Pontius' Conscience: Pilate's Afterlives and Apology for Empire in John Chrysostom's Antioch

Ben Kolbeck

Journal of Late Antiquity, Volume 17, Number 1, Spring 2024, pp. 3-34 (Article)

Published by Johns Hopkins University Press
DOI: https://doi.org/10.1353/jla.2024.a926279

Ben Kolbeck

Pontius' Conscience: Pilate's Afterlives and Apology for Empire in John Chrysostom's Antioch

This article explores apologetic early Christian approaches to Pontius Pilate, demonstrating the popularity of the idea that Pilate was innocent of Jesus's death, regarded Christ as innocent and just, and even became a Christian himself. Focusing on the exceptionally detailed image of the man who condemned Jesus to the cross found in the New Testament homilies of John Chrysostom, this article connects Chrysostom's treatment of Pilate to his interaction with a real-life (and pagan) governor of Syria. It suggests that apologetic interpretations of Pilate were used not merely to denigrate Jews but also to allow Christians who were themselves both Christian and Roman to believe that Rome had witnessed their Messiah—a historical example which proved the congruence of Romanness and Christianity.

Introduction

Only three people are named in the major early Christian creeds: Jesus Christ, Mary, and Pontius Pilate. Early Christian authors were fascinated by this figure; due to his equivocal presentation in the Gospels, they generated a range of interpretations of him.[1] If we restrict our attention to those authors who wrote under the Roman empire, however, the dominant interpretation is positive and apologetic. We repeatedly meet a Pilate who may have been weak, but one who was not evil and who attempted to release Christ as innocent. Some went further, arguing that the Roman governor had recognized Jesus's divinity and so had become—in a sense—a proto-Christian.

The pre-Constantinian roots of this idea are relatively well-known, fitting into a traditional scholarly assumption that apologetics served the function of

Versions of this research were presented at the King's College London Classics Research Seminar and at the British New Testament Society meeting in St Andrews. It has benefitted from the feedback of James Corke-Webster, Karl Dahm, Edward Creedy, George Oliver, and David DeVore, as well as the *Journal of Late Antiquity*'s two anonymous reviewers. Remaining errors and idiosyncrasies are my own.

[1] This varied interpretative history continues to this day: see Herzer 2020, 238–260 on modern depictions of Pilate, and McDonough 2022 specifically on Pilate in modern cinema.

advertising Christianity in a palatable way to outsiders. The idea that Pilate viewed Jesus as innocent was therefore valuable propaganda in the argument against persecution. The continuation of pro-Pilate Christian literature in the late empire has however been comparatively neglected—partly because it questions the above assumption. Those who recognize the post-Constantinian tradition suggest a range of motivations, all of which see Pilate himself as a secondary concern. He was, it is argued, merely a chronological marker to fix Christ's death historically;[2] he was a mirror-image to highlight the betrayal of the Jews in giving Jesus up;[3] he was a stand-in for "the nations" to whom the mantle of Israel would soon pass.[4]

Focusing on the extensive portrayal of Pontius Pilate found in the Gospel homilies of John Chrysostom—presbyter of Antioch, bishop of Constantinople, and supposed arch-opponent of earthly authorities[5]—I suggest instead an interpretation which puts Pilate himself front-and-center. Pilate was presented positively by early Christian authors because it was embarrassing for them that Christ should have been put to death by a Roman authority as a revolutionary. Early Christians—themselves Roman subjects—wanted to believe that Christianity and Romanness were fundamentally congruent, and they were attracted to historical examples which demonstrated this. Pilate represented *the* programmatic, foundational proof of this idea.

This has several implications. Firstly, it suggests that we need to take the Roman identities of Christian authors—both pre- and post-Constantine—more seriously to understand their approach to earthly authority. Secondly, we should nuance our approach to the political rhetoric of Christian polemicists like Chrysostom, who supposedly valued ecclesiastical power above all else. Thirdly, we should be more alive to the continuation of Christian apologetics into the late empire and its similarity to pre-Constantinian expression. Because—as Chrysostom's self-evidently *Christian focused* rhetoric shows us—the principal aim of such material is not to convince non-Christian hearers of the benign and superior nature of Christianity. Rather, it seeks to re-assure Christians themselves—who were also Romans—that they had a legitimate, and even exalted place in imperial society and history.

My argument proceeds in three sections. Section I demonstrates that apologetic interpretations of Pilate intensified in Late Antiquity rather than withered away. Section II introduces Chrysostom's homilies and explores

[2] Maier 1971, 362; Hourihane 2009, 40; Baudoin 2013, 42–44; Gounelle 2013, 30; Agamben 2014, 2.

[3] Liberty 1944, 50; Brandon 1968, 529; Staats 1987, 510; Real 2010, 166; Judd 2016, 179; Herzer 2020, 216–217.

[4] Liberty 1944, 52; Baudoin 2013, 50–54.

[5] Groß-Albenhausen 1999; Stephens 2001 and 2009.

their remarkably detailed and positive portrait of Pilate. Finally, Section III connects this positive portrayal to Chrysostom's broader discussions of earthly authority and to a real-life episode in which he felt embarrassment in front of a Roman governor, making the case that the motivations suggested for Chrysostom can equally be applied to the similar material explored in Section I.

I. Pilate in Early Christian Literature

The primary source material with which early Christian authors were working was the New Testament Gospels. Each of the canonical Gospels attempts to shift the blame for the death of Jesus from Pilate to Jewish elements. Mark—the earliest and briefest account—shows Pilate recognizing that the chief priests handed Jesus over out of jealousy (διὰ φθόνον) and asking the crowd "what evil has he done?" (Mark 15.14).[6] Matthew presents a similar picture, adding Pilate's wife's warning not to harm Jesus, and shows the governor washing his hands and declaring that he is "innocent" (ἀθῷος) of Jesus' blood (Matt 27.19, 24–25). He contextualizes Pilate's condemnation of Jesus by saying he realized a riot was about to occur. Luke's Pilate explicitly tells the chief priests that he finds Jesus innocent (Luke 23.4), repeating this to the crowd outside the praetorium (23.14–16, 22). Luke also transfers the mockery of Jesus by the Roman cohort (as in Mark 15.16–20 and Matt 27.27–30) to the Herodian soldiery (Luke 23.11).[7] The synoptics therefore display a progressive pro-Romanness and desire to narrate the governor's belief in Christ's innocence.

John displays many similar impulses. Though he has Roman troops arresting (18.12) and mocking (19.3–4) Jesus, he gives us the most detailed portrait of Pilate in the New Testament. Pilate wants the Jews to deal with Jesus themselves, but they refuse (18.29–31). John constructs a metaphysical distinction between the inside of the praetorium—inhabited only by Jesus and Pilate—and the exterior, where the crowd bays for blood; Pilate transitions repeatedly between these spaces,[8] speaking with Jesus about his spiritual kingdom in the one (18.36), and negotiating with the hostile crowd for his release in the other (18.38–39, 19.4). Convinced that Jesus possesses some special power (19.12), John's Pilate only relents when the crowd suggests he will not be a friend of Caesar (οὐκ εἶ φίλος τοῦ Καίσαρος) if he releases the prisoner; on extracting a

[6] Bond 1998, 94–119 argues that Mark presents Pilate as skillfully manipulating the crowd. R. Brown 1994, 754 says that Mark presents him as "a poor excuse for Roman justice."

[7] On Luke's maneuver here, see Brink 2014, 104. On Luke's general pro-Romanness, see Brink 2009 and 2014; Robbins 1991; Alexander 2012; Yoder 2014.

[8] Aubert 2010, 305 on the spaces of John's trial.

pledge of loyalty from the mob (19.12–15), he condemns Christ. He is handed over to "them" for crucifixion.[9]

Each of the Gospels mentions the inscription on the cross, recording the charge against Jesus. John alone specifies that Pilate had it written, accurately calls it a τίτλος (Latin *titulus*), and says it rendered the phrase "Jesus of Nazareth, King of the Jews" in Greek, Latin, and Hebrew.[10] John has the chief priests protest and ask that Pilate instead write "This man said, 'I am king of the Jews,'" but Pilate replies, "What I have written, I have written" (19.21–22). John therefore agrees with the synoptics in outlines but adds new details such as his involvement with the *titulus* and his discourses with Jesus.

In post-New Testament literature, many references to Pilate are credal mentions: Christ was crucified ἐπὶ Ποντίου Πιλάτου or *sub Pontio Pilato*.[11] But his ambiguous presentation in the Gospels left the door open for more imaginative retellings too—particularly to those who wished to elaborate on his supposed belief that Christ was innocent and possibly even divine. The idea that some judicial record or letter was sent to Tiberius by Pilate concerning Jesus is mentioned by Justin Martyr (*1 Apol.* 35.5, 48.3); by Tertullian, who goes as far as to say that Pilate became Christian (*Apol.* 5.2, 21.24); and by Eusebius (*HE* 2.2.2–4).[12] Several accounts present Pilate as innocent of Jesus's condemnation, blaming the Jews instead.[13] Other texts focus particularly on Pilate's handwashing in Matthew as symbolizing the passage of guilt from the governor to the Jews.[14] Pilate's name was also mobilized by those on the other side of the "debate": Eusebius tells us that Maximinus Daia, persecutor of the Christians, forged his own memoirs (ὑπομνήματα) of Pilate full of slanders against Christ (*HE* 1.9, 9.5).[15] Afterwards, we also begin to see Christian documents which purport to represent the report sent from Pilate to Tiberius.[16]

[9] Winter 1961, 57.

[10] Geiger 1996, and Adams 2004, 268, on the unique case of a Roman governor using a "local" language epigraphically. There is only one surviving official Roman inscription written in anything but Latin or Greek (*CIL* 3.14147=*ILS* 8995; see Mommsen 1905). Geiger 1996 and Millar 2006, 223–26 find John's notice historically compelling.

[11] This eventually finds its way into the Nicene Creed as fixed at Constantinople in 381.

[12] On these see Kolbeck 2022, 151–53, and Kolbeck forthcoming.

[13] See Mel. *Peri Pascha* 92 (Hall 1979, Cohick 2000; Sykes 1997 suggests he was so hostile to Judaism because he was a recent convert *from* Judaism); the *Gospel of Peter*, especially 1.1–2; Origen, *C. Cels.* 2.34; Lactantius, *Div. Inst.* 4.18. Winter 1961, 58 and Judd 2016, 160–61 discuss this phenomenon.

[14] Hippol. *Comm. in Dan.* 1.28.4–5; Tert. *Adv. Iud.* 8.18 (but see Tert. *Or.* 13.1). On the handwashing motif, see Kötting 1985, and Hourihane 2009, 69–80 for early Christian art.

[15] Dusenbury 2021, 43–47 argues that it likely presented Jesus as a bandit (as Lact. *Div. Inst.* 5.3).

[16] On these texts, related to the Pilate Cycle discussed below, see Winter 1964; Gounelle 2013, 34–35; and Baudoin 2016.

