

Reframing Julius' Kindness (Acts 27) as an Extension of Luke's Socratic Characterisation of Paul

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The Acts narrative's characterisation of Julius evokes the circumstances of Socrates, specifically the end of his life, at which point his prison guard – who exhibits a fondness for Socrates – allows his friends to visit and care for him. The credibility of this reading is strengthened by situating Acts 27 amid other Socratic characterisations of Paul in Acts 17–26, 28. By understanding Julius' characterisation in this way, readers can regard Paul as a Socratic figure even during his sea voyage and shipwreck. This reading is more credible than others that attribute the characterisation of Julius to the narrative's positive disposition towards centurions.

Keywords: Acts of the Apostles, Julius (centurion), literary models, Paul, Roman Empire, Socrates

1. Introduction

Julius, a centurion of the Augustan cohort, is a relatively minor character in the narrative of Acts.¹ His role is to bring Paul, a prisoner under his custody, from Caesarea to Rome in order to testify before the emperor. Despite this limited role, the Acts narrative includes a number of statements that supply additional dimensions to his character. Specifically, he treats Paul kindly, allowing his friends to care for him (Acts 27.3), and even proactively saves Paul's life after a shipwreck (27.42–4). There is a tendency among scholars to attribute this positive

¹ Regarding his name and cohort, Warren Carter explains: 'The identifiers not only evoke the Roman military power to which Paul is subject, but they also particularise that power in terms of its leading exponents, Julius Caesar and Augustus' ('Aquatic Display: Navigating the Roman Imperial World in Acts 27', *NTS* 62 (2016) 79–96, at 91). See also C. B. Zeichmann, *The Roman Army and the New Testament* (Lanham, MD: Lexington/ Fortress Academic, 2018) 89–91.

characterisation to the narrative's favourable disposition towards Roman power – or at least towards centurions in particular.²

According to Laurie Brink, for example, the characterisation of Julius the centurion defies the stereotype-informed expectations of ancient readers regarding provincial centurions.³ This defiance is most pronounced in the narrative's assertion that Julius 'dealt with Paul humanely' (Acts 27.3) and in its depiction of Julius as rescuing Paul from the murderous intentions of the other soldiers (27.43).⁴ Brink explains, 'Julius's actions towards an inferior unsettle the authorial audience's expectations', a judgement based on her review of literary depictions of soldiers in antiquity – where they are often portrayed as provincial brutes.⁵ Brink thus draws the logical conclusion that the positive characterisation of Julius is evidence of the narrative's favourable disposition towards centurions – exemplifying an interpretive tendency among scholars.⁶

Beyond the scope of Brink's study, however, are the literary models that appear to have influenced the shape of the Acts narrative. Indeed, the indebtedness of Acts to classical Greek and Septuagintal literary models is arguably least contentious with respect to its narration of Paul's sea voyage and shipwreck in Acts 27. Nevertheless, the literary models that critics most frequently cite as influencing this narrative – namely, the book of Jonah and Homer's *Odyssey* – do not help readers make sense of the narrative's positive characterisation of Julius.⁷

2 P. W. Walaskay writes, 'Paul was "saved" by Julius; the gospel was rescued by Rome' (*And so We Came to Rome: The Political Perspective of St Luke* (SNTSMS 49; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984) 62).

3 L. Brink, *Soldiers in Luke-Acts: Engaging, Contradicting, and Transcending the Stereotypes* (WUNT 11/362; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2014) 119–25. See also A. Kyrychenko, *The Roman Army and the Expansion of the Gospel: The Role of the Centurion in Luke-Acts* (BZNTW 203; Berlin: de Gruyter, 2014), esp. 152–3. For a review of these studies, see M. Kochenash, 'Taking the Bad with the Good: Reconciling Images of Rome in Luke-Acts', *RelSRev* 41 (2015) 43–51, at 48–9.

4 Translations of biblical texts are my own.

5 Brink, *Soldiers in Luke-Acts*, 124. For her review of provincial soldiers in literature, see esp. 74–82.

6 This conclusion, of course, is also informed by her analyses of other centurions in Luke and Acts, especially those in Luke 7 and Acts 10.

