

## Introduction



Codex Bezae offers an interesting variant reading of Matt 20:28: “But seek to increase from that which is small, and to become less from that which is greater.”<sup>1</sup> This Jesus-saying (perhaps an *agraphon*) seemed to a scribe to fit within the context of Jesus’ teaching about glory, honor, and “greatness.” Jesus’ message would have been discouraging to many readers entrenched in the agonistic Greco-Roman culture. Because honor was treated as a limited good (there was only so much of it to go around), daily one vied for honor and competed to “best” the other.<sup>2</sup> While modern Westerners sometimes scoff at the secret request of the mother of James and John that her sons be given prime seats at the eschatological banquet (Matt 20:20–21), it would not have been a surprise to the other disciples. They were probably upset on account of *jealousy*, not propriety! The second part of the Codex Bezae Jesus-saying – “to become less” – was utter foolishness in such a competitive world. Jesus was not actually encouraging the disciples to be underachievers; rather, he was undermining a *status quo* that locked people into shame and poverty.

<sup>1</sup> The variant reading goes on with a teaching similar to what we find in Luke 14:8–10; see B. Metzger, *A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament* (Stuttgart: United Bible Society, 2012), 42.

<sup>2</sup> J. E. Lendon refers to honor as the “filter through which the whole world was viewed, a deep structure of the Graeco-Roman mind, perhaps the ruling metaphor of ancient society”; *Empire of Honour: The Art of Government in the Roman World* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), 73. That this value would naturally lead to competition and rivalry is made clear by this statement by Cicero: “Nature ... has made us ... enthusiastic seekers after honour, and once we have caught, as it were, some glimpse of its radiance, there is nothing we are not prepared to bear and go through in order to secure it” (*Tusc.* 2.40.58 King, LCL), as cited in Craig Hill, *Servant of All: Status, Ambition, and the Way of Jesus* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2016), 81.

What does this have to do with Philippians? Everything indeed! Philippi was a Roman colony in Paul's time, and the "values of Rome" were especially prominent and on display in such an environment. Rome supported and reinforced social stratification and operated on a system of tracks of "upward mobility." Bettering oneself is always a good thing, but, again, the system as it was often involved *my* betterment at the cost of *someone else's* degradation. The text of Phil 2:5–11, popularly dubbed the "Christ Hymn," is perhaps the most discussed and debated text in all of Paul's letters. While scholars will continue to disagree on its origins, exact literary style, and the meaning and implications of specific details, what is *not* in doubt is how countercultural Paul's portrayal of Jesus would have been to "Romanized" people. The Roman way promoted headstrong ascension. Contrastingly, the main figure of the Christ Hymn dared to *willfully* lower himself. He was not the first person in antiquity to model humility, but Paul boldly narrates the breathtaking *plunge* of Jesus, from an exceptionally high status and glory to the degradation of a common slave. He modeled the movement from "greater to lesser." Who would do such a thing and why? And who would follow and emulate such a person? These are the kinds of questions that drive Philippians and give it pride of place as one of the most theologically rich texts of the New Testament.

#### PHILIPPI: THE CITY AND ITS INHABITANTS

##### Philippi before Roman Occupation

Ancient Philippi was located in eastern Macedonia between the mountain range of Orvilos and Mount Pangaion, with Mount Symyolon to the east. Before it was called Philippi, it was the Thasian colony of Krenides, founded in 360 BCE.<sup>3</sup> Only a handful of years later (356 BCE), Philip of Macedon (359–336 BC) was called up to protect the inhabitants of Krenides. He took control of the city, fortified it, and changed its name to "Philippi." He also established a royal mint there.<sup>4</sup> Philippi would

<sup>3</sup> Before 360 BCE, the population consisted of tribal peoples, mostly Pieri and Edoni; see P. Oakes, *Philippians: From People to Letter* (SNTSMS; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 10.

