

Pontius Pilate and the Imperial Cult in Roman Judaea*

JOAN E. TAYLOR

Department of Philosophy and Religious Studies, University of Waikato, P. B. 3105, Hamilton, New Zealand

While Pontius Pilate is often seen as agnostic, in modern terms, the material evidence of his coinage and the Pilate inscription from Caesarea indicate a prefect determined to promote a form of Roman religion in Judaea. Unlike his predecessors, in the coinage Pilate used peculiarly Roman iconographic elements appropriate to the imperial cult. In the inscription Pilate was evidently responsible for dedicating a Tiberieum to the *Dis Augustis*. This material evidence may be placed alongside the report in Philo *Legatio ad Gaium* (299–305) where Pilate sets up shields – likewise associated with the Roman imperial cult –honouring Tiberius in Jerusalem.

Of all the figures that appear in the New Testament and early Christian literature, Pontius Pilate is probably the most ambiguous, and yet also the most well evidenced in non-Christian writings, importantly in Philo (*Legat.* 299–305), Josephus (*Bell.* II.117–18; 167–279; *Ant.* XVIII.55–64; 85–89), and in Tacitus (*Ann.* XV.22.4). The rhetorical aspects of the literary sources have been well discussed, notably by J. P. Lémonon¹ and B. C. McGing,² and recently by Helen Bond,³ who has deftly explored the historical Pilate beneath this material.

In general such studies have an ultimate goal of interpreting Pilate's role in the execution of Jesus. A psychological interest is apparent: we find ourselves as readers wanting to know Pilate's motivations, what exactly he was trying to achieve in his actions, what his feelings were in terms of the emperor, or the Jews.

* A first draft of this paper was read at the Institute of Classical Studies, Ancient History Seminar, 20 May 2004. I would like to thank the convenors of the seminar, John North and Bella Sandwell, for inviting me to participate, and also those who attended and contributed to the valuable discussion afterwards. I would also like to thank Holger Szesnat, David Jacobson and Judith Lieu for their help as I revised this study for publication.

1 J. P. Lémonon, *Pilate et le gouvernement de la Judée* (Paris: Gabalda, 1981).

2 B. C. McGing, 'Pontius Pilate and the Sources', *CBQ* 53 (1991) 416–38.

3 H. K. Bond, *Pontius Pilate in History and Interpretation* (New York: Cambridge University, 1998).

This psychological interest is the result of two millennia of Christian speculation, now expressed in the popular biography of Pilate written by Anne Wroe.⁴

Additionally, there is hard evidence that comes directly from Pilate's own initiative, unmediated by writers whose purposes in recording incidents of his rule derive from their own wider rhetorical strategies. In the first place there is the bronze coinage issued by Pilate between 29 and 31, and in the second place the so-called 'Pilate inscription'. This hard evidence is particularly important because it gives us indications of an aspect of Pilate that has often been ignored, namely Pilate's own religion.

Pilate, over the course of Christian history, is anything but 'religious' in Christian terms. The Gospel of John has him, famously, asking Jesus: 'Τί ἐστὶν ἀλήθεια;' – 'What is truth?' (18.38) – and from henceforth Pilate has become, in Christian imagination, a kind of archetypal agnostic. In Jewish literature, in the writings of Philo and Josephus, Pilate can seem to us deeply anti-religious, in that he appears deliberately offensive to Jews and Samaritans and uncaring about their sensibilities.⁵

However, as Roman governor of Judaea, Pilate's position carried within it a religious dimension. Beard, North and Price note in their comprehensive study of Roman religion, that 'in the provinces emperor and governor filled the role occupied in Italy by the *pontifices*' and the 'role of governor included supervision of religious matters along essentially *Roman* guidelines'.⁶

In the present study, the material evidence is interpreted in a way that accords with what might be expected of a Roman Prefect of a province in the immediate post-Augustan age. Subsequently, there will be a concise foray into a consideration of one literary source, the testimony of Philo of Alexandria. As this examination will show, it would appear that Pontius Pilate was actively engaged in the promotion of the imperial cult in Roman Judaea.

A. Numismatic Evidence

Pontius Pilate's coins in Judaea were small bronze perutahs (equivalent to the Seleucid dilepton), measuring between 13.5 mm and 17 mm.⁷ The coins were minted in Jerusalem: a specimen dated to 31 CE has been found there in the

4 A. Wroe, *Pilate: The Biography of an Invented Man* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1999).

5 For a review of scholars who tend to follow this characterization, see Bond, *Pontius Pilate*, xiii–xvi.

6 M. Beard, J. North and S. Price, *Religions of Rome* (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 1998) 1:321.

7 David Hendin, *Guide to Biblical Coins* (4th ed.; Dix Hills, N.Y.: Amphora Books, 2001) nos. 648–50.

process of being manufactured; it is a tongue of metal that would have been pressed between two clay moulds.⁸

There are two types: type 1 shows a *simpulum* on the obverse and three ears of wheat or barley on the reverse, while type 2 shows a *lituus* on the obverse with a laurel wreath on the reverse. On the obverse of both coins is the Greek legend 'ΤΙΒΕΡΙΟΥ ΚΑΙΣΑΡΟΣ', 'of Tiberius Caesar'. On the reverse of the type 1 coins there is the legend 'ΙΟΥΛΙΑ ΚΑΙΣΑΡΟΣ', 'Julia, of Caesar', and with type 2 there is no legend on the reverse (see Fig. 1).⁹



Figure 1: Bronze coins issued by Pontius Pilate: type 1 above and type 2 below. (J. E. Taylor)

8 See Y. Meshorer, *Ancient Jewish Coinage* (Dix Hills, N.Y.: Amphora Books, 1982) 2:186, Pls. 7–8.

9 Cf. Mark 12.16–17 (and parr.): 'Whose is this image and the inscription? And they answered him, "Caesar's (Καίσαρος)". So Jesus said to them, "Deliver what is Caesar's to Caesar (τὰ Καίσαρος ἀπόδοτε Καίσαρι) and what is God's to God".' There were no images of the emperor on Judaeen-issue coins, but imaged coins circulated in Judaea from elsewhere.

The coins are given dates in the form of a Latin letter ‘L’ for Greek λύκαβας, ‘year’, followed by Latin–Greek letter-numbers: LIS, LIZ and LIH (Year 16, 17 and 18 of Tiberius’ reign, corresponding to 29, 30 and 31 CE). The date is found following the inscription on the obverse in type 1 coins, while the date in type 2 coins is found in the wreath. Type 1 coins were only issued in 29 CE, the year of the empress’ death.

The coins are different from those issued by Pilate’s predecessors, Coponius (6–9 CE), Marcus Ambibulus (9–12 CE) and Valerius Gratus (15–26 CE) in terms of the images depicted. In 6 CE, Coponius issued a coin showing a barley head on the obverse with an eight-branched palm tree bearing two bunches of grapes on the reverse: images reflecting main crops of the region.¹⁰ His successor, Marcus Ambibulus, continued to issue the same types.¹¹ Valerius Gratus, arriving in Judaea under a new emperor, issued coins with a wreath on the obverse and on the reverse a double cornucopia with small caduceus, lilies or a palm branch, while another type had a vine leaf on the obverse and a kantharos with scroll handles on the reverse.¹² There appears in such coinage to be an interest in symbolism rather than in simple agricultural motifs, but a symbolism with a certain ambiguity. For example, the wine images may make reference to the trade in wine from Judaea, but may also refer to Dionysus. The caduceus, which can be symbolic of Mercury, the god of trade, is too small to make any clear reference to his cult, but is used with the double cornucopia in order to refer to bounteous trade. The lilies, associated not with any plants of the region but with the goddess Hera (Roman Juno), may relate to the empress Julia, mentioned in the accompanying legend. Livia/Julia was associated with the goddess Hera in coins and inscriptions,¹³ but lilies could also be symbolic of hope. Whatever their interpretation, it would be hard to read the coinage of Valerius Gratus as strongly indicating cultic *sacra* as such, even when there are allusions to certain Hellenistic deities; rather, there is a Hellenistic iconographic repertoire employed, which incorporated deities for symbolic intent.

Pilate’s coins, by contrast, depict two key items of specifically Roman religious ritual use: the *lituus* and the *simpulum*. In depicting these instruments on the

The legend Καίσαρος was not uncommon and had appeared already in coins of the Judaeian governors Coponius and Marcus Ambibulus; see Hendin, *Biblical Coins*, nos. 635–8.

¹⁰ Hendin, *Biblical Coins*, no. 635.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, nos. 636–8.

¹² *Ibid.*, nos. 639–47.

¹³ See G. Grether, ‘Livia and the Roman Imperial Cult’, *The American Journal of Philology* 67 (1946) 222–52 (229–30, 241–2); E. Bartman, *Portraits of Livia: Imaging the Imperial Woman in Augustan Rome* (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 1999) 94 n. 152, and see her Catalogue of Epigraphic Sources (henceforth EpigCat.) no. 5 and 20.

Judaean coinage Pilate advertised particular rituals of exclusively Roman cult. These instruments were not generic to all cults in the Empire, which now embraced the Hellenistic world, let alone to Jewish or Samaritan rituals, but had emblematic and ritual uses within Roman rites alone. The ritual instruments themselves are described by terms not used for profane utensils, even when these utensils are quite similar (see Arnobius *Adversus Nationes* XXIV.1–6). They were entirely sacred implements, and they were cared for and stored in sacred space.

The *lituus* and *simpulum* appear in Roman Republican coinage from the beginning of the first century BCE.¹⁴ The *simpulum* was a small utensil shaped like a ladle with handle and shaft, with the top of the shaft slightly curved, and was used by priests for tasting the wine of the libations before they poured it out on the head of an animal about to be sacrificed. Additionally, it was a special emblem of the college of *pontifices*.