7 For the narrative's use of the book of Jonah, see R. B. Rackham, *The Acts of the Apostles* (London: Methuen, 1904²) 477; R. Kratz, *Rettungswunder: Motiv-, traditions-, und formkritische Aufarbeitung einer biblischen Gattung* (EHS 23.123; Frankfurt am Main: Lang, 1979) 320–50; C. K. Barrett, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Acts of the Apostles* (2 vols.; ICC 34; Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1994–8) 11.1197–8; L. C. A. Alexander, "'In Journeyings Often': Voyaging in the Acts of the Apostles and in Greek Romance', *Acts in its Ancient Literary Context: A Classicist Looks at the Acts of the Apostles* (LNTS 298; London: T&T Clark, 2005) 69–96, at 84–5; J. Börstinghaus, *Sturmfahrt und Schiffbruch: Zur lukanischen Verwendung eines literarischen Topos in Apostelgeschichte 27,1–28,6* (WUNT 11/274; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2010) 183–209; C. S. Keener, *Acts: An Exegetical Commentary* (4 vols.; Grand

I argue here that an additional model – the life of Socrates, especially as depicted in the writings of Plato – can be understood as guiding Julius' characterisation and that, rather than expressing the narrative's disposition towards soldiers, this imitation can be read as sustaining the narrative's Socratic characterisation of Paul during an extended nautical (and decidedly non-Socratic) episode. This characterisation thereby connects the sea voyage and shipwreck scene to the series of judicial apologiae before and to Paul's bold proclamation in Rome after. Of course, the parallels that I draw can be considered credible only when contextualised within the broad arc of the narrative's Socratic characterisation of Paul from Acts 17 to Acts 28, and so I review that arc here.

2. Socratic Characterisations of Paul throughout Acts 17–28

That the characterisation of Paul in Acts frequently reflects a Socratic paradigm – one that was popular in the ancient world – has been demonstrated, for example, by Loveday Alexander.⁸ Her comparison of the Lukan Paul to Socrates foregrounds eight elements: a divine calling, characteristically narrated in the first person; a post-calling mission that animates the remainder of their lives; an emphasis on 'divinities' (δαίμονια), whether receiving guidance from one or introducing one (or more) to a new audience; the experience of a catalogue of tribulations; official opposition; a trial or trials featuring extended apologiae; the utilisation of time spent in prison as a platform for communication; and a noble death. Although this schema stretches the Socratic comparison from Paul's Damascus Road experience as 'Saul' in Acts 9 to his implied death after the

Rapids: Baker Academic, 2012–15) iv.3558–9; J. M. Beresford, 'The Significance of the Fast in Acts 27:9', *NovT* 58 (2016) 155–66; M. Kochenash, 'You Can't Hear "Aeneas" without Thinking of Rome', *JBL* 136 (2017) 667–85, at 683–4. For its use of Homer's *Odyssey*, see especially D. R. MacDonald, 'The Shipwrecks of Odysseus and Paul', *NTS* 45 (1999) 88–107. See also F. Blass, *Acta apostolorum sive Lucae ad Theophilum liber alter, editio philologica* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1895) 282; F. J. Foakes-Jackson and K. Lake, *The Beginnings of Christianity*, Part 1: *The Acts of the Apostles* (5 vols.; London: Macmillan, 1920–33) iv.339; S. M. Praeder, 'Acts 27:1–28:16: Sea Voyages in Ancient Literature and the Theology of Luke-Acts', *CBQ* 46 (1984) 683–706, at 701; F. F. Bruce, *The Book of the Acts* (rev. edn; NICNT; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1988) 474; R. I. Pervo, *Acts: A Commentary* (ed. H. W. Attridge; Hermeneia; Minneapolis: Fortress, 2009) 666; C. B. Zeichmann, 'Ulyssean Qualities in *The Life of Josephus and Luke-Acts: A Modest Defence of Homeric Mimesis*', *Neot* 53 (2019) 491–515.

⁸ L. C. A. Alexander, 'Acts and Ancient Intellectual Biography', *Acts in its Ancient Literary Context*, 43–68, at 62–8. See also D. M. Reis, 'The Areopagus as Echo Chamber: Mimesis and Intertextuality in Acts', *JHC* 9 (2002) 259–77, at 271–2; D. R. MacDonald, *Luke and Vergil: Imitations of Classical Greek Literature* (New Testament and Greek Literature 2; Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2015) 67–123.

narrative's conclusion in Acts 28, in the present section I foreground Paul's Socratic characterisation in Acts 17 – a narrative exhibiting, arguably, the least ambiguously Socratic features in Acts – and then briefly review some of the ways in which this Socratic characterisation continues through the end of the narrative.

It is relatively commonplace for scholars to classify the characterisation of Paul in the Athens narrative (Acts 17.16–34) as Socratic.⁹ This scene can be divided into three sections: the setup for Paul's speech (17.16–21), the speech itself (17.22–31) and the reaction of the Athenians to the speech (17.32–4).¹⁰ Each section contributes to the impression that Acts is presenting Paul as a 'new Socrates'.