<sup>4</sup> C. Koukoulis-Chrysantaki and C. Bakirtzis, *Philippi* (Athens: Ministry of Culture, 1995), 7–8.

have been attractive to Philip for many reasons, including its gold and silver mines and plentiful water springs (“Krenides” means “with many springs”).<sup>5</sup>

The Romans, under general Lucius Aemilius Paulus, conquered Macedonia in 167 BCE, and captured Philippi in 148 BCE. Soon after they began construction on the Via Egnatia, the route that connected the Adriatic ports of Dyrrachium and Apollonia.<sup>6</sup> In 42 BCE, the battle between Brutus and Cassius against Octavian and Antony was waged just outside the western wall of Philippi. After Octavian won, he settled veterans in Philippi. From that time on the city became especially prosperous. After the battle of Actium (31 BCE), more Roman veterans were given land in Philippi.<sup>7</sup>

In 30 BCE, when Philippi became a Roman colony, it was renamed Colonia Iulia Philippensis; soon after it was renamed Colonia Iulia Augusta Philippensis, and new buildings were erected, fresh coins struck.<sup>8</sup> There were, of course, many unique advantages to being a Roman colony, including tax and tribute exemption, and greater autonomy for the local government.<sup>9</sup>

## Roman Philippi

Despite having the status of a Roman colony (*Ius Italicum*),<sup>10</sup> Philippi was a relatively small city with around 10,000 inhabitants, a fraction of the

<sup>5</sup> See C. Koukouli-Chrysantaki, “Colonia Iulia Augusta Philippensis,” in *Philippi at the Time of Paul and after His Death* (eds. C. Bakirtzis and H. Koester; Harrisburg: Trinity Press International, 1998), 5–35, here 5.

<sup>6</sup> The road was built by Gnaeus Egnatius, a Roman proconsul; see A.-F. Christidis, ed., *A History of Ancient Greek from the Beginnings to Late Antiquity* (English translation; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 901. E. Verhoef notes that the journey from Rome to Byzantium on the Via Egnatia would take about twenty-four days; *Philippi: How Christianity Began in Europe: The Epistle to the Philippians and the Excavations at Philippi* (London: Bloomsbury, 2013), 4.

<sup>7</sup> It is estimated that as many as 500 Roman veterans were settled in Philippi after Actium (Dio Cassius, *Roman History* 51.4.6).

<sup>8</sup> Koukouli-Chrysantaki, “Colonia Iulia Augusta Philippensis,” 14.

<sup>9</sup> See J. E. Stambaugh and D. L. Balch, *The New Testament in Its Social Environment* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1986), 20.

<sup>10</sup> This designation meant that the parcel of land was declared legally to be “Italian soil.” As A. W. Lintott poignantly writes, “such communities in the provinces had the prestigious status of Roman islands in a more or less foreign sea,” in *Imperium Romanum: Politics and Administration* (London: Routledge, 1993), 130.

much larger Thessalonica (ten times its size).<sup>11</sup> It covered a geographic space of about 2,000 square kilometers. Despite its relatively small population, Eduard Verhoef notes how Philippian residents clearly traveled and established a reputation for themselves based on the naming of Philippian men in inscriptions found elsewhere.<sup>12</sup>

### Economy, Inhabitants, and Social Environment

In the era of Roman rule, Philippi continued to sustain its economy on agriculture.<sup>13</sup> Romans comprised the ruling class. There is evidence of guilds or associations in Philippi, although these often were comprised of freedmen and slaves (and foreigners); rarely did aristocrats participate.<sup>14</sup> In an important study called *Philippians: From People to Letter*, Peter Oakes offers an educated guess at the social stratification of the population. He surmises the following:

- 1 percent Roman elite
- 15 percent community peasant colonists
- 43 percent service groups
- 25 percent poor
- 16 percent slaves<sup>15</sup>

The ethnic composition of Roman Philippi was comprised largely of Greeks, Macedonians, and Romans;<sup>16</sup> it would also have included a smaller

<sup>11</sup> See Verhoef, *Philippi*, 6.

<sup>12</sup> For example, their presence is indicated in athletic competitions and games in Delphi; and some Philippians made monetary donations to temples in Argos and Delphi; see Verhoef, *Philippi*, 3.

<sup>13</sup> See Koukouli-Chrysantaki, “Colonia Iulia Augusta Philippensis,” 22; Verhoef notes that some would have worked in Philippian stone quarries; *Philippi*, 13.

<sup>14</sup> See in general, R. Ascough, *Paul’s Macedonian Associations: The Social Context of Philippians and 1 Thessalonians* (WUNT 2.161; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2003); cf. R. Ascough, R. Harland, and J. Kloppenborg, *Associations in the Greco-Roman World: A Sourcebook* (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2013); J. Hellerman, *Reconstructing Honor in Roman Philippi: Carmen Christi as Cursus Pudorum* (SNTSMS; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008). Verhoef estimates the slave population in Philippi was about 20 percent; *Philippi*, 19.