The *lituus* was a wooden staff (or wand) with a curled end, made of a branch of either ash or hazel that had knots, and the curl was supposed to be naturally formed. The *lituus* was held in the right hand of the *augures* and was the *augures'* identifying emblem. Traditionally the *lituus* was first used by Romulus when Rome was founded and symbolised the *augures'* authority and pastoral vocation, but it was also raised to the sky when they invoked the gods and made predictions. It was used to mark out regions of the heavens when assessing the placement of sacred space on earth.

The image of the *simpulum*, in the coinage issued in 29, is unusual and may be rather a *culullus*, which appears together with other cultic artefacts in the coinage of Julius Caesar.¹⁵ The distinctions are small on coins but a *simpulum's* handle tends to be long and turned away from the ladle bowl, while the *culullus* handle turned inwards. The *culullus* is also squatter than the *simpulum*, and is made of pottery, while the *simpulum* could be made of metal. This ritual artefact was an emblem of both the *pontifices* and Vestals.

In using these artefacts on the coinage it might be argued that Pilate too was employing symbols, like his predecessor Valerius Gratus. However, while Gratus used common symbolism of the Hellenistic world to point to the importance of trade or the wine industry – which all inhabitants of the region could accept as positive phenomena – Pilate's symbols point only to in a very limited way to other facets of Roman religion, to the *augures* in the case of the *lituus*, or to the *pontifices* and Vestals in the case of the *simpulum/culullus*.

14 M. H. Crawford, *Roman Republican Coinage* (London: Cambridge University, 1974) *lituus* cat. nos. 343, 344, 346, 402, 405, 423, 425, 426, 428, 456, 460, 466, 467, 468, 480, 488, 489, 496, 500, 511, 517, 520, 521, 537; *simpulum*: 378, 385, 405, 409, 484, 489, 502.

15 See Beard, North and Price, *Religions of Rome*, 2:205; Crawford, *Roman Republican Coinage*, cat. no. 443, 456, 467.

The three ears of barley in Pilate's coinage may possibly reflect the agricultural production of the region, like the palm tree or vine-leaf. A single barley ear, bent to the right as if blowing in the wind and growing out of the earth with curling leaf-blades, is shown on the coins of Coponius and Marcus Ambibulus, and an image of three ears of barley would occur again in the coinage of the Jewish king Herod Agrippa I. However, there is one striking difference between Pilate's and Agrippa's depiction of the grain. In Agrippa's coinage the three ears are upright, but in Pilate's the ears droop. This draws attention to the fact that they are in Pilate's coinage cut and positioned in a tripod, as if they are being used in a ritual (which would explain their drooped appearance, because they are no longer growing). This practice of cutting wheat to place it on display in a metal tripod is still maintained in parts of southern Europe to this day in summer celebrations of cereal crops. In Roman times one would naturally associate cut ears of wheat or barley in a tripod with some veneration of Ceres (Greek Demeter), the Roman goddess of grain and marriage.

The three barley ears are accompanied by the inscription IOYAIKAICAPOC, 'Julia, of Caesar', which is a slightly odd inscriptional form, given that 'Julia Augusta' is the title Augustus' wife Livia received after his death in 14 CE, usually rendered in Greek as IOYAIKAEBACTH. It is possible to read KAICAPOC separately as indicating that this is a coin 'of Caesar', but that leaves the name 'Julia' undefined, and it would have been appropriate to refer to Julia as the mother of the living emperor.¹⁶

In the coin of Valerius Gratus noted above, Livia may have been honoured specifically by the image of lilies, symbolic of the goddess Hera, though more commonly the name of the empress appears on Valerius Gratus' coinage with the wide-ranging symbol of the palm branch.¹⁷ Given that Valerius Gratus had already issued coinage honouring Livia, Pilate may have intended to continue the practice. The fact that the coinage was only issued for a short time could indicate that he quickly ceased its production at the time of Livia's death.

The association of Livia and Ceres is attested in sculpture, for example in the monumental statue of Julia Augusta in the Louvre where the empress appears holding stalks of wheat in her left hand and a cornucopia in her left.¹⁸ Coinage throughout the Empire could portray Livia with the corn crown of Ceres,¹⁹ and in

16 Bartman, *Portraits of Livia*; EpigCat. no. 31 (Anticaria), 34 (Athens), 38 (Athribis), 43 (Cyzicus), 50 (Gaulus Insula), 56 (Lebena), 61 (Myra), 64 (Smyrna), also posthumously, no. 76 (Velleia).

17 Hendin, *Biblical Coins*, 642, 645–7.

18 Ma 1242; B. Searth, 'The Goddess Ceres in the Ara Pacis Augustae and the Carthage Relief', *American Journal of Archaeology* 98 (1994) 65–100 (88); Bartman, *Portraits of Livia*, 45 Fig. 42; cf. Fig. 137 and see 93–4, 106–7; Grether, 'Livia and the Roman Imperial Cult', 243–4.

19 G. Mattingly, *Coins of the Roman Empire in the British Museum* (2nd ed.; London: British Museum, 1976) I:30–43, 46–60, 91; Pl. 14.8; 22.20; Grether, 'Livia and the Roman Imperial Cult', 239 n. 98; cf. as Demeter 241 nn. 105, 106.

due course this corn crown would become one of the most common attributes in the depictions of Roman empresses.²⁰ In the year 30 the client tetrarch Philip would rename the city of Bethsaida near the Sea of Galilee 'Julia', after the Augusta, issuing a commemorative coin with an image of Livia, three ears of wheat/barley held in a hand, and the inscription ΚΑΡΠΙΟΦΟΡΟΣ, a reference to Demeter/Ceres.²¹ Already by 18 CE there were dedications to Livia as Ceres Augusta within Italy,²² symbolism that was not intended to deify Livia, but designed as a form of symbolic honour whereby the maternal and generous attributes of Ceres are applied to the empress, the mother of the emperor.

The drooping appearance of the ears of barley may not only suggest cut corn used in a cereal festival, but also the fact that Julia Augusta was herself cut down by death in the year of the coin's issue, 29 CE. Her funeral was a cause for much mourning (Cassius Dio *Hist. Rom.* LVIII.2; Tacitus *Ann.* V.1) since, unlike her husband, she herself did not officially become a *diva* until the reign of Claudius, in 41 CE. The coin would then be commemorative.

In addition, it is interesting to note that Livia had been designated as priestess of the imperial cult by the emperor's will, which specified also her adoption into the Julian family and title of 'Augusta' as Augustus' daughter. Her role as the first priestess of the Divine Augustus placed her in a curious position of both officiating in a cult in which she was herself sometimes an object of special honour. Importantly, inscriptions indicate that there were priestesses of Julia Augusta in such Italian cities as Minturnae in Latium, Pompeii, Aeclanum in Samnium, Polla in Lucania and Vibo in Brutium, as well as in numerous other places in the Roman empire, most importantly in Smyrna, Ancyra and Pergamum.²³ She was honorifically called a goddess, *Θεά*, in inscriptions from a number of eastern cities during both the Augustan and Tiberian period.²⁴

The laurel wreath on Pilate's coin type 2 can be a symbol of power and victory, and was used on Hasmonean Jewish coinage, as well as in the coinage of Herod Antipas. The laurel wreath did also at times play a part in rituals, as when soldiers crowned the military *signae* with wreaths. Nevertheless, its wide use and symbolic

20 Grether, 'Livia and the Roman Imperial Cult', 227 n. 24; S. B. Pomeroy, *Goddesses, Whores, Wives and Slaves: Women in Classical Antiquity* (London: Pimlico, 1975) 184: 'Ceres... was the divinity to whom imperial women are most frequently assimilated'.

21 Cf. Josephus *Ant.* XVIII.27; *Bell.* II.168. F. Strickert, 'The First Women to be portrayed in a Jewish Coin', *JSJ* 33 (2002) 65–92. Philip's action may be interpreted as an effort to expand on the imperial cult already established by his father at or near Paneas (Caesarea Philippi).

22 CIL XI. 3196 = Bartman, *Portraits of Livia*, EpigCat. no. 63 (Nepet) and see also no. 50 (Gaulus Insula, 'Cereris Iuliae Augustae'); Grether, 'Livia and the Roman Imperial Cult,' 239.

23 Grether, 'Livia and the Roman Imperial Cult', 230, 239. For the inscriptions, see *CIL* X.51, 961, 6018; *ILS* 9390.

24 Bartman, *Portraits of Livia*, EpigCat. no. 6 (Attouda), 7 (Cyzicus), 16 (Palaepaphus), 23 (Thasos), 35–6 (Athens), 60 (Megara), 61 (Myra), 66–8 (Thyatira).

associations made it impossible to associate exclusively with one form of religious cult or practice. In Pilate's coins it is sometimes upright and sometimes downturned.

Discussion of the coins has focused on whether Pilate was deliberately trying to offend the Jewish population of the province by depicting pagan artefacts on both his coin types. Helen Bond thinks not, and notes that the Jewish Herod the Great and his sons could borrow motifs from Greek or Roman deities or rituals if it suited them.²⁵ However, the Herodian dynasty is not the lynchpin for assessing what Jews found acceptable. Herod the Great instituted the imperial cult in Judaea, and the fact that Herod and his sons, Archelaus, Antipas and Philip, depict items such as the tripod with *lebes* (copper basin or cauldron), or the Augusteum of Caesarea Philippi in the coinage of Philip, is more reflective of the early Herodian royal family's interests towards Rome than it is informative of ordinary Jewish sensibilities. But Bond is clearly right to question whether Pilate's main reason in striking coins with Roman cultic items depicted was to offend the Jews and provoke them to revolt, which could then be crushed, a view that goes back to the German scholar E. Stauffer, who thought that Pilate was appointed by the anti-Judaic prefect of the Praetorian Guard, Sejanus.²⁶ Such psychological hypotheses sidetrack scholars from seeing what Pilate actually achieves in the coinage.