After escaping violent opposition to his preaching in Beroea, Paul is brought safely to Athens, where he is instructed to wait for Silas and Timothy to join him (Acts 17.10–15).¹¹ The Athenian setting is, of course, singularly conducive to a Socratic characterisation: it is where Socrates lived and philosophised and where he was ultimately executed following a trial on the charges of 'not worshipping the gods worshipped by the state and of bringing in other novel divinities (καὶνὰ δαίμόνια εἰσφέρον). . . [and] corrupting the young men' (Xenophon,

9 See E. Benz, 'Christus und Sokrates in der alten Kirche: Ein Beitrag zum altkirchlichen Verständnis des Märtyrers und des Martyriums', *ZNW* 43 (1950–1951) 195–224; H. D. Betz, *Der Apostel Paulus und die sokratische Tradition* (BHT 45; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1972) 38 and n. 182; E. Plümacher, *Lukas als hellenistischer Schriftsteller: Studien zur Apostelgeschichte* (SUNT 9; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1972) 97–9; K. O. Sandnes, 'Paul and Socrates: The Aim of Paul's Areopagus Speech', *JSNT* 50 (1993) 13–26; Barrett, *Acts of the Apostles*, 1.828–9; E. W. Stegemann, 'Paulus und Sokrates', *Der fragende Sokrates* (ed. K. Pestalozzi; Colloquium Rauricum 6; Stuttgart: Teubner, 1999) 115–31; Reis, 'Areopagus as Echo Chamber'; Alexander, 'Acts and Ancient Intellectual Biography', 64; M.-F. Baslez, 'Un "nouveau Socrate" dans la tradition chrétienne', *Le Monde de la Bible*, special issue (2008) 22–5; A. A. Nagy, 'Comment rendre un culte juste au dieu inconnu? Le Socrate chrétien entre Lystre et Athènes', *Kalendae: Studia Sollemnia in Memoriam Johannis Sarkady* (ed. G. Németh; Hungarian Polis Studies 16; Budapest: Phoibos, 2008) 241–64; J. W. Jipp, 'Paul's Areopagus Speech of Acts 17:16–34 as Both Critique and Propaganda', *JBL* 131 (2012) 567–88; D. Marguerat, *Paul in Acts and Paul in his Letters* (WUNT 1/310; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2013) 70–4; C. K. Rothschild, *Paul in Athens: The Popular Religious Context of Acts 17* (WUNT 1/341; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2014) 81–107; MacDonald, *Luke and Vergil*, 76–81; T. Jantsch, "'Sokratische" Themen in der Areopagrede: Apg 17,22–31 im Kontext der antiken Philosophiegeschichte', *EC* 8 (2017) 481–503.

10 See e.g. Pervo, *Acts*, 426.

11 On the opposition to Paul in Beroea in Acts 17.10–15 (and Thessalonica in 17.1–9), see M. Kochenash, 'The Scandal of Gentile Inclusion: Reading Acts 17 with Euripides' *Bacchae*', *Classical Greek Models of the Gospels and Acts: Studies in Mimesis Criticism* (ed. M. G. Bilby, M. Kochenash and M. Froelich; Claremont Studies in New Testament & Christian Origins 3; Claremont, CA: Claremont Press, 2018) 125–44. See also M. Kochenash, 'Better Call Paul "Saul": Literary Models and a Lukan Innovation', *JBL* 138 (2019) 433–49, esp. 447–9.

Mem. 1.1.1 (trans. Marchant, Todd and Henderson, LCL)).¹² Readers hardly need additional Socrates-related cultural competence in order to interpret Paul in Acts 17.16–21 as a Socratic figure. While waiting for Silas and Timothy, Paul argues both in the synagogue and ‘in the marketplace (ἐν τῇ ἀγορᾷ) every day with those who happened to be there (παρατυγχάνοντας)’ (17.17).¹³ Richard Pervo describes the latter locale as ‘a fresh dimension of missionary endeavor’ in Acts.¹⁴ Apparently arising from these marketplace interactions, some call him an ‘idle babbler’ (σπερμολόγος), and others ‘a proclaimer of foreign divinities (ξένων δαιμονίων)’ (17.18) – restated in the following verses as presenting ‘new (καινή) teaching’ (17.19) and as ‘introducing (εἰσφέρεις) strange things’ (17.20).¹⁵ Not unreasonably, C. K. Barrett characterises these accusations as ‘nearly an explicit quotation’ of the charges raised against Socrates.¹⁶ Karl Olav Sandnes likewise judges that ‘the Socratic model is relatively obvious’ in Acts 17.16–21.¹⁷ Indeed, it would be difficult to contest these assessments.

