamics of Roman imperialism (connectivity, trade, migration, urban development, social mobility), promoted the recognition and attractiveness of forms of religion with such characteristics. My study suggests that where these factors converged, often in cosmopolitan urban centers, freelance experts were the most concentrated and competitive with one another, and most prone to innovation. Such dynamics were especially pronounced at Rome, but the capital is not the only place where one might encounter them, in turn, where the independent specialist phenomenon seems to have flourished. Many of the experts whom we have considered (Paul, Peregrinus, Alexander, Apollonius), even those of fiction (Diophanes, Apuleius' Chaldean at Corinth), show a remarkable degree of overlap with respect to their travel itineraries or the cities wherein they resided. On this basis, one might broaden the geographical scope of the present study to include evidence from cities such as

⁴ As Pauline Ripat remarks, "[For such actors,] expertise might not have been as important as the impression of expertise" ("Expelling Misconceptions: Astrologers at Rome," 125).

Puteoli, Athens, Corinth, Delos, Alexandria, Jerusalem, and Ephesus, all of which regularly appear in accounts of specialist activity.

I have also argued that many participants in the religion of freelance experts were people whose opportunities to hold a prestigious office or to participate in civic religious institutions were relatively more limited on account of their civil status or sex. This observation obtains both for freelance experts, many of whom were *peregrini* or freedpersons of foreign origin, and for consumers of exotic wisdom and forms of religion. Time and again we have encountered literary references to aristocratic women and socially mobile freedpersons taking an interest in the teachings and practices of freelance experts. Many of these depictions are far from neutral. For instance, Ross Kraemer has drawn attention to the difficulty of extracting “reliable historical evidence from the entanglements of gendered concerns” that underlie many accounts of women’s religious practices.⁵ This is certainly the case, for example, in Petronius’ vignette of Quartilla, a woman of aristocratic profile who presides over mysteries of Priapus. When the novel’s three anti-heroes accidentally disrupt his nocturnal rites, Priapus instructs Quartilla in a dream to seek them out and assuage the offense by means of secret methods that the god reveals to her.⁶

Yet the sheer number of accounts that feature women as the recipients of special teachings and other practices suggests an element of verisimilitude in the

⁵ Kraemer, *Unreliable Witnesses*, 54-55.

⁶ Petron. *Sat.* 16-26.

basic scenario being presumed, even if the character of those offerings and the relationships between freelance experts and their female clients are distorted to suit the author's own agenda. Similarly, a prism of aristocratic point of view has refracted many of our accounts of the religious activities of freedpersons. While we should not take such pictures as straightforwardly representative of the interests that freedpersons pursued through involvement in entrepreneurial forms of religion or of what such participation looked like, we would be equally remiss to confuse distortion with complete fabrication. The basic assertion that women and freedpersons consulted freelance religious experts correlates with epigraphic evidence for their involvement in forms of religion that arose from that class of religious activity. We have also inherited more positive models of the same dynamic, for instance, Jerome's relationships with elite Roman women interested in Christian teachings and practices.⁷

Likewise, the Pauline epistles are thick with references to women and people whom scholars have identified as freedpersons and slaves, perhaps even of imperial *familiae*. As Stanley Stowers notes, "An analysis of Romans 16 shows that Paul greets primarily slaves and freedpersons. Some are also likely to have been members of the most socially mobile group in the empire. In addition to having the status inconsistency of freedpersons, the readers are foreigners, mostly Greeks, disproportionately prominent women, and they have associated themselves with Judaism. One is right to imagine that these people, who had the ambition to

⁷ E.g., Jerome's epistles to Eustochium and the *Vita Paulae*, addressed to the same woman.

advance but not the cultivation of the ruling class and who had wealth or potential for wealth but not the respect that wealth ordinarily brought, found both moral cultivation and respect in the politeia of the Jews.”⁸

Again, this is not to suggest that motivations such as compensating for status inconsistency were the only interests that people pursued through participation in entrepreneurial forms of religion. To the contrary, the examples that we have considered convey any number of religious interests that people expected to satisfy by periodically consulting or sustaining a more committed relationship with a freelance expert: fuller knowledge about and more personal communication with the gods, foreknowledge of future events, control over human affairs, healing, fertility, purification, self-mastery, the promise of a better afterlife, and so on. While some of these interests might also be pursued through practices that were not religious in the sense for which I have argued, we cannot overlook the fact that many people preferred to solicit the assistance of gods and similar beings in realizing them.