<sup>15</sup> Oakes, *Philippians*, 60.

<sup>16</sup> Oakes observes that Romans would have not been in the majority of the population; see “Re-mapping the Universe: Paul and the Emperor in 1 Thessalonians and Philippians,” *JSNT* 27.3 (2016): 301–322, at 309. E. Verhoef explains that Roman veterans were in active service for more than twenty years. When they were discharged, they were granted land

population of Thracians, and foreigners from Egypt, Asia Minor, Israel, and elsewhere.<sup>17</sup> The question of Jewish presence in Philippi is somewhat complex. Luke narrates that when Paul came to Philippi, he sought out a “place of prayer” outside of the city gate. There he engaged with some women including Lydia, “a gentile God-worshipper” from Thyatira (Acts 16:12–14). While Luke’s account here offers little detail, it would seem that his story implies the absence of a major Jewish community in Philippi, and that what Paul found there was a group of women, mostly Gentiles sympathetic to Israel’s God.<sup>18</sup>

As for other evidence, a relevant grave stele was discovered in the west cemetery of Philippi.<sup>19</sup> The stele reads: “Nikostratos Aurelius Oxcholios himself furnished this flat tomb/grave [and] if someone lays down [on it] a dead body of others, he will give [a fine] to the synagogue.” The name of this Jewish male includes a Greek cognomen, Roman nomen gentis, and a second Greek cognomen.<sup>20</sup> Koukouli-Chrysantaki surmises from this stele

for income. The amount of land given varied from one situation and location to the next, but a common soldier might receive thirty acres; veterans of higher status much more. Landowners could lease the property to tenant farmers or purchase slaves to work; see Verhoef, *Philippi*, 10. Despite the periodic resettlement of veterans in Philippi, Romans would have been a relatively small population in the city compared to Greeks and Thracians; see C. Koukouli-Chrysantaki, “Philippi,” in *Brill’s Companion to Ancient Macedonia: Studies in Archaeology and the History of Macedonia* (Leiden: Brill, 2011), 437–452, here 447. Hellerman convincingly argues, though, that even in spite of the small population of Romans, the city took on a strong Roman culture; thus, “the Romans remained an ideological majority, particularly where issues of honor, status, and social virtues were concerned, since the dispossession of local landholders by Roman veterans ultimately determined not only the social hierarchy, but also the social values, of the reconstituted settlement”; *Reconstructing Honor*, 71.

<sup>17</sup> See Verhoef, *Philippi*, 2.

<sup>18</sup> See M. C. Parsons, *Acts* (Paideia; Grand Rapids, MI: Baker), 229.

<sup>19</sup> See Philippi Museum inv. no. \*λ1529; cf. Koukouli-Chrysantaki, “Colonia Iulia Augusta Philippensis,” 28; P. Pilhofer, *Philippi: Band II: Katalog der Inschriften von Philippi* (WUNT 2.119; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2000), 465–467.

<sup>20</sup> As Koukouli-Chrysantaki notes, “It was very common for Jews in the Roman Empire to use the Greek language and to have Greek names” (“Colonia Iulia Augusta Philippensis,” 29). Indeed, Koukouli-Chrysantaki’s statement seems to align with the evidence from Rome; see further, H. Leon, *The Jews of Ancient Rome* (updated ed.; Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1995). Koukouli-Chrysantaki also rightly observes that just because a Jew might take a Greek or Roman name does *not* mean he or she was culturally Hellenized, or less “Jewish” in any way in terms of commitments or practice (“Colonia Iulia Augusta Philippensis,” 29–30); see J. M. G. Barclay, *Jews in the Mediterranean Diaspora: From Alexander to Trajan – 323BCE to 117CE* (London: T & T Clark, 2015).

inscription that Nikostratos was a Roman citizen who probably obtained his citizenship status through Caracalla's edict of 212 CE. Along with most scholars, Koukouli-Chrysantaki dates the stele to the late third or early fourth century CE.<sup>21</sup> Despite the fact that this stele dates to at least two centuries after Paul's ministry in Philippi, nevertheless "it still serves as an important archaeological commentary on the Acts of the Apostles, offering the first epigraphical evidence of the existence of an organized Jewish community in the city of Philippi in the late third century CE."<sup>22</sup> As further evidence along these lines, Koukouli-Chrysantaki adds the discovery of another grave inscription from the same time period that mentions a Jewish male called "Simon the Smyrnon."<sup>23</sup> All in all, it is likely that Roman Philippi of the first century was not *devoid* of Jewish presence, but certainly Jews did not comprise a significant population group.