Once readers foreground these elements – the setting in Athens, Paul’s uncharacteristic appearance in the marketplace and the remarkably Socratic accusations – still additional details, otherwise unremarkable, can also be read as signalling Paul’s Socratic characterisation. The narrative notes that Paul ‘was irritated’ (παροξύνετο) at the idolatry he encountered in Athens (17.16), echoing Socrates’ vexation at ‘the naïve religiosity of many Athenians’.¹⁸ The word used for Paul’s engagement with those he encountered in the synagogue and in the marketplace, ‘argued’ (διελέγετο, 17.17), is likewise used of Socrates and so also contributes to Paul’s Socratic characterisation, even if only in a minor way.¹⁹ Perhaps most importantly, however, two phrases in Acts 17.19 can help readers frame Paul’s Athenian speech as Socratic. In response to some calling Paul an ‘idle babbler’ and ‘proclaimer of foreign divinities’ (17.18), ‘they took (ἐπιλάβομενοι) him’ and brought him before the ‘Areopagus’ (Ἄρειον Πιάγον, 17.19). As scholars sometimes note, the verb used for ‘taking’

12 See also Plato, *Apol.* 24b–c, 26b; *Euthyphr.* 2c–3b; Xenophon, *Apol.* 10–13; Quintilian, *Inst.* 4.4.5; Philostratus, *Life* 7.11.2; 8.7.1; Diogenes Laertius, *Lives* 2.40.

13 For the use of a verb related to παρατυγχάνω (i.e. ἐντυγχάνω) with Socrates as the subject, see Plato, *Apol.* 29d, 41b. See also Plato, *Phaed.* 61c, where Socrates is the object. Παρατυγχάνω in Acts 17.17 is a *hapax legomenon* within New Testament literature.

14 Pervo, *Acts*, 424. For Socrates’ interactions in the Athenian marketplace, see Plato, *Apol.* 17c; Xenophon, *Mem.* 1.1.10; Diogenes Laertius, *Lives* 2.21.

15 For the use of εἰσφέρω with Socrates as the subject, see Xenophon, *Apol.* 10–11; *Mem.* 1.1.1 (quoted above); Justin, 1 *Apol.* 5.4; 2 *Apol.* 10.5–6. See also Quintilian, *Inst.* 4.4.5 (*introduco*); Philostratus, *Life* 7.11.2 (ἐπείσάγω), 8.7.1 (ἡγέομαι); Diogenes Laertius, *Lives* 2.40 (εἰσάγω).

16 Barrett, *Acts of the Apostles*, II.830.

17 Sandnes, ‘Paul and Socrates’, 20.

18 MacDonald, *Luke and Vergil*, 76. Compare Acts 17.16–17 with Plato, *Resp.* 376e–392c; *Euthyphr.* 6a–c.

19 See e.g. Diogenes Laertius, *Lives* 2.20, 22, 45, 122. Cf. Plato, *Apol.* 33a; *Resp.* 454a.

Paul often appears in the context of arrests in Acts.²⁰ Moreover, it is likely that 'Areopagus' here refers to the council that met on Mars Hill, not to Mars Hill itself.²¹ Both of these details, especially in the context of the features noted in the preceding paragraph, enable readers to interpret Paul's speech as an apologia – the first of several that Paul delivers throughout the second half of the book of Acts.

Paul begins with an address, 'Men, Athenians' (Ἄνδρες Ἀθηναῖοι, 17.22), that is identical to that of Socrates in Plato's *Apology*, where it occurs thirty-seven times.²² Accordingly, this vocative further establishes a Socratic and judicial tone for Paul's Areopagus speech. Indeed, although some have presented compelling arguments in favour of classifying this speech as deliberative, Paul nevertheless does defend himself against the Socratic charge of introducing 'foreign divinities'.²³ First, Paul clarifies that his proclamation concerns the resurrection of Jesus, not two distinct deities named Jesus and Anastasis. Second, he suggests that the God who raised Jesus from the dead is not foreign but is rather the 'unknown God' acknowledged in Athens. In this way, Paul de facto defends himself against the accusations raised in Acts 17.18–20, even though he does so within the deliberative context of encouraging those in the Areopagus to repent.

Yet even the deliberative aspects of Paul's speech can be characterised as Socratic. Sandnes, for example, argues that Paul's style of argumentation echoes that of Socrates: he begins with his listeners' presuppositions and guides them to certain desired conclusions.²⁴ The use of a Socratic style of argumentation aims 'to promote curiosity and to elicit questions'.²⁵ Appropriately, then, the reaction to Paul's speech is consistent with the Athenian reaction to Socrates' defence: although the majority rejects both Socrates and Paul, some are nevertheless convinced (Acts 17.32–4).²⁶ In Paul's case, an Areopagite named Dionysius and a woman named Damaris are explicitly identified among those who become believers.²⁷

Although Paul's characterisation following the Athens narrative is less obviously Socratic, readers attuned to the features outlined above can nevertheless

20 See Reis, 'Areopagus as Echo Chamber', 270. Per Reis, the use of ἐπιλαμβάνω in Acts 17.19 can be compared with its use in 16.19, 18.17, 21.30, 33 (270 n. 47).