I would like to clarify that although I have relied on concepts such as interest, exchange, and competition to theorize the religion of freelance experts, my articulation of this class and its dynamics is not perfectly synonymous with the model of a ‘marketplace of religious options’ that has become something of a commonplace in recent conversations about religion in the Roman Empire, and about the emergence and success of Christianity within that marketplace. One of

⁸ Stowers, *A Rereading of Romans*, 79.

the operative assumptions of the religious marketplace approach is that people seek out new religious options because they have grown dissatisfied with older ones, and thus that new forms of religion come to occupy openings left by weak or outdated alternatives.⁹ Implicit in this assumption is the existence of stable and universal religious needs that will be satisfied with varying degrees of success by competing religious ‘firms’.¹⁰ Taken together these ideas suggest that peoples’ religious preferences tend toward forms of religion that most effectively satisfy those inherent, invariable needs, with the result that in a pluralistic religious economy (that is, one in which a number of ‘firms’ are able to compete for followers) the most successful ‘religions’ will be the ones that not only maximize religious interests but that also provide the most plausible and attractive explanations for how those interests are met.

Many theorizations of varieties of religion in the Roman Empire are tailored to explaining the emergence and eventual success of Christianity. Therefore the precise form of the ‘religious needs’ posited for all people are adduced from the very benefits that early Christians alleged to be offering. Rodney Stark, for example, has argued both that people have a natural impulse to pursue ‘rational’ and salvation oriented forms of religion, and that the ultimate factor in the rise of Christianity is that its central doctrines “prompted and sustained attractive,

⁹ E.g., Rodney Stark, *The Rise of Christianity: A Sociologist Reconsiders History* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1996). So Stark writes, “Christianity found a substantial opportunity to expand because of the incapacities of paganism, weaknesses quite outside of Christian control. If Christianity ultimately buried paganism, it was not the source of its terminal illness” (203).

¹⁰ Stark, *The Rise of Christianity*, 39.

liberating, and effective social relations and organizations.”¹¹ Furthermore, Stark understands Christian doctrine and organizations to have comprised a robust and stable ‘culture’ amidst the religious mayhem of the first century. Whereas, in his understanding, the state of religion in the empire prior to the emergence of Christian options was one of confusion, with people thrown together helter-skelter speaking many languages and worshipping all manner of gods, Christianity offered “a coherent culture that was *entirely stripped of ethnicity*.”¹² Highlighting, in particular, the fundamental incompatibility between the strong moral vision of the Christians and “the casual cruelty of pagan custom,” Stark concludes, “What Christianity gave to its converts was nothing less than their humanity. In this sense virtue was its own reward.”¹³

The evidence that we have considered in this study refutes a number of Stark’s basic premises. Against his claim that religious ‘professionals’ were “produced only within monotheism,” the sheer variety of experts that we have

¹¹ Stark, Stark, *The Rise of Christianity*, 211.

¹² Stark, *The Rise of Christianity*, 213. For a sustained critique of Stark and his rational choice approach to the study of religious preference see Paul Firenze, “Value and the Economics of Religious Capital,” (Ph.D. Dissertation; Brown University, 2013).

