

STEPHEN'S USE OF ΧΕΙΡΟΠΟΙΗΤΟΣ IN ACTS 7.48 AND ITS MEANING
IN JEWISH AND GRECO-ROMAN LITERATURE

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1. Introduction

Luke's interest in the temple has been regarded as 'sufficiently clear and widely acknowledged',¹ yet agreement on whether Luke maintains either a fundamentally positive or negative portrayal of this establishment in Luke–Acts remains elusive.² An adjoining complexity relates to discerning Stephen's own view of the temple through an analysis of his speech in Acts 7.1-51 and especially vv. 46-50 which contains his most poignant statements on the temple. Dennis D. Sylva notes that interpretations of these

1. Peter Head, 'The Temple in Luke's Gospel', in T. Desmond Alexander and Simon Gathercole (eds.), *Heaven on Earth: The Temple in Biblical Theology* (Carlisle: Paternoster Press, 2004), pp. 101-19 (101). One finds in Luke–Acts, therefore, 39 uses of *ἱερόν* and 6 instances of *ναός*. On the use of *οἶκος* and *τόπος* for references to the temple, some of which are regarded as 'uncertain', see p. 108.

2. For a survey of scholarship, see the overview in Francis D. Weinert's article, who nevertheless complains that while the temple in Luke–Acts 'is widely recognized by commentators as a prominent motif in Luke's work ... few have pursued this topic with any rigor' ('Luke, the Temple and Jesus' Saying about Jerusalem's Abandoned House [Luke 13:34-35]', *CBQ* 44 [1982], pp. 68-76 [68]). Head, writing over 20 years after Weinert, also bemoans that 'there does not seem to be a really adequate treatment of the history of research in this area' ('Temple in Luke's Gospel', p. 104 n. 12). For a more recent, albeit brief, survey of scholarship on the topic, see Steve Smith, *The Fate of the Jerusalem Temple in Luke–Acts: An Intertextual Approach to Jesus' Laments over Jerusalem and Stephen's Speech* (LNTS, 553; London: Bloomsbury, 2017), pp. 6-8.

verses fall into three major categories: those who see them (1) as signifying a replacement of the temple; (2) as signifying a rejection and condemnation of the temple; or (3) as signifying an affirmation of God's transcendence of the temple.³ The thesis that Stephen rejects the temple is taken up, for example, by Charles Talbert, who claims, 'Stephen's speech says that the very existence of the temple involves faithlessness to Moses and the pattern of worship he received from God.'⁴ Similarly, Richard Pervo avers that Acts 7.48-50 indicates that Solomon's construction of the temple 'must be judged a mistake'.⁵ Among the arguments advanced in support of this thesis is the claim that Stephen's use of *χειροποίητος* ('handmade') in 7.48, because of its use in the LXX to denote idols, indicates that the construction of the temple was itself an act of idolatry akin to the construction of the golden calf.⁶ For

3. Dennis D. Sylva, 'The Meaning and Function of Acts 7:46-50', *JBL* 106 (1987), pp. 261-75 (261); cf. p. 261 n. 4 for an extensive bibliography of advocates for each view.

4. Charles H. Talbert, *Reading Acts: A Literary and Theological Commentary on the Acts of the Apostles* (RNTS; Macon, GA: Smyth & Helwys, rev. edn, 2005), p. 63. Concerning the relationship between Luke's view and Stephen's view on the temple, Talbert claims, 'Stephen's evaluation of the temple is different from that of the author of Luke-Acts,' where the former is negative and the latter positive (*Reading Acts*, p. 63). In contrast, Craig S. Keener (*Acts: An Exegetical Commentary* [4 vols.; Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2012-2015], II, p. 282) notes the challenge of recovering Stephen's view apart from Luke's: 'Those who think Stephen regarded the temple's construction as, indeed, wrong go beyond the evidence of the text; this cannot be Luke's view (cf. Luke 19.46; Acts 2.46), and we cannot certainly reconstruct Stephen's view apart from Luke's text.'

5. Richard I. Pervo, *Acts: A Commentary* (Hermeneia; Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2009), p. 191.

6. Thus, Marcel Simon writes, '*χειροποίητο*[ς] is the technical term, so to say, by which the Septuagint and the Greek-speaking Jews describe the idols. In Stephen's speech, the same kind of expression is used in relation to the worship of the golden calf ... This similitude of expression puts the making of the calf and the building of the Temple on the same level: they are both idolatrous actions' ('Saint Stephen and the Jerusalem Temple', *JEH* 5 [1951], pp. 127-42 [133]). Similarly, Pervo writes, 'by inference, innuendo, and insinuation, the temple of Solomon (and its successors) is drawn into the belly of the golden calf' (*Acts*, p. 189). Todd C. Penner (*In Praise of Christian Origins: Stephen and the Hellenists in Lukan Apologetic Historiography* [New York: T. & T. Clark, 2004], p. 317) also avers, 'The

others, however, the use of *χειροποίητος* denotes not the intrinsic status of the temple as an idol but only that Stephen finds his accusers to have adopted an idolatrous attitude toward the temple.⁷ Although scholars argue their case by appealing in a general manner to the meaning and function of *χειροποίητος* in Hellenistic Judaism, there nevertheless exists a lacuna of detailed study on how this decisive term was employed throughout the LXX specifically and Jewish and Greco-Roman sources more broadly. In part, one may question whether any evidence may be found in the LXX use of *χειροποίητος* for viewing the handmade entity as something not intrinsically idolatrous in its creation but a legitimately constructed entity which was merely subsequently viewed with an idolatrous attitude.

The present article seeks to analyze more closely the instances of *χειροποίητος* in Greco-Roman and Jewish literature to enhance precision regarding how the term was employed, with a view toward assessing the claim that Stephen was criticizing an illegitimate attitude rather than an ille-

building of the temple is ... interpreted as an act of disobedience and, as a result, not surprisingly linked to idolatry as a "thing made by human hands".

7. 'The use of "made with human hands" may suggest that the attitude of the people had become idolatrous' (I. Howard Marshall, 'Acts', in G.K. Beale and D.A. Carson [eds.], *Commentary on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament* [Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2007], p. 568). Here Marshall ('Acts', p. 568) seems to retreat from his position in his 1980 commentary, writing, 'the text seems to suggest not that Solomon was wrong to build the temple (contra Marshall 1980: 146; see Evans 1993b: 197), but that those people are wrong who think that God dwells there and is confined to this one place' (cf. Craig A. Evans, 'Prophecy and Polemic: Jews in Luke's Scriptural Apologetic', in Craig A. Evans and James A. Sanders [eds.], *Luke and Scripture: The Function of Sacred Tradition in Luke-Acts* [repr., Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2001], p. 198). Similarly, James D.G. Dunn (*Beginning from Jerusalem* [Christianity in the Making, 2; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2009], p. 270) says that *χειροποίητος* 'is an astonishing term to find in a Jewish description of the Jerusalem Temple' since it 'was Hellenistic Judaism's dismissive description of "the idol".' However, Dunn posits that the point is not that the Temple was intrinsically idolatrous, but that 'the implied criticism is hard to avoid: the attitude of Stephen's accusers to the Temple was nothing short of idolatrous!' (cf. 'Yes, Stephen criticizes the temple, but not for what it is; rather, he is finding fault for how it is viewed' [Darrell L. Bock, *Acts* (BECNT; Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2007), p. 302]). See also to this effect David W. Pao, *Acts and the Isaianic New Exodus* (WUNT, 2/130; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2000), p. 207.

gitimate edifice. The study will proceed, first, by situating the use of χειροποίητος in 7.48 within the context of Stephen's overall speech in 7.2-53. Secondly, a brief examination of χειροποίητος in Greco-Roman texts will provide a broader foundation for assessing its usage than has traditionally been offered in scholarship and highlight the unique emphasis undertaken in its LXX usage. Thirdly, a close examination of χειροποίητος in Jewish literature—and particularly in the LXX—will seek to establish the manner in which the term was employed and how these usages compare with Acts 7.48. Finally, a limited survey of χειροποίητος in the New Testament and the cognate term ἀχειροποίητος will illuminate the way in which other New Testament authors might have employed the term and to what degree their usage comports with that found in the LXX.