From this point, however, traditional approaches see a turning point. On the view that such expressions were externally directed apologies which sought to convince non-Christians of Christianity's benign nature, Winter and Brandon chart the intensity of pro-Pilate statements as correlated with the intensity of persecution. However, from Eusebius and Constantine onwards, such arguments are no longer required: "because he was no longer useful as an official Roman witness to the innocence . . . of Jesus, Christians began to look more critically at him."[17] After Eusebius, "the current takes a sharp turn in the opposite direction, and Pilate's fortunes in Christian tradition enter upon a steep decline."[18]

While it is true that negative stories about Pilate begin to appear in later periods—for example, narrating his suicide (mentioned already by Eusebius) or execution by avenging emperors[19]—it is not correct to say that positive interpretations disappear with Constantine's victory. Indeed, if anything, they become more insistent. Pilate's handwashing as symbolising gentile innocence is described by Jerome (*Comm. in Matt.* 4.27.24) and Ambrose, though he does not absolve Pilate (*Expos. in Luc.* 10.97–101). Commenting on the *titulus* in John, Augustine has Pilate as a representative of the nations, declaring his faith in Jesus's Messiahship (*Serm.* 201.2, 218.7).[20] He elsewhere argues it is a greater sin to give up an innocent man for punishment than for the judge to carry out said punishment (*In Evang. Iohan.* 115.5), and argues Pilate tried to release Jesus (*In Evang. Iohan.* 115.5).[21] Cyril of Jerusalem counts Pilate as a witness for Christ's innocence (*Cat.* 13.13), while Cyril of Alexandria argues that Pilate condemned Jesus despite believing him innocent because he was legitimately worried about provincial sedition (*Comm. in Ioh.* 12). Such ideas are common too in the apocryphal Pilate literature of Late Antiquity: for example, the *Gospel of Nicodemus*[22]—referred to in later (Latin) recensions as the *Acts of Pilate*[23]—presents a Pilate ranged against Jesus's Jewish

[17] Brandon 1964, 530.

[18] Winter 1961, 60. Dagron 2013 agrees that Pilate was treated more negatively in Late Antiquity.

[19] Gounelle 2013, 35–38; see too Maier 1971, 368–69; Geerard 1989–1990; Izydorczyk 1997, 55–63; and Grüll 2010, 160–66. These apocryphal stories clearly had a wide circulation and were influential on authors such as the Antiochene John Malalas (see Joh. Mal. 10.30–33, 36, 38).

[20] He was likely influenced by a third-century text, *The Two Mountains of Sinai and Zion*, probably written in Africa and used elsewhere by Augustine (*In Evang. Iohan.* 10.12). This text presents Pilate as moved by God to write the *titulus* in fulfilment of a Christian version of Ps 96(95); see Laato 1998, 177, n. 9.

[21] Dusenbury 2021, 147–55 argues that Augustine disproves the idea that the Jews, rather than Pilate, condemned Jesus. However, the evidence discussed here shows that Augustine did not fully repudiate the idea of a "good" Pilate.

[22] Most scholars think that this is the text which Epiphanius refers to at *Panarion* 50.1.5–8; Gounelle 2013, 30 dates its composition to between 320 and 380, but see O'Ceallaigh 1963 for a *terminus post quem* of 555.

[23] See Izydorczyk and Dubois 1997 for an introduction, and Izydorczyk 1997 for its literary life in Medieval Europe.

accusers, to the extent that they label him a disciple of Jesus (*Acta Pil.* 5.2).[24] In the *Paradosis of Pilate*, Tiberius recalls Pilate and executes him for deicide; before death, Pilate proclaims his innocence, blames the Jews (*Para. Pil.* 3), and begs God for forgiveness (9). A voice comes from heaven, declaring that Pilate will stand by Christ's side at his second coming, and he—and his wife—depart to heaven (10).[25]

The idea that positive interpretations of Pilate disappear after Constantine is therefore incorrect.[26] Arguably, "apologetic" approaches to Pilate are even more insistent in the late empire. In order to investigate why this should be, I wish to focus on a single author who treats the character of Pilate in unique detail: the indomitable Antiochene presbyter and later archbishop of Constantinople, John Chrysostom.

II. Chrysostom's New Testament Homilies: Pilate the Catechumen

John Chrysostom (ὁ Χρυσόστομος, "the Golden-mouthed"), was a fiery Antiochene preacher and later bishop of Constantinople. Likely the son of a middling imperial official (a member of the *officium* of the *magister militum per Orientem*), he initially trained to serve as a clerk in the *sacra scrinia*, the imperial secretariat which drafted legislation.[27] He therefore came from a successful family, though not from the truly landed elite (Joh. Chrys. *de Sac.* 1.2, 1.5), and received a good education—including rhetorical instruction from Libanius, professor of rhetoric at Antioch (Soc. 6.3; Soz. 8.2).[28] He abandoned his secular pursuits to enter church service, becoming an assistant to the Nicene Bishop Meletius at a time when that faction was imperially disfavored. After a monastic interlude and with Nicene Christianity again triumphant, he was promoted deacon in 381 and ordained presbyter by Bishop Flavian in 386.[29]

[24] Gounelle 2013, 32–33 argues that Pilate is presented almost as Jewish here, but this is not correct. He has knowledge of the Hebrew Bible but only in order to refute the Jews on their own terms. Compare Real 2010, who thinks Pilate is characterized here as weak.

[25] Note also Pilate's positive interpretation in Ethiopian Christianity, where he is a saint. See Cerulli 1973 and Pérès 2010.

[26] An alternative interpretation is that Pilate continued to be venerated in the East, but denigrated in the West (for example, Carulli 1973, 9; Hourihane 2009, 37; Grüll 2010, 170–71). This is closer to the truth, and on my argument below it may be connected to the earlier failure of Roman power in the West.

[27] For Chrysostom's background and early career, see Jones 1953 (interpreting Pall. *Dial.* 5), and subsequently J. Kelly 1995, 4–5, 15.

[28] For a comparison of the religious thought between Chrysostom and Libanius, see Sandwell 2007.

[29] Flavian was the "Meletian" successor, opposed by the rival bishop Paulinus (followed by Evagrius). Socrates (6.3) claims that Chrysostom separated from the Meletians, but there is no

Between 386 and 397 he preached many hundreds of sermons to his congregation in Antioch which contained a broad cross-section of fourth-century society, many of which have survived.[30] In 397, he was made archbishop of Constantinople, but his public feuding with the empress Eudoxia culminated in his double deposition in 403 and 404 (Soc. 6.15–16, 18), and in 407 he died en route to exile at Pityus, on the Black Sea (Soc. 6.21).[31]

Of interest here is Chrysostom's attitude to the Roman state, or his "political philosophy." In his monumental study of early Christian political philosophy, Francis Dvornik argued that while Chrysostom possessed no systematic theory of political power and responded to situations singly, he was supportive of the emperor's position and authority, utilized traditional Graeco-Roman political principles, and followed Eusebius in divining a commonality of purpose between the Christian church and the *Pax Romana*, of which the principal historical illustration was Constantine. On the other hand, partly due to his turbulent relationship with real-life Roman rulers, he supported the "spiritual superiority" of the Christian priesthood over secular rulers in his later works.[32] More recently, it has been emphasized that, in fact, it is Chrysostom's earliest texts which are most strident in their presentation of sacerdotal superiority.[33] Stephens has gone so far as to argue that Chrysostom possessed a well-developed and consistent political theory, maintained throughout his career as presbyter and bishop, asserting the authority of ecclesiasts over imperial rulers.[34] Several scholars have highlighted Chrysostom's criticism of particular Roman institutions, for example concerning family and property law.[35] Constantine Bozinis' study of Chrysostom's attitude to the Roman empire highlighted the conspicuous absence of imperial institutions

---

good evidence for this, and he may be attempting to tar Chrysostom as an arch-schismatist. On this, see Dahm 2023.

[30] Mayer and Allen 2000, 36–37 suggest a predominantly middling and artisanal audience. MacMullen 1989 argues for a largely land-holding audience who belonged to the civic leadership. However, as Mayer and Allen argue, frequent references to such people do not mean that they actually numerically dominated. In 387, the *consularis Syriae* had to address John's church in order to calm the Antiochene population (see below), suggesting that it contained a cross-section of society.

[31] On this period see J. Kelly 1995, 211–49; Mayer and Allen 2000, 7–11; and for a complete narrative Baur 1960.

[32] Dvornik 1966, 2: 692–99.

[33] Early texts: see *On St. Babylas against Julian and the Gentiles*, and the *Comparison of King and Monk*. Wilken 1983, 130–31 sees *St. Babylas* as an offensive tract posing the question: "Whose power is greatest—that of the gods of the Greeks and Romans, reflected in the fortunes of the empire, or that of Christ, reflected in the fortunes of the church?" See Groß-Albenhausen 1999, 157–64 on the anti-authority productions of this early period; Sandwell 2004 concurs with Chrysostom's anti-imperial bent.

[34] See Stephens 2001 and 2009. De Wet 2011 focuses on the sacerdotal usurpation of temporal authority in Chrysostom's *On the Priesthood*.

[35] Kinzig 1998, 422–24; Bozinis 2019, 504–17; Yingxue 2022, with bibliography.

from much of his work, in favor of the structures of the city and church; against his understanding of Dvornik's position, Bozinis suggests that Chrysostom rejected Eusebius's "Caesaro-papism."[36] Recent work, therefore, seems to have adopted a more negative view of Chrysostom's attitude to earthly powers. The remarkably positive portrait of Pilate discussed in this article, however, seems to suggest a political identity—and a view of history—more in keeping with Dvornik's portrait.

I wish to focus on the ways in which John Chrysostom deals with Pilate in two homiletic cycles: his *Homilies on Matthew* and his *Homilies on John*, delivered at Antioch in 390 and 391 CE, respectively.[37] While there are some differences in the portrait of the Roman governor between the two, occasioned by the source texts and the overarching aims of the series, there are also clear similarities. In both cycles, Chrysostom shifts the blame for Christ's death from Pilate to the Jews. However, there is a progressive movement toward proclaiming Pilate's innocence from the *Homilies on Matthew* to the later *Homilies on John*.

We begin with *Matthew*.

Chrysostom characterizes the court of the Sanhedrin which initially finds Jesus guilty of blasphemy as a sham trial (*In Matt. Hom.* 84.2). He thinks that the high priests did have the ability to put Jesus to death themselves—for which he adduces Pilate's statement, "Take him and judge him according to your law," actually from John's Gospel (λάβετε αὐτὸν ὑμεῖς καὶ κατὰ τὸν νόμον ὑμῶν κρίνατε αὐτόν, John 18.31)—but that wishing his condemnation to be witnessed far and wide, they made use of a Roman trial and execution (*In Matt. Hom.* 84.3). We meet Pilate himself when Jesus is brought before him. Chrysostom tells us that, upon seeing that their charges of blasphemy had no purchase with the Roman governor, the priests switched their attack to a political one, that he aimed at tyranny (τυραννίς, *In Matt. Hom.* 86.1). But Pilate was unconvinced.

> So what does Pilate say? "Do you not hear how many things they witness against you?" For he wished that, having defended himself, Jesus should be set free (ἠβούλετο μὲν γὰρ αὐτὸν ἀπολογούμενον ἀπαλλαγῆναι), on which account he said this. But since Jesus did not reply, he devises (μηχανᾶται) something else (*In Matt. Hom.* 86.1; *PG* 58: 764).[38]

[36] Bozinis 2005; 2019, 498. See Ritter 2012, 151–53 for a reasonable response, arguing that though "Caesaro-papism" was not particularly interesting to Chrysostom, he also did not explicitly reject it. I cannot see that Dvornik ever argued that Chrysostom uncritically accepted any form of "Caesaro-papism."

[37] Dates: Quasten 1960, 437, 439, accepted by J. Kelly 1995, 90; Garroway 2010. John seems to have delivered his New Testament homilies in canonical order.

[38] Translations my own throughout, with text from *PG* 58; the sermons dealt with in detail here—86 and 87—are on columns 763–74.

Here, Chrysostom begins his portrait of a Pilate who is unconvinced of Jesus's guilt and anxious that he should defend himself and be set free—but is stymied by Christ's silence. This forces Pilate to adopt a new device, the Passover prisoner release. Chrysostom uses the verb μηχανάομαι, "to devize by cunning." The governor is scheming towards Jesus's release, actively interested in his safety. He goes to the crowd and offers to let Jesus go free on account of the Passover: "he tried to save him (αὐτὸν ἐξελέσθαι ἐπεχείρησεν)."