¹³ Stark, *The Rise of Christianity*, 215. Stark expands his argument about the moral superiority of Christianity in *Cities of God: The Real Story of How Christianity Became an Urban Movement and Conquered Rome* (New York: HarperOne, 2007), 30. He writes, “The power of Christianity lay not in its promise of otherworldly compensations for suffering in this life, as has so often been proposed. No, the crucial change that took place...was the rapidly spreading awareness of a faith that delivered potent antidotes to life’s miseries here and now! The truly revolutionary aspect of Christianity lay in moral imperatives such as “*Love one’s neighbor as oneself*,” “*Do unto others as you would have them do unto you*,” “*It is more blessed to give than to receive*,” and “*When you did it to the least of my brethren, you did it unto me*.” These were not just slogans.... It was these responses to the long-standing misery of life in antiquity, not the onset of worse conditions, that were the ‘material’ changes that inspired Christian growth. But these material benefits were entirely spiritual in origin.”

examined shows that such a position is mistaken. But there are two additional problems. The first problem is that many of the participants in the independent specialist phenomenon alleged to represent a single god with whom he or she had a special relationship. Furthermore, many experts argued for the supremacy or singular abilities of their god, whether or not it was at the exclusion of others (e.g., Isis devotees or Mithras initiates). The second problem is that the very examples that Rodney Stark has in mind were not strict monotheists in the sense he has in mind. Paul's religious program admits for both the god of the Judeans and his divine son, but also for the presence of 'spirits' (πνεύματα) in his audiences' environment that they will be able to discern having received the *pneuma* of God made available to them by Christ.

While one might overlook the semantic imprecision of calling Paul and other freelance experts monotheists, in Stark's model any endeavor to attract followers demands that the expert in question maintained that there was only one true religion or only one true god.¹⁴ Yet, again, it would appear that many freelance experts presented their divine wisdom as some sort of revealed or ultimate truth, and the god whom they represented as one of exceptional status within the divine hierarchy. On the basis of what we now know about the competitive and innovative dynamics of this class of activity, I would argue that the promotion of one supreme deity is a predictable *effect* of entrepreneurial activity, but not its

¹⁴ Stark, *Cities of God*, 3.

prerequisite.¹⁵ Similarly, the imperative to attract followers, and also to demand their allegiance, makes sense within a context wherein rivalries between specialists were acute and there was much to gain (prestige, patronage, property) from engendering and regularizing new religious social formations. We would be mistaken, however, to conflate these patterns in the activities of freelance experts with widespread religious attitudes of the period.

The most serious flaw in Stark's picture of the religious life of the empire lies in his concept of certain religious 'needs' that all of its inhabitants shared, and which they struggled to meet by navigating a bewildering mass of alternatives.¹⁶ He presumes that the practices and emphases that one finds in early Christian offerings—self-mastery, moral progress, relief from sin, salvation, and eternal life—were basic, that other forms of religious activity addressed them inadequately, and that the gradual success of Christian offerings lay in widespread recognition of their ability to meet those needs. Moreover, Stark identifies a market trend preceding Christianity, since he claims that 'oriental religions' attracted a following by virtue of placing a similar emphasis on morality and

¹⁵ North, "Pagans, Polytheists, and the Pendulum," 125-143.

¹⁶ On this point Stark follows E. R. Dodds: "As E. R. Dodds recognized, religious life in the empire suffered from excessive pluralism, from 'a bewildering mass of religious alternatives. There were too many cults, too many mysteries, too many philosophies of life to choose from: you could pile one religious assurance on another, yet not feel safe.' Moreover, since no god could effectively demand adherence (let alone exclusive commitment), individual faced the need and the burden to assemble their own divine portfolio, seeking to balance potential services and to spread the risks, as Dodds noted in his reference to religious insurance" [Stark, *Cities of God*, 33; E. R. Dodds, *Pagan and Christian in an Age of Anxiety* (New York: Norton, 1970), 130].

atonement.¹⁷ Even if these foreign deities heralded more rational religious preferences, “when monotheism and polytheism collide, monotheism always wins. Easily. It does so because it offers far more, and does so with far greater credibility, making it the choice of philosophers as well as of the people.”¹⁸

All of the evidence we have considered in this study suggests that it was simply not the case that the forms of religion that Stark has in mind optimally realized preexisting and shared religious needs; rather, the needs that he identifies were *created* by freelance experts who deliberately contrasted their knowledge and services with more intuitive and widespread religious practices and understandings that did not require expertise. To arrive at the conclusion, for example, that Paul’s salvation scheme generated interest because it satisfied people’s inherent need for salvation, and also that it did so most rationally, grossly ignores all of the work that Paul devoted to demonstrating why and for what purpose people need salvation in the first place, in order that he might then propose the remedy. Moreover, the only evidence that his religious program held value to his audiences lies in the fact that they seem to have recognized Paul as a religious authority and to have been interested in the teachings he transmitted.