2. Χειροποίητος in its Acts 7 Context

Attempts to analyze Stephen's speech in Acts 7.2-53 are problematized, *inter alia*, by the abundance of literature that attends to it,⁸ with Heinz-Werner Neudorfer noting that contemporary study of the speech inevitably must address the three primary areas of inquiry which surround it, namely, its historical, literary and theological dimensions.⁹ While a full analysis of Stephen's speech remains outside of the scope of the present study, it may nevertheless be briefly observed how χειροποίητος in 7.48 fits within the larger narrative.¹⁰ Philip E. Satterthwaite has drawn attention to narrative

8. E.g., I. Howard Marshall (*Acts: An Introduction and Commentary* [TNTC, 5; Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1980], p. 139 n. 8) notes that 'the literature is immense'. Smith (*Fate of the Jerusalem Temple*, p. 140) points to 'the vast scholarly literature on this speech' which 'contains substantial disagreement'. Likewise, Steve Walton writes that 'Stephen's speech ... has been a storm center in scholarship' ('A Tale of Two Perspectives', in T. Desmond Alexander and Simon Gathercole [eds.], *Heaven on Earth* [Carlisle: Paternoster Press, 2004], pp. 135-49 [135]).

9. Heinz-Werner Neudorfer, 'The Speech of Stephen', in I. Howard Marshall and David Peterson (eds.), *Witness to the Gospel: The Theology of Acts* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), pp. 275-94 (276).

10. As Chris Bruno, Jared Compton, and Kevin M. McFadden (*Biblical Theology according to the Apostles: How the Earliest Christians Told the Story of Israel* [NSBT, 52; Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2020], p. 55) write, 'While some

proportions in Acts and emphasizes that Luke dwells on an event when it plays a critical thematic and structural role in the overall strategy of the book.¹¹ Accordingly, the considerable length of this speech points to its important role as a turning-point in the narrative wherein the gospel is no longer preached only to Jews and only in Jerusalem.¹² This speech inaugurating the broadening of the gospel is, for Luke Timothy Johnson, the interpretive key to all of Luke–Acts.¹³

The *raison d'être* for this pivotal speech is as a response to the dual accusations in Acts 6.13, framed by the narrator as false charges, that Stephen spoke against the temple and against the law.¹⁴ Jacques Dupont offers a widely accepted analysis of the rhetorical structure of the speech as dividing into the following: (1) *exordium* (7.2a); (2) *narratio* (7.2b-34); (3) *transitio/propositio* (7.35); (4) *argumentatio* (7.36-50); and (5) *peroratio* (7.51-53).¹⁵ It is in the final verses of Stephen's *argumentatio* that he claims, ἀλλ' οὐχ ὁ ὑψιστος ἐν χειροποιήτοις κατοικεῖ ('yet, the Most High does not dwell in houses made by human hands'),¹⁶ which has led to one of the most de-

may debate its historicity and background, few can dispute that Stephen's speech in Acts 7 and its aftermath play a crucial role in the unfolding narrative of Acts.'

11. Philip E. Satterthwaite, 'Acts against the Background of Classical Rhetoric', in Bruce W. Winter and Andrew D. Clarke (eds.), *The Book of Acts in its Ancient Literary Setting* (BAFCS, 1; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1993), pp. 337-80 (351). As I. Howard Marshall (*Acts*, p. 139) writes, 'If length is anything to go by, Stephen's speech is one of the most important sections of Acts.'

12. Satterthwaite, 'Acts against the Background of Classical Rhetoric', p. 351.

13. Luke Timothy Johnson, *The Acts of the Apostles* (SP; Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1992), p. 119 (cf. pp. 12-13). See also Bruno *et al.* (*Biblical Theology according to the Apostles*, p. 55) who find that the speech 'serves as a narrative hinge'.

14. Those who speak these charges are identified as 'false witnesses' (μάρτυρας ψευδεῖς) (Acts 6.13).

15. Jacques Dupont, 'La structure oratoire du discours d'Étienne (Actes 7)', *Bib* 66 (1985), pp. 153-67. Cf. Ben Witherington III (*The Acts of the Apostles: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary* [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998], p. 260), who calls this 'the most persuasive analysis of the crucial Stephen speech'. See also Keener, *Acts*, II, pp. 1332-33; Bock, *Acts*, p. 277.

16. All translations taken from the NRSV unless otherwise noted. Likewise, translations of the LXX are taken from NETS unless otherwise noted. The term

bated issues regarding Stephen's speech, namely, whether or not it is critical of the temple.¹⁷

For Richard N. Longenecker, 'Stephen reaches the climax of his anti-temple polemic by insisting that "the Most High does not live in houses made by men".'¹⁸ Steve Smith agrees that 'for many scholars, the language in Acts 7.46-48 confirms Stephen's overall negative attitude to the Jerusalem temple.'¹⁹ James D.G. Dunn sees 7.48 as the climax of the theme of apostasy, which was interwoven throughout the speech's mention of the idolatry of the golden calf (7.39-41), where the similar language of 'the works of their hands' appears,²⁰ to the idolatry of planetary powers (7.42-43) and to the present idolatry of the temple (7.48-50).²¹ Dunn stresses that the outspoken attack on the temple in 7.48 'is the most astonishing feature of the speech' and finds χειροποίητος to be the 'key word' in the text.²² Likewise, Sylva in arguing against the notion that Acts 7.46-50 criticizes the temple and in advocating for the idea that it asserts God's transcendence over the temple, finds the use of χειροποίητος in 7.48 to be one of the three main obstacles to the acceptance of his thesis since it was employed for

'houses' does not appear in the Greek but is supplied by most translations as the implied noun.

17. As Witherington writes, 'The suggestion that the speech is temple critical is largely based on an assumed contrast between things made with human hands and things made by God, and secondarily on a perceived contrast between the tent of witness and the temple as a "house" built by Solomon for God' (*Acts*, p. 262).

18. Richard N. Longenecker, 'Acts', in Tremper Longman III and David E. Garland (eds.), *Luke-Acts* (EBC, 10; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, rev. edn, 2017), pp. 663-1102 (826).

19. Smith, *Fate of the Jerusalem Temple*, p. 169.

20. ἐν τοῖς ἔργοις τῶν χειρῶν αὐτῶν (7.41). A full consideration of this phrase goes beyond the limitations of the present study, though it may be noted that many see 'works of their hands' in 7.41 as parallel to 'handmade' in 7:48. If this is the case, then the idolatry connection is heightened. On this construction, see Bock, *Acts*, p. 298; Hans Conzelmann, *Acts of the Apostles: A Commentary on the Acts of the Apostles* (trans. James Limburg, A. Thomas Kraabel, and Donald H. Juel; Hermeneia; Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1987), pp. 54-55.

21. Dunn, *Beginning*, p. 293.

22. James D.G. Dunn, *Unity and Diversity in the New Testament: An Inquiry into the Character of Earliest Christianity* (London: SCM, 3rd edn, 2006), p. 292.

idols in the LXX.²³ Given the importance of the term *χειροποίητος* in the debate regarding the temple yet the paucity of studies on it in the relevant literature, the present study seeks to establish a clearer picture on how *χειροποίητος* was employed in Greco-Roman, Jewish and New Testament literature.