The Roman cultic devices on the coinage could be understood as an attempt to honour Tiberius, just as the ears of barley in the tripod appear to honour Livia. In using the emblems of the *augures* and *pontifices*, Pilate is pointing to the priestly status of Tiberius himself, who was *pontifex maximus*, and also *augur*, like his father. In Roman coinage the priestly emblems usually refer to a ruler's membership of priestly colleges, as for example in the coin of Julius Caesar in 46 BCE with the legend 'AUGUR PONT[IFEX] MAX[IMUS]' showing a *culullus*, *aspergillum* (emblem of pontifex), *capis* (a kind of jug holding libations, an emblem of an *augur*) and *lituus*.²⁷ A coin was issued in 16 BCE showing emblems of the priestly offices to celebrate Augustus' becoming *pontifex* in 48 BCE, *augur* in 41–40 BCE, *quindecimvir sacris faciundis* in c. 37 BCE and *septemvir epulonum* in 16 BCE.²⁸ In 13 BCE, the *lituus* and *simpulum* appear together,²⁹ and in 12 BCE a coin

25 Bond, *Pontius Pilate*, 21. Bond identifies the amphora of Gratus' coinage as a *kantharos*, a Hellenistic cultic drinking vessel. However, in the coinage of the Bar Kochba revolt it was precisely the amphora – as a symbol of wine and plenty – that was an acceptable generic symbol, along with the image of the (destroyed) Temple.

26 *Christus und die Caesaren: historische Skizzen* (3rd ed.; Hamburg: F. Wittig, 1952).

27 Beard, North and Price, *Religions of Rome*, 2:205; Crawford, *Roman Republican Coinage*, no. 467.

28 Beard, North and Price, *Religions of Rome*, 1:182, 186; cf. Crawford, *Roman Republican Coinage*, nos. 537, 538.

29 Mattingly and Sydenham, *Roman Imperial Coinage*, 1:76, Pl. II, 19, as also in a coin of Gaius Caligula, p. 115.

was issued with the *lituus*, *simpulum*, *patera* and *lebes*,³⁰ which was later replicated in an aureus by Nero to commemorate his membership of all the major colleges of priests.³¹

However, coins with ritual emblems could also be issued to celebrate certain cults themselves, such as the denarius issued by Galba in 69 BCE showing a veiled Vestal head and emblems of the cult of Vesta: a knife, *culullus* and axe.³² In other words, cultic items point to the cult in which they are used. Moreover, there is something distinctly different about presenting Roman cultic items on coins in Rome, or Roman Italy, and presenting Roman cultic items in the far-flung province of Judaea, in which Roman rituals and priesthoods were foreign.

Given that the images of the *simpulum* and *lituus* refer to the *pontifices* and the *augures*, Pontius Pilate in his coinage honours the emperor Tiberius by celebrating his membership of two Roman priestly colleges in depicting Roman emblems symbolic of those colleges, but he also does more. It was the *pontifices* and *augures* who were the representatives of Roman religion in the two imperial cult temples of Caesarea Maritima and in Sebaste, located in the province he governed.

The symbolism never points outside Roman cult to universal themes. The coins celebrate the religious roles of the emperor, and also the imperial cult, and Pilate does this in a province in which the institution of Roman religion is largely the preserve of the Roman administration and army, with its focus in the army barracks and in the temples of the imperial cult. While in Palaestina as a whole – understood as a substantial geographical area (cf. Pomponius Mela *De Situ Orbis* I.11.2, writing in the reign of Claudius) – there were many Greek and local cults and deities that could to some extent be syncretised to the Roman pantheon, most of the pagan cities (Gaza, Ascalon, Ashdod, Dora, Ptolemais, Scythopolis etc.) were excluded from the area of the Roman-administered Province of Judaea.³³ In using exclusively Roman cultic items in his coinage designed for a province largely composed of Jews and Samaritans, Pilate was promoting Roman religion, manifested largely in the imperial cult, in an environment in which there were strong sensitivities.

30 Mattingly and Sydenham, *Roman Imperial Coinage*, 1:78.

31 Beard, North and Price, *Religions of Rome*, 2:205.

32 Crawford, *Roman Republican Coinage*, no. 406.

33 See D. Flusser, 'Paganism in Palestine', in S. Safrai and M. Stern, in co-operation with D. Flusser and W. C. van Unnik, *The Jewish People in the First Century* (Assen/Amsterdam: Van Gorcum, 1976) 2:1065–100; E. Schürer, *The History of the Jewish People in the Age of Jesus Christ* (rev. ed. by G. Vermes, F. Millar and M. Goodman; Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1973) 1:79–95.

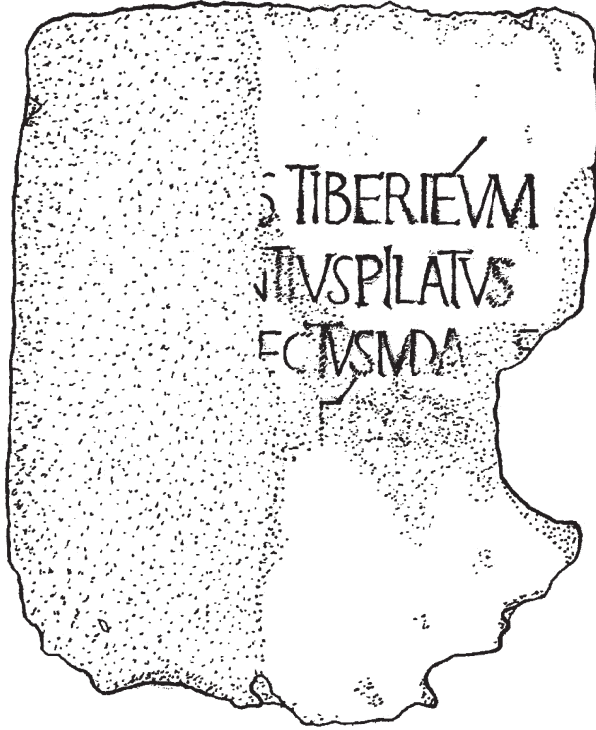


Figure 2: The Pilate Inscription, excavated in Caesarea, now in the Israel Museum, Jerusalem, AE 1963 no. 104. (J. E. Taylor)

B. The 'Pilate Inscription'

A Latin inscription mentioning Pontius Pilate, now in the Israel Museum, was found in the Italian excavations in Caesarea Maritima, on the coast of Israel, in 1961 (Fig. 2). The block is limestone (82 cm by 65 cm) and the letters are 6 cm high. It was not found *in situ*, but was in a tertiary position as a step in the fourth-century theatre, remodelled in the Byzantine period. Its secondary use had been possibly as part of a well-head, since a half-circle, of 22 cm diameter, was cut out of its right side. The left side has been damaged, leaving an inscribed area 30 cm high and 31 cm wide. Originally, the inscription had four lines. The legible letters read (with restoration):

- 1 [_ _]S TIBERIEVM
- 2 [_ _]PO]NTIUS PILATUS
- 3 [PRAEF]ECTUS IUDA[EA]E
- 4 [_ _ _ _]É[_ _ _ _ _]

Translation:

[...] Tiberieum
 [. Po]ntius Pilate
 [Pref]ect of Judaea
 [...]e[...]

The importance of the inscription is that it verifies the existence of Pontius Pilate as governor of Judaea during the time of Tiberius (14–37), which fits with the literary evidence. Additionally, his designation ‘Prefect’ (*Praefectus Iudaeae*) is confirmed, indicating, then, that Pilate would have been of equestrian rank.

However, apart from Pilate’s name and title the inscription is unclear. The restoration of the beginning of line three gives the boundary for the letters of the inscription and shows that it was entirely contained on one block, because the end of line two and the restored line three together give Pontius Pilate’s full title: *Pontius Pilatus Praefectus Iudaeae*. There would then be space for a single letter or short abbreviation for Pontius Pilate’s *praenomen*. The authors of the publication on the inscriptions of Caesarea, Clayton Lehmann and Kenneth Holum, consider that only five or six letters need have been lost from the beginning of lines 1–3.³⁴

The first word has been speculated upon greatly, and Lehmann and Holum give various proposals, only to find all of them wanting, namely: *Caesariens(ibus)*; *Dis Augustis*; *Tib(erio) Caes(are) Aug(usto) V? cons(ule)*; *Kal(endis) Iuliis*; *Nemus*; *Ti(berio) Augusto co(n)s(ule)*; *Iudaeis*; *Clupeis*; *Q(uod) b(onum) f(austum) f(elixque) s(it)*; *munus*. Most of these are too long to fit in the space available on the stone.³⁵ The word can be no more than six and no less than four letters.

The only marks that exist in the final line are an apex above a vertical bar, indicating an É. If the final line is restored with the words ‘*dédicavit*’, which may be expected in terms of the grammar and in terms of parallels with other inscriptions of this kind, and if the word ‘Tiberieum’ is read as a noun in the accusative then this would mean that Pilate is dedicating a Tiberieum to someone or something. A dative ending with an ‘s’ is easy to find in the plural, but a short, sensible word has proven difficult to determine. Given that dedications are normally made to a god or gods, a simple solution is to restore it as *divis*, referring to Augustus and Roma (and the living emperor too, perhaps, as *Divi Augusti filius*). The general reluctance to read it in this way may spring from a reticence to ascribe a particular mentality to Pilate that would have him refer to the deceased emperor in a form that promoted his divinity. *Dis Augustis*, the obvious suggestion made early

34 C. M. Lehmann and K. Holum, *The Joint Expedition to Caesarea Maritima, Excavation Reports V: The Greek and Latin Inscriptions of Caesarea Maritima* (Boston: American Schools of Oriental Research, 1999) 68–71.

35 *Ibid.*, and see also G. Alföldy, ‘Pontius Pilatus und das Tiberieum von Caesarea Maritima’, *Scripta Classica Israelitica* 18 (1999) 85–108 (85–93).

on by Degrassi,³⁶ has been ruled out as being too long without anyone suggesting a similar alternative or abbreviation of the same concept.