While we might glean some sense of the preferences of his audiences as revealed in their choice to entertain Paul’s offerings, this is not the same thing as saying that these people had an inherent *need* for salvation prior to the elaborate

¹⁷ Stark, *Cities of God*, 88.

¹⁸ Stark, *Cities of God*, 208.

case that he makes for why they do. At the same time, their preference might have had less to do with the specific services that he offers, and the arguments that justify the need for those services, and more to do with an interest in exotic teachings, prophecy, religious writings, having a personal relationship with a god, or any other element in his composite offering. In other words, all of the characteristics that Stark understands to be intrinsic to people's spiritual make-up are, in fact, *needs* that Paul must go out of his way to demonstrate through an elaborate scheme that includes but is not limited to: a myth of human decline whose outcome is an inherently sinful condition, an eschatology whose outcome is grim in light of that condition, a highly preferable scenario in which people are not only spared from assured destruction, but are also promised eternal life and a god-like existence, and a rite that will change the essences of his initiates in order that they meet the latter fate.

All of the freelance experts whom we have considered shouldered the same burden of arguing for and getting people to accept the value of their religious offerings, with varying degrees of success. But the reason why so much effort went into establishing the value of specialized religious practices is that people did not automatically value them as such, or have an obvious need for them. Religious preferences were not stable but were shaped by a vast array of social practices, including those of freelance experts who utilized a range of strategies to accrue

value to their offerings. Nor was there only one form that value could take.¹⁹ Thus, attraction to specialized offerings cannot be explained as rational choices made in order to maximize predictable interests that everyone already held.²⁰ Rather, the value of such practices depended on the understandings of those who participated in them, which might or might not align with values proposed by the experts who purveyed them.

While freelance religious experts are valuable objects of study in their own right, in the particular period of this study they also offer invaluable evidence for the question of how Christianity emerged and spread in the first century. Several recent publications have profitably reinvestigated dynamics contributing to the heterogeneity and proliferation of early Christian phenomena within the complex religious landscape of the first centuries. Nevertheless, most begin from some premise of groups and leadership without interrogating the social processes by which distinctive Christian entities, authorities, and ideologies came into existence. The decision to begin hence is neither made arbitrarily nor out of ignorance. In his contribution to the aforementioned volume, James Rives openly addresses the misleading impression of his “undifferentiated appeal to ‘Christian leaders’ *tout court*.” As he writes, “In reality, especially after the first few generations of Christians, there were different sorts of leaders: bishops and priests,

¹⁹ Diverse practices might even share certain values when the understandings that guide the practice are shared. Theodore R. Schatzki, *The Site of the Social: A Philosophical Account of Social Life and Change* (University Park, PA: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 2002); Firenze, “Value and Economics of Religious Capital,” 197.

²⁰ Firenze, “Value and Economics of Religious Capital,” 189.

teachers and writers, and a range of charismatic figures. A person might belong to more than one of these categories, but more often they must have remained distinct.... It was precisely in the struggles of this variety of individual Christian leaders to work out individual solutions to the specific problems that faced them, both from non-Christians and from other Christian leaders, that [a new Christian] ideology was gradually forged.”²¹

There is much to recommend Rives’ account, but what it is missing from it, and from other explanations in this vein, is a specific context of religious activity that is exclusive neither to Christians nor to Jews or Judeans, within which to situate the full range of early experts in wisdom and practices involving Christ. What these studies lack are plausible sources of agency responsible for assembling varied, often composite, religious programs (diversity), for diffusing Christ phenomena (spread), for designating kinds of expertise (leadership), and for forging social formations of subscribers to such programs (groups), with varying interests and success.