3. *Χειροποίητος* in its Greco-Roman Context

Although the septuagintal influence on Stephen's speech has been widely recognized,²⁴ the use of *χειροποίητος* in Greco-Roman literature must be given due attention, too, for two reasons. First, it provides a contrast to the distinctive septuagintal usage. Secondly, *χειροποίητος* is also employed throughout the New Testament in a way that departs from this usage, and one should therefore resist the baseline assumption that the septuagintal usage necessarily predetermines its meaning. In discussions of the meaning of *χειροποίητος*, scholars frequently trace a direct line from the LXX to the New Testament with little to no consideration of how the term was employed in other literature relevant to the time. G.K. Beale, for example, in assessing the term writes 'the word "handmade" (*χειροποίητος*, *cheiropoiētos*) always refers to idols in the Greek OT and is without exception a negative reference, with overtones of idolatry, in the NT.'²⁵ First, however, the use of 'always' is problematic insofar as its use in Isa. 16.12 refers instead to a pagan sanctuary, and thus more accurate is the use of 'almost always' by scholars.²⁶ Secondly, the framing of the evidences leaves the impression that the

23. Sylva, 'Meaning and Function of Acts 7.46-50', p. 268.

24. See, e.g., F.F. Bruce, *The Book of the Acts* (NICNT; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1988), p. 134. Cf. 'Stephen's speech is based primarily on the LXX and it uses the Old Testament in different ways' (Gerhard A. Krodel, *Acts* [ACNT; Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1986], p. 139).

25. G.K. Beale, *Colossians and Philemon* (BECNT; Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2019), p. 186. Curiously, the *NIDNTE* similarly writes that *χειροποίητος* 'always' refers to idols in the LXX, yet later its only other comment on *χειροποίητος* downplays the idolatry connection, writing that 'in the NT it never refers to idols (in Eph 2.11 it is used of circumcision; elsewhere, of temples)' (Moisés Silva, 'Χείρ', *NIDNTE*, IV, p. 663).

26. See, e.g., Otto Bauernfeind, 'Επαναπαύω', *TDNT*, I, p. 351, where the Isa. 16.12 exception is noted. Similarly, David W. Pao (*Colossians and Philemon*

New Testament usage containing ‘overtones of idolatry’ is necessarily determined by the LXX usage and ignores the data from broader Greco-Roman or other Jewish literature.²⁷

Concerning its Greco-Roman usage, it should be noted that χειροποίητος means merely ‘made by hand, artificial’, with no necessary connotations of idolatrous practice.²⁸ Plato applies the term to a trench reported to be an enormous depth, a report which Plato doubts and finds ‘incredible ... considering that it was made by hand (ὡς χειροποίητον ἔργον)’.²⁹ Similarly, Herodotus details Lake Moeris and comments on the parts of the lake which were evidently altered ‘by men’s hands’ (χειροποίητος),³⁰ while Appian describes two legions traversing a road ‘which had been thrown up artificially’ (τῆς ὁδοῦ, χειροποιήτου).³¹ Likewise, Arrian in describing the conquests of Alexander the Great speaks of an enormous rock upon which certain cities sought shelter and which had ‘only one way up, made by hand and rough’ (ἀνάβασιν χειροποίητον μίαν χαλεπήν).³² One finds Polybius noting that the land connecting Carthage and Libya contains hills difficult to traverse ‘with several passes to the country artificially cut in them’ (χειροποιήτους ἐχόντων διεκβολὰς ἐπὶ τὴν χώραν).³³ Alternatively, Polybius also reflects a non-liter-

[ZECNT; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2012], p. 165) writes that χειροποίητος ‘in the LXX is almost always used in reference to the idols made by human hands’. Cf. Smith, *Fate of the Jerusalem Temple*, p. 173; Conzelmann, *Acts*, p. 56; Pervo, *Acts*, p. 434 n. 88.

27. See also the same situation in G.K. Beale, *The Temple and the Church’s Mission: A Biblical Theology of the Dwelling Place of God* (NSBT, 15; Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2004), pp. 222-28.

28. LSJ, s.v. ‘χειροποίητος’. Cf. ‘by the hand of man, artificial’ (MGS, s.v. ‘χειροποίητος’).

29. Plato, *Critias* 118c (Bury, LCL).

30. Herodotus, *Hist.* 2.149 (Godley, LCL). ‘That it has been dug out and made by men’s hands the lake shows for itself’ (ὅτι δὲ χειροποίητος ἐστὶ καὶ ὀρυκτὴ, αὐτὴ δηλοῖ). In *Hist.* 1.195, Herodotus uses the word in describing Babylonian clothing, where ‘every man has a seal and a carven staff’ (σφρηγίδα δὲ ἕκαστος ἔχει καὶ σκῆπτρον χειροποίητον).

31. Appian, *Bell. civ.* 3.66 (White, LCL). Later this road is referred to as ‘the high road above mentioned’ (ἐς τὴν χειροποίητον ὁδόν) (see 3.67).

32. Arrian, *Anab.* 4.28.3 (Brunt, LCL).

33. Polybius, *Hist.* 1.75.4 (Paton, LCL). Elsewhere, he speaks of a road ‘of singular natural and artificial strength’ (ὀχυρότητι δὲ φυσικῇ καὶ χειροποιήτῳ

al use when he describes the ruthlessness of Hermeias who was guilty of ‘trumping up false charges’ (τοῖς δὲ χειροποιήτους καὶ ψευδεῖς ἐπιφέρων αἰτίας) as a judge.³⁴

Further, Dionysius of Halicarnassus speaks of Rome’s fortification, wherein some sections of the wall were ‘fortified by nature’, yet draws attention to one section ‘strengthened artificially’ (χειροποιήτως ἐστὶν ὀχυρόν).³⁵ Thucydides records how the Peloponnesians attempted to burn a city rather than siege it, and speaks of a fire greater than any he had seen which was ‘kindled ... by the hand of man’ (γε ἐκείνον τὸν χρόνον χειροποιήτων εἶδεν).³⁶ The word appears also in a first- or second-century travel letter (P.Lond. 854) to denote that travelers go by ship ‘in order that they may visit works of art made by hands’ (ἵνα τὰς χε[ι]ρ[ο]π[ο]ι[ο]ι[ή]τ[ου]ς τέχνας ἰστορήσωσι) on the banks of the Nile.³⁷ In assessing the function of *χειροποίητος* in the New Testament, therefore, it should be borne in mind that the term was employed frequently in Greco-Roman literature without reference to idolatry or an intended negative association with the referred-to hand-made creation. The translation sometimes given as ‘artificial’, which may carry a negative connotation in modern English, relates more instead to the distinction made by the author between what is natural and what is non-natural.³⁸ Assessments of New Testament texts where *χειροποίητος* appears,

διαφέρει) (4.64.9 [Paton, LCL]). Similar uses may be found in *Hist.* 9.27.4 to describe the ‘artificially rendered’ steepness of a rock, and in 10.10.12 (Paton, LCL), an ‘artificial communication’ opened between a lagoon and neighboring sea. In 14.10.5, *χειροποίητος* is compared with *φυσικός* to describe the construction of Tunis: ‘both nature and art have contributed to render it a very strong place’ (διαφέρει δ’ ὀχυρότητι καὶ φυσικῇ καὶ χειροποιήτῳ). This contrast is also seen in 6.42.2 where he notes that the Greeks ‘think artificial defences are not equal in value to the fortifications which nature provides’ (οὐχ ὁμοίας εἶναι τὰς χειροποιήτους ἀσφαλείας ταῖς ἐξ αὐτῆς τῆς φύσεως) (Paton, LCL).