> Do you see how normal order is reversed (εἶδες τάξιν ἀντεστραμμένην)? For it was the custom for the petition (αἴτησις) on behalf of the condemned (ὑπὲρ τῶν καταδίκων) to belong to the people, while the granting (δόσις) belonged to the governor (ἄρχων). But now the opposite occurs: for the governor petitions the people (ὁ ἀρχων αἰτεῖ τὸν δῆμον). But even so they are not mollified, but become more savage and murderous, excited to Bacchic frenzy (ἐκβακχευόμενοι) by a passion for envy (βασκανία) (*In Matt. Hom.* 86.1; *PG* 58: 764).

Chrysostom develops several important strands of his interpretation of the trial of Jesus here. Firstly, he highlights Pilate's anxiousness to secure Jesus's release, drawing attention to the atypicality of a governor petitioning the people. By lingering on the reversal of the normal order, he suggests Pilate's individual and singular efforts, the one party *actively* seeking to release Jesus. At the same time, this role reversal hints at the weakness of Pilate's position, and perhaps of his character. A governor petitioning the people is not normal for good reason—a ruler (ἄρχων) should rule. Thus, Chrysostom begins to sow the seeds for an explanation as to how Jesus ended up on a cross, despite a well-disposed judge. Finally, and relatedly, Chrysostom demonstrates to his audience the threat of the mob—both since the governor feels the need to employ such a stratagem to deal with them, and through focusing on their unhinged blood frenzy.

Chrysostom goes on to narrate Pilate's desperate attempts to save Jesus. When the crowd asks for Barabbas instead, Pilate asks the crowd, "What then shall I do to the Christ?" seeking to "shame" (ἐντρέψαι) the crowd into changing their mind. Finally, when he sees that no headway can be made and the situation is deteriorating, Pilate washes his hands, and proclaims his innocence. Only when the crowd had accepted Jesus's blood-guilt and "brought down sentence upon themselves" (καθ' ἑαυτῶν τὴν ψῆφον ἐξήνεγκαν), did he finally "assent that everything be done" (συνεχώρησε πάντα γενέσθαι) (*In Matt. Hom.* 86.2). Thus "Pilate intervened in no way, but the Jews did everything (ἀλλὰ πάντα αὐτοὶ ἐποίουν), all of them becoming accusers (κατήγοροι), judges (δικασταί), and executioners (δήμιοι)" (*In Matt. Hom.* 87.1).

As suggested above, Pilate does not completely escape censure. For his inability to command the crowd, Chrysostom accuses Pilate of being

"unmanly and weak" (ἄνανδρος καὶ μαλακός). However, in the same breath he affirms that his guilt is the lesser, since the chief priests were evil and criminal (πονηροὶ καὶ κακοῦργοι). Pilate was not evil, then; he was simply a weak governor (*In Matt. Hom.* 86.1). So far, Chrysostom's portrait of Pilate is similar to others we have surveyed, if treated at greater length.

A year later, he revisited Pilate's character in his *Homilies on John*. In these homilies the image of Pilate was further developed: Chrysostom consistently interprets every action Pilate takes as an attempt to save Jesus. More than this, Chrysostom shows the Roman governor being taught and led towards divine understanding by the one he was supposed to be judging.

We pick up the story as Jesus is led to the praetorium by the chief priests. Chrysostom at first mocks the Jewish elders for their refusal to enter the governor's residence on grounds of ritual purity, asking "But what sort of pollution, tell me, is it to set foot into a justice-hall (δικαστήριον), where wrongdoers receive judgement?" (*In Ioan. Hom.* 83.3). Pilate's chambers are characterized as a place where justice occurs, in opposition to the halls of the Sanhedrin. Chrysostom adopts a different explanation for the fact that the chief priests brought Jesus to Pilate from that in his *Homilies on Matthew*. He suggests that the Jews did not have the power to execute him, since Roman dominion had taken away their authority. Moreover, the chief priests were afraid that if they executed Jesus on their own authority, "they would later be accused (κατηγορηθέντες) and dealt punishment (δίκην . . . δώσειν) by him"[39]—that is, by Pilate (*In Ioan. Hom.*83.3). Pilate not only believes in Christ's innocence but would avenge him if illegally executed.

Pilate goes out to the chief priests, sees Jesus bound, and asks them what accusation they have against him:

> Do you see that Pilate was free from lust for power (φιλαρχία) and envy (βασκανία)?[40] For seeing Jesus bound and conveyed by so many men, he did not assume that they had indisputable proof (ἐλεγχον ἀναμφισβήτητον) of their charges. Rather, he interrogates them, saying it inappropriate (ἄτοπος) for them to snatch at a judgement, and then apply a punishment, unjudged, to him (*In Ioan. Hom.* 83.4; *PG* 59: 452).[41]

[39] The NPNF translation (by Charles Marriott, taken over from the earlier *Library of the Fathers* series)—the only existing translation in English of the *Homilies in John*—translates this last phrase, παρ' αὐτοῦ, as "by Him," that is, "by Jesus." But in context it seems clear that he means the Roman governor would have punished the chief priests for killing Jesus.

[40] βασκανία was the negative characteristic used to describe the Jewish crowd at Joh. Chrys. *In Matt. Hom.* 86.1.

[41] This is my best rendering of ἄτοπον εἶναι λέγων τὴν μὲν κρίσιν αὐτοὺς ἀπράσαι, τὴν δὲ κόλασιν χωρὶς κρίσεως ἐπιτρέψαι ἐκείνῳ. For the text of sermons 83–85, see *PG* 59: 447–68, but see Harkins 1958 on problems with the textual tradition.

Pilate's unremarkable request for the chief priests to explain their charges against the accused is interpreted as an action which proves his justice and his lack of malice. Similarly, when Chrysostom discusses John's account of the Passover prisoner release, he again goes beyond his source (John) in attributing to the Roman governor a strenuous and praiseworthy energy:

> See how wisely (συνετῶς) Pilate proceeded! He did not say to the crowd: "He has sinned and is worthy of death, but forgive him on account of the feast." But, having first freed him of all charges (αὐτόν ἀπαλλάξας αἰτίας ἀπάσης), Pilate goes above and beyond (ἐκ περιουσίας) and asks them that if they will not accept his release as innocent, to forgive him as guilty on account of the season (*In Ioan. Hom.* 84.1; *PG* 59: 455).

Chrysostom's sense here is confusing, but he seems to be saying that—by initially emphasizing Christ's innocence, then on the crowd's refusal to accept this, instead asking them to pardon him as guilty—the governor was allowing the crowd to save face by meeting him in the middle. This is an image then of a governor bargaining with the people he is ruling—an inversion, like the governor petitioning the people in the earlier *Homilies on Matthew.* Again, Chrysostom is highlighting Pilate's active and even creative role in attempting to secure a safe conclusion to the episode.

Throughout the rest of his account, Chrysostom continues to emphasize Pilate's restless pro-Jesus action. He wished to "deliver him from the anger of the Jews," and was "anxious" (σπεύδων) to halt the bloodthirst (*In Ioan. Hom.* 84.1). Every action which Pilate took is interpreted as evidence that he was trying to free him. When he had Jesus whipped, it was to "calm the fury of the Jews (τὸν Ἰουδαικὸν ζῆλον)," and when he permitted Jesus to be dressed as a false king, it was to "slacken their anger." However, when the Roman soldiers who mocked Jesus went too far and hurt him, Chrysostom shows that Pilate bore no responsibility. He rhetorically asks, "How would the soldiers have done this, if it had not been the command of their governor?" Supplying the answer: "to please the Jews" (εἰς χάριν τὴν Ἰουδαικὴν), for soldiers will do anything for money. This was "not by the order" (οὐδὲ τὴν αρχήν) of their commander.[42] Even when Pilate shouted to the crowd, "Take him and crucify him yourself," this was merely to shame the Jews by throwing to them responsibility which they did not have (*In Ioan. Hom.* 84.2). The result of all of this was another inversion: "see in how many ways the judge defends the defendant" (ὅρα διὰ πόσων ὁ δικαστὴς ἀπολογεῖται):

[42] Chrysostom had earlier argued that when the soldiers went out with the high priests to arrest Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane, that they did this without Pilate's knowledge, having been paid off (Joh. Chrys. *In Ioan. Hom.* 83.1).

> They had dragged him there in order that [their will] might be done with the aid of the governor's judgement (μετὰ τῆς τοῦ ἄρχοντος κρίσεως τοῦτο γένηται); but the opposite happened, that he was instead acquitted by the governor's judgement (ἀπὸ τῆς κρίσεως τοῦ ἄρχοντος αὐτὸν ἀπολύεσθαι μᾶλλον) (*In Ioan. Hom.* 84.2; *PG* 59: 456).

More than simply finding Jesus innocent, Pilate, in Chrysostom's description, began to believe in Christ's divinity and Messiahship. When the governor interrogated Jesus about the kingdom which the chief priests alleged he coveted, he replied that "My kingdom is not of this world." In this he "leads (ἀνάγει) Pilate up, who was certainly not evil (οὐ σφόδρα ὄντα πονηρόν)—and did not take after the manner of the others—and wished to show him that he is not simply a man, but God, and the son of God" (*In Ioan. Hom.* 83.4). Christ therefore attempted to catechize Pilate and teach him about his own nature. Later, Chrysostom suggests he was successful: Jesus "spoke to Pilate, educating him (παιδεύων αὐτόν),[43] and leading him up to higher things (ἀνάγων πρὸς ὑψηλότερα)." More than this, Pilate was a willing student, discoursing alone with Jesus inside the praetorium, a place Chrysostom has established the Jews will not tread, because "he had a suspicion of something great about Jesus, and wanted to learn everything accurately (ἐβούλετο . . . παντα ἀκριβῶς μαθεῖν) away from the tumult of the Jews" (*In Ioan. Hom.* 84.1). Pilate, in fact, became the only non-Jewish student of Christ.[44]

Pilate, Chrysostom suggested, had begun to believe. And he showed this too in writing the *titulus*: in proclaiming that Christ was the King of the Jews in three languages, Pontius Pilate was repudiating the Jews (τοὺς Ἰουδαίους ἀμυνόμενος) and defending (ἀπολογούμενος) Christ. He set the title on the cross "as if on a trophy" (ὥσπερ ἐπὶ τροπαίου), words which speaking with a "clear voice" proclaim Christ's victory (νίκη) and kingdom (βασίλεια) (*In Ioan. Hom.* 85.1). Chrysostom outdoes his efforts in the *Homilies on Matthew*, aided here by John's Gospel but still going well beyond it. The governor is shown as a dogged defender of Christ, seeking new ways to set him free at every turn and separated from the more distasteful elements of the trial. More than this, he becomes a willing hearer of Christ's message, eager to learn from

[43] The verb παιδεύω can mean both "educate" and "discipline/punish." It is the same verb which Pilate himself uses in Luke's Gospel when he tries to convince the crowd to let Jesus go: "Therefore, having chastised [παιδεύσας—that is, whipped] him, I will release him" (Luke 23.16).

[44] Hourihane 2009, 82 recognizes this. Baudoin 2013, 47 thinks that Chrysostom is focusing here on the way in which Jesus took control of the situation, which minimizes the degree to which Pilate is shown as an active agent and one who was himself interested in learning from Jesus. She compares Cyril of Alexandria's *Commentary on John* 12, which describes this episode as a catechesis, but emphasizes Pilate's blindness.

him, and led by him to greater understanding. After Christ's death, he proclaims his witness of Christ's Messiahship through the *titulus*. For Chrysostom's fourth-century Antiochene audience, the *praefectus Iudaeae* had been won by Christ.