21 See e.g. C. K. Rowe, 'The Grammar of Life: The Areopagus Speech and Pagan Tradition', *NTS* 57 (2010) 31–50, at 37.

22 MacDonald, *Luke and Vergil*, 79.

23 For an argument in favour of classifying Paul's speech as deliberative, see Sandnes, 'Paul and Socrates', esp. 15–17.

24 Sandnes, 'Paul and Socrates', 23–4. Those following Sandnes include Reis, 'Areopagus as Echo Chamber', 269–70; Jipp, 'Paul's Areopagus Speech', 576–88; Marguerat, *Paul in Acts and Paul in his Letters*, 72–4; MacDonald, *Luke and Vergil*, 76–81; Jantsch, "'Sokratische" Themen in der Areopagrede', 490–502.

25 Sandnes, 'Paul and Socrates', 25.

26 See Marguerat, *Paul in Acts and Paul in his Letters*, 71.

27 On the potential significance of these names, see MacDonald, *Luke and Vergil*, 122–3.

regard the Socratic characterisation of Paul as being sustained through the narrative's conclusion. In Acts 19, for example, Paul is in Ephesus.²⁸ Demetrius, 'a silversmith who made silver shrines of Artemis' (Acts 19.24), rouses a group of similarly interested artisans by announcing, 'Paul has persuaded and drawn away a considerable number of people by saying that gods made with hands are not gods' (19.26). In response, Ephesus 'was filled with confusion' (19.29) as the crowd sought to put Paul – or at least his ideas – on trial (19.32–4, 40). This plot likewise recalls the situation of Socrates, who failed to honour the gods of Athens and ridiculed Homeric theology (Plato, *Apol.* 24b). His trial on this charge was also apparently unruly, with Socrates repeatedly advising against making a disturbance throughout Plato's *Apology*.²⁹

While Paul heeds the advice to stay away from the angry crowd in Ephesus – and so does not offer a defence – he nevertheless delivers several apologiae after his arrival in Jerusalem.³⁰ First, in Acts 22, Paul defends himself before a crowd of Jews against accusations that readers of Acts know to be false: that he teaches 'all the Jews living among the gentiles to forsake Moses', that he tells them 'not to circumcise their children or observe the customs', and that he 'brought Greeks into the temple' and so defiled it (Acts 21.21, 28). He even begins his defence with an appropriation of the Socratic address, 'Men, brothers and fathers' (Ἄνδρες ἀδελφοὶ καὶ πατέρες, 22.1).³¹ Wanting 'to find out what Paul was being accused of by the Jews' (22.30), Lysias releases Paul into the custody of the Sanhedrin. Paul again begins his address in a Socratic manner, 'Men, brothers' (Ἄνδρες ἀδελφοί, 23.1). This scene concludes with scribes of the Pharisees declaring, 'We find nothing wrong with this man. What if a spirit or an angel has spoken to him?' (23.9), before the narrative indicates that 'the dissention became violent' between the Pharisees and Sadducees (23.10) and Lysias retrieves Paul, securing him in the barracks.

Still seeking an explanation for the accusations against Paul, Lysias sends him before Felix. Paul tells Felix that he 'makes [his] defence (ἀπολογία)

28 On the Socratic nature of the Acts 19 narrative, see D. R. MacDonald, 'A Categorization of Antetextuality in the Gospels and Acts: A Case for Luke's Imitation of Plato and Xenophon to Depict Paul as a Christian Socrates', *The Intertextuality of the Epistles: Explorations of Theory and Practice* (ed. T. L. Brodie, D. R. MacDonald and S. E. Porter; Sheffield: Sheffield Phoenix, 2006) 211–25, at 216–19; Marguerat, *Paul in Acts and Paul in his Letters*, 66–8; MacDonald, *Luke and Vergil*, 87–90.

29 See MacDonald, 'Categorization of Antetextuality', 217.

30 MacDonald, 'Categorization of Antetextuality', 219–24; R. R. Dupertuis, 'Bold Speech, Opposition, and Philosophical Imagery in Acts', *Engaging Early Christian History: Reading Acts in the Second Century* (ed. R. R. Dupertuis and T. Penner; London: Routledge, 2014) 153–68; R. Carhart, 'The Second Sophistic and the Cultural Idealization of Paul in Acts', *Engaging Early Christian History*, 187–208; MacDonald, *Luke and Vergil*, 90–6.