34. Polybius, *Hist.* 5.41.3 (Paton, LCL).

35. Dionysius of Halicarnassus, *Ant. rom.* 9.68.3 (Cary, LCL). In 10.16.5, Dionysius uses the term for ‘the roads that had been built to the summits’ (τὰς χειροποιήτους ὁδοὺς) (Cary, LCL).

36. Thucydides, *Hist.* 2.77.4 (Smith, LCL).

37. MM, s.v. ‘χειροποίητος’, p. 687.

38. See, e.g., the definition of ‘artificial’ as ‘of a thing: made or constructed by human skill, esp. in imitation of, or as a substitute for, something which is made or occurs naturally; man-made’ (OED, s.v. ‘artificial’).

therefore, should include in their analysis not simply a citation that the LXX uses *χειροποίητος* in a particular way but also an acknowledgment of its Greco-Roman usage (and broader Jewish usage) as well as arguments for why the LXX sense should be seen as predominating in the text.

4. *Χειροποίητος* in its Jewish Context

Whereas the Greco-Roman literature employed *χειροποίητος* as a way of contrasting natural walls with non-natural walls or to describe works of art, the notion of idolatry looms large over its use in the LXX. In relation to its use in Stephen's speech, it is often posited that *χειροποίητος* draws from the LXX sense of idolatry, yet that *χειροποίητος* does not denote an intrinsically idolatrous creation but refers to an entity legitimately constructed that was only subsequently viewed with an idolatrous attitude. However, few studies have investigated closely the use of *χειροποίητος* in the LXX, and the question remains whether linguistic justification may be found in the LXX for the assertion that *χειροποίητος* denotes extrinsic, rather than intrinsic, idolatry.³⁹ Thus, the following analysis will examine the appearance of *χειροποίητος* in Jewish literature, particularly the Septuagint and the pseudepigrapha where the term appears (Lev. 26.1, 30; Isa. 2.18; 10.11; 16.12; 19.1; 21.9; 31.7; 46.6; Dan. 5.4, 23; 6.28; Jdt. 8.18; Wis. 14.8; *Sib. Or.* 3.606, 3.618; 14.16; *Sib. Or. Frag.* 3.29). Likewise, a brief examination of how the term appears in Philo and Josephus will be undertaken.

Leviticus 26.1, 30

In Lev. 26.1, the substantive use of *χειροποίητος* appears in the prohibition against idols which further develops Lev. 19.4 and corresponds to Exod. 20.4.⁴⁰ Here the creation of *χειροποίητα* ('hand-made things') translates the Hebrew *לִלְוֹת* which indicates 'pagan gods, always derogatory as nonenti-

39. For the sake of convenience, 'intrinsic' idolatry will refer to entities which were idolatrous ipso facto in their creation, and 'extrinsic' idolatry will refer to entities which were legitimate in their own right, such as presumably the temple, which later became an idol by the attitudes of others.

40. René Péter-Contesse and John Ellington, *A Handbook on Leviticus* (UBS Handbook Series; New York: United Bible Societies, 1992), p. 401.

ties, idols'⁴¹ and 'is used with debilitating intention and with scornful undertones in all OT passages where it occurs'.⁴² The term thus 'resembles לִּילְהִים , gods, and is used to affirm the nonexistence of such entities, identifying them solely with the physical object'.⁴³ This physical object is therefore rendered in the LXX by the substantive $\chi\epsilon\iota\rho\omicron\pi\omicron\iota\eta\tau\alpha$ where Yahweh commands the blanket prohibition, $\sigma\upsilon\ \pi\omicron\iota\eta\sigma\epsilon\tau\epsilon\ \acute{\upsilon}\mu\iota\upsilon\upsilon\ \alpha\upsilon\tau\omicron\iota\varsigma\ \chi\epsilon\iota\rho\omicron\pi\omicron\iota\eta\tau\alpha$ ('you shall not make for yourselves hand-made things,' Lev. 26.1). Thus, Jacob Milgrom notes that this command against $\text{לִּילְהִים}/\chi\epsilon\iota\rho\omicron\pi\omicron\iota\eta\tau\alpha$ prohibits not only their worship but also their possession and even their manufacture.⁴⁴ Here, however, in contrast to Dan. 5.4 which follows, $\chi\epsilon\iota\rho\omicron\pi\omicron\iota\eta\tau\alpha$ does not stand by itself as a summary of all idols but exists as one among four terms which are used cumulatively to issue a comprehensive ban on idolatry.⁴⁵

Later in the chapter, in v. 30, the term appears again, yet instead of denoting idols and translating לִּילְהִים , it denotes an incense altar, translating חֲמֹן .⁴⁶ Thus, Yahweh declares, 'I will destroy your high places and cut down your incense altars ($\text{וְהִכַּרְתִּי אֶת חֲמֹנֵיכֶם}; \tau\grave{\alpha}\ \xi\upsilon\lambda\iota\upsilon\alpha\ \chi\epsilon\iota\rho\omicron\pi\omicron\iota\eta\tau\alpha\ \acute{\upsilon}\mu\omega\upsilon\upsilon$). I will heap your carcasses on the carcasses of your idols. I will abhor you' (26.30).⁴⁷ Here, three observations may be noted. First, it is unclear whether the referent of $\tau\grave{\alpha}\ \xi\upsilon\lambda\iota\upsilon\alpha\ \chi\epsilon\iota\rho\omicron\pi\omicron\iota\eta\tau\alpha$ (which translates חֲמֹן), a term typically given as 'incense-altar', may properly be defined itself as an idol,

41. HALOT, s.v. ' לִּילְהִים '.

42. Horst Dietrich Preuss, ' לִּילְהִים ', *TDOT*, I, pp. 285-87.

43. Judith M. Hadley, ' לִּילְהִים ', *NIDOTTE*, I, p. 411. She adds, 'This is specifically said in Ps. 96.5 = 1 Chron. 16.26: the gods (לִּילְהִים) of the people are nothing (לִּילְהִים).'

44. Jacob Milgrom, *Leviticus 23–27: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* (AB, 3B; New Haven: Yale University Press, 2001), p. 2279.

45. John E. Hartley, *Leviticus* (WBC, 4; Dallas: Word, 1992), p. 450; Erhard S. Gerstenberger, *Leviticus: A Commentary* (trans. Douglas W. Stott; OTL; Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1996), pp. 402-3.

46. HALOT, s.v. ' חֲמֹן '; 'sun-pillar, used in idolatrous worship' (BDB, p. 329); 'incense altar' (DCH, III, p. 256). For a detailed discussion, see Baruch A. Levine, *Leviticus: The Traditional Hebrew Text with the New JPS Translation* (JPS Torah Commentary; Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1989), p. 188.

47. NRSV translation of the HB. NETS translates the LXX as 'and I will strip bare your steles and utterly destroy your wooden handcrafted objects'.

which would soften the claim that χειροποίητος always refers to idols in the LXX, even though the altar is undoubtedly used in idolatrous practices.⁴⁸ Secondly, the LXX, although translating עִדֹלִים as εἰδῶλα ('idols') elsewhere, here 'renders the word vaguely'⁴⁹ as 'wooden object made with hands'.⁵⁰ Thirdly, throughout Lev. 26.30-31, one finds the notion of legitimate edifices which had subsequently resulted in illegitimate worship and thus were to be destroyed by Yahweh. For example, the 'high places' in 26.30 'were apparently once considered legitimate',⁵¹ and Gordon Wenham adds that here 'they seem to be regarded as legitimate,' though used in illegitimate ways.⁵² Milgrom disagrees that 26.30 has any legitimate sites in view, but sees them as legitimate in 26.31, writing that 'if Israel were obedient, God would indeed look with favor on his people's sacrifices at their "sanctuaries"'.⁵³ Although the reference to τὰ ξύλινα χειροποίητα does not appear to