Additionally, G. Alföldy has questioned whether '*dēdicavit*', and other proposals for the final line (*dēdit*, *fēcit*, *fēcit dēdicavit*, and so on) are appropriate, especially given the apex on the 'e' which would indicate a long sound that may not be correct, and suggested *refēcit*, 'remade', arguing that the Tiberieum was a secular building in some way designed to honour sailors. He suggests, then, that the first word is *nautis*.³⁷

The word 'Tiberieum' is found nowhere else in the corpus of Latin inscriptions or literature and, given the relatively small size of the inscription and its terse quality, this Tiberieum should probably be understood as something of modest proportions. Possibly this small structure was attached to the theatre of Caesarea, located in the southern part of the city, which would explain its existence as a step in the remodelled theatre later on. In Leptis Magna a small temple dedicated to the *Dis Augustis*, the deified Augustan imperial family, was built in a colonnaded square attached to the main theatre of the city in 43 CE,³⁸ and a small rectangular building west of the Caesarean theatre has thus been suggested as the Tiberieum.³⁹ Alföldy, in opting for a secular building, identifies the Tiberieum as a tower built on one of the moles of the harbour, a structure that acted as a lighthouse.⁴⁰

Such a secular identification can be made because, according to Josephus (*Bell.* 1:402), King Herod the Great had the two buildings which comprised his Jerusalem palace named the *Καϊσάρειον* and the *Αγρίππειον* after his patrons Augustus and M. Vipsanius Agrippa. The argument is then that a Tiberieum might also be a secular building given an honorific title.⁴¹ Herod the Great liked to name buildings after people (consider the towers of Mariamme, Phasaelis and Hippius in the citadel, or the fortress Antonia, after Mark Anthony), especially by using the Greek 'ιον' ending, so that a tower in the harbour of Caesarea is the *Δρούσιον* after Livia's son Drusus, the town of Anthedon on the coast is called *Αγρίππειον*, and his fortress near Bethlehem he called *Ἐρώδειον* after himself (*Bell.* I.412, 416, 419). With the *Δρούσιον* identified by Josephus as the largest tower on the moles of the harbour of Caesarea, Alföldy suggests that there was an unmentioned

36 A. Degrassi, 'Sull'iscrizione di Ponzio Pilato', in *Atti della Accademia Nazionale dei Lincei, Rendiconti, Classe di Scienze morali, storiche e filologiche* Ser. VIII, 19 (1964) 59–65.

37 Alföldy, 'Pontius Pilatus', 87–9, 106–7.

38 J. A. Hanson, *Roman Theater-Temples* (Princeton Monographs in Art and Archaeology 33; Princeton: Princeton University, 1959) 95.

39 Lehmann and Holum, *Inscriptions*, 69; L. I. Levine, *Roman Caesarea: An Archaeological-Topographical Study* (Qedem 2: Monographs of the Institute of Archaeology, The Hebrew University of Jerusalem; Jerusalem: Hebrew University, 1975) 21.

40 Alföldy, 'Pontius Pilatus', 93–105.

41 Bond, *Pontius Pilate*, 12, following Lémonon, *Pilate*, 26–32.

accompanying tower named after Drusus' brother Tiberius, that this tower needed rebuilding in the era of Pontius Pilate, and that the inscription records Pilate's rebuilding.⁴²

This is possible in the absence of any evidence, positive or negative, but while Herod indeed designated all kinds of structures in this way to honour his patrons, friends and relatives, in Greek, it does not necessarily follow that the Roman governor of Judaea would respond to a structure thus designated in the same way as this idiosyncratic Hellenistic Judaeo-Idumaeian king. Despite Herod the Great's Greek terms, 'Caesareum' or 'Augusteum' in Latin are words associated with the imperial cult.⁴³ The word 'Tiberieum', like later 'Hadrianeum' (also found in Caesarea⁴⁴), does have a profound resonance: a structure in special honour of the emperor Tiberius.⁴⁵ A dedicated structure in honour of the emperor Tiberius, a *res sacra*, would easily be called in Latin a 'Tiberieum'. The most natural thing in terms of the Latin word would be to consider this to be not some secular light-house for the help of sailors or any other profane building, but an edifice or annex associated with the Roman imperial cult.⁴⁶

An action that strengthened the Roman imperial cult in Caesarea would, on the basis of the parallels in Asia Minor, be expected of a Roman provincial governor. Simon Price has noted numerous examples of governors who make regulations about the imperial cult, or ratify local decisions, authorise local titles, regulate finances of cults in general, and notes how such matters were sometimes passed to the emperor for adjudication, such as in the correspondence between the younger Pliny and the emperor Trajan: one governor in Asia changes the calendar so that the year begins on the birthday of Augustus; another governor in the Peloponnese actively promotes the imperial festival, funding much of it himself; the Governor of Asia awards a crown in 9 BCE for the person who best devises honours for Augustus.⁴⁷

Despite such cases, however, there has been a tendency to explain them away as not representing what elite Romans wanted to achieve in terms of the imperial

42 Alföldy, 'Pontius Pilatus', 93–105.

43 *OLD* 214: Augusteum, 'a temple dedicated to Augustus'; 254: Caesareum, 'a shrine dedicated to one of the Caesars'.

44 This was probably built when Hadrian toured the east in 130 CE; see Lehmann and Holum, *Inscriptions*, 80–2.

45 *OLD* 1940: Tiberieum, 'a shrine or temple dedicated to Tiberius'.

46 While I. Gradel, *Emperor Worship and Roman Religion* (Oxford: Oxford University, 2002) 5–7, prefers the usage of 'emperor worship' lest 'Roman imperial cult' give the impression of 'a neat and independent category', the terminology used here is meant to cover the various rituals in which the highest honour was paid to the emperor as *divus*, *genius* or *numen*, whether private, municipal, provincial or state, without implying uniformity.

47 Price, *Rituals*, 54–5, 69–70.

cult, because elite Romans could not possibly have believed in the emperor, alive or dead, as a god. Classical scholars of previous generations found it repugnant that men they esteemed in the Roman era could have held 'oriental' views that would lead to a dangerous confusion between man and god.⁴⁸ The Romans therefore were characterised as detached and manipulative, using the imperial cult as an expedient measure to subdue the eastern provinces, while they themselves did not believe in it.⁴⁹ With Ittai Gradel's recent study of the cult, however, it can now be understood more correctly as equally Roman, with a widespread acceptance in Roman Italy,⁵⁰ so that a Roman prefect's sponsoring of the imperial cult in a far-flung province becomes not so much a way of accommodating a Hellenistic ruler-cult but an attempt to promote religious rituals in honour of the emperor in terms that are deeply Roman.

The Tiberieum need not have been a temple or a building immediately recognisable as a temple or shrine. As is well known, the distinction between a building that was – in our terms – 'secular' or 'religious' can be anachronistic, since Romans did not necessarily need to have a temple proper, or a shrine, to have an essentially 'religious' structure: one dedicated in honour of the emperor or a god, and a locus for cult. If a Tiberieum was designed to honour Tiberius, the emperor, it would have been part of the imperial honours system within an Empire-wide rubric, and could have taken many forms. Price has noted that various architectural structures – porticoes, staircases, colonnades – could be dedicated in this way.⁵¹ As Moshe Fischer writes, summarising the phenomenon:

48 W. Warde Fowler commented in 1911 that the new element of emperor-worship led to 'practices which are utterly repulsive to us, and repulsive too to an honest man even in that day . . . Tiberius, whatever else he may have been, was beyond doubt an honest man, and so too was Seneca. . . [T]he extravagances of Caesar-worship are not to be met with in Augustus' time': W. Warde Fowler, *The Religious Experience of the Roman People from the Earliest Times to the Age of Augustus* (London: Macmillan, 1911) 438. This view has persisted until very recently in the understanding that the Roman imperial cult was something used by the Romans to encourage loyalty from the eastern provinces, in incorporating the 'divine ruler cult' common in the Hellenistic world into Roman state religion; see the entry 'imperial cult' in L. Adkins and R. A. Adkins, *Dictionary of Roman Religion* (New York: Oxford University, 2000) 104–6.

49 Such a notion is superficially endorsed by Roman jokes, such as Seneca's *Apocolocyntosis*, the 'pumpkinification' of the emperor Claudius. However, as Price points out, this joke is about the absurdity of making Claudius a god, not actually a comment on the absurdity of apotheosis *per se*, see Price, *Rituals*, 115–7.

50 Not counting private devotions and altars, from the time of Augustus there are seven imperial temples in Italy outside Rome and a further seven imperial temples that are undated there, from which some may also be Augustan; see Gradel, *Emperor Worship*, 84.

51 Price, *Rituals*, 110, 140, 143–4, 149 and see also F. Yeguel, 'A Study in Architectural Iconography: *Kaisersaal* and the Imperial Cult', *Art Bulletin* 64 (1982) 7–31.

Special imperial space was created using porticoes, steps, and special rooms attached to existing spaces or newly created ones. . . [A]n accommodation of the imperial cult within the city civic space is evident, representing the relationship between the emperor and the cities.⁵²

But even if the legitimacy of a Roman governor promoting the imperial cult by building and/or dedicating a Tiberieum is possible, it has been questioned whether the emperor wanted one.⁵³ It was noted by Lily R. Taylor already in 1929 that while Julius Caesar and Augustus accepted the acclamation of divinity and identification with several gods, even Zeus, the Emperor Tiberius apparently had an official policy of not encouraging divine honours for himself (cf. Tacitus *Annals* V. 2.1; Suetonius *Tiberius* XXVI.1).⁵⁴ However, it is now recognised that such protestations do not reflect some kind of general prohibition of divine honours for Tiberius throughout the Empire, but reflect dynamics between the Senate and the emperor regarding the state cult of the emperor in Rome, without necessarily affecting municipal or provincial actions.⁵⁵ Modesty befitted good emperors. In Tacitus' *Annals* IV.37–8, Tiberius is recorded as accepting having 'his statue worshipped among the gods' in Pergamum, which already had a temple to Roma and Augustus, and his reluctance to having a shrine to himself and his mother in Farther Spain is because too many of these might mean that honour to Augustus could become meaningless. On this level of municipal or provincial temple- or altar-building, rejection of honours by the emperor should be seen simply as appropriate *moderatio*, not proscription. There is, for example, the well-known letter of Claudius to the Alexandrians in which the emperor asks the Alexandrians not to worship him as a god, which was issued with a covering edict referring to him as 'our god Caesar'.⁵⁶ Price notes that Thasos had a 'priest of Claudius' when Claudius had refused to be worshipped with divine honours there.⁵⁷

There is nothing significant to suggest that Tiberius discouraged the imperial cult as such. In fact, it was Tiberius who constructed a Templum Augusti somewhere between the Palatine and Capitoline hills, though it was not dedicated until the time of Gaius Caligula. Epigraphic evidence is clear that Tiberius and his

52 M. Fischer, 'Marble, Urbanism and Ideology in Roman Palestine', in *Caesarea Maritima: A Retrospective after Two Millennia* (ed. A. Raban and K. G. Holum; Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1996) 251–61 (260).