31 Paul's accusers use a more straightforward Socratic address, 'Men, Israelites' (Ἄνδρες Ἰσραηλίται, Acts 21.28).

cheerfully' (24.10), using a Socratic verb that the Acts narrative repeats four more times in reference to Paul (25.8; 26.1, 2, 24).³² Paul then proceeds to again deny the validity of the accusations he faces (24.11–13) and remarks about the absence of his accusers themselves (24.19–21). This sequence recalls Socrates' defence that if he had corrupted young people, then those who were corrupted but are now old enough ought to attest to the charge themselves, though they do not (Plato, *Apol.* 33c–d). After Paul's defence, Felix 'ordered the centurion to keep him in custody, but to let him have some liberty and not to prevent any of his friends from taking care of his needs' (24.23). Paul's final apologia in Acts occurs before Festus and Agrippa in Acts 26. Once more, Paul is 'happy' to 'make his defence (ἀπολογεῖσθαι)' (26.2), wherein he again speaks boldly before powerful individuals (26.26). Of course, this defence ends with those powerful individuals remarking, 'This man is doing nothing to deserve death or imprisonment', and with Agrippa telling Festus, 'This man could have been set free if he had not appealed to the emperor' (26.31–2). Thus, Paul must travel to Rome, a journey that animates Acts 27.1–28.13.

Once in Rome, 'Paul was allowed to live by himself with the soldier guarding him' (Acts 28.16), and after three days he summons the local Jewish leaders. Again evoking Socrates, he addresses them as 'men, brothers' (ἄνδρες ἀδελφοί, 28.17) and explains how his current circumstances came about. After meeting with them on another occasion, at which time Paul 'was earnestly attesting to the kingdom of God and trying to persuade them about Jesus from the law of Moses and the prophets' (28.23), 'some were persuaded by this reasoning, but others did not believe' (28.24). This divided outcome triggers an outburst from Paul that echoes his response to similar situations in Acts 13.46 and 18.6. On this occasion, Paul applies a curse from Isa 6.9–10 to those who did not believe and announces that salvation is open to gentiles (28.25–8). As Rubén Dupertuis observes, this situation recalls Socrates' address to 'those who voted for his execution', wherein he prophesies 'their punishment in the form of numerous followers of Socrates who would continue to push them towards self-examination (*Apol.* 39c–d)'.³³

Dupertuis notes further that Socrates subsequently addresses a second group: 'the large minority that voted to acquit him', consisting 'of his friends, with whom he asks to speak "while the authorities are occupied and before I go to the place where I must die"'.³⁴ The Acts narrative closes by explaining that Paul 'lived there two whole years at his own expense and welcomed all who came to him, proclaiming the kingdom of God and teaching about the Lord Jesus Christ with all

32 On the delivery of apologiae as characteristically Socratic, see T. Whitmarsh, *The Second Sophistic* (Greece & Rome: New Surveys in the Classics 35; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005) 81.

33 Dupertuis, 'Bold Speech', 166.

34 Dupertuis, 'Bold Speech', 166, quoting Plato, *Apol.* 39e.

boldness (μετὰ πάσης παρρησίας) and without hindrance (ἀκωλύτως) (28.30–1). In addition to receiving visitors while in custody – a theme that I address in greater detail below – the final two adverbs are particularly evocative of the Socratic tradition. Discussing important matters ‘without hindrance’ (ἀκωλύτως) recalls Socrates’ address to his friends after his trial. Following the excerpt quoted at the beginning of this paragraph, Socrates says, ‘But please, gentlemen, just wait that long since there’s nothing to stop (κωλύει) us chatting together while we can’ (Plato, *Apol.* 39e (trans. Emlyn-Jones and Preddy, LCL)). Likewise, teaching ‘with all boldness’ (μετὰ πάσης παρρησίας), especially while under Roman custody, also contributes to Paul’s Socratic characterisation.³⁵ According to Allen Hilton, Socrates was ‘the exemplar of choice’ with respect to ‘boldness’ (παρρησία) during ‘the early Imperial period ... because of his signature performance before the Athenian jury in his trial’.³⁶ Especially in the works of Plato and Xenophon of Athens, Socrates exhibits a characteristic disregard for threats of imprisonment and even death when faced with a duty to speak certain truths to powerful individuals who are not disposed to hearing them – thereby exhibiting ‘boldness’ (παρρησία). Accordingly, Socrates became a compelling paradigm for orators and authors of literary works for presenting someone – whether themselves or their protagonists – as both virtuous and courageous. Readers can interpret the Acts narrative’s presentation of Paul in precisely this manner. Although remaining in Roman custody and awaiting a hearing before the emperor – whom readers may perhaps know to be Nero, whom readers may perhaps know to be responsible for Paul’s death – Paul continues to proclaim the kingdom of God boldly and without hindrance to all who visit him.