48. τὰ ξύλινα χειροποίητα here translates תַּחֲת־הַמִּזְבֵּחַ and indicates 'incense altars', whereas an indication of idols appears in the LXX as τῶν εἰδῶλων ὑμῶν and translates גִּלְזוּלִים. On the latter terms, εἰδῶλον is a standard designation of idol ('fabricated/imagined deity, idol', BDAG, p. 281), as well as גִּלְזוּלִים ('idols', HALOT, s.v. 'גִּלְזוּלִים'). The precise nature and function of the מִזְבֵּחַ, writes Milgrom, however, is ultimately 'shrouded in darkness'. See the survey of views in Milgrom, *Leviticus 23–27*, p. 2318. Cf. H.G.M. Williamson who writes that מִזְבֵּחַ is 'an uncertain word often thought to refer to an incense altar but perhaps now better identified as a shrine' (*A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on Isaiah 1–27* [3 vols.; ICC; New York: T. & T. Clark, 2006], II, p. 427). The view that מִזְבֵּחַ in Lev. 26.30 denotes an idol is, however, advocated by Rashi: 'This was some sort of idol that they would set up on the roofs' (Michael Carasik [ed.], *The Commentator's Bible: Leviticus* [Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 2009], p. 227).

49. G.A. Cooke, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Book of Ezekiel* (ICC; Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1936), p. 73. Cf. 'The Gk translates this term with τεμένη (official place) (Ezek. 6.4, 6); ξύλινα χειροποίητα (wooden object made with hands) (Lev. 26.30); εἰδῶλα (idol) (Isa. 27.9; 2 Chron. 14.4); ὑψηλά (high place) (2 Chron. 34.4, 7); and βδελύγματα (abomination) (Isa. 17.8)' (Hans Wildberger, *Isaiah 13–27* [trans. Thomas H. Trapp; CC; Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 1997], p. 176).

50. Wildberger, *Isaiah 13–27*, p. 176.

51. Péter-Contesse and Ellington, *Handbook on Leviticus*, p. 415.

52. Gordon J. Wenham, *The Book of Leviticus* (NICOT; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1979), p. 332 n. 11. Cf. Hartley, *Leviticus*, p. 467.

53. Milgrom, *Leviticus 23–27*, p. 2327.

have in view sites that were ever legitimate, they nevertheless are included alongside sites which seem to have lost their legitimacy due to the behavior and practices of the worshippers.⁵⁴ As Hartley thus writes regarding the sanctuaries, ‘the people have turned the sanctuaries where Yahweh was once worshiped in purity into places where they follow worship practices like those of their neighbors,’⁵⁵ a notion not too distant from the suggestion that the Jerusalem temple in New Testament times had begun to be used improperly.

Isaiah 2.18; 10.11; 16.12; 19.1; 21.9; 31.7; 46.6

H.G.M. Williamson notes that ‘idolatry is a concern of the whole of the book of Isaiah in all its major divisions,’⁵⁶ and *χειροποίητος* appears among its various designations for idols.⁵⁷ The difficulty in assessing the significance of word choice in the LXX of Isaiah relates, in part, to what I.L. Seeligmann describes as ‘the excessive inconsistencies shown everywhere in the translation of our text in the interpretation of Hebrew words’.⁵⁸ Thus, for example, אֱלִילִים is translated in 2.18 as τὰ χειροποίητα, but in 2.20, as τὰ βδέλυγματα. Seeligmann concludes that ‘the great majority of inconsisten-

54. However, Milgrom writes that *Sipra* Beḥuqotay 6.4 suggests these sites included legitimate worship, since it interprets חַמְנִיכִים as ‘magical practices in Israel’ where Milgrom thus notes that ‘the *Sipra* is forced to render it this way because what sort of punishment is it to destroy *idolatrous* objects? The assumption must therefore be that *legitimate* worship is destroyed’ (Milgrom, *Leviticus 23–27*, p. 2318 [emphasis original]).

55. Hartley, *Leviticus*, p. 467.

56. Williamson, *Isaiah 1–27*, I, p. 43. Cf. ‘Both sections condemn the worship of idols but in entirely different ways. The terminology is different, and the monotonous harping on the manufacture of idols in Second Isaiah by way of dismissing idolatry as stupid (40.19-20; 41.16-17; 44.9-20; 46.5-7) is absent from First Isaiah’ (Joseph Blenkinsopp, *Isaiah 1–39: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* [AB, 19; New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000], p. 89).

57. For a non-exhaustive sampling, see, e.g., βδέλυγμα (2.8, ‘abomination’), χειροποίητος (2.18, ‘works of their hands’), γλυπτός (10.10, ‘graven images’), εἶδωλον (10.11, ‘idol’), δένδρα (17.8, ‘trees’), translating אֶשְׂרָה *‘Asherah pole’*, θεοὺς αὐτῶν (19.3, ‘their gods’), ἄγαλμα (21.9, ‘statues/images’) and εἰκόνα (40.19, ‘image’).

58. I.L. Seeligmann, *The Septuagint Version of Isaiah and Cognate Studies* (FAT; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2004), p. 181.

cies here discussed must be imputed to the translator's unconstrained and carefree working method, and to a conscious preference for the introduction of variations.⁵⁹ Likewise, Seeligmann finds 'throughout his work, traces of his attempts to express some idea or other which was dear to his heart, without bothering overmuch about the Hebrew original'.⁶⁰ Assessments of the use of *χειροποίητος* in the LXX broadly and Isaiah particularly, which contains half of the septuagintal references, must therefore take into account the degree to which the use of *χειροποίητος* by the translator arose from an unconstrained method and a preference for introducing variations, rather than necessarily a view that *χειροποίητος* was the preferred term for referring to idols.⁶¹

Nevertheless, it remains the case that *χειροποίητος* was frequently used by the translator of Isaiah to denote idols. Thus, in 2.18, the substantive *τὰ χειροποίητα* stands for *אֱלִילִים*. A change, however, occurs from 'hiding' to 'passing away': 'The idols shall utterly pass away'⁶² to 'They will hide all the works of their hands.'⁶³ Isaiah 10.11 similarly uses the substantive *τοῖς χειροποιήτοις* to translate the *אֱלִילִים* of Samaria, and the word occurs alongside a series of terms for idols.⁶⁴ Curiously, however, while both the idols of Samaria and Jerusalem will be destroyed, only the former are described with *τοῖς χειροποιήτοις αὐτῆς* whereas Jerusalem's idols are designated instead with *τοῖς εἰδώλοις αὐτῆς* (10.11).⁶⁵ Again, in 19.3, the substantive *τὰ χειροποίητα* translates *אֱלִילִים*, but this time it is describing the idols of Egypt

59. Seeligmann, *Septuagint Version*, p. 182.

60. Seeligmann, *Septuagint Version*, p. 205.

61. On idolatry in Isaiah, T.J. Meadowcroft (*Aramaic Daniel and Greek Daniel: A Literary Comparison* [JSOTSup, 198; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1995], p. 113 n. 61) draws attention to an idolatry polemic in Daniel and points out that Seeligmann 'notes a similar polemic against idol worship in LXX Isaiah', adding, 'the references in Isa. 1.29; 27.9; 37.19; 41.28 and 57.5 are all interpretations rather than literal translations of MT.'

62. *אֱלִילִים כָּלֵל יִחַד* (2.18).

63. *καὶ τὰ χειροποίητα πάντα κατακρύψουσιν* (2.18).

64. See, e.g., *τὰ γλυπτὰ* in 10.10 and *τοῖς εἰδώλοις* in 10.11.

65. In the Hebrew, Samaria's idols are *אֱלִילִים* and Jerusalem's idols are *עַצְבִּים*. Williamson writes, however, that 'it is difficult to know whether the word was chosen here for any reason other than variety of terminology' (*Isaiah 1–27*, II, p. 520).