And yet, still, Pilate gave him up. As in the *Homilies on Matthew*, Pilate cannot entirely escape blame. When the crowd saw that the prefect was not for turning, they "wickedly" switched their argument to treason against the emperor, finding recourse to "outside laws," saying, "Everyone who makes himself a king, speaks against Caesar." This led Pilate to think that "he might be endangered in the future" (νομίσας κινδυνεύειν λοιπόν) (*In Ioan. Hom.* 84.2), and so he eventually delivered Jesus up, "completely irrationally" (σπόδρα ἀλόγως). He should have carefully investigated the truth of the charges, but instead he delivered the condemnation "out of fear alone" (ἀπὸ τοῦ φόβου μόνου) (*In Ioan. Hom.* 85.1). He was perhaps perceptive and just, but he was also weak and led by fear.

This seems like an extreme condemnation, but it does not quite fit with the rest of the presentation of Pilate we get in these homilies. Chrysostom spends so much time showing Pilate's energetic defence of Christ that the moment of weakness—almost betrayal—is somehow unsatisfying. To understand this, it may be worth considering that the power of the governor had been significantly diminished by Chrysostom's own day in comparison to the early and high empire.

Many factors conspired to render the Roman provincial governor of the fourth century less fearsome and powerful than the governor of the early and high empire. In earlier periods, Roman administration was thin, and the governor was by far and away the senior official. As a senator or (in the case of Pilate above, and Festus below—see Section III) an *eques*, the governor of the early Roman empire held a status which few others, if any, in his province could match.[45] His authority was buttressed by the fact that he was also the commander of the troops in his province.[46] Roman citizenship was comparatively rare in the East, and governors had almost untrammelled authority in dealing with peregrines, such as Jesus.[47] Institutions of appeal and judicial

[45] For equestrian status as a rare distinction in the eastern Mediterranean, see Davenport 2019, 231–32, and Kuhn 2010, 237–38.

[46] Mommsen 1874, 238–42. On the troops under Pilate's command, see Saddington 1996, 2413–14 and Speidel 1992, 224. He possessed a small force of 3,000 Samaritan auxiliary troops.

[47] See Mommsen 1874, 244–45; 1899, 37–38 and 239–41; and Garnsey 1968a. For the judicial competencies of Roman magistrates and promagistrates, see Mommsen 1887, 162–68. The unfettered right of the imperial governor to deal with non-citizens as he pleases is demonstrated by Pliny the Younger's execution, with no appeal, of peregrine Christians brought before him in *Ep.* 10.96. In contrast, the Roman citizens were remitted to Rome for sentencing.

checks-and-balances were relatively poorly developed, making it difficult to evade an unfavorable legal decision.[48] If provincials were unhappy with their treatment at the hands of their governor, they had to wait for his term of office to end and then travel to Rome to have him impeached in the senate in a trial (though the chances of success were reasonably good).[49]

All these conditions had been changed in the late empire. Diocletian's reorganization had drastically reduced the size of provinces,[50] which were now grouped within dioceses and further above these into praetorian prefectures, meaning that governors had at least two layers of hierarchy between themselves and the emperor.[51] This meant that provincials had other reachable officials they could appeal to if they were unhappy with a governor's decision—particularly so in major cities like Antioch, which was the seat both of the *consularis* (governor) of Syria and of the *comes Orientis*, the *vicarius* of the diocese of the *Oriens*.[52] Civil and military competencies had been separated, depriving governors—who no longer commanded troops—of directly using imperial forces.[53] Finally, many inhabitants of cities like Antioch were themselves ex-officials or Constantinopolitan senators, often of senior status

[48] On appeal under the empire, see Garnsey 1966.This was properly a right of Roman citizens, but as citizenship became more common, it developed into a more regularized component of the Roman judicial apparatus. By the third century, the court of the urban prefect was the final appeals court for crimes in the city of Rome, whereas that of the praetorian prefect was the final appeal court for crimes in the empire at large: Bauman 1996, 100–113. The praetorian prefect maintained this judicial role in the late empire.

[49] See Brunt 1961 for the classic study. Of the forty cases collected in his appendix, twenty-eight cases were successful (ending in conviction or suicide); only seven governors were known to have been acquitted; and five results are unknown.

[50] Jones 1964, 1: 373–77; Lo Cascio 2005, 179–81. For the evidence for late imperial provinces and dioceses, see Jones 1964, 3: 381–91.

[51] The *vicarii* of the dioceses and the praetorian prefects of the prefectures; Slootjes 2006b, 16–45, Jones 1964, 1: 371–72 on the supervisory role of the prefects. See Jones 1964, 3: 341–42, n. 44 for estimates that the late Roman bureaucracy numbered over 30,000 men, compared to the common figure for the principate of around 10,000 as per Noreña 2017: 51, or as few as 1,000 salaried officials according to C. Kelly 1998, 163, n. 132 (who also usefully summarizes the late Roman bureaucracy at 162–69).

[52] Liebeschuetz 1972, 110; Slootjes 2006b, 158. For *vicarii* in general, see Jones 1964, 1: 373–74 and Arnheim 1970, 593–603, and for the *comes Orientis* specifically, see Downey 1939. Liebeschuetz 1972, 115–17 and Isaac 1998, 455–56 suggest that the *magister militum per Orientem* also had his headquarters at Antioch (the former on the basis of Libanius's speeches, the latter on the basis of *Not. Dig. Or.* 7). On petitions to other officials when provincials were unhappy with the decision of a governor—for example, to the praetorian prefect—see Slootjes 2006b, 41, and *CTh* 1.5.1, 1.5.2.

[53] Jones 1964, 1: 101, 373. Though scholars generally deny that these actions were deliberately calibrated to hobble the power of the governor—since military commands went instead to powerful *duces* (for example, Lo Cascio 2005, 180)—in practice, these measures reduced the governor's status. See Lallemand 1964, 42, for Egypt. Jones 1964, 1: 373 writes that, through these administrative innovations, Diocletian and Constantine "levelled down the status of provincial governors."

to the man who was administering their province.[54] The emboldened local elite had become part of the structure of imperial administration as the late antique state expanded its aims and reach, and so "even when resident in their hometown, they felt entitled to treat the incoming governor as a junior colleague."[55] Among this local elite were now also the Christian bishops, who were developing judicial competencies which contested with those of the governors.[56] The governor of the late empire—the kind of man to whom Chrysostom was accustomed—was no longer the all-powerful imperial legate but one piece among many in the administration of a province who had to co-operate and tussle with, as much as rule over, the potentates of his province.[57]

A governor who did not show restraint and care in his dealings with the local elite—treating them as inferiors rather than as partners—might find co-operation withdrawn, and administration become impossible.[58] Lucianus, *consularis Syriae* in 388—the third year of Chrysostom's career as presbyter, shortly before he began his Gospel homilies—had been deposed after the Antiochene councillors, outraged at what they regarded as a lack of respect,[59] appealed to Tatianus, the praetorian prefect of the *Oriens* and Lucianus's superior (Lib. *Or.* 56.14, 21). Indeed, losing the protection of the powerful could be the difference between life and death. In 354, Theophilus, another *consularis Syriae*, was torn to pieces by the Antiochene mob during a famine. Ammianus Marcellinus suggests that he had been used as a scapegoat by Gallus Caesar, who had inflamed the crowd by proclaiming that nobody could lack food against the governor's will (*quod invito rectore, nullus egere poterit victu*).[60] This event left a deep impression at Antioch; nine years later Julian reproached the Antiochenes for having killed the governor (Jul. *Misop.* 370c),

[54] See Liebeschuetz 1972, 186–92 on this "new aristocracy" of *honorati* at Antioch.

[55] P. Brown 1992, 23. See also Corcoran 2000, 244 on the "increasing tendency for powerful local notables to act . . . at odds with the imperial administration . . ."

[56] On the judicial roles of bishops, see Lamoreaux 1995; Slootjes 2006a. Theodosius decreed that a bishop's judicial decision could not be appealed: *CTh* 1.27.2; see also Just. *Nov.* 96.

[57] Conversely, this development coincided with an increase in literary descriptions of the savagery of the Roman governor: see, for example, MacMullen 1986. This was partially due to an increase in the harshness of criminal punishments (Garnsey 1968b), but it was also, ironically, a by-product of the governor's impoverishment. Harries 1999 sees this rhetoric of judicial savagery as a literary construction which legitimized greater oversight of governors (for example, by emperors, praetorian prefects, and vicars).

[58] P. Brown 1992, 23.

[59] Lib. *Or.* 56.2–4. He was less accessible to the Antiochene elite than they expected, receiving them for only four days a month, and sat in public supported by large pillows to seem superior to the local notables. See P. Brown 1992, 23, and Malosse 2014, 88–90 for Libanius's orations to and about governors. Seek 1920 discusses this *Oration*, which can be found in Italian translation at Casella 2010, 77–90.

[60] Amm. Marc. 14.7.5–8 (ed. Seyfarth, Jabob-Karau, and Ulmann, *Teubner*). See also Amm. Marc. 15.13.2.

and looking back after the Riot of the Statues in 387 (below), Libanius recalled the murder of the "excellent governor" (χρηστὸς ἄρχων) Theophilus and asked Theodosius to show the same clemency to the city which Constantius II had after that shameful episode (Lib. *Or.* 19.47–48 [Loeb 452: 296–98]).

John Chrysostom's audience in 390–391 would therefore have needed no reminding of the professional and personal risks faced by a governor who lost control of his province. They had excellent examples of both in the recent history of their city. I suggest that Chrysostom's focus on the intransigence of the local elites in Jerusalem—the chief priests—and their incitement of the mob baying for Jesus's death, would have allowed an audience acquainted with weak governors to reconcile the idea that Pilate had been convinced of Jesus's innocence with the fact that he allowed him to be executed. Pilate was not evil, but nor was he all powerful, and he was afraid—perhaps reasonably. What would have stretched credulity for an early imperial audience was now more believable: Pilate was one of a number of actors in the story of Jesus's trial rather than the undisputed chief, and he had found himself outmanoeuvred.

This may have served as explanation, and partial defence, of Pilate's weakness, his μαλακία. But why should he have needed this defense—why was John Chrysostom so keen to emphasize his attempted protection of Christ and his lack of responsibility for the condemnation? The primary explanation for the similar expressions we find across early Christian texts is that this was to emphasize the separation between a Christian church—which had found its home in the gentile world—and the Jews.[61] Absolving the Roman judge of guilt for Jesus's death was part of a project to instead blame the Jews and emphasize their failure to recognize the Messiah—justifying the passing of the mantle of the people of God from the old Israel to the new. This is certainly part of the motivation for the material we have explored. It ties into the popular Christian idea that the Jewish nation executed Christ and paid for its offence with the double destruction of Jerusalem, first during the Jewish Revolt of 66 to 73/74,[62] and finally during the Bar Kokhba revolt under Hadrian in the 130s.[63] The force and coherence of such arguments would be lessened if the mechanism by which this divine penalty was applied—the Roman state—also bore responsibility for the death the Messiah.

There is support for this in Chrysostom's work. In the homilies we have explored, he explicitly places the guilt of the Jews above that of Pilate.[64] He

[61] Staats 1987, 510; Baudoin 2013, 49; Judd 2016, 179; Herzer 2020, 216–17.

[62] Tert. *Contra Iud.* 8.1–18; Origen, *C. Cels.* 8.42.

[63] Tert. *Contra Iud.* 13.1-5; Justin, *Dial.* 16.3, 19.2, 139.3; Joh. Chrys. *Hom. contra Iud.* 6.4.