Paul’s perilous sea voyage to Rome thus can appear to disrupt his otherwise-sustained Socratic characterisation throughout the second half of Acts. Nevertheless, it is here that Paul’s guard, Julius the centurion, is described as dealing with Paul ‘humanely’ (φιλανθρώπως) and as allowing Paul ‘to go to his friends to obtain care (ἐπιμελείας τυχεῖν)’ (Acts 27.3). These details about Julius – and his continued presence throughout the journey to Rome – recall

35 For a review of the uses and meanings of παρρησία in ancient literature, including Acts 4, see A. R. Hilton, *Illiterate Apostles: Uneducated Early Christians and the Literates Who Loved Them* (LNTS 541; London: T&T Clark, 2018) 103–54. See also W. C. van Unnik, ‘The Christian’s Freedom of Speech in the New Testament’, *Sparsa Collecta: The Collected Essays of W. C. Van Unnik* (2 vols.; NovTSup 29/30; Leiden: Brill, 1980) II.269–89; S. C. Winter, ‘παρρησία in Acts’, *Friendship, Flattery and Frankness of Speech: Studies on Friendship in the New Testament World* (ed. J. T. Fitzgerald; NovTSup 82; Leiden: Brill, 1996) 185–202; Dupertuis, ‘Bold Speech’, esp. 160–7; MacDonald, *Luke and Vergil*, 114–16.

36 Hilton, *Illiterate Apostles*, 138. He continues: ‘As it became fashionable for philosophers and other educated persons to defy the powerful rulers of their day, their minds naturally gravitated to Plato and Xenophon and other authors who presented vivid images of Socrates before his Athenian accusers.’ Hilton also argues convincingly that Socratic material played a formative role in literary education (*Illiterate Apostles*, 138–9).

the situation of Socrates, allowing the Socratic characterisation of Paul to resist fading altogether behind the foregrounded characterisations of Paul as a figure like Jonah and Odysseus. To explain how these details perform this function, I turn here to Plato's depiction of Socrates in custody after his conviction and leading up to his execution.

3. Socrates' Friendly Guard and a Socratic Reframing of Julius' Kindness

Plato's dialogue *Crito* opens with the eponymous character visiting Socrates in prison early in the morning, two days before Socrates would comply with his death sentence by imbibing hemlock.³⁷ Crito's mission is to convince Socrates to escape from prison and live in exile. At the beginning of the dialogue, Plato immediately communicates both that Socrates has been receiving care from his friends (Crito among them) and that Socrates' prison guard has allowed it. Socrates says, 'I'm surprised the prison guard was willing to answer the door to you', and Crito replies, 'He's used to me by now, Socrates, owing to my frequent visits here, and he's also had the odd favor from me' (*Crit.* 43a (trans. Emlyn-Jones and Preddy, LCL)). That Socrates received friends for care and conversation while in state custody is a necessary premise not only for *Crito*, but also for Plato's *Phaedo*, which takes place the following day.³⁸ Indeed, in the setup to this dialogue, Echecrates asks Phaedo, 'Or did the authorities not allow any of his companions to be present, and he died alone without his friends?', to which Phaedo answers, 'Oh, by no means; several of them were there: in fact quite a lot of them' (*Phaed.* 58c-d (trans. Emlyn-Jones and Preddy, LCL)). At Echecrates's request, Phaedo identifies fourteen other individuals - and mentions additional unnamed Athenians - who were with Socrates at the time of his death (59b-c). Phaedo explains further, 'You see I and the rest were in the habit of going to see Socrates regularly on the preceding days too, gathering at daybreak at the court where the trial took place: it was in fact next to the prison. So we used to wait each time until the prison was opened ... But when it was opened, we would go in to Socrates and spend most of the day with him' (59d (trans. Emlyn-Jones and Preddy, LCL)).³⁹

37 See Alexander, 'Acts and Ancient Intellectual Biography', 66: 'As the dramatic setting for two of Plato's most famous dialogues, prison inevitably figures just as large in the biography of Socrates', citing Epictetus, *Diatr.* 1.1.23-4, 1.4.24, 1.12.23.

38 See also Plato, *Apol.* 39e; Xenophon, *Apol.* 23-30; Diogenes Laertius, *Lives* 2.5 Socrates (39); 2.7 Aeschines (60). Epictetus writes, 'But Socrates used to practise speaking to some purpose - Socrates, who discoursed as he did to the Tyrants, to his judges, and in the prison' (*Diatr.* 2.13.24 (trans. Oldfather, LCL)).

