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**PAUL BETWEEN JERUSALEM AND ROME:
A POLITICAL UNDERSTANDING OF HIS APOSTOLATE**

IVDAEA CAPTA



Ariccia, 19-29 April 2009

A traditional reading:

Jews, Judaism, Torah
(exclusivism,
nationalism,
oppression)

Gentiles, law-free
church (inclusivity,
universalism,
freedom) . . . *And Paul*

*Christian apostle
criticizing Judaism?*

*Jewish apostle of
Christ criticizing the
non-Judean church?*

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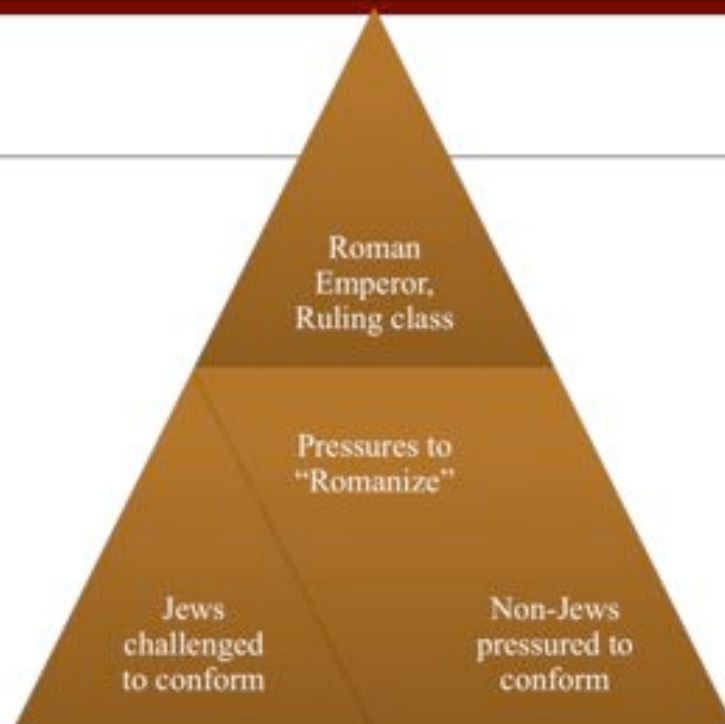


Problems with “ethnic” readings

Judaism is stereotyped (and Paul is separated from his own identity as a Jew)

Political and economic factors are ignored

“Those people” (Jews . . . and who else?) are considered inferior



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Rome and the Jews



➤ **Cicero:** “a people born to servitude”



➤ **Caesar:** useful allies

➤ **Augustus:** friends to be welcomed into “Augustan peace,” enjoying the “good faith of the Roman people” and his mercy and “good works”



The Promise:

Jews have a proper place in the Roman order. . . .
 The emperor himself was their benefactor.

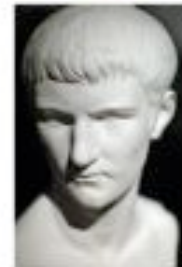
(One ancient synagogue in Rome was named after M. Agrippa, Augustus’s advisor; so were two of Judea’s kings.)



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Imperial actions against Judeans

- **Tiberius** (and Sejanus): expulsion from Rome (19 C.E.)
- **Gaius** (“Caligula”): Riots in Alexandria (38-41); contempt for the Judean embassy (Philo); his statue in the Temple in Jerusalem



Claudius

41 C.E.:

- Suppresses riots in Alexandria, *blaming the Jews* for “renewing” the violence;
- *Warns them* “not to seek more than was yours before,” citizenship;
- *Warns them* that he considers Judean interference in Egyptian society a “plague”



49 C.E.: expulsion from Rome “at the instigation of Chrestus”

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Crisis: Were Jews eligible for Roman oikoumene, or a people to be conquered?



Nero

- Declares his (murdered) father divine, himself *divi filius*
- Reverses the expulsion of Jews
- Celebrates his own “mercy” to the undeserving
- *His court propagandists*: his mercy surpasses that of Augustus; the sword in his hands is idle
- *His advisor Seneca*: the Jews are *victi*, their influence unhealthy



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The Argument of Romans

- > The obedience of nations *versus* idolatry to the Empire
- > The power of God *versus* the power of those who suppress truth
- > Divine justice *versus* claims to impunity
- > True ancestry of the chosen people: Abraham “the impious” *versus* false piety [Aeneas]
- > God’s irrevocable calling *versus* apparent circumstances of triumph and defeat



Hearing Paul’s voice today

- > How should we understand “Israel” today?
- > How do we live with the failure of Paul’s vision?
- > How do we understand “empire” today . . .
- > Or: What myths and ideological pressures do we face today?