### Religion in Philippi

Like many of the major cities of the Greco-Roman world, Philippi was home to the worship of many gods from numerous peoples and cultures. Of course the major Greek and Roman gods were honored in Philippi, including Zeus, Athena, Apollo Comaeus, Artemis, and Dionysus.<sup>24</sup> There was also a Cybele cult, local worship of the Roman god of forests (Silvanus), and a cult dedicated to the Hero-Horseman. Material evidence also establishes that Philippi was home to a small sanctuary for the Egyptian gods Isis, Serapis, Horus, and probably Telesphorus.<sup>25</sup>

In recent years, scholars have taken a special interest in the imperial cult in the Roman world. Joseph Hellerman notes how the "Augustan character of the colony" would have guaranteed a central place of the imperial cult in the life of the city.<sup>26</sup> According to Hellerman, a ruler cult in Philippi is attested several centuries before Paul set foot there (in honor of Philip II, at

<sup>21</sup> See Koukouli-Chrysantaki, "Colonia Iulia Augusta Philippensis," 30–34.

<sup>22</sup> Koukouli-Chrysantaki, "Colonia Iulia Augusta Philippensis," 34.

<sup>23</sup> Koukouli-Chrysantaki, "Colonia Iulia Augusta Philippensis," 35.

<sup>24</sup> See Koukouli-Chrysantaki and Bakirtzis, *Philippi*, 28.

<sup>25</sup> Koukouli-Chrysantaki and Bakirtzis, *Philippi*, 28.

<sup>26</sup> Hellerman, *Reconstructing Honor*, 81; cf. L. Bormann, *Philippi: Stadt und Christengemeinde zur Zeit des Paulus* (Leiden: Brill, 1995); see especially chapter 3: "Die Caesarenreligion und der Kaiserkult in Philippi."

first, and later for Alexander the Great). Verhoef aptly sums up the evidence for the Roman period.

In the first century CE monuments were erected in Philippi in honour of the Caesarean family, and in the second century temples were even built in their honour. Priests were appointed, holidays were instituted and sacrifices to the Emperor were made. Next to the priests the so-called *seviri Augustales*, the six men working in honour of Augustus, played a role in the cult of the Emperor.<sup>27</sup>

#### THE USE OF ACTS IN THE STUDY OF PHILIPPIANS

Of what use is Acts when it comes to understanding the Philippian church and Paul's relationship and experiences in Philippi? Scholars disagree on the historical value of Acts. Some argue that Luke's theological agenda clouds Acts' ability to serve the purposes of historical reconstruction. No doubt Luke cared about more than just relaying "facts" about particular people and events in his time. He was inspired to tell a story about Jesus and the life and times of the earliest Christians.

An important starting place for discussions about the historical value of Acts involves the matter of *genre*. Martin Hengel labels Acts an "historical monograph," even if it demonstrates certain theological biases and narrative tendencies. Any attempt to understand Paul's life and even his letters apart from Luke's accounts is futile and irresponsible and, perhaps even, impossible, Hengel posits.<sup>28</sup> He adds the point that just because we may label a certain passage as a "legend" or "type scene" does not obviate its historical utility, "because they tend to indicate the essential characteristics of a person or event and the general impression that they made, and because they express the earliest influence exerted by such a person or

<sup>27</sup> Verhoef, *Philippi*, 12. Honors were offered to Claudius but he refused this homage; see B. Winter on the wider subject of rulers refusing divine honors; *Divine Honours for the Caesars: The First Christians' Responses* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2015). Verhoef makes it a point to say that "There was no impediment against participation in more than one cult, though the one condition was that the veneration of the Emperor would not suffer at the hands of the other cults, because the town was dependent on the Emperor for the common good" (Verhoef, *Philippi*, 12).

<sup>28</sup> M. Hengel, *Acts and the History of Earliest Christianity* (trans. J. Bowden; London: SCM, 1979), 36–38; see also B. Witherington III, *The Acts of the Apostles: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1998), 2.

event.”<sup>29</sup> Hengel also contributes the important point that Acts should be treated by modern historians of no less value than Josephus’s works.<sup>30</sup> At the end of the day we are almost entirely reliant today on ancient writers like Luke and Josephus to piece together the world of antiquity, filling in the gaps left by our analysis of Philippians and study of material remains.