(i.e. ‘the handiworks of Egypt’). As with 2.18 and 2.20 above, however, one finds the LXX translator showing variety in how אֱלִילִם is translated. Thus, the אֱלִילִם of Egypt are given in 19.1 as τὰ χειροποίητα Αἰγύπτου, but the reference to Egypt’s אֱלִילִם is given in 19.3 as τοὺς θεοὺς αὐτῶν instead. In 21.9, the LXX differs from the MT slightly in regard to describing how Babylon’s gods have fallen. Thus, where the MT reads ‘and all the images of her gods’ (וּכְלֵי פְסִילֵי אֱלֹהֶיהָ), the LXX breaks the construct into two units: ‘and all her images and the works of her hands’ (καὶ πάντα τὰ ἀγάλματα αὐτῆς καὶ τὰ χειροποίητα αὐτῆς).⁶⁶

An injunction for Israel to dispense with their idols occurs in 31.7 where, in contrast to previous texts, the focus on the illegitimacy of handmade idols is stressed both in the LXX and in the MT.⁶⁷ The emphasis is particularly heightened in the LXX since it contains both τὰ χειροποίητα as the translation of אֱלִילִם—which stresses the handmade nature of the objects—and the explanatory clause τὰ χειροποίητα αὐτῶν τὰ ἀργυρᾶ καὶ τὰ χρυσᾶ, ἃ ἐποίησαν αἱ χεῖρες αὐτῶν (‘their handiworks of silver and gold, which their hands have made’).⁶⁸ Here, the use of τὰ χειροποίητα by the translator of Isaiah closely matches the thematic emphasis of the MT; thus, ‘as expressed elsewhere, it is stressed that the אֱלִילִם (idols) are made with human hands; how then can they possibly represent a real deity? ... The judgment could only be: they are, as a glossator added, חַטָּא (for sin).’⁶⁹ In contrast to previ-

66. George Buchanan Gray (*A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Book of Isaiah, I–XXXIX* [ICC; Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1912], p. 357) suggests that the doublet in the LXX text possibly represents ‘an early text which read פְּסִילֵיהָ (= בְּבַל פ’, Jer. 51.47) or אֱלֹהֶיהָ, only’.

67. The LXX differs slightly from the MT here in that the MT repeats אֱלִילִם wherein זְהָבוּ וְאֱלִילֵי כֶסֶפּוֹ וְאֱלִילֵי זָהָבוֹ (‘their idols of silver and idols of gold’) becomes τὰ χειροποίητα αὐτῶν τὰ ἀργυρᾶ καὶ τὰ χρυσᾶ (‘their handiworks of silver and gold’).

68. The third person possessive forms appear in both the MT and the LXX, although some translations, such as the NRSV, read ‘your idols of silver and idols of gold’, presumably to match the second person forms that appear in the second half of the verse (אֲשֶׁר עָשׂוּ לָכֶם יְדִיכֶם חַטָּא, 31.7b).

69. Wildberger, *Isaiah 13–27*, p. 225. Cf. ‘These idols, as works of people’s own hands, will prove to be worthless and ineffective (cf. 17.7-8; 2.20; 27.9)’ (S.H. Widyapranawa, *The Lord Is Savior: Faith in National Crisis—A Commentary on the Book of Isaiah 1–39* [ITC; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990], p. 195). The MT emphasizes the sinfulness of the hand-made creation: אֲשֶׁר עָשׂוּ לָכֶם יְדִיכֶם חַטָּא (‘which your hands have sinfully made for you’). The LXX, Ethiopian and Arabic

ous instances, in 46.6, it is אֱל (‘god, deity’) which stands behind the LXX translation of χειροποίητα.⁷⁰ Here, as well, the use of χειροποίητα is particularly suitable insofar as the text narrates (and mocks) the manufacturing of powerless gods.⁷¹

Special note may be made of Isa. 16.12 insofar as τὰ χειροποίητα does not stand for an idol—translating אֱלִילִים or אֱל—but means a ‘sanctuary’,⁷² (translating מִקְדָּשׁ), which is a point frequently missed in descriptions of the LXX use of χειροποίητος.⁷³ Here, one may note again Seeligmann’s observation regarding the inconsistent method insofar as all other references to מִקְדָּשׁ in LXX Isaiah are given as ἁγίασμα (‘sanctuary’, 8.14; 63.18) or τὸν τόπον τὸν ἅγιόν μου (‘my holy place’, 60.13).⁷⁴ The use of τὰ χειροποίητα thus likely refers to the various local sanctuaries in which Moabites might idolatrously pray.⁷⁵ As John Goldingay writes, ‘Yahweh joins in the lamenting at devastation that is coming on Moab and at the futility of its laborious

versions omit the אֱלִילִים, however, and Wildberger sees it as a gloss. For a discussion, see John D.W. Watts, *Isaiah 1–33* (WBC, 24; Nashville: Nelson, rev. edn, 2005), p. 478.

70. HALOT, s.v. ‘אֱל’. Thus, the singular subject and object אֱל וַיַּעֲשֶׂהוּ (‘and he makes it into a god’, RSV) is rendered in the LXX by the plural subjects and objects, ἐποίησαν χειροποίητα (‘they made handiworks’).

71. Walter Brueggemann, *Isaiah 40–66* (Westminster Bible Companion; Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1998), p. 89. Cf. Graham S. Ogden and Jan Sterk, *A Handbook on Isaiah* (2 vols.; UBS Handbook Series; New York: United Bible Societies, 2011), II, p. 1284.

72. HALOT, s.v. ‘מִקְדָּשׁ’.

73. See, e.g., Beal (*Colossians and Philemon*, p. 186), who says, ‘The word “handmade” (χειροποίητος, *cheiropoiētos*) always refers to idols in the Greek OT.’ Cf. Frank Thielman, *Ephesians* (BECNT; Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2010), p. 160; Douglas J. Moo, *The Letters to the Colossians and to Philemon* (PNTC; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2008), p. 197 n. 46; Johnson, *Acts of the Apostles*, p. 133. Others have rightly noted that Isa. 16.12 denotes not an idol specifically, but a pagan sanctuary, such as Bauernfeind, ‘Ἐπαναπαύω’, I, p. 436 n. 1. This distinction is also reflected correctly in Rudolf Pesch, *Das Markusevangelium* (2 vols.; HthKNT; Freiburg: Herder, 2001), II, p. 433; Keener, *Acts*, II, p. 1416 n. 1169.

74. BDAG, s.v. ‘ἁγίασμα’.

75. Wildberger, *Isaiah 13–27*, p. 151. Cf. Blenkinsopp’s comments on 1QIsa^a (*Isaiah 1–39*, p. 297).

efforts in praying at its own sanctuary.⁷⁶ Bruce Chilton notes that the Aramaic Targum to Isaiah refuses to translate $\Psi\text{דקמ}$ here as אשדקמ , since it reserves the term to designate Yahweh's temple,⁷⁷ and this may also stand behind the LXX preference for $\tau\acute{\alpha}$ $\chi\epsilon\iota\rho\omicron\pi\omicron\iota\eta\tau\alpha$ rather than $\acute{\alpha}\gamma\iota\alpha\sigma\mu\alpha$ in the present passage.