39 Dupertuis observes, 'When Plutarch recounts the death of Cato the Younger, he does so with the death of Socrates as his literary template (*Cat. Min.* 66.4-77.6). Like Socrates, Cato calms

At the end of *Phaedo*, the jailer delivers the hemlock to Socrates. It is evident that he and Socrates are on good terms. The guard says to Socrates, 'I shall not find fault with you, as I do with others, for being angry and cursing me, when at the behest of the authorities, I tell them to drink the poison. No, I have found you in all this time in every way the noblest and gentlest and best man who has ever come here' (116c (trans. Emlyn-Jones and Preddy, LCL)), and Phaedo narrates that the guard 'burst into tears and turned and went away' (116d (trans. Emlyn-Jones and Preddy, LCL)). Socrates then speaks to those with him, 'How charming the man is! Ever since I have been here he has been coming to see me and talking with me from time to time, and has been the best of men, and now how nobly he weeps for me!' (116d (trans. Emlyn-Jones and Preddy, LCL)).

The end of Socrates' life is thus characterised, dramatically, by an extended apologia followed by the receiving of friends for care and conversation while awaiting his execution in prison. The guard in charge of Socrates permits these visits and, at some point, even develops a special fondness for the philosopher, weeping at the imminent prospect of his execution. Although the details that the Acts narrative includes about Julius the centurion are curious when Acts 27 is read in isolation, readers can begin to make sense of them when it is read against these Socratic stories and within the narrative context of the preceding and succeeding characterisations of Paul as a new Socrates.

After Julius is introduced in Acts 27.1, readers begin to gain an appreciation for his character two verses later when the narrative states, 'Julius dealt with Paul humanely and allowed him to go to his friends to obtain care' (27.3).⁴⁰ Thus, after delivering several apologiae throughout Acts 17–26, Paul is in custody, but, thanks to the kindness of Julius, he is allowed to continue receiving friends – a remarkably Socratic series of circumstances. Moreover, as the Acts narrative subsequently suggests, Julius apparently develops a special fondness for Paul – even preventing his execution. Although he disregards Paul's warning against leaving the harbour at Fair Havens (27.11) – of course, the narrative would lack a shipwreck otherwise – the next time Julius is mentioned, he and the sailors respond obediently to Paul's admonition not to abandon ship (27.31–2). Moreover, when their ship breaks apart, presumably after running into a shoal, the soldiers determine that they will kill all of the prisoners, lest some escape.

his friends and refuses their efforts to save him. Plutarch also mentions that Cato read through Plato's *Phaedo* twice on the night of his death' ('Bold Speech', 159).

40 Pervo attributes this allowance to Julius being 'sufficiently impressed by his prisoner – and of sufficient character himself – to permit Paul to visit (lit.) "the friends"' (Acts, 655). If this assessment is correct, it establishes another connection with the end of Socrates' life – his guard is effusive in his praise of Socrates (Plato, *Phaed.* 116c–d).

The centurion, however, resolves to save Paul and, indeed, prevents any executions (27.42–3). In these ways, the presentation of Julius recalls the role of the prison guard at the end of Socrates' life and thereby projects a Socratic identity on to Paul.⁴¹

It is worth adding that the characteristically Socratic features of Julius' presentation duplicate elements from other scenes within Acts that contain more-explicit references to the text's Socratic model. For example, Julius' permission for Paul's friends to care for him (Acts 27.3) echoes Felix's order for another centurion 'not to prevent any of his friends from taking care of his needs' (24.23), an order given immediately after one of Paul's *apologiae*. Moreover, the image of friends congregating around Paul while in custody prefigures his circumstances in Rome, where Paul, under house arrest, proclaims the kingdom of God 'with all boldness' to all who come to him (28.31).

4. Conclusion

The Acts narrative's evocation of the circumstances surrounding the end of Socrates' life – being in custody but with his guard allowing friends to visit and offer care – bridges the apparent gap separating the *apologiae*-delivering Socratic Paul of Acts 17–26 from the arguing-with-friends-boldly-while-in-custody Socratic Paul of Acts 28. Readers who identify Julius' disposition towards Paul as recalling these circumstances can, accordingly, regard Paul's Socratic characterisation as being sustained through the end of Acts – despite the narrative's momentary commitment to nautical jargon and imitations of Jonah and the *Odyssey*. At the very least, then, readers can question whether it might be more credible to attribute the narrative's positive portrayal of Julius to the use of a literary model in the service of its overarching characterisation of Paul, rather than to a positive narrative disposition towards Roman power or towards centurions specifically. I submit that it is – though, of course, these options are not mutually exclusive.

41 One notable *comparandum* for the Socratic characterisation of Paul in Acts is Lucian's characterisation of Peregrinus as an ersatz 'new Socrates', who is cared for by a group of Christians while imprisoned but whose ineffectual 'boldness' does not precipitate his death (*Peregr.* 12–18).