#### PAUL’S MINISTRY IN PHILIPPI (ACTS 16:12–40)

Given the previous comments made about Acts, it is helpful to consider the background of Paul’s letter to the Philippians with some interest in Luke’s account of Paul’s visit to Philippi. Acts 16 narrates Paul’s missionary work in the Asia Minor cities of Derbe and Lystra (Acts 16:1–3). After Timothy joined Paul and Silas they entered the region of Phrygia and Galatia (as the Spirit prevented their movement into Asia; 16:6). The Spirit also occluded their entry into Bithynia. Instead, they moved into Troas. There Paul received the famous vision of the “man of Macedonia”: “Come over to Macedonia and help us” (16:9). Wasting no time, they crossed over by boat into Samothrace, then to Neapolis. They stopped for a period of time in an important city of the northwest, Philippi; Luke refers to it as “a leading city of the district of Macedonia and a Roman colony” (*prōtē meridos tēs Makedonias polis kolōnia*; Acts 16:12).

Luke makes it a point to say that Paul and his companions stayed in the city for several days. On the Sabbath they went outside the gate by the river<sup>31</sup> expecting to find a place of prayer (*proseuchē*; Acts 16:13). There is scholarly interest in what Luke means here in his use of *proseuchē*. It *could* refer to a synagogue building (cf. Philo, *In Flaccum*, 6.41), but it is more likely that Luke means that they went in search of a Jewish worship gathering.<sup>32</sup>

<sup>29</sup> Hengel, *Acts and the History*, 41; see similarly D. Binder, *Into the Temple Courts: The Place of the Synagogues in the Second Temple Period* (SBLDS; Atlanta, GA: SBL, 1999), 78–81: “we should consider the possibility that Luke’s pattern may well be a generalization based on one or more actual incidents – a possibility that takes on greater weight when we factor in the supporting evidence we have seen from Paul’s own writings” (p. 81).

<sup>30</sup> Hengel, *Acts and the History*, 39.

<sup>31</sup> J. Fitzmyer observes that this may be the Gangites river, 2.4 kilometers from Philippi; or perhaps the Crenides creek; see J. Fitzmyer, *The Acts of the Apostles* (AB; New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2010), 585.

<sup>32</sup> See C. S. Keener, *Acts: An Exegetical Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2014), vol. 3, on 16:13; cf. M. Hengel, “Proseuche und Synagoge: Jüdische Gemeinde,



Paul found a group of women (Acts 16:13) and preached to them. Luke singles out the responsiveness of Lydia whom he calls a “worshiper of God” (*sebomenē ton theon*). This was one of Luke’s ways of indicating non-Jews who were sympathetic to Judaism (but who did not fully observe Torah). Such Gentiles were attracted to Jewish-style “ethical monotheism” and took interest in synagogue worship.<sup>33</sup> Luke adds the personal detail that Lydia was from Thyatira, and that she was, to use Luke Timothy Johnson’s language, a “purple-goods merchant” (Acts 16:14). Thyatira (modern-day Akhisar) stood at the crossroads between Pergamum and Sardis. Unsurprisingly, Thyatira was known for its textile industry, and in particular for purple dyeing.<sup>34</sup> Verhoef explains that purple cloth was not purely ornamental in the ancient world; it was mainly reserved for particular (high-status) Roman military adornments in Paul’s time.<sup>35</sup> Luke records that Lydia and her household were baptized and she prevailed upon the

Gotteshaus und Gottesdienst in der Diaspora und in Palästina,” in *Tradition und Glaube: Das frühe Christentum in seiner Umwelt: Festgabe für Karl Georg Kühn* (eds. G. Jeremias et al.; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1971), 157–184. As C. K. Barrett observes, had Luke meant that Paul went in search of a “synagogue,” one would have expected him to use the word “*synagogē*”; see *Acts* (ICC; Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1998), 2.781.