The importance of understanding LXX Isaiah's use of $\tau\acute{\alpha}$ $\chi\epsilon\iota\rho\omicron\pi\omicron\iota\eta\tau\alpha$ for Stephen's speech is seen not only in the fact that the speech draws extensively from the LXX, but also in that Acts 7:48 is immediately followed by a quotation from Isa 66.1-2 in the LXX: 'Yet the Most High does not dwell in houses made with human hands; as the prophet says, "Will you build for me, says the Lord, or what is the place of my rest?"' As Joseph Fitzmyer writes, 'He cites Isaiah's words, which sought to make Israel aware that a human construction of stone and wood, no matter how beautiful, could not really contain God.'⁷⁸ For Conzelmann, this Isaiah quotation 'is a clear rejection of the Temple', and he avers that this quotation must be seen against the backdrop of the use of $\chi\epsilon\iota\rho\omicron\pi\omicron\iota\eta\tau\omicron\varsigma$ in LXX Isa. 16.12 'as a designation for a temple'.⁷⁹ Against Conzelmann, however, it may be noted how the LXX and Targum of Isa. 16.12 seem to have intentionally chosen translations of $\Psi\text{דקמ}$ which would ensure that the reader does not confuse the legitimate temple of Jerusalem with the illegitimate temples/sanctuaries of Moab. One may question, therefore, the degree to which the LXX use of $\chi\epsilon\iota\rho\omicron\pi\omicron\iota\eta\tau\omicron\varsigma$ in Isa. 16.12—which is apparently chosen to protect the legitimacy of the Jerusalem temple—may therefore count as evidence against the legitimacy of the Jerusalem temple.

Overall, it may be noted that, regarding the use of $\chi\epsilon\iota\rho\omicron\pi\omicron\iota\eta\tau\omicron\varsigma$, it refers to idols themselves with no suggestion of a legitimate edifice only later viewed idolatrously, although an exception is Isa. 16.12 which refers instead to a sanctuary. Inconsistency, nevertheless, abounds in LXX Isaiah's word choice, and it remains a possibility that $\chi\epsilon\iota\rho\omicron\pi\omicron\iota\eta\tau\omicron\varsigma$ was chosen merely for

76. John Goldingay, *The Theology of the Book of Isaiah* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2014), p. 44.

77. Bruce Chilton, *The Glory of Israel: The Theology and Provenience of the Isaiah Targum* (JSOTSup, 23; Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1983), p. 18.

78. Joseph A. Fitzmyer, *The Acts of the Apostles: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* (AB, 31; New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998), p. 384.

79. Conzelmann, *Acts*, p. 56.

word variation. Likewise, at times, one finds that χειροποίητος fits within the larger emphasis on the intrinsic inferiority of handmade entities, such as Isa. 31.78. Lastly, the substantive τὰ χειροποίητα mostly appears throughout LXX Isaiah with qualified terms which make the idolatry clear by the context;⁸⁰ however, the use of the substantive alone in Acts 7.48 might instead stress not that the Most High does not dwell in idolatrous houses, but that he does not ultimately dwell in any handmade entity, whether legitimately constructed or not.⁸¹

Daniel 5.4, 23; 6.28

In contrast to the substantive τὰ χειροποίητα seen earlier, in Dan. 5.4, it is used attributively to modify εἰδωλον; thus, during Baltasar's feast, they were praising τὰ εἰδωλα τὰ χειροποίητα αὐτῶν ('their handmade idols', 5.4). First, it may be noted that the LXX translation summarizes the Aramaic which lists in greater detail the material composition of the idols.⁸² Secondly, following the use of τὰ χειροποίητα, the LXX also expands the MT to emphasize the transcendental nature of Yahweh in contrast to the idols, with the LXX adding καὶ τὸν θεὸν τοῦ αἰῶνος οὐκ εὐλόγησαν τὸν ἔχοντα τὴν ἐξουσίαν τοῦ

80. Thus, e.g., Σαμαρεία καὶ τοῖς χειροποιήτοις αὐτῆς ('to Samaria and to the works of her hands', 10.11), τὰ χειροποίητα Αἰγύπτου ('the handiworks of Egypt', 19.1), etc.

81. Thus, ἀλλ' οὐχ ὁ ὕψιστος ἐν χειροποιήτοις κατοικεῖ (7.48), that is, 'but the Most High does not dwell in hand-made things'. Though many translations, such as NASB, NRSV, ESV, NIV, add 'houses', the term as such does not appear in the Greek. Sylva's point is well worth noting: 'If Luke had written in Acts 7.48 that God (*ho theos*) does not dwell in the temple (*hieron* or *naos*), this would have been a biting criticism of the temple. However, Luke did not write this but rather he wrote that the Most High (*ho hypsistos*) does not dwell in what is made with hands (*cheiropoiētois*).' Thus, Luke's purpose in 7.46-50 is to convey 'the idea of God's transcendence (*ho hypsistos*) of earthly (*cheiropoiētois*) places of worship in general, and of the temple in particular' ('Meaning and Function of Acts 7:46-50', p. 267).

82. Thus, וְשָׁחֻ לְאֱלֹהֵי דְהַבָּא וְכֶסֶפָּא וְנְחֹשֶׁת פְּרָזְלָא אַעֲמָא וְאַבְנָא ('[they] praised the gold and silver and bronze and iron and wood and stone gods'). John A. Cook notes that describing the gods in terms of their material is 'a common strategy of anti-idolatry rhetoric' (*Aramaic Ezra and Daniel: A Handbook on the Aramaic Text*, [Baylor Handbook on the Hebrew Bible; Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2019], p. 79).

Judith 8.18; *Wisdom of Solomon* 14.8; *Sibylline Oracles* 3.606, 3.618; 14.62; *Sibylline Oracles Fragments* 3.29

The term χειροποίητος may likewise be found in some pseudepigraphal texts with a similar function to the examples already surveyed. In *Jdt.* 8.18, χειροποίητος modifies θεός to denote idols and stresses that the current generations did not bow to idols as in the past. Thus, there is no tribe or family who προσκυνούσι θεοῖς χειροποίητοις ('worships gods made with hands'). The particular construction, θεοῖς χειροποίητοις, writes Lawrence Wills, 'was a relatively recent term in Israel's critique of idolatry', although it was comparable to other uses of χειροποίητος.⁸⁸ Notable is the use of χειροποίητος in *Wis.* 14.8. Here, the author is found praising a piece of wood, namely, the Ark of Noah which conceptually may be regarded as being made by hands and as 'blessed' and an object 'by which righteousness comes'.⁸⁹ Yet, while the raft (σχεδίας) guided by Yahweh's hand (χειρὶ) is blessed, this creation is strongly contrasted with τὸ χειροποίητον: 'But the idol made with hands is accursed, and so is the one who made it—he for having made it, and the perishable thing because it was named a god' (14.8). Here, then, is perhaps the clearest use where the substantive τὸ χειροποίητον—without any contextual modifiers such as τὰ χειροποίητα Αἰγύπτου in *Isaiah* or without grammatical modifiers such as τὰ εἰδῶλα τὰ χειροποίητα in *Daniel*—refers specifically to an idol. This is particularly noteworthy insofar as the Ark could properly be described as τὸ χειροποίητον ('a handmade thing'), yet here the term by itself does not refer to a handmade thing in general, but that which is intrinsically idolatrous and, as 14.8 says, 'accursed'.

In the *Sibylline Oracles*, χειροποίητος appears in 3.606 substantively as χειροποίητα to denote idols and in a context which stresses the transcendence of Yahweh and the shame associated with worshipping these handmade creations.⁹⁰ This transcendence is again heightened in 3.618 where

88. Lawrence Wills, *Judith: A Commentary on the Book of Judith* (ed. Sidnie White Crawford; Hermeneia; Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2019), p. 266.

89. εὐλόγηται γὰρ ξύλον, δι' οὗ γίνεται δικαιοσύνη ('For blessed is the wood by which righteousness comes'). Here the reference to ξύλον may indicate any piece of wood through which righteousness comes, but would nevertheless include at least the Ark.