[64] Indeed, part of the "mission" of Chrysostom's New Testament homilies—in particular, the Matthew cycle—was to distinguish Jesus from Judaism, while also fending off the Manichean attempt to jettison entirely Jewish heritage from Christian understandings: Garroway 2010.

uses Pilate's defence of Christ to highlight the relentless attempts by the chief priests to have him executed. As we have seen, he refers to the *titulus* placed by the governor as an explicit repudiation of the Jews (*In Ioan. Hom.* 85.1). Chrysostom's interpretation of Pontius Pilate may also be implicated in his earlier series of *Homilies against the Jews*, delivered in 386/387.[65] These addresses are primarily directed against the Judaizing tendencies of his own congregation, exhorting them to abstain from joining in with Jewish festivities and calling upon them to be watchful lest any of their number backslide towards Jewish belief—a call-to-arms to community self-policing.[66]

In these sermons, Chrysostom regularly calls the Jews "Christ-killers," asking his congregation to remember that those with whom they would share feasts and fasts were those who shouted "Crucify him, crucify him," and "His blood be upon us and upon our children" (for example, *Adv. Iud.* 1.5.1, 6.1.7; *PG* 48: 850, 905), recalling the moment in Matthew in which the guilt for Jesus's death is transferred from Pilate to the Jewish mob through the governor's handwashing. This project of transferring guilt from Pilate to the Jews therefore could have supported his tangential aims of arguing for strict separation between Jews and Christians.[67] Indeed, a passage in the first *Homily against the Jews* in which Chrysostom seems to be channelling his inner Pilate may suggest that the prefect was on his mind. He tells his audience that if any of his congregation should join in any Jewish festival, "I am cleansed of the blood of all of you" (καθαρὸς ἐγὼ ἀπὸ τοῦ αἵματος ὑμῶν πάντων, *Adv. Iud.* 1.8.1; *PG* 48: 835), reminiscent of Pilate's statement in Matthew that "I am innocent of the blood of this man" (ἀθῷός εἰμι ἀπὸ τοῦ αἵματος τούτου, Matt 27.24).

On the other hand, Pilate is only explicitly named once in this series of sermons, where Chrysostom interprets Jesus's silence before his judge as a fulfilment of Isaiah 53.7–8, and the mention is not positive. Pilate is described as presiding over a "lawless tribunal" (παράνομος δικαστήριον), and it is suggested that he bears responsibility for accepting "false witness" (ψευδεῖς μαρτυρίαι) made in his courtroom (*Adv. Iud.* 6.5; *PG* 48: 910). If the primary motivation for presenting Pilate in a positive light was to highlight Jewish evil, it is strange that it does not occur in a series which seeks explicitly to prove Jewish guilt for Christ's death. Moreover, as this passage demonstrates, it is not necessary to reduce Pilate's guilt to stress Jewish culpability. Both could be condemned together. Finally, it is now generally agreed that the *contra*

[65] Quasten 1960, 452.

[66] In general, see Wilken 1983. For the rhetorically-stereotyped images of Jews as sexual deviants in the sermons, see Drake 2013, 78–98.

[67] See Wilken 1983, 125 on this rhetoric. "Christ-killers" is naturally not exclusive to Chrysostom, and Wilken collects a number of contemporary references (for example, *Apoc. Pauli* 49; *Const. App.* 2.61.1, 6.25.1; Bas. *Hom.* 20.2, and so on).

Iudaeos genre is less concerned with "real" debates between Christians and Jews than with internal Christian debates.[68] This is in fact explicit in Chrysostom's *Homilies against the Jews*, as he is addressing *Christian* members of his flock and begins by likening his anti-Jewish mission to his anti-heretical addresses (*Hom. contra Iud.* 1.1). Viewed this way, it may be asked whether it might be the case that, in Chrysostom's *Homilies on Matthew* and *Homilies on John*, Jewish guilt is used in order to highlight the relative innocence of Pilate, as much as the other way round. If this is the case, then we must suggest new motivations for Chrysostom's presentation—ones which center Pilate himself.

III. A Tale of Three Governors: Pilate, Festus, and Celsus

This was not the only time Chrysostom showed interest in a historical Roman governor. He also had cause, several years earlier, to discuss with his congregation the example of Paul before Porcius Festus, who ruled Judaea as procurator three decades after Pilate's stint as prefect (*Hom. de Stat.* 16). I contend that the way Chrysostom dealt with Festus throws light onto his motivations in mobilizing Pilate: these two historical Roman governors were utilized by Chrysostom in similar ways. What particularly attracted him to this episode was his belief that Festus had almost become Christian by Paul's words—another example of a Christian figure catechizing a pagan Roman official. Moreover, this was an example to which John's mind went after a real-life interaction with a pagan Roman governor which had left him ashamed and angry.

In 387, the people of Antioch rioted after a protest against a new tax got out of hand.[69] In the fray, imperial images were smashed and statues of the emperor were torn down, broken up, and dragged through the streets (Lib. *Or.* 19; Joh. Chrys. *Hom. de Stat.* 2). Though some lower-class "instigators" were quickly executed by the local authorities—led by the governor (*consularis*)[70] of Syria, Celsus—the population was terrified that, once word reached the emperor, he would destroy the city.[71] The Meletian Bishop of Antioch, Fla-

[68] See, for example, Den Dulk 2018 on Justin Martyr's *Dialogue with Trypho*.

[69] In addition to the principal sources of Libanius (*Or.* 19–23) and Chrysostom, the riot is also mentioned by Theodoret (*HE* 5.20.1) and Sozomen (7.23). Browning's 1952 historical study is still valuable but overstates the importance of the theatrical claque, corrected by French's 1998 study of Libanius's rhetoric.

[70] On these initial trials see Libanius, *Or.* 19.37. Celsus's conduct is praised by Libanius (*Or.* 23.10–11, 19.55), and Chrysostom also implies that the proper people were executed (*Hom. de Stat.* 3.7)—though directly following the riot, he suggests that all and sundry are being dragged before the tribunal (*Hom. de Stat.* 2.2).

[71] For example, Joh. Chrys. *Hom. de Stat.* 2.1. The evidence of both Libanius and Chrysostom concerning this period is replete with descriptions of the fear which gripped the city; in *Or.* 23 Libanius criticizes those who have fled.

vian, immediately departed for Constantinople to beg Theodosius for mercy (*Hom. de Stat.* 3.1).[72] Chrysostom, who had already begun his Easter cycle of homilies (*Hom. de Stat.* 1), was now faced with keeping the congregation of Antioch calm in the absence of their bishop while they awaited news from the capital.[73]

The sequence of homilies suggests that after the initial excitement, the situation calmed, enabling Chrysostom to avoid the topic for several sermons. In the meantime, the emperor had received news of the riot and dispatched two deputies—Caesarius the *magister officiorum* and Ellebichus the *magister militum per Orientem*—to execute the guilty among the Antiochene curial class at an extraordinary trial. Seventeen days after the riot—perhaps due to news that the commissioners' arrival was imminent[74]—Chrysostom's congregation became distressed by the idea that the city was encircled by soldiers preparing a slaughter (*Hom. de Stat.* 16.1). Celsus, the pagan *consularis Syriae* who had carried out the initial executions, entered John's church (probably the Golden Church) to calm his congregation.[75] After this gubernatorial intervention, an embarrassed John admonished his cowardly flock.

[72] De Paverd 1991 places Chrysostom's homilies in chronological order. Theodosius eventually spared the lives of the *curiales* arrested by Caesarius and Ellebichus, the imperial commissioners (see below). The accounts of Chrysostom and Libanius differ. Chrysostom praises the intercession of the monks from the Antiochene hinterland in the trial of the *curiales* (*Hom. de Stat.* 17), and he presents the imperial clemency as Flavian's achievement (*Hom. de Stat.* 21). Libanius, meanwhile, ignores Flavian and praises Ellebichus (*Or.* 22) and, especially, Caesarius (*Or.* 21). On the surface, this may look like a clear church versus state issue: Chrysostom's focus on Flavian as another example of his belief that ecclesiastical authority eclipsed temporal. However, Soler 1997 draws attention to the fact that Chrysostom is highlighting the prestige of, and imperial favor enjoyed by, the Meletian faction at Antioch, versus that of Flavian's rival Paulinus, as much as he is attempting to suppress the role of government officials.

[73] This seems to have required him to relocate from his own church—the Old Church (named due to its location in the "Old Town"; see Saliou 2000, 220, n. 24, and Theophanes's *Chronicle* for 385–386 CE)—to the principal Meletian church of Antioch, the so-called "Golden Church" built under Constantine and dedicated by Constantius. See Saliou 2000 and 2014 for the church. Eusebius describes it at *V. Const.* 3.50.

[74] De Paverd 1991, 55–56.

[75] Liebeschuetz 1972, 111, n. 1, follows Foerster 1908, 401, in assuming that Celsus was the *comes Orientis*—the ἄρχων τῶν ἐθνῶν whom Libanius says moved in with troops once the riot had been dispersed (Lib. *Or.* 19.36). Neither provides reasoning, though presumably it is simply the belief that the *comes*—who was superior to the *consularis*—would take judicial precent. McLynn 1994, 321 similarly seems to identify Celsus as the *comes Orientis*. Most other authorities, however—Seeck 1906, 107, for example, with De Paverd 1991, 10; Slootjes 2006b, 158; *PLRE* 1: 194; and Norman 1977, 251—take Celsus to be the *consularis Syriae*. This is surely correct. Libanius speaks negatively of the *comes Orientis* at *Or.* 19.36, implying that had he arrived earlier, he could have stopped the riot, whereas he speaks positively of Celsus's role (*Or.* 19.55). Chiming with this, he elsewhere speaks negatively of the successor to Deinias, *comes Orientis* in 386 (for example, Lib. *Or.* 33.6–7), and he says that this successor was Christian (*Or.* 1.254–55). In the same oration he mentions that Tisamenus, *consularis* in 386 under Deinias, was succeeded by an unnamed

> Though I commended (μὲν ἐπῄνεσα) the governor (τὸν ἄρχοντα) for his care (κηδεμονία)—because having seen that the city was in uproar, and all were considering flight, he entered in here and encouraged (παρακάλεσε) you, and led you to happy hopes (εἰς χρηστὰς ἐλπίδας)—I nevertheless was ashamed and burned (ἠρυθρίασα) on your account, that you should have required consoling words from without (ἔξωθεν), after my many and extensive addresses! (*Hom. de Stat.* 16.1; *PG* 49: 161).

So distressed was John that his congregation had failed to heed his own exhortations to calmness, necessitating an unbelieving governor to take his place in church, that he wished to be swallowed up by the ground. He lamented upon hearing the governor "now comforting (παραμυθουμένων) you, now rebuking (αἰτιωμένων) this inopportune and senseless cowardice (ἄλογον δειλίαν)." The congregation had missed an opportunity to give the governor a lesson in Christian mildness and self-control, and he had left less convinced by Christian virtue than before.

> For it was not befitting for you to be taught (διδάσκεσθαι) by him: rather you should become the teachers of all the unbelievers . . . In future, with what eyes shall we look upon the unbelievers, we who were so terrified (ψοφοδεεῖς) and cowardly (δειλοί)? With what tongue shall we discourse with them, and persuade them to take courage before the coming horrors, when we proved more cowardly throughout this contest (διὰ τῆς ἀγωνίας) than any hare? (*Hom. de Stat.* 16.1; *PG* 49: 161–62).