53 As noted by Levine, *Roman Caesarea*, 20.

54 L. R. Taylor, 'Tiberius' Refusal of Divine Honors', *Transactions of the American Philological Association* 60 (1929) 87–101, and see eadem, *The Divinity of the Roman Emperor* (Middletown, Conn.: American Philological Association, 1931) 267–83.

55 So Gradel, *Emperor Worship*, 85.

56 Beard, North and Price, *Religions of Rome*, 1:313. I thank Richard Alston for pointing this out to me.

57 Price, *Rituals*, 72.

mother Livia did receive divine honours from both cities and from individuals in many more places than Pergamum alone.⁵⁸ The notion of a Tiberius shunning the Roman imperial cult breaks down under close examination. Levine points out that in Cyprus a statue and temple were dedicated to Tiberius in 31 CE, and an oath of allegiance has been found citing his divine honours.⁵⁹ Price notes how from inscriptional evidence there were priests of Tiberius in eleven cities of Asia Minor, and that a cult place was dedicated to him in the north part of the *pronaos* of the temple of Apollo in Claros.⁶⁰ An inscription from North Africa records a shrine dedicated to Roma and Tiberius. Gradel lists a flamine dedicated to the emperor Tiberius in Paestum in Lucania.⁶¹ Closer to Judaea, at Gerasa, Kraeling has identified that there is an inscription from the year 22–23 CE mentioning a priest of Tiberius.⁶² At any rate, no matter how moderate Tiberius insisted on appearing, he remained, officially, ‘Augustus’ and ‘son of the deified Augustus’ (*Divi Augusti filius*), titles he was not shy of in his coinage.⁶³ Given that Octavian was honoured as a god on the basis of his title ‘Augustus’ and ‘Divi Filius’ in his own lifetime, it would follow that people assumed they should do the same thing with Tiberius.

Therefore, in dedicating a Tiberieum Pilate would have been serving Roman religious purposes of honouring the emperor in Judaea in ways that were in accordance with his duty as governor. An inscription reading ‘Pontius Pilate, Prefect of Judaea, [made and d]e[dicated] the Tiberieum for the (Augustan) gods’ need not be a surprise. The dedication of a structure for the emperor was probably not done out of a psychological need for Pilate to impress an easily unimpressed Tiberius, but because it was the right thing to do in the case of the provincial imperial cult, for it was Pilate’s role to encourage those he governed to render due honour to the emperor. According to fragments of Augustan calendars, festivals or celebrations for the honour of the living emperor or imperial family took place about twice every month.⁶⁴

Furthermore, as noted, Pilate as governor of Judaea had two very grand provincial temples of the imperial cult to oversee. Caesarea Maritima, the seat of Roman government in Judaea, was the location of a great temple for Roma and Augustus, while the second temple was in Sebaste. Another had been built north-

58 See the examples given by Grether, ‘Livia and the Roman Imperial Cult’, 222–52, and see *ILS* 1.162, 3.474, 933, 4.454; *CIL* ix.652, x.688; Levine, *Roman Caesarea*, 20.

59 See for this and other examples Levine, *Roman Caesarea*, 20.

60 Price, *Rituals*, 58, 150, 254.

61 Gradel, *Emperor Worship*, 65, citing A. Burnett, M. Amandry and P. P. Repollès, *Roman Provincial Coinage* (London: British Museum, 1992) 1: nos. 610–12.

62 C. H. Kraeling, *Gerasa, City of the Decapolis* (New Haven: American Schools of Oriental Research, 1938) 44.

63 H. Mattingly and E. A. Sydenham, *Roman Imperial Coinage* (London: Spink, 1923) 1:107–8.

64 Adkins and Adkins, *Dictionary*, 106.

wards, on the slopes of Mount Hermon near Paneas, but this was now in the territory of the Roman tetrarch Philip. All three were built by Augustus' great supporter King Herod the Great.

Archaeological excavations in Caesarea in the 1990s exposed massive foundations of a large temple in the heart of the city, which allowed the excavators to suggest its dimensions were 28.6 m north–south and 46.4 m east–west. More than fifty architectural blocks have been identified from architraves and friezes, Corinthian capitals, column bases and shafts enabling the excavators to propose that the height of the temple from base to the top of the cornice was approximately 20.5 m, though Lisa Kahn suggests it may have been wider and as high as 30 m.⁶⁵

These excavations have confirmed the accuracy of Josephus' statements about Caesarea, which can then be used to build up a picture of what existed in terms of the temple's superstructure. Josephus writes of how Herod the Great, anxious to honour his patron Augustus, rebuilt the old town of Straton's Tower on the coast with white stone and constructed a great artificial harbour (the remains of which have been uncovered by underwater archaeological expeditions). He then writes:

Opposite the mouth of the harbour, on a height, stood the temple of Caesar (ναὸς Καίσαρος), of distinctive beauty and grandeur. Inside it was a colossal statue of Caesar, not inferior to that of Olympian Zeus, on which it was modelled. Roma was like Hera at Argos. (*Bell.* I.414).

The existence of the temple of Roma and Augustus is also indicated by Philo, who calls it by its Greek name, the Sebasteion (*Legat.* 305), corresponding to the Latin word Augusteum. Kahn has noted that the white stone was limestone faced with bright, white stucco, as with the Temple in Jerusalem.⁶⁶

The huge statue of Augustus as Olympian Zeus is telling. The massive (12–14 m high) chryselephantine statue of Olympian Zeus made by Pheidias in the fifth century BCE was considered one of the wonders of the ancient world. Its appearance is known from a downsized Roman copy now found in the Hermitage Museum, St. Petersburg. Zeus is clad only in a heroic *himation*. In his right hand he holds a small winged Victory (Nike) standing on a globe, indicating his rule of the world, and in his left a sceptre. He is accompanied by his symbol, the eagle. Interestingly,

65 K. Holum, 'The Temple Platform: Progress Report on the Excavations', in *Caesarea Papers* (ed. K. Holum, A. Raban and J. Patrich; Journal of Roman Archaeology Supplement Series 35; Portsmouth, Rhode Island, 1999) 2:13–40; L. C. Kahn, 'King Herod's Temple of Roma and Augustus at Caesarea Maritima', in *Caesarea Maritima: A Retrospective after Two Millennia* (ed. A. Raban and K. G. Holum; Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1996) 130–45 (141, 145); H. Hänlein-Schäfer, *Veneratio Augusti: Eine Studie zu den Tempeln des ersten römischen Kaisers* (Rome: Bretschneider, 1985) 201–3.

66 Kahn, 'King Herod's Temple', 131–2.

from the very same museum, there is a statue of Augustus as Olympian Zeus,⁶⁷ exactly the type of statue that Herod placed in the temple in Caesarea, which replicates the figure, except that the bearded and long-haired head of Zeus is replaced by the usual young Augustus head. In Caesarea a statue of the goddess Roma was found nearby.⁶⁸ Josephus states that Roma was depicted as Hera of Argos, which was again a gigantic sculpture originally made by Polycleitos in the fifth century BCE. The iconographic linking of Augustus-as-Zeus and Roma-as-Hera was surely obvious, and size clearly mattered in terms of the impact of these statues.⁶⁹

The temple of Augustus in Sebaste was begun around the year 27 BCE,⁷⁰ the same year that the name 'Augustus' was conferred on Octavian by the Senate. It is apparent from excavations⁷¹ that this temple in Sebaste was not as large as in Caesarea Maritima, but it was built on a high hill with a wide view of the surrounding countryside and would have been seen for miles, just as the great temple of Augustus in Caesarea would have been seen from far away at sea.⁷² Σεβαστός, the Greek word for Augustus, was dedicated to the emperor, and Herod apparently founded the entire city with six thousand colonists and a privileged constitution all centred on honouring Augustus (*Ant.* XV.296–8; *Bell.* I.403).

The temple was built on a large podium 4.40 m higher than the floor of a huge colonnaded forecourt. This forecourt was approximately 280 m in perimeter, and was not unlike the Temple forecourt in Jerusalem. Josephus writes:

67 The huge temple of Olympian Zeus in Athens was completed in the reign of Hadrian, but Suetonius (*Aug.* 60) notes that certain client kings decided collectively to finish the incomplete temple of Jupiter Olympius in Athens and dedicate it to the genius of Augustus. It was the largest temple in Greece, measuring 40 m × 96 m, see David Jacobson, 'Three Roman Client Kings: Herod of Judaea, Archelaus of Cappadocia and Juba of Mauretania', *PEQ* 133 (2001) 22–38 (27–8); R. Tölle-Kastenbein, *Das Olympieion in Athen* (Arbeiten zur Archäologie; Cologne: Böhlau, 1994).