I identify this area of murkiness in theories of Christian origins in hope that this dissertation will provide tools for taking what is, in my view, the necessary prior step of situating emergent Christians within a discrete class of religious activity, populated more generally by varieties of freelance experts. In fact, our earliest sources point to tremendous rivalry among self-authorized Christ experts

²¹ James B. Rives, “Christian Expansion and Christian Ideology,” in *The Spread of Christianity in the First Four Centuries: Essays in Explanation* (ed. William V. Harris; Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2005), 15-41, cit. 40-41.

in the first and second centuries, which traditional interpretations cast as a tension between orthodoxy and heresy, and more recently as early Christian diversity or diversities, variety, or multiplicity. Noting this shift Karen King summarizes the issues at stake as follows: “It is in this context that two of the issues troubling contemporary scholars can be understood: how to resolve issues of normativity in the face of multiplying differences and divisions given the breakdown of old strategies and methods; and how to imagine the history of early Christianity without reinscribing the canon, creed, master narrative, and discursive strategies of orthodoxy and heresy.”²² Yet all of these options implicitly evoke a set of assumptions about common features of ‘Christianity’, however much the category has been qualified with respect to fluctuating first- and second-century dynamics. Additionally, all are framed exclusively in terms of intramural contestations, despite the assortment of non-Christian and non-Judean opponents whom Christian texts also engage. The context of the religion of specialists, which has thus far been absent from valuable discussions of Christian origins, offers a plausible social setting for competition among a variety of innovative, largely independent Christian authorities.

I have already located within the wider class of freelance religious experts evidence for specialists in ethnically coded practices, and for Judean specialists specifically. I have also explored the implications of extending the dynamics of this

²² Karen L. King, “Factions, Variety, Diversity, Multiplicity: Representing Early Christian Differences for the 21st Century,” *MTSR* 23 (2011): 216-237, cit. 217. For a useful discussion of the implications of ‘orthodoxy’ and ‘heresy’ as normative terms of evaluation belonging to particular discourses of power and identity, see King’s discussion on 218-219.

class to competing appropriations of Jesus Christ evident in sources such as the Pauline epistles. But one can extend the insights of my theorization even further. I would argue that our earliest evidence for 'Christianity' maps perfectly onto the above typology of freelance religious experts, one area of which consists of writer-intellectuals—the authors of the Chaldean oracles, diviners or interpreters of Judean sacred writings, and also, I would argue, figures such as Paul, Marcion, and Valentinus—another area of which captures non-textual diviners, inspired prophets, exorcists, and authorities on Christ whose practices might not emphasize writings (more along the line of the man who exorcizes in Christ's name in Mark 9:38-39 and the depiction of Simon Magus in Acts 8:17-19).

Arranging our evidence in this way does not require talking about common features of 'Christianity' in the first two centuries, at least beyond the fact that, not unlike Pythagorean phenomena, what unites this particular form of religious expertise is the figure of Christ, nor does it require bringing in heavily qualified categories such as 'orthodoxy' and 'heresy' or 'Gnosticism', to make sense of our range of evidence. It also throws into higher relief the interests of the so-called 'apologists' who used intellectual skills and writings to propose criteria for differentiating the gross rubric 'Christian' in much the same way that Josephus presented a normative version of Judean religion, or Galen a medical discipline. We can parse the larger category of specialist religion in any number of ways, filtering our evidence to exhibit different but non-essential relationships between the experts it contains.

Locating early Christians within this class of religious activity also makes sense of why so many of our sources depict varieties of specialists as direct antagonists to Christian figures. Acts portrays the apostles clashing with and ultimately winning over a slave girl with a divinatory spirit, Judean exorcists, various philosophers, and practitioners of magical arts, who spontaneously burn their books upon learning about Christ.²³ The author of the *Didache* uses writings to instruct his readers in specialized practices, while enjoining them from teachers of contrary claims, pseudo-prophets, enchanter, astrologers, and sorcerers. Elsewhere the reader is admonished not to practice divination, nor to use incantations or astrology or rites of purification, nor even to wish to see or hear these things.²⁴ Justin Martyr denounces Simon Magus and Menander, false authorities on Christ who used beguiling ‘magical arts’ to attract a great following at Rome in the time of Claudius.²⁵ In defense of Christian practices, Justin argues that an emperor who allows himself to be persuaded by conjurers, *magoi*, necromancers, and philosophers should be willing to receive the teachings of Christians.²⁶ He also points to a precedent of certain philosophers warranting and receiving stricture, without compromising the status of the schools with which