The craven behavior of his congregation was an embarrassment in front of civil authority—particularly since he was a pagan, one "without" (ἔξωθεν) the church, an unbeliever (ἄπιστος) who should have been student, not teacher.[76] There is only praise for Celsus himself; he had spoken and acted well. The

---

governor under whom the riot occurred; of this man he has nothing negative to say (Lib. *Or.* 1.252). From Chrysostom, we know that the ἄρχων who addressed his church was a pagan (*Hom. de Stat.* 16.1), and he must therefore have been the *consularis*, if the contemporaneous *comes* was Christian. Therefore, it seems most likely that the pagan *consularis* of whom Libanius does not disapprove at *Or.* 1.252 is the Celsus who is praised at *Or.* 19.55 and 23.10–11, and the Christian *comes* of whom he speaks negatively at *Or.* 1.254-5 is identical with the man who is reproached for his slow response to the riot at *Or.* 19.36. That the *consularis Syriae* should have undertaken the primary judicial work following the riot, despite the presence of the *comes*, is unsurprising. The *consularis* was the governor of the province and had principal duty for juridical matters; the *comites/vicarii* seem to have overseen governors and taken appeals from their judgements (Jones 1964, 1: 374–75) rather than to have usurped the *consularis*'s duties.

[76] Seeck 1906, 107 clearly errs here in suggesting that Celsus was Christian since he entered the church. The whole purpose of the homily is the contradiction that, though a pagan (ἄπιστος), he calmed the Christians.

issue was rather that Chrysostom's congregation did not act before a Roman governor the way Christians should.[77]

To drive home the point, Chrysostom summoned the example of Paul before Festus. Unlike the Antiochene Christians, Paul had calmly met his fate and even revelled in his detention. He looked upon his trial before a Roman judge—just as Jesus did in the *Homilies on John* which Chrysostom would later deliver—as an opportunity to catechize the governor, teaching him of Jesus. In this way Paul "grasped the judge (εἶλε τὸν δικάζοντα), and almost convinced him to convert (μεταστῆναι) to his side" (*Hom. de Stat.* 16.3).

> Such are the souls of the saints. When they have fallen into danger, they do not contemplate how they might get free (ἀπαλλαγῶσι), but how they might capture their oppressors (τοὺς ἐμβαλόντας), trying all devices. And it happened just so. He entered to defend himself (εἰσῆλθεν ἀπολογησόμενος), but he left, taking the judge with him (τὸν δικαστὴν λαβὼν ἀπῆει)! And the same judge witnessed (ἐμαρτύρησε) this, saying: "In such short order (ἐν ὀλίγῳ) you convince me to become Christian!" (*Hom. de Stat.* 16.4; *PG* 49: 166).

This is the example which Chrysostom would have had his congregation follow before their own governor Celsus:

> And this is what should have happened today: and this governor (ἄρχων) should have been amazed by your magnanimity (μεγαλοψυχία), your philosophy (φιλοσοφία), your total calmness (ἡσυχία ἅπασα)—and have left taking with him an education (διδασκαλία) from your constancy (ἐκ τῆς καταστάσεως ὑμῶν), marvelling at your assembly (σύλλογος), praising your council (συνέδριον), and learning from these things how great the difference is between Hellenes and Christians! (*Hom. de Stat.* 16.4; *PG* 49: 166).

In their cowardice, the Antiochene Christians of 387 had failed to make a Festus—or a Pilate—out of Celsus. While those two historical governors, whose interaction with Christians had been immortalized in the New Testament, had been led to higher things by the constancy of those brought before them, the inconstancy of John's congregation had left only a negative impression on the pagan governor of fourth-century Syria.

Only, Festus never suggested he was nearly made Christian by Paul. Those words were spoken by Herod Agrippa II, attending Festus's court at Caesarea. Moreover, in context, Agrippa's interjection in Acts 26.28 (ἐν ὀλίγῳ με πείθεις

[77] Naturally, there is an element of tough love here: possibly, the fears of his congregation were not so assuaged as Chrysostom presents, yet he uses the episode to shame them into greater courage. This being granted, the way the governor is mobilized by Chrysostom is still important.

Χριστιανὸν ποιῆσαι) is clearly satirical, translated either as a mocking question ("Are you so quickly persuading me to become a Christian?" NRSV) or a dismissive statement ("You try to make me a Christian with so few words"). Luke's Paul understands this, for his response supposes that Agrippa means ἐν ὀλίγῳ to be diminutive. More than this, the Festus of Acts—though, like Luke's Pilate, finding Paul innocent[78]—is not convinced by what he has to say. In fact, he interrupts Paul: "Festus said in a loud voice: 'You are mad, Paul! Too much learning (πολλά . . . γράμματα) has made you insane!'" (Acts 26.24).

John's homily therefore significantly alters Acts 26. Chrysostom has reinterpreted the mocking ἐν ὀλίγῳ με πείθεις Χριστιανὸν ποιῆσαι as an affirmation that Paul *succeeded* in making a Christian in such short order (ἐν ὀλίγῳ), and he has transferred the words from Agrippa to Festus. Introducing the scene, John tells us only: "When this Paul came in before Festus," referring to him thereafter as "the judge," (ὁ δικαστής). Nowhere is the presence of Agrippa admitted. Whether by deliberate intent or accident,[79] Chrysostom's elision here demonstrates a deep interest in the converted Roman governor as a counterpoint to the unconverted Celsus—an interest that we have seen was widely held among early Christian authors writing under the Roman empire.

Chrysostom admits no Jewish presence in the scene of Paul before Festus—Jewish guilt is not a topos here—and yet he dwells, again, on a Roman officer who recognized Christian truth and innocence. This helps to elucidate that when he did the same a few years later while preaching on Pilate, focusing on another catechesis at the hands of a prisoner, it is not simply because Pilate's innocence suggests the culpability of the Jews. Nor is he merely the generalized representative of the gentiles. Rather, Chrysostom is interested in Pilate *qua* Pilate—in his capacity as Roman prefect of Judaea. In each of these cases—Celsus, Festus, and Pilate—Chrysostom is animated by the desire that Roman officialdom should be positively impressed in its interactions with Christians.

Chrysostom elsewhere shows an interest in the ways in which the Roman empire and Christianity were complementary.[80] Like many other Christian authors, he found Roman recognition of Christianity a compelling subject. This should not be surprising, despite the idea that Chrysostom professed an

[78] Festus says: "This man does nothing deserving of death or imprisonment" (Acts 26.31), to which may be compared Pilate's "He has done nothing deserving of death" (Luke 23.15).

[79] It is possible that Chrysostom is working from memory and has unknowingly misattributed the line; equally, doing so suited his purposes. Later, in his *Homilies on Acts*—delivered, probably, in 392—he correctly credits the words to Agrippa, accepting that they are meant dismissively (*In Acta Apost. Hom.* 52), though he is more interested in the fact that both Festus and Agrippa found Paul innocent (*In Acta Apost. Hom.* 53).

[80] See too Dvornik 1966, 2: 695–97, 699.

episcopal authority which existed outside and superior to imperial structures.[81] Of course, like many other elites of the Roman empire, he advocated the superiority and legitimacy of the structures of which he was beneficiary and organizer, as potentates in the provinces ruled by Rome always had.[82] This should not necessarily be taken as evidence that he was opposed to temporal authority in principle; rather, the zero-sum competition for privileges and legitimacy which characterized life under Roman rule encouraged these types of rhetorical expressions from all identity mobilizers. At the same time, Chrysostom was part of a Mediterranean-wide society which was avowedly and, in many ways, "aggressively Roman," and of a family with a history of imperial service.[83] Antioch, after all, was proud of its history of imperial honors, even if this was intertwined with periods of imperial disfavor.[84] The material discussed here does not amount to a coherent political philosophy by any means, but I think it gives us a window into something deeper than a self-conscious and fully fledged exposition: a basic, even primal discomfort with some of the things that a narrative of hostility between the Roman state and the Christian religion implied, and an interest in historical examples which vitiated them. Chrysostom may have had much to criticize about specific Roman institutions, but this material does not support the view that the Roman empire was conspicuous in its absence from John Chrysostom's thought.[85] Contrary to Dvornik's schema, however, this is not a purely (or even particularly) "Eusebian" viewpoint, but—as we have seen in Section I—it corresponds to concerns encountered throughout a wide swathe of early Christian literature.

In 393, two years after he delivered his *Homilies on John* and six years after the debacle of the statues, Chrysostom's homiletic cycle concerned Paul's Epistle to the Romans. Here, again, he spoke of the importance of Christian self-control and obedience in front of earthly authorities, since by this behavior the Christian could convert unbelieving governors and dispel the myth of Christian revolution (*In Epist. ad Rom.* 23.1–2). Thus, Paul's injunction to obey rulers (Rom 13.1–7) applied to both pagan and Christian powers (*In*

[81] See notes 5, 33, and 34 above. Groß-Albenhausen 1999, 173 and 202 detected a mellowing in Chrysostom's attitude to authority following his face-to-face interaction with Roman power during the emergency of 387.

[82] This could be compared to the insistence of numerous Greek authors of the power and independence of their own "free" cities.

[83] See note 27 above. Aggressively Roman: P. Brown 1992, 6: "Latin was the native language of almost all the emperors of the age . . . A knowledge of Roman law and an ability to speak to the great in their own Latin tongue remained a *sine qua non* for success at court . . ." Libanius was outraged—and insecure—about the attraction of the Latin-speaking legal school at Berytus snatching away his students. See Lib. *Or.* 1.154, 31, 62.8–10, and *Ep.* 1375, with Liebeschuetz 1972, 242–55.

[84] French 1998, 479–84.

[85] Contrary to Bozinis 2005.

Epist. ad Rom. 23.3). In his final homily on Romans, Chrysostom delivered a moving tribute to Rome itself, as a place redolent in both earthly and spiritual glory—both a historical and living proof of the essential connection between the empire of the Romans and the religion of Christ. Reflecting on the fact that both Peter and Paul should be forever associated with the eternal city, Chrysostom waxes:

> I love Rome on this account (ἐγὼ καὶ τὴν Ρώμην διὰ τοῦτο φιλῶ), despite having other reasons to praise her—for example her greatness (καὶ ἀπὸ τοῦ μεγέθους), and her antiquity (καὶ ἀπὸ τῆς ἀρχαιότητος), and her beauty (καὶ ἀπὸ τοῦ κάλλους), and her populousness (καὶ ἀπὸ τοῦ πλήθους), her power (καὶ ἀπὸ τῆς δυναστείας), her wealth (καὶ ἀπὸ τοῦ πλούτου), and her successes in war (καὶ ἀπὸ τῶν κατορθωμάτων τῶν ἐν πολέμῳ). But I leave all this aside, and consider her blessed for this reason: that while he lived Paul both wrote to them, and so loved them, and discoursed with them while he was there, and loosed his grip on life there. So the city is more renowned (ἐπίσημος . . . μᾶλλον) for this reason, than for any other. And as a body great and strong, she has two shining eyes—the bodies of these saints. Not so brilliant is heaven (οὐχ οὕτως ἐστὶν ὁ οὐρανὸς λαμπρὸς) when the sun sends forth its rays as is the city of Rome transmitting these two beacons across all parts of the world (*In Epist. ad Rom.* 32.2; *PG* 60: 687).

I think that we can detect a clear pride in this passage, not necessarily that Christianity has conquered a hostile Rome (for Chrysostom explicitly counts Rome blessed) but that a city known everywhere as the most famous and powerful in the world should find a new fame as something unambiguously and splendidly Christian. For Christian believers who were themselves Roman subjects and citizens, both pre- and post-Constantine—and leaving aside their apparent beliefs on episcopal authority—there was a deep-seated need to find a way to present Christianity as something that had always really been a part of Rome. This is the same impulse which was acting on Christians across the Mediterranean, throughout the principate and Late Antiquity, in mobilizing the figure of Pilate as one who recognized the righteousness of Jesus. They did this not simply as a way of suggesting Jewish guilt for Jesus's death, nor merely as a way of prophesying the Pauline mission to the gentiles, but as a way of suggesting that *Rome*—through the prefect of Judaea—had been there from the very start.