68 S. E. Smith, 'Chronique archéologique – Césarée', *RB* 78 (1971) 591–3, Pl. 29.

69 Additionally, that Augustus was portrayed as Olympian Zeus was not only an attempt to honour the emperor as ruler of the world, but also reflected Herod's interest in Olympia and the Olympic Games. Herod was a great donor to the games, and was made 'Patron of the Games', *agonothetes*, for life (*Bell.* I.426–7). In addition, Herod inaugurated quinquennial games of his own in Caesarea Maritima, games that were named after 'Caesar', in the 192nd Olympiad, namely 10–9 BCE. Counting forward, this would mean that Pontius Pilate presided over the games in 26–27 and 31–32.

70 J. Crowfoot, K. Kenyon and E. Sukenik, *Samaria-Sebaste I: The Buildings* (London: Palestine Exploration Fund, 1942) 123–32; Dan Barag, 'King Herod's Royal Castle at Samaria-Sebaste', *PEQ* 125 (1993) 4–8; Hänlein-Schäfer, *Veneratio Augusti*, 199–201.

71 The Augusteum of Sebaste, in Samaria, was excavated by the Harvard Semitic Museum in the early twentieth century and published in the *Samaria-Sebaste* volumes of the Palestine Exploration Fund.

72 The excavators therefore called it 'the summit temple'.

In the centre of this creation [of his, i.e. Sebaste] he erected a massive temple consecrated to Caesar, and beside it a temenos three hemistadia [320 m] around the outside (*Bell.* I.403).

The temple itself was octastyle, with Corinthian columns, with its facade facing north. It was 23.95 m broad and 34.90 m long and, with a portico 6.95 m deep. The cella was divided into a nave (24.35 m × 12.45 m) and two aisles, each of 2 m wide. Remains here include a stairway of 24 steps divided into two sets of twelve. A large altar (3.6 m × 1.81 m and 1.74 m high) was built in front of the steps, in the forecourt. A marble torso of a giant cuirassed statue, probably depicting Augustus, was found west of the altar.

Josephus goes on to note that a third temple to Augustus was built near the source of the Jordan, which was at Pania (*Bell.* I.404; *Ant.* XV.363), at a place later renamed Caesarea Philippi. The temple was tetrastyle, as is shown on coins dating to the reign of Philip, Herod the Great's son (ruled 4 BCE to 34 CE),⁷³ and may be that discovered recently at Omrit, just 3 km. southwest of Pania.⁷⁴ The Omrit temple was built of white limestone and measured 14.5 m × 23 m. It stood on a podium measuring 12 m high. The excavators estimate the building itself was approximately 18 m high. As such it would have borne a remarkable resemblance to the surviving Augusteum in Pola (now Pula on the Croatian coast), built at approximately the same time, between 2 BCE and 14 CE.⁷⁵ The temple at Pola is also tetrastyle, of similar proportions. The forms of all three Herodian temples to Roma and Augustus appear to have been very Roman, with no nods in the direction of any distinctively Syrian forms of temple architecture.

One item to note in both the coins of Herod Philip showing the temple near Paneas and the surviving temple of Roma and Augustus in Pola is a circular shape at the centre of the triangular pediment, which most likely represents Augustus' golden shield – the *Clupeus Virtutis*.⁷⁶ The original was in the Roman Senate, inscribed with his virtues, a stone copy of which is found in Arles, probably from a temple of Roma and Augustus indicated by an inscription testifying to a *flamen Romae et Augusti*,⁷⁷ and, famously, in the Belvedere altar, carried by winged

73 BMC Palestine 228, no. 4.

74 J. A. Overman, J. Olive and M. Nelson, 'Discovering Herod's Shrine to Augustus: Mystery Temple Found at Omrit', *Biblical Archaeology Review* 29/2 (March/April 2003) 40–9, 67–8. Others would situate the temple to Augustus in Pania itself; see J. F. Wilson, *Caesarea Philippi: Baniyas, the Lost City of Pan* (London/New York: I. B. Tauris, 2004).

75 D. Jacobson, 'Herod's Roman Temple', in *Biblical Archaeology Review* 28/2 (March/April 2002) 19–27, 60–1 (21); G. Fischer, *Das Römische Pola: Ein Archäologische Stadtgeschichte* (Munich: Verlag der Bayerischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 1996); Hänlein-Schäfer, *Veneratio Augusti*, 149–52.

76 Jacobson, 'Roman Temple', 20–1.

77 CIL XII, 647, Hänlein-Schäfer, *Veneratio Augusti*, 242; and see K. Galinsky, *Augustan Culture: An Interpretive Introduction* (Princeton: Princeton University, 1996) 86–88, cf. *Res Gestae* 34.

Victory.⁷⁸ The surviving temples to Augustus in Nîmes and Vienne unfortunately no longer have any indications of what was originally in the pediment of the façade, but the disc in the centre of the pediment does appear very prominently in many coin types showing temples of Augustus or other emperors – for example in Hadrianic coins of Nicomedia’s octastyle Doric-columned imperial temple;⁷⁹ in Augustan and later coins of Pergamum;⁸⁰ in coins of Septimius Severus from Neocaesarea;⁸¹ in Neronian to Severan coins showing the Augusteum in Ancyra;⁸² and coins of Tiberius and Augustus showing imperial temples in Augusta Emerita, Tarraco and Carthago Nova.⁸³ Mostly the image of the shield in the coins is shown simply as a dot, but sometimes there is a clear attempt to make it more obvious by showing the indented rim around the outside of the shield (as shown in Hänlein-Schäfer’s example shown in her Pl. 45, C from Ancyra or Price’s example in his Pl. 2, d). This rim is depicted in the decorative work of the west gable of the imperial temple from Antiocha ad Pisidia,⁸⁴ in which a girl growing out of acanthus leaves seems to balance the *clupeus* on her head. This rimmed shield is also, a little confusingly, shown in a coin in which the emperor Caracalla sacrifices to Asclepius at Pergamum: Asclepius is shown in a temple with a pediment containing the *clupeus*. The unique Asclepion in Pergamum was not a pediment-styled temple, though it did contain an ‘imperial room’ as one of four temples within its precincts. The best depiction of the shield in the numismatic record is in fact a denarius issued in 20 BCE in the Colonia Patricia (Cordova, Spain) which shows Augustus on the obverse wearing a *corona civica*, and on the reverse the *clupeus* between two laurel trees. Two laurel trees were planted outside his house when he received his honours in 27 BCE.⁸⁵

In the sestertius issued by Gaius Caligula (37–41) which shows the Templum Augusti in Rome the shield in the centre of the pediment seems to be carried, as in the Belvedere altar, by winged Victory,⁸⁶ an image which is found in a sestertius of Antoninus Pius (158–9) which also depicts the Templum Augusti in Rome.⁸⁷

78 Beard, North and Price, *Religions of Rome*, 1:187, Fig. 4.3; cf. 333, Fig. 7.3.

79 Hänlein-Schäfer, *Veneratio Augusti*, 31, b, c, e, as opposed to a Corinthian-columned temple that had a figure with a spear or sceptre, though what the figure is holding in his right hand is unclear.

80 Ibid., 32, c, e; Price, *Rituals*, Pl. 2, c.

81 Ibid., Pl. 2, d, e

82 Hänlein-Schäfer, *Veneratio Augusti*, 45, b, c, i, l, m.

83 Ibid., 60, a, b, e.

84 Ibid., 193, Pl. 49.a–b.

85 For discussion of these trees, see Gradel, *Emperor Worship*, 122–4, who argues against seeing depictions of two laurel trees with Augustus as necessarily reflective of the honours he received.

86 Hänlein-Schäfer, *Veneratio Augusti*, 75–6, Pl. I, b.

87 Ibid., I, c. It also appears in a coin of Augustus apparently showing the Temple of Olympian Zeus.

The use of the *Clupeus Virtutis* in the pediment of imperial temples is highly suggestive, because the Latin word *clupeus*, or *clipeus*, for round shield, can also refer to the sun.⁸⁸ The indicator of deification in coinage is often the aureus of the sun. If in fact the shields were at times embossed with bronze it would have made the association seem even greater.

The physical presence of the Roman imperial cult in Judaea and northern Galilee has therefore been shown by recent archaeology, which has also provided evidence of the size and splendour of the imperial temples in Caesarea and Sebaste, and the prominent position of the temple near Caesarea Philippi (if at Omrit). How the imperial cult functioned is not the focus of this study, though the usual assumption has been that it was presided over by a *flamen Romae et Augusti*.⁸⁹ It appears that there was at some stage a collegium known as the *serviri Augustalis*.⁹⁰ There would have been not only cultic statues, in terms of the huge sculptures of Augustus and Roma in Caesarea, and most probably also at Sebaste, but all kinds of other sacred and cultic items, serviced by a dedicated priesthood. The non-indigenous Roman imperial cult had a physical presence in Judaea and required resources, maintenance and a public profile that were the responsibility of the provincial governor. The building or dedication of an additional Tiberieum in Caesarea Maritima, then, was a way that Pilate could honour the Emperor and Rome by expanding on the existing cult which was under his authority. By creating a Tiberieum, he promoted the imperial cult, even if his Tiberieum itself was an independent building, a small structure attached to the theatre or to the Augusteum itself. This action coheres with Pilate's placement of images on his coinage which likewise promoted Roman religion, represented in Caesarea and Sebaste by the imperial cult.

C. Philo of Alexandria *Legatio ad Gaium* 299–305

According to Philo of Alexandria, writing in the *Legatio ad Gaium* (299–305), Pilate set up shields in honour of Tiberius in Herod's palace, now the Praetorium, in Jerusalem, 'not in order to honour Tiberius, but rather to annoy the [Jewish] multitude'.⁹¹ Since it is easy to fall foul of what Paul Maier described as the 'lush

88 OLD 337.

89 Levine, *Roman Caesarea*, 19.

90 A. Negev, 'Inscriptions hebraïques, grecques et latines de Cesarée Maritime', *RB* 78 (1971) 258–9. As noted above, later on in Caesarea there was a Hadrianeum. This contained a white marble statue of Hadrian as Jupiter and another in porphyry, see Cornelius Vermeule and Kristin Anderson, 'Greek and Roman Sculpture in the Holy Land', *The Burlington Magazine* 123 no. 934 (1981) 7–19 (11), Fig. 16, 22.