²³ Acts 16:6, 19:18-19. The *locus classicus* for comparisons of gospel actors with other varieties of freelance religious specialists is Morton Smith’s *Jesus the Magician*. While I disagree in fundamental ways with how Smith characterizes the activities of ‘magicians’ in antiquity and do not share his interest in making Christians ‘charlatans’, I support his instinct to situate early Christian figures amidst other freelance experts in religion, irrespective of the scholarly categories into which we sort them (astrology, magic, etc.).

²⁴ *Didache* 3.4.

²⁵ Just. 1 *Apol.* 56.2; 2 *Apol.* 15.1.

²⁶ Just. 1 *Apol.* 18.3-6.

they claim affiliation.²⁷ In turn, Justin proposes criteria for differentiating the category 'Christian' so that administrators might be equally discriminating for its diverse figures and phenomena.

Not only are the above arguments aimed at rival authorities on Christ, in whatever guise such authorities appear, they also contend with an assortment of experts in specialized, often ethnically coded or otherwise novel, religious practices. Read in this way, our earliest Christian writings join the Pauline epistles as a rare form of evidence for the claims, representations, and internal dynamics of the wider phenomenon of the religion of freelance experts. The same sources betray the challenges of stabilizing a novel form of religion, of forging groups that were committed to particular practices and understandings of those practices, and of tensions that might arise on account of other social entanglements with which group membership conflicted.

The redescription that I am suggesting exposes an important flaw in a fairly mainstream account of the spread of earliest Christianity, which envisages individuals who had come to believe that Jesus was the Son of God sharing compelling stories about their newfound faith as they moved throughout the empire for other purposes. As Bart Ehrman writes in his standard New Testament textbook: "Such opportunities to tell stories about Jesus must have presented

²⁷ Just. *1 Apol* 4.7-8; Justin draws an explicit connection between varieties of Christians and varieties of philosophers: "For just as certain people, although they have learnt from Christ the teacher that they should not deny, are knocked off course when questioned, so too, perhaps, by their evil lives they play into the hands of those who are already disposed to accuse all Christians of irreligion and injustice. And it is unfair that this, too, should happen. For, indeed, some assume the name and appearance of philosophers who behave in no way worthily of their profession."

themselves throughout the major urban areas of the Mediterranean.... Otherwise, there is no way to account for the spread of the religion in an age that did not enjoy the benefits of telecommunication.”²⁸

But this passive scenario of transmission is not consistent with the picture that we receive from the Pauline epistles, from Pauline pseudepigrapha, from the Ignatian epistles, from the *Didache*, from Acts, from Justin Martyr, from Irenaeus, and so on and so forth. Rather, these texts bear witness to and even participate in a variegated field of rival would-be religious experts, all of whom deploy assorted strategies in order to proactively further their particular religious programs. The sources themselves are even quite plain about supplying freelance experts as the mechanism behind the heterogeneity and diffusion of religious teachings and practices involving Christ, although scholars have overlooked the significance of individual actors in positing ‘communities’ as the primary, if not exclusive, social formations comprising the panorama of first- and second-century ‘Christianity’. Properly situated, then, these texts offer a tantalizing glimpse of how the religion of freelance experts would develop over the course of the second century and into the third, inviting us to extend the insights of this study into the first century of Christian history.

²⁸ Bart D. Ehrman, *The New Testament: A Historical Introduction to the Early Christian Writings* (5th ed.; New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 41–42. See also Rodney Stark, *Cities of God*, 75: “[Travelers in the Roman Empire] were not missionaries; they spread their gods mainly by example. In the first century a new element was added. Now, among all these many travelers were some prepared to actively missionize on behalf of the One True Faith; a few of them, like Paul and his associates, were professional missionaries. The great majority of Christian travelers, though, were ordinary members devoted to spreading their faith.”

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