In some ways, my interpretation represents a return to older arguments which saw Pilate as part of a "propaganda war," used by Christians to suggest the benign nature of their religion.[86] Where I differ from this—and what the

[86] See, for example, Winter 1964, 40. Similar was the traditional idea that the *Gospel of Nicodemus* was composed as a "counterblast" to the anti-Christian *Acts of Pilate* mentioned by Eusebius: Elliot 1993, 164; Scheidweiler 1991, 501, contested by, for example, Real 2010, 152.

case of Chrysostom shows clearly—is that the target of this rhetoric was not "pagans" or "educated Graeco-Romans" outside the church, as has traditionally been regarded the audience of Christian apology.[87] Chrysostom did not preach to *externi*, but to Christians congregated in his church. This was an *internal* discourse—as was, I argue, the pre-Constantinian material explored in Section I. The investigation of Chrysostom's detailed portrait of Pilate therefore throws light on the motivations for a wide range of early Christian literature. This helps to explain why Constantine's reign and the coming of a Christian empire did not lead to a radical break in the way Christian authors approached Pilate. For as long as they existed within the Roman empire, Christian thinkers—most of them educated individuals who considered that they should be part of the social elite of imperial society—had to work out how to square their Christianity, which entailed revering a man who was put to death by a Roman governor as a revolutionary, with their positions as educated members of Roman society. This was an identity imperative which, if anything, became more acute with Christianity's achievement of power in the fourth century. Indeed, if there is a new development in this period, it is the *popularization* of the theory of Pilate's lack of culpability. Whereas in the pre-Constantinian area, such expressions were embedded in texts written by elite Christians and intended for consumption by other elite Christians, Chrysostom was preaching to a socially-mixed audience. At the same time, Pilate-related apocrypha—which, as we have seen (Section I), often contained pro-Pilate portraits—were circulating, likely also finding wider social appeal than earlier apologies and polemics. Chrysostom himself may have been influenced by them, as he was by other popular apocryphal stories, such as those concerning the emperor Nero.[88] This shows that such ideas were not merely of academic interest but had a wide appeal. Rome was Christian, and Roman history was Christian history, but that overlapping story had some rough edges. Christian authors and identity mobilizers resorted to a number of creative strategies to smooth these out—and the material explored here was part of that process.

In John Chrysostom's New Testament homilies we see an exceptionally full exposition of the idea of Pilate as an honest witness for Jesus Christ, belying the preacher's apparent anti-authority bent and presented for the benefit of

[87] For Chrysostom as the author of apology supposedly intended for non-Christians, see Schatkin 1987. For apology more generally as a genre targeted at outsiders, see Grant 1955, 31; Millar 1977, 563–64; Swift 1968; Keresztes 1966; and so on. Recent approaches emphasize instead the internal purpose of apologetics: the creation of a sense of identity and belonging for the social group of the author. See, for example, Buck 2003; Lieu 2011; and Kolbeck 2022.

[88] Rougé 1978. John Malalas, another Antiochene author, was influenced by Pilate apocrypha (see note 18). The possibility of the *Gospel of Nicodemus* as a source for Chrysostom's *Homilies on John* is interesting and may offer evidence for the question over the former text's dating.

his Christian congregation. In fourth-century Antioch, deep into a Christian empire, it was still important to be able to imagine a Pontius Pilate who had seen and believed.

University of Cambridge
bgrk2@cam.ac.uk

References

Adams, J. N. 2004. *Bilingualism and the Latin Language*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Agamben, G. 2014. *Pilato e Gesú*. Rome: Nottetempo.

Alexander, L. 2012. "Luke's Political Vision." *Interpretation: A Journal of Bible and Theology* 66.3: 283–93.

Arnheim, M. T. W. 1970. "Vicars in the Later Roman empire." *Historia* 19.5: 593–606.

Aubert, J.-J. 2010. "The Setting and Staging of Christian trials." In *Spaces of Justice in the Roman World*. Columbia Studies in the Classical Tradition 35, edited by F. de Angelis, 277–309. Leiden: Brill.

Baudoin, A.-C. 2013. "Gouverneur, juge et Romain: la figure de Pilate chez les auteurs patristiques." In *Ponce Pilate*. Graphè 22, edited by J.-M. Vercruysse, 41–56. Arras: Artois Presses Université.

———. 2016. "Truth in the Details: The Report of Pilate to Tiberius as an Authentic Forgery." In *Splendide Mendax: Rethinking Fakes and Forgeries in Classical, Late Antique, and Early Christian Literature*, edited by E. P. Cueva and J. Marínez, 219–38. Gronigen: Barkhuis.

Bauman, R. A. 1996. *Crime and Punishment in Ancient Rome*. London: Routledge.

Baur, C. 1960. *John Chrysostom and His Time*. Vol. 2, *Constantinople*. Translated by M. Gonzaga. Westminster, MD: The Newman Press.

Bond, H. K. 1998. *Pontius Pilate in History and Interpretation*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Bozinis, C. 2005. *Johannes Chrysostomus über das Imperium Romanum: Studie zum politischen Denken der Alten Kirche*. Mandelbachtal: Edition Cicero.

———. 2019. "The Natural Law in John Chrysostom." In *Revisioning John Chrysostom: New Approaches, New Perspectives*, edited by C. L. de Wet and W. Mayer, 493–524. Leiden: Brill.

Brandon, S. G. F. 1968. "Pontius Pilate in History and Legend." *History Today* 18.8: 523–30.

Brink, L. 2009. "Unmet Expectations: The Literary Portrayal of Soldiers in Luke-Acts." PhD diss., University of Chicago.

———. 2014. *Soldiers in Luke-Acts: Engaging, Contradicting, and Transcending Stereotypes*. Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck.

Brown, P. 1992. *Power and Persuasion in Late Antiquity: Towards a Christian Empire*. Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press.

Brown, R. E. 1994. *The Death of the Messiah: From Gethsemane to the Grave. A Commentary on the Passion Narratives in the Four Gospels*. Vol. 1. New York: Doubleday.

Browning, R. 1952. "The Riot of A.D. 387 in Antioch: The Role of the Theatrical Claques in the Later Empire." *Journal of Roman Studies* 42.1: 13–20.

Brunt, P. A. 1961. "Charges of Provincial Maladministration under the Early Principate." *Historia* 10.2: 189–227.

Buck, P. L. 2003. "Justin Martyr's *Apologies*: Their Number, Destination, and Form." *Journal of Theological Studies* 54.1: 45–59.

Casella, M., ed. and trans. 2010. *Storie di ordinaria corruzione: Libanio, Orazioni LVI, LVII, XLVI. Introduzione, traduzione e commento storico*. Messina: DICAM.

Cerulli, E. 1973. "Tiberius and Pontius Pilate in Ethiopian Tradition and Poetry." *Proceedings of the British Academy* 59: 3–20.

Cohick, L. H. 2000. *The* Peri Pascha *Attributed to Melito of Sardis: Setting, Purpose, Sources*. Brown Judaic Studies 327. Providence RI: Brown University.

Corcoran, S. 2000. *The Empire of the Tetrarchs: Imperial Pronouncements and Government, AD 284–324*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.

Dagron, G. 2013. "Pilate après Pilate: l'Empire chrétien, les Juifs, les images." In *Ponzio Pilato: storia di un mito*, edited by G. Jori, 31–49. Florence: Leo S. Olschki Editore.

Dahm, K. 2023. "(Re-)Writing the History of a Christian Roman Empire: A Study on Conflict and Authority in the *Ecclesiastical Histories* of Socrates of Constantinople and Sozomen of Gaza." PhD diss., King's College London.

Davenport, C. 2019. *A History of the Roman Equestrian Order*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Den Dulk, M. 2018. *Between Jews and Heretics: Refiguring Justin Martyr's Dialogue with Trypho*. London: Routledge.

De Wet, C. L. 2011. "The Priestly Body: Power-Discourse and Identity in John Chrysostom's *De Sacerdotio*." *Religion and Theology* 18: 1–29.

Downey, G. 1939. *A Study of the Comites Orientis and the Consulares Syriae*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

Drake, S. 2013. *Slandering the Jew: Sexuality and Difference in Early Christian Texts*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press.

Dusenbury, D. L. 2021. *The Innocence of Pontius Pilate: How the Roman Trial of Jesus Shaped History*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Dvornik, F. 1966. *Early Christian and Byzantine Political Philosophy: Origins and Background*. Vol. 2. Washington, DC: The Dumbarton Oaks Center for Byzantine Studies.

Elliott, J. K. 1993. *The Apocryphal New Testament: A Collection of Apocryphal Christian Literature in an English Translation Based on M.R. James*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.

Foerster, R., ed. 1908. *Libanii Opera*. Vol. 2, *Orationes XII–XXV*. Leipzig: Teubner.

French, D. R. 1998. "Rhetoric and the Rebellion of A.D. 387." *Historia* 47.4: 468–84.

Garnsey, P. 1966. "The Lex Iulia and Appeal under the Empire." *Journal of Roman Studies* 56.1–2: 167–89.

———. 1968a. "The Criminal Jurisdiction of Governors." *Journal of Roman Studies* 58: 51–59.

———. 1968b. "Why Penalties Become Harsher: The Roman Case, Late Republic to Fourth-Century Empire." *Natural Law Forum* 13: 141–62.

Garroway, J. 2010. "The Law-Observant Lord: John Chrysostom's Engagement with the Jewishness of Christ." *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 18.4: 591–615.

Geerard, M. 1989–1990. "Marie-Madeleine, dénonciatrice de Pilate." *Sacris Erudiri* 31: 139–48.

Geiger, J. 1996. "Titulus Crucis." *Scripta Classica Israelica* 15: 202–7.

Gounelle, R. 2013. "Genèse d'un personage littéraire: Ponce Pilate dans la literature apocryphe chrétienne." In *Ponce Pilate*. Graphè 22, edited by J.-M. Vercruysse, 29–40. Arras: Artois Presses Université.

Grant, R.M. 1955. "The Chronology of the Greek Apologists." *Vigiliae Christianae* 9.1: 25–33.

Groß-Albenhausen, K. 1999. *Imperator christianissimus: Der christliche Kaiser bei Ambrosius und Johannes Chrysostomus*. Frankfurter Althistorische Beiträge 3. Frankfurt am Main: Buchverlag Marthe Clauss.

Grüll, T. 2010. "The Legendary Fate of Pontius Pilate." *Classica et Mediaevalia* 61: 151–76.

Hall, S. G. 1978. *Melito of Sardis* On Pascha *and Fragments*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.

Harkins, P. W. 1958. "The Text Tradition of Chrysostom's Commentary on John." *Theological Studies* 19: 404–12.

Harries, J. 1999. "Constructing the Judge: Judicial Accountability and the Culture of Criticism in Late Antiquity." In *Constructing Identities in Late Antiquity*, edited by R. Miles, 214–33. London: Routledge.

Herzer, J. 2020. *Pontius Pilatus: Henker und Heiliger*. Leipzig: Evangelische Verlagsanstalt.

Hourihane, C. 2009. *Pontius Pilate, Anti-Semitism, and the Passion in Medieval Art*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

Isaacs, B. 1998. "The Eastern Frontier." In *The Cambridge Ancient History*. Vol. 13, *The Late Empire, A.D. 337–425*, edited by A. Cameron and P. Garnsey, 437–60. Cambridge: CUP.