91 Translation from the Greek text in Francis H. Colson, *Philo X: On the Embassy to Gaius* (LCL; Cambridge, MA: Harvard University, 1962).

foliage of Philo's rhetoric',⁹² it is necessary to examine the rhetorical complexities of the passage in which the evidence occurs before assessing this evidence.

As a high-ranking Jew in Alexandria whose brother was the Jewish alabarch (*Ant.* XVIII.259), Philo moved in high places and had access to reliable information about events and government. He was a first-hand witness and leader of the delegation to Gaius Caligula in 39–40 which pleaded for consideration of the Jewish case in Alexandria after civil unrest between the 'Greeks' and the Jews in the city (*Ant.* XVIII.259). However, while that means he could be a reliable witness, Philo embeds his description of Pilate's actions in a letter from Herod Agrippa I, in which he appeals to Gaius to desist from placing a gigantic statue of himself as a god – perhaps on the model of Augustus as Olympian Zeus which existed in Caesarea (and Sebaste?) – in the Jewish Temple in Jerusalem (*Legat.* 276–329).⁹³ The letter may therefore be considered a literary contrivance,⁹⁴ but any scepticism about the reliability of its contents must take into account the possibility that Philo and Agrippa may well have known each other. They were in Rome at the same time the letter was composed, and the two wealthy families were friendly. Philo's brother, the powerful Jewish alabarch of Alexandria, lent Agrippa's wife money (*Ant.* XVIII.159–60) and Agrippa's daughter married Philo's nephew Tiberius Alexander (*Ant.* XIX.276–7).

Legatio ad Gaium tells the story of the Alexandrian Jewish delegation's appeal to Caligula in 39–40, and is the first part of a larger work entitled 'On Virtues'.⁹⁵ Such virtue is configured in Graeco-Roman philosophical terms, especially *andreia*, manliness, and the faculty of *logismos*, reason (*Legat.* 2, 112, 196), and can be eulogised in terms of Graeco-Roman gods: Heracles, Dionysus, the Dioscuri, Hermes, Apollo and Ares (*Legat.* 81–113). In terms of the imperial cult, Philo claims that Augustus was given his title, here *Sebasteios*, because of his virtue (*Legat.* 143, 309, 318), since he transcended human nature (*Legat.* 143). He writes in glowing terms of the sacred precincts, temples, porticoes, groves and colonnades in honour of Caesar, especially those in Alexandria (*Legat.* 150–1). Philo does not critique the imperial cult, but rather the emperor Gaius because of his active – and insane – imposition of his divine veneration against the will of the people (*Legat.* 78–80; 346–7). While the configuration of virtue in Stoic terms is typically Philonic, the appeal to Graeco-Roman divinities, to Augustus' transcendence of human nature, and to the glory of the imperial cult, also the painful apologetics to explain

92 P. L. Maier, 'The Episode of the Golden Roman Shields at Jerusalem', *HTR* 62 (1969) 109–21 (119).

93 See, for the broader context, the commentaries by E. M. Smallwood, *Philonis Alexandrini, Legatio ad Gaium* (2nd. ed.; Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1970) and André Pelletier, *De Legatio ad Caium* (Paris: Éditions du Cerf, 1972).

94 S. Zeitlin, 'Did Agrippa Write a Letter to Gaius Caligula?' *JQR* 56 (1965) 22–35.

95 See Colson, *Philo X*, xiv.

the Jewish case, point to the work being written for a non-Jewish audience. Indeed, according to Eusebius, who had access to a wealth of information on Philo from the library in Caesarea, Philo read out *'On Virtues'* to the Roman Senate in the reign of Claudius (*Hist. Eccles.* II.18.8) when further civil unrest in Alexandria had caused him to head a second Jewish delegation to Rome in 41.⁹⁶ Given that Agrippa was much in favour with Claudius, who had just installed him as king of a larger area than even Herod the Great had ruled (*Bell.* II.206–13), Agrippa would have had to be depicted as being on the side of the good.

According to Josephus, Agrippa met with Gaius to appeal that he abandon the attempt to install the statue (*Ant.* XVIII.289–96) at which point Gaius (temporarily) agreed to stop.⁹⁷ In Philo's *Legatio*, Agrippa makes the case that the Jews are so sensitive about infringements of religious tradition in the holy city of Jerusalem that a relatively small matter in Roman eyes could cause an extreme reaction of protest; so much the greater would the reaction be if the violation of religious tradition were very significant (i.e. the statue). Pilate, though derided continually in Agrippa's plea, is responsible for the relatively small matter.⁹⁸

The anti-Pilate attitude of Agrippa's letter does not necessarily tell us anything about Pilate's real motives, but is in keeping with the fact that Pilate ended his rule in disgrace. According to Josephus, Pilate was recalled to Rome to answer charges of inordinate use of violence in regard to a massacre of Samaritans at Tirathana late in the year 36 (*Ant.* XVIII.85–9). The snide comment that Pilate did not wish to honour the Emperor so much as to annoy the multitude reflects the fact that the multitude was so annoyed by Pilate in the end that they petitioned Rome. Agrippa was himself in Rome at the very time Pilate was recalled, from the spring of 36, first appealing to Tiberius to recognise him as ruler of Philip's former territory, then fettered in prison when Tiberius heard he had wished for his death, and then in order to receive what he had asked for from his new mentor Gaius on the death of Tiberius on 16 March 37 (*Bell.* II.178–80). He apparently stayed in Rome for a further 18 months, not returning until the middle of 38 (via Alexandria). He would

96 Both the Jewish and the 'Greek' delegations from Alexandria came to Rome with works of literature to be used in debate, some of which were sent ahead (*Legat.* 178–9), and this text could well have formed part of such a dossier; see J. E. Taylor, *Jewish Women Philosophers of First-Century Alexandria* (Oxford: Oxford University, 2003) 30–46. An original Roman audience was advocated by E. Goodenough, *An Introduction to Philo Judaeus* (2nd ed.; Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1962) 59–60.

97 The letter in Philo's *Legatio* is then paralleled by Agrippa's speech at a dinner party in Josephus' much later account. Here Agrippa does not try to persuade Gaius in any way; he simply makes a direct request that the dedication of the statue be abandoned when Gaius asks him what he would like as a reward for pleasing him so much by a dinner party.

98 As Maier ('Episode', 117) noted, since the aim of the passage is to make the shields seem a small incident in comparison with the present danger, Philo by no means necessarily tells us the whole story.

have been in Rome when Pilate returned, and would undoubtedly have formulated a view on this Tiberian Prefect.

Philo himself hides his own opinion of Pilate behind Agrippa's vitriol and engages in complex rhetorical gymnastics: he has a virtuous Jewish king, Agrippa, deride a bad Roman Prefect, Pilate (referred to in past tense as if he is dead), in a letter to a mad emperor, Gaius Caligula, showing how the bad Prefect was chastised by the intervention of a good emperor, Tiberius. The real audience – Claudius and his advisors – were to identify with Tiberius against Gaius. Pilate is presented as having done something that would not seem in the least offensive to this audience, and yet Pilate reaps unmitigated condemnation from the emperor Tiberius, here presented in kind terms despite the fact that, as 'Agrippa' states, he received 'many evils [from him] when he lived' (*Legat.* 299). The moral of the story is that anyone else infringing Jewish sensibilities should be reprimanded by good emperors. Agrippa is disassociated from his former mentor, Gaius (now not in favour with Claudius), and made an ally of his persecutor, Tiberius (respected by Claudius), at the expense of Tiberius' Prefect, Pilate.

Amid all this 'lush foliage', the basic information can be determined that Pilate 'set up (as a votive gift) shields coated with gold in the royal buildings⁹⁹ of Herod in the holy city.' Despite the negative appraisal of Pilate's motives as being 'to annoy the [Jewish] multitude', Philo/Agrippa in fact provides (though rejects) the obvious explanation for Pilate's actions: 'to honour the emperor'. The reliability of the information need not be doubted, since it would have been hard for Philo to depart too far from what took place only some five years earlier. These were current events.¹⁰⁰

The Greek word used here for 'shield', ἀσπίς, designates quite specifically a round shield and translates Latin *clipeus/clupeus*,¹⁰¹ a significant term given that, as noted above, the *Clupeus Virtutis* of Augustus was a symbol strongly associated with the imperial cult. Tiberius himself had two shields depicted on two coins showing on the obverse a bust of Tiberius on an ornamental shield, with the words: 'CLEMENTIAE' or 'MODERATIONI'. As Mattingly and Sydenham commented, "There were doubtless shields of "Clementia" and "Moderatio" presented

99 Note here that Philo/Agrippa uses the word βασιλείοις the Dative plural of βασιλείον, which I translate as 'royal buildings'. According to Josephus, Herod the Great had two buildings (οἴκοι) constructed in Jerusalem, the Καίσαρειον and the Αγρίππειον, that together comprised his royal palace (*Bell.* 1.402; cf. *Ant.* XV.306). Such accuracy in the details is impressive.

100 The date of the shields incident is usually placed some time after the removal of the anti-Jewish Praetorian Prefect Sejanus in 31 (*Legat.* 299–305) and rather late in Pilate's career, since in the passage he is worried that delegations to Rome might expose a great catalogue of his sins in Judaea, implying some years had elapsed in which he had committed the various actions; see Maier, 'Episode', 113.