- <sup>33</sup> See Fitzmyer, *Acts of the Apostles*, 449–450. For more information see A. Levinskaya, “The Inscription from Aphrodisias and the Problem of God-Fearers,” *TynBul* 41 (1990): 312–318; also A. Levinskaya, *The Book of Acts in Its Diaspora Setting* (BAFCS 5; Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1996), 51–126; M. F. Bird, *Crossing over Sea and Land: Jewish Missionary Activity in the Second Temple Period* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2009), 44–52. Richard Ascough has a richly nuanced discussion of Lydia as a Gentile “worshiper of God.” He rightly notes that there was no technical class of god-fearers, thus we ought to be careful about what we assume about their beliefs and practices; see *Lydia: Paul’s Cosmopolitan Hostess* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2009), 86, and generally pp. 86–90.
- <sup>34</sup> See T. B. Slater, “Thyatira,” NIDB, vol. 5, 591. Thyatira is also mentioned in Rev 1:11 as one of the seven churches of Asia Minor to whom John writes.
- <sup>35</sup> See Verhoef, *Philippi*, 19. D. Matson remarks how purple fabric was “an item of luxury in both Luke’s social and symbolic worlds” indicating that Lydia was probably a “person of some means”; see *Household Conversion Narratives in Acts* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1996), 143; he also aptly observes how Luke’s story of the rich man and Lazarus describes the former as “dressed in purple and fine linen” (Luke 16:19). M. Parsons argues that she is clearly a *dealer* of purple fine-cloth, but probably not the status of a *wearer*; he quotes Plutarch: “often we take pleasure in a thing, but we despise the one who made it. Thus we value aromatic salves and purple clothing, but the dyers and salvemakers remain for us common and low craftspersons” (*Per.* 1.3–4). Nevertheless, as Parsons points out, she proved successful enough to have her own “household”; thus, he labels her as one of relatively low status, but high income (*Acts*, 230).

apostles to stay in her home (16:15). Lydia's exact economic situation is unclear, as is the composition of her household. Obviously in the Roman world one's "household" included far more than the kinship-only "nuclear" family – it could include slaves, and household workers as well. Keener surmises that Lydia appears to be independent, and thus her household probably consisted of servants and slaves.<sup>36</sup>

Beginning in Acts 16:16 Luke transitions to another episode that happens while Paul and his companions were in Philippi. Again they were going to a *proseuchē* and they came upon a slave girl who had a "spirit of clairvoyance." Literally, it says that she had a "pythonic spirit." According to Greek legend, a large she-snake or dragon lived in the caves of Mount Parnassus, serving as protector of the oracle of Delphi. When Apollo came to Delphi, he slew the python, and took control of the oracle. The priestess of Apollo, "his mystic bride, Pythia, became the 'mouthpiece for the god'."<sup>37</sup> In an ecstatic state, she gave prophecies that were interpreted by priests (who were, assumingly, in a state of spirit possession). By Paul's time, to say someone had a "pythonic spirit" meant that they were a soothsayer or had a spirit of divination.<sup>38</sup> Why would her services be needed? As Esther Eidinow explains, ancient people were deeply interested in divine guidance, not only for *personal* gain, but also civic decision-making. Thucydides "mentions them almost cursorily as if they were a fact of daily life, and other evidence, both literary and epigraphic, demonstrates that it was indeed usual practice to involve oracular evidence and its interpreters in political decisions, both before and after this date."<sup>39</sup> As Fitzmyer surmises,

<sup>36</sup> He does consider the possibility that she indeed has a husband but in this case they do not share the same religious interests; see C. S. Keener, *The IVP Bible Background Commentary: New Testament* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2014), 370.

<sup>37</sup> See M. Dixon-Kennedy, *Encyclopedia of Greco-Roman Mythology* (Santa Barbara, CA: ABC-CLIO, 1998), 266.

<sup>38</sup> See Fitzmyer, *Acts of the Apostles*, 586. Might she have been one of the *engastrimouthoi*, the so-called belly-talkers who prophesied through "voices" emanating from their stomachs? These were also called "pythons" due to their association with the Delphic Pythia. Luke does not say this, but it is a tantalizing possibility; see S. Iles Johnston, *Religions of the Ancient World* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2004), 384–385; cf. J. P. Laycock, *Spirit Possession around the World* (Santa Barbara, CA: ABC-CLIO, 2015), 17; M. Dillon, *Girls and Women in Classical Greek Religion* (London: Routledge, 2008), 180.

<sup>39</sup> E. Eidinow, *Oracles, Curses, and Risk among the Ancient Greeks* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012).