Izydorczyk, Z. 1997. "The *Evangelium Nicodemi* in the Latin Middle Ages." In *The Medieval Gospel of Nicodemus: Texts, Intertexts, and Contexts in Western Europe*. Medieval and Renaissance Texts and Studies 158, edited by Z. Izydorczyk, 43–102. Tempe: Arizona State University.

Izydorczyk, Z., and J.-D. Dubois. 1997. "Nicodemus's Gospel before and beyond the Medieval West." In *The Medieval Gospel of Nicodemus: Texts, Intertexts, and Contexts in Western Europe*. Medieval and Renaissance Texts and Studies 158, edited by Z. Izydorczyk, 21–42. Tempe: Arizona State University.

Jones, A. H. M. 1953. "St. John Chrysostom's parentage and education." *Harvard Theological Review* 46.3: 171–73.

———. 1964. *The Later Roman Empire 284–602. A Social, Economic, and Administrative Survey*. 3 vols. Oxford: Blackwell.

Judd, F. F. 2016. "Perspectives about Pontius Pilate in the Ante-Nicene Fathers." *Studies in the Bible and Antiquity* 8: 157–81.

Kelly, C. 1998. "Emperors, Government, and Bureaucracy." In *The Cambridge Ancient History*. Vol. 13, *The Late Empire, A.D. 337–425*, edited by A. Cameron and P. Garnsey, 138–83. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Kelly, J. N. D. 1995. *Golden Mouth: The Story of John Chrysostom—Ascetic, Preacher, Bishop*. London: Duckworth.

Keresztes, P. 1966. "Tertullian's *Apologeticus*: A Historical and Literary Study." *Latomus* 25: 124–33.

Kinzig, W. 1998. "Römisches Recht und Unrecht in der Predigt der Alten Kirche." In *Recht, Macht, Gerechtigkeit*, edited by J. Mehlhausen, 407–37. Gütersloh: Gütersloher Verlagshaus.

Kolbeck, B. 2022. "Doing Justice? Christians, Courts, and Constructions of Empire." PhD diss., King's College London.

———. Forthcoming. "Read It in Rome: Miracles, Documents, and an Empire of Knowledge in Justin Martyr's *First Apology*." *Zeitschrift für Antikes Christentum* 28.1.

Kötting, B. 1985. "Handwaschung." *Reallexicon für Antike und Christentum* 13: 575–85.

Kuhn, A. B. 2010. "Senatorial and Equestrian Rank in the Cities of Roman Asia Minor, *c*. 30 BC–AD 212." DPhil diss., University of Oxford.

Laato, A. M. 1998. *Jews and Christians in* De duobus montibus Sina et Sion*: An Approach to Early Latin Adversus Iudaeos Literature*. Åbo: Åbo Akademi University Press.

Lallemand, J. 1964. *L'administration civile de l'Égypte de l'avènement de Dioclétien à la creation du diocese (284–382)*. Brussels: Palais des Académies.

Lamoreaux, J. C. 1995. "Episcopal Courts in Late Antiquity." *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 3.2: 143–67.

Liberty, S. 1944. "The Importance of Pontius Pilate in Creed and Gospel." *Journal of Theological Studies* 45.177–78: 38–56.

Liebeschuetz, J. H. W. G. 1972. *Antioch: City and Imperial Administration in the Later Roman Empire*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.

Lieu, J. M. 2011. "The Audience of Apologetics: The Problem of the Martyr Acts." In *Contextualising Early Christian Martyrdom: Early Christianity in the Context of Antiquity*. Early Christianity in the Context of Antiquity 8, edited by J. Engberg, U. H. Eriksen, and A. K. Petersen, 205–23. Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang.

Lo Cascio, E. 2005. "The New State of Diocletian and Constantine: From the Tetrarchy to the Reunification of the Empire." In *The Cambridge Ancient History*. Vol. 12, *The Crisis of Empire, A.D. 193–337*, edited by A. K. Bowman, P. Garnsey, and A. Cameron, 170–83. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

MacMullen, R. 1986. "Judicial Savagery in the Roman empire." *Chiron* 16: 147–66.

———. 1989. "The Preacher's Audience (AD 350–400)." *Journal of Theological Studies* 40.2: 503–11.

Maier, P. L. 1971. "The Fate of Pontius Pilate." *Hermes* 99.3: 362–71.
Malosse, P.-L. 2014. "Libanius' *Orationes*." In *Libanius: A Critical Introduction*, edited by L. van Hoof, 81–106. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
Mayer, W., and P. Allen. 2000. *John Chrysostom*. London: Routledge.
McDonough, C. M. 2022. *Pontius Pilate on Screen: Soldier, Sinner, Superstar*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.
McLynn, N. B. 1994. *Ambrose of Milan: Church and Court in a Christian Capital*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
Millar, F. 1977. *The Emperor in the Roman World*. London: Duckworth.
———. 2006. "Reflections on the Trials of Jesus." In *Rome, the Greek World, and the East*. Vol. 3, *The Greek World, the Jews, and the East*, edited by F. Millar, H. M. Cotton, and G. M. Rogers, 139–63. Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press.
Mommsen, T. 1874. *Römisches Staatsrecht*. Zweiter Band, Erste Abteilung. Leipzig: Verlag von S. Hirzel.
———. 1887. *Römisches Staatsrecht*. Erster Band, Dritte Auflage. Leipzig: Verlag von S. Hirzel.
———. 1899. *Römisches Strafrecht*. Leipzig: Verlag von Duncker und Humblot.
———. 1905. "Gaius Cornelius Gallus." In *Reden und Aufsätze*, edited by T. Mommsen, 449–57. Berlin: Weidmannsche Buchhandlung.
Noreña, C. F. 2017. "Nero's Imperial Administration." In *The Cambridge Companion to the Age of Nero*, edited by S. Bartsch, K. Freudenburg, and C. Littlewood, 48–62. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
Norman, A. F., trans. 1977. *Libanius: Selected Orations*. Vol. 2, *Orations 2, 19–23, 30, 33, 45, 47–50*. Loeb Classical Library 452. Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press.
O'Ceallaigh, G. C. 1963. "Dating the Commentaries of Nicodemus." *Harvard Theological Review* 56.1: 21–58.
Pérès, J-N. 2010. "Les traditions éthiopiennes relatives à Pilate." *Apocrypha* 21: 83–91.
Quasten, J. 1960. *Patrology*. Vol. 3, *The Golden Age of Greek Patristic Literature from the Council of Nicaea to the Council of Chalcedon*. Utrecht/Antwerp: Spectrum Publishers.
Real, R. R. 2010. "Emerging Christian Discourse: The *Acts of Pilate* as the Rhetorical Development of Devotion." *Apocrypha* 21: 151–167.
Ritter, A. M. 2012. *Studia Chrysostomica*. Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck.
Robbins, V. K. 1991. "Luke-Acts: A Mixed Population Seeks a Home in the Roman Empire." In *Images of Empire*. JSOT Supplement Series 122, edited by L. Alexander, 202–21. Sheffield: JSOT Press.
Rougé, J. 1978. "Néron à la fin du IVe et au début du Ve siècle." *Latomus* 37.1: 73–87.
Saddington, D. B. 1996. "Roman Military and Administrative Personnel in the New Testament." *Aufstieg und Niedergang der römischen Welt* 2.26.3: 2409–35.
Saliou, C. 2000. "À propos de la ταυριανὴ πύλη: remarques sur la localisation présumée de la Grande Église d'Antioche de Syrie." *Syria* 77: 217–26.

———. 2014. "À Antioche sur l'Oronte, l'église de Constantin entre histoire et mémoire." *Antiquité Tardive* 22: 125–36.

Sandwell, I. 2004. "Christian Self-Definition in the Fourth Century AD: John Chrysostom on Christianity, Imperial Rule, and the City." In *Culture and Society in Later Roman Antioch*, edited by I. Sandwell and J. Huskinson, 35–58. Oxford: Oxbow Books.

———. 2007. *Religious Identity in Late Antiquity: Greeks, Jews, and Christians in Antioch*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Schatkin, M. A. 1987. *John Chrysostom as Apologist*. Analecta Blatadon 50. Thessaloniki: Patriarchal Institute for Patristic Studies.

Scheidweiler, F. 1991. "The Gospel of Nicodemus: Acts of Pilate and Christ's Descent into Hell." In *New Testament Apocrypha 1: Gospels and Writings*, edited by W. Schneemelcher, 501–536. Translated by R. McL. Wilson. London: James Clarke and Co.

Seeck, O. 1906. *Die Briefe des Libanius zeitlich geordnet*. Texte und Untersuchungen zur Geschichte der altchristlichen Literatur n.s. 15: 1–2. Leipzig: J.C. Hinrichs'sche Buchhandlung.

Slootjes, D. 2006a. "Governor Trumped by Bishop: Shifting Boundaries in Roman Religious and Public Life." In *The Impact of Imperial Rome on Religions, Ritual, and Religious Life in the Roman Empire: Proceedings from the Fifth Workshop of the International Network Impact of Empire*, edited by L. de Blois, P. Funke, and J. Hahn, 219–31. Leiden: Brill.

———. 2006b. *The Governor and his Subjects in the Later Roman Empire*. Mnemosyne Supplements, History and Archaeology of Classical Antiquity 275. Leiden: Brill.

Soler, E. 1997. "Évêque et pasteurs à Antioche sous l'empereur Théodose: l'engagement chrétien dans la défense de la cité après la sédition des statues (387)." In *Vescovi e pastori in epoca Teodosiana: in occasione del XVI centonario della consacrazione episcopale di S. Agostino, 369–1996. Roma, 8–11 magio 1996*. Vol. 2, *Padri Greci e Latini*, 461–76. Rome: Institutum Patristicum Augustinianum.

Speidel, M. P. 1992. "The Roman Army in Judaea under the Procurators: The Italian and Augustan Cohort in the Acts of the Apostles." In *Roman Army Studies: Volume II*. Mavors Roman Army Researches 3, edited by M. P. Speidel, 224–32. Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag.

Staats, R. 1987. "Pontius Pilatus im Bekenntnis der frühen Kirche." *Zeitschrift für Theologie und Kirche* 84: 493–513.

Stephens, J. 2001. "Ecclesiastical and Imperial Authority in the Writings of John Chrysostom: A Reinterpretation of His Political Philosophy." PhD diss., University of California.

———. 2009. "Religion and power in the early thought of John Chrysostom." In *The Power of Religion in Late Antiquity*, edited by A. Cain and N. Lenski, 181–88. London: Routledge.

Swift, L. J. 1968. "Forensic Rhetoric in Tertullian's *Apologeticum*." *Latomus* 27: 864–77.

Sykes, A. S. 1997. "Melito's anti-Judaism." *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 5.2: 271–83.

Van de Paverd, F. 1991. *St. John Chrysostom, The Homilies on the Statues: An Introduction*. Orientalia Christiana Analecta 239. Rome: Pontificium Institutum Studiorum Orientalium.

Wilken, R. L. 1983. *John Chrysostom and the Jews*. Berkely: University of California Press.

Winter, P. 1961. *On the Trial of Jesus*. Studia Judaica: Forschungen zur Wissenschaft des Judentums 1. Berlin: De Gruyter.

———. 1964. "A Letter from Pontius Pilate." *Novum Testamentum* 7.1: 37–43.

Yingxue, C. 2022. "John Chrysostom's Discourse on Property Ownership: An Analysis from the Perspective of Roman law." *Vox Patrum* 83: 221–46.

Yoder, J. 2014. *Representatives of Roman Rule: Provincial Governors in Luke-Acts*. Beihefte zur Zeitschrift für die neutestamentliche Wissenschaft 209. Berlin: De Gruyter.