101 Maier, 'Episode', 117.

to Tiberius in honour of these qualities in his character, on the analogy of the 'Clupeus Virtutis' presented to Augustus'.¹⁰² Votive shields appear also in terms of the imperial honours in Alexandria: Philo mentions shields as being (inadvertently) destroyed by the 'Greek' mob in Alexandria who were so frenzied in their attacks on synagogues, which they burnt down, that they also damaged the gilded shields and crowns and pillars and inscriptions that were 'in honour of the emperor' (*Legat.* 133), items that Philo himself seems to classify as indicating appropriate 'piety towards the imperial family' (*Flacc.* 49).¹⁰³

Pilate then brought items appropriate in the Roman imperial honours system to Jerusalem. There was nothing strongly public about the setting up of the shields; they were placed in Herod's former palace, the Praetorium, not the Temple. It might be thought Pilate should have learnt from his mistakes: according to Josephus' account, Pilate offended the Jerusalemites when he first brought in his auxiliary troops from Caesarea with standards depicting a bust of the emperor (*Bell.* II.169–74; *Ant.* XVIII.55–9) and had to relent by removing the standards from Jerusalem, which probably meant removing the entire regiment and replacing it with one that did not have standards showing an image of the emperor.¹⁰⁴ Still, since auxiliary troops always had some kind of standards, and standards were sacred objects in the Roman army, there must have been a sacred area in the fortress Antonia, where the Roman army was stationed, so that the normal honorific rituals associated with the standards could take place, even when they had no images. In these rituals the standards were at times coated with oil, or decorated with laurel wreaths or roses.¹⁰⁵ There is no suggestion that the Jews objected to what went on within the fortress Antonia in terms of the standards as long as they did not have the image of the emperor on them.

In terms of parallel, there is Herod's institution of games in honour of Augustus in Jerusalem (*Ant.* XV.267–91). Josephus states that Herod contravened Jewish laws by erecting a theatre around which there were inscriptions of the great actions of Caesar, and the trophies of those nations he had conquered, all made of gold and silver, to which honour was paid. However, Josephus writes, 'above all, the trophies were most distressing to the Jews, for since they believed that there were images included with the armour that hung around them, they were very upset at them, because it was not the custom of the country to pay honours to such images' (276). This distress to the Jews was, then, not so much

102 Mattingly and Sydenham, *Roman Imperial Coinage*, 1:107–8, see Pl. VI.101.

103 For Philo, it was only actual representations of the emperor in the form of statues that were totally unacceptable to Jews (*Flacc.* 41–52).

104 So C. H. Kraeling, 'The Episode of the Roman Standards at Jerusalem', *HTR* 35 (1942) 263–89 (295); Bond, *Pontius Pilate*, 79–84.

105 G. Webster, *The Roman Imperial Army of the First and Second Centuries A.D.* (3rd ed.; A. & C. Black: London, 1985) 133–4.

because of the honours given to the trophies, but because they feared that there might be images hidden in the armour that would 'bear the images of human beings in the city' (277). Herod dispelled the anxiety of most of the people by deconstructing the trophies down to the wood on which they were fixed, to show that there were no figures.

Josephus then presents Jews who could distinguish between military standards with the image of the emperor on them and standards without that image. The point about the aniconic standards is that while they were sacred, they were not configured as a rival god in the way that a divinised Augustus might be considered a rival god in an idolatrous cult in Jerusalem. That is exactly Philo's point in *Flacc.* 41–52: Jews could not accept statues of the emperor when they could accept many other sacred elements of imperial honours.

In line with Jewish cultic honours for the emperor certain rites took place at the Temple in Jerusalem that one would normally associate with the imperial cult. There were two sacrifices every day in the Temple for the welfare of the emperor and the Roman people (Josephus *Bell.* II.197; Philo *Legat.* 157, 317).¹⁰⁶ While these rites were undoubtedly begun by order of Herod the Great, Jews continued to maintain them until the Great Revolt of 66.

Given all this, Pilate may have missed realising the significance of his new action. It has not been obvious to modern commentators either. Paul Maier concluded the response must have been 'an extremely sensitive, hyperorthodox reaction against an unpopular foreign governor'.¹⁰⁷ However, while it is well-known that Second Temple Judaism was replete with quasi-divine/angelic intermediary figures and divine agents, they were not considered 'the rightful recipients of cultic worship', as Larry Hurtado has shown.¹⁰⁸ This focus on the praxis of monotheism is useful for understanding Jewish objections to the imperial cult in Jerusalem: the distinction between cultic veneration and acceptable honours had to be maintained. Such a distinction was at variance with the praxis of the rest of the Graeco-Roman world where, as Richard Bauckham aptly notes, the 'typical Hellenistic view was that worship is a matter of degree because divinity is a matter of degree'.¹⁰⁹ Likewise, for Romans, according to Ittai Gradel, the difference

¹⁰⁶ And see Josephus *Contra Apionem* II.77. The emperors (*imperatores et populum Romanorum...solis imperatoribus*) in plural in the surviving Latin version probably indicates that whoever is emperor will change, and over the course of the ritual sacrifices there have been performed for a number of different living (human) emperors as worthy men.

¹⁰⁷ Maier, 'Episode', 118.

¹⁰⁸ Larry Hurtado, *Lord Jesus Christ: Devotion to Jesus in Earliest Christianity* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003) 29–48 (31), and see also idem, *One God, One Lord: Early Christian Devotion and Ancient Jewish Monotheism* (2nd ed.; Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1998).

¹⁰⁹ Richard Bauckham, *God Crucified: Monotheism and Christology in the New Testament* (Carlisle: Paternoster, 1998) 15. However, Bauckham (p. 14) critiques Hurtado's insistence that worship plays the key role in the definition of Jewish monotheism: 'This, in my view, is

between a man and a god was also in terms of degree, not in terms of essential kind, even if certain transformations (e.g. apotheosis) marked the journey from man to god,¹¹⁰ so that the cultic veneration paid to the emperors, whether living or dead, was part of a continuum within the honours system. The issue confronting Pilate was clearly one of boundaries.

It would not necessarily have been obvious to a Roman that the shields would cause distress, given that there were no images on them, and given that Jews honoured the emperor already. Philo specifically states that the shields had no figure or anything subversive but only a 'necessary'¹¹¹ inscription revealing the dedicator and for whom¹¹² the shields were set up. In other words, there was a short inscription with the name of Pontius Pilate and the name of Tiberius, which recalls the short inscription of the Caesarea stone. It is possible that the inscriptions themselves mentioned Tiberius as *divi Augusti filius*,¹¹³ since these words are in his full title. It was not in Philo's interests to mention this detail, since in his rhetorical schema the mere existence of the dedicated shields in Jerusalem (which was such a miniscule offence) was the reason the Jews reacted so desperately.

Whether the dedication of the shields to Tiberius as 'son of a god' or Augustus as divine appeared or not, Jews appear to have recognised that the votive shields belonged to the imperial cult and were about the worship of the emperor in some way that went beyond the honours already accepted. As such, the shields were contrary to Jewish law on idolatry (cf. *m. Avodah Zarah* 1.1–4), a law that should be fully maintained in Jerusalem, the holy city. It was not an issue of honouring the emperor, for Jews, who accepted that honour should be paid for the emperor (though not 'to' the emperor, cf. Philo, *Legat.* 357); it was an issue of whether in this particular honour there was implicit cultic veneration in Jerusalem of an entity other than God.

a confusion, because the exclusive worship of the God of Israel is precisely a recognition of and response to his unique identity. . . Worship of other beings is inappropriate because they do not share in this unique identity.'

110 Gradel, *Emperor Worship*, 25–6.

111 It was 'necessary' to include this to ensure everyone knew that the shields were set up in Tiberius' honour; so P. S. Davies, 'The Meaning of Philo's Text about the Gilded Shields', *JTS* 37 (1986) 109–14.

112 Davies suggests that the expression ὑπερ ᾧ indicates that while the shields were set up 'for' or 'on behalf of' Tiberius, Pilate was not practising the imperial cult, because if he had been they would have been set up 'to' Tiberius. In this very strict definition of the imperial cult, Tiberius would himself have had to be considered a living god for the imperial cult to be the issue here. Unlike Gaius, who claimed to be a god in his lifetime, thereby demanding sacrifices 'to' him rather than 'for' him (*Legat.* 357), Tiberius was clearly not a god (though officially the son of a god), but honours 'for' him were very much part of the imperial cult system throughout the Empire.

113 G. Fuks, 'Again on the Episode of the Gilded Roman Shields at Jerusalem', *HTR* 75 (1982) 503–7 (507); Bond, *Pontius Pilate*, 38–9, but see Davies, 'Meaning', 111 n. 16.

In addition, as Lémonon notes, Philo may well have neglected to add that the setting up of the shields would have involved some kind of ritualised ceremony in which the shields were formally dedicated as an honour for the emperor.¹¹⁴ A ceremony would have appeared to make them into religious *sacra* in the same way the *lituus* and the *simpulum/culullus* were also: implements used in the Roman imperial cult.

The way Philo tells it, Pilate would not alter his decision in terms of the placement of the shields until the emperor Tiberius himself wrote to him to remove them. At this point, writes Philo, they were placed in 'Caesarea-by-the-Sea, named after [your] grandfather Augustus, in order to be set up [as a votive gift] in the Sebasteion [=Augusteum], and [so] they were set up' (*Legat.* 305). This resolved the issue, which hinged, then, on the placement of religious *sacra* connected with emperor worship. The shields are put in their rightful place, according to Jewish opinion, in the temple of Roma and Augustus in Caesarea Maritima, where the cult of the emperor was acceptably located along with the cultic shrines of numerous other gods, but Jerusalem was reserved for the worship of God alone.

It would have been appropriate indeed if Pilate had subsequently built a small structure to house the shields in Caesarea, whether related to the Augusteum or not: a Tiberieum. The shields incident described by Philo would, then, directly relate to the existence of the Tiberieum in Caesarea evidenced by the inscription.

Conclusion

To conclude, the epigraphic and numismatic evidence of Pontius Pilate, as well as in Philo's near-contemporary account of the shields incident, provide examples of a Prefect promoting Roman religion, in the form of the imperial cult, in the immediate post-Augustan age. Pontius Pilate does not in fact need to have been purposely vindictive to Jews in this regard or even necessarily concerned to flatter Tiberius, but he does seem to have been purposively determined to maintain, if not advance, the Roman imperial cult in Judaea.

114 Lémonon, *Pilate*, 214–7.