90. 'They were not willing to piously honor the immortal begetter of all men, but honored idols made by hand [χειροποίητα], revering them, which mortals themselves will cast away, hiding them in clefts of rocks, through shame' (*Sib. Or.*

χειροποίητος appears attributively alongside ἔργα: ‘They will bend a white knee on the fertile ground to God the great immortal king, but all handmade works [ἔργα δὲ χειροποίητα] will fall in a flame of fire.’⁹¹ Notably, in 14.62, χειροποίητος does not technically denote idols as such, but is used, perhaps for the first time, specifically with reference to a temple. While the text has in view the melting down of the idolatrous statues (ιδρύματα) of the temples, it is nevertheless the temple itself to which χειροποίητος applies: ναῶν ιδρύματα χειροποιήτων (‘the statues of temples made by hands’).⁹² In *Sib. Or. Frag.* 3.29, one finds the attributive ἀγάλματα χειροποίητα (‘handmade images’) in a list of objects adored by the ‘mindless ones’, alongside living creatures such as snakes, dogs and cats.⁹³

Philo and Josephus

In both Philo and Josephus, χειροποίητος is utilized in similar ways already surveyed, yet also departing in significant ways. Like the usage found in Greco-Roman literature, the term appears in Philo in non-idolatrous contexts which relate both to physical and non-physical realities. For example, in *Vit. Mos.* 2.51 it refers to the ‘foundation of a man-made city’ (πόλεως τε χειροποιήτου κτίσιν ἀρχήν) with no suggestion of its idolatrous nature.⁹⁴ Similarly, it is used for non-physical referents such as in *Somn.* 2.215 where it refers to ‘trouble’ caused by human agency⁹⁵ or in *Flacc.* 62 where it refers to ‘a famine artificially created’ (λιμῶ χειροποιήτω).⁹⁶ To be sure, Philo

3.604-607; translation from J.J. Collins, ‘Sibylline Oracles [Second Century B.C.–Seventh Century A.D.]’, in James H. Charlesworth [ed.], *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha: Volume 1—Apocalyptic Literature and Testaments* [Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1983], pp. 317-472 [375]).

91. Collins, ‘Sibylline Oracles,’ p. 375.

92. Collins, ‘Sibylline Oracles,’ p. 462. Note, e.g., that both ναῶν and χειροποιήτων are in the genitive yet ιδρύματα in the accusative.

93. Collins, ‘Sibylline Oracles,’ p. 471.

94. Philo, *Vit. Mos.* 2.51 (Colson, LCL).

95. Thus, in listing various natural disasters, such as ‘a blazing conflagration or a thunderbolt or family, or plague or earthquake’, he adds ‘any other trouble either of human or divine agency’ (κακὰ χειροποίητα καὶ θεήλατα) (Philo, *Somn.* 2.125 [Colson and Whitaker, LCL]).

96. Philo, *Flacc.* 62 (Colson, LCL). The use of the term for ‘famine artificially created’ (λιμὸν ... χειροποιήτων) also appears in Philo, *Spec.* 3.203 (Colson, LCL).

does employ χειροποίητος with reference to idols, as in *Vit. Mos.* 1.303 which depicts the massacring of those ‘who had taken part in the rites of these idols made by men’s hands’ (τοῖς χειροποιήτοις).⁹⁷ However, what is notable is the fact that Philo uses χειροποίητος in *Op. Mund.* 142 to denote a construction of stone and wood, yet what is described is neither an idol nor an idolatrous temple, but a dwelling place that would have been suitable for Adam except that it merely had not yet been created.⁹⁸ So, too, does Philo in *Vit. Mos.* 2.88, when discussing the tabernacle and the temple, speak of ‘a temple of man’s making [ἱερὸν χειροποίητον], dedicated to the Father and Ruler of All’ with no suggestion that it is an idol.⁹⁹ Significant here is that Philo was writing in a Jewish context, on the topic of the Old Testament, and was thoroughly acquainted with the LXX; indeed, Peder Borgen finds that ‘Philo builds his exegesis on the Greek text of the LXX.’¹⁰⁰ However, he nevertheless employs χειροποίητος without the LXX connotations or denotations of idolatry.

Josephus likewise retains various uses of χειροποίητος unrelated to idolatry, such as its use to describe ‘an artificial rounded hill’ near Jerusalem.¹⁰¹ He similarly speaks of immense walls ‘reared by human hands’ (χειροποίητα

97. Philo, *Vit. Mos.* 1.303 (Colson, LCL).

98. ‘If we call that original forefather of our race not only the first man but also the only citizen of the world we shall be speaking with perfect truth. For the world was his city and dwelling-place. No building made by hand had been wrought out of the material of stones and timbers’ (Philo, *Op. Mund.* 142 [Colson, LCL]).

99. Philo, *Vit. Mos.* 2.88 (Colson, LCL).

100. Peder Borgen, ‘Philo of Alexandria’, *ABD*, V, pp. 333-42 (336). Cf. ‘Scripture, in the form of the LXX, was a central source of authority for Philo and the window through which he could ... reach his audience’ (J. Andrew Overman and William Scott Green, ‘Judaism’, *ABD*, III, pp. 1037-54 [1050]).

101. Josephus, *War* 1.419 (Thackeray, LCL). Literally, Josephus writes, τὸν δὲ μαστοειδῆ κολωνὸν ὄντα χειροποίητον, that is, a hand-made hill ‘in the form of a breast’, on which see translator’s note in *War* 1.419 (Thackeray, LCL). Later Josephus will speak of the mound as being ‘entirely artificial’ (πᾶν χειροποίητον) in *War* 1.420 (Thackeray, LCL). The same expression appears in *Ant.* 15.324 where Josephus speaks of a hill ‘raised to a (greater) height by the hand of man [χειροποίητον] and rounded off in the shape of a breast’ (Marcus and Wikgren, LCL).

τείχη μέγιστα)¹⁰² or the ‘artificial defenses’ of a city.¹⁰³ Josephus, in *Ant.* 4.55, also uses the term similarly to the earlier mentioned reference in Thucydides, *Hist.* 2.77.4 when he writes that the fire in Num. 16.35 was ‘a fire, the like of which had never in the record of history been made by the hand of man’ (χειροποίητον).¹⁰⁴ Notably, therefore, while Josephus does make reference to idols elsewhere,¹⁰⁵ there does not appear to be any use of χειροποίητος in his corpus to denote idols specifically or even idolatry more broadly. The repeated use of χειροποίητος by Josephus and Philo, who are rightly regarded as ‘among the primary representatives of Hellenistic Judaism extant today’,¹⁰⁶ without intending a derogatory sense of ‘idol’, therefore, problematizes broad generalizations such as Dunn’s that the word ‘was Hellenistic Judaism’s dismissive description of “the idol”’.¹⁰⁷

Observations on Jewish Usage

The focus of the present article has been to provide a more nuanced and thorough study of χειροποίητος in antiquity insofar as the term has rightly been recognized as a crucial interpretive key in Acts 7.48 and the debate about Stephen’s view of the temple. Before surveying in a briefer fashion the instances where the term appears in the New Testament, the following observations may be made. First, the data are not as straightforward as has often been indicated and thus one finds in a standard dictionary like *NIDNTTE* the problematic claim that χειροποίητος in the LXX ‘always’ refers

102. Josephus, *War* 4.614 (Thackeray, LCL).

103. Josephus, *War* 7.176 (Thackeray, LCL). Later he will speak of Herod’s tower which had been strongly ‘intrenched against an enemy’s attack, both by nature and the hand of man’, here using the adverb χειροποιήτως (Josephus, *War* 7.294 [Thackeray, LCL]).

104. Josephus, *Ant.* 4.55 (Thackeray, LCL).

105. For example, when he discusses the construction of altars and the worship of idols in *Ant.* 9.243, he speaks of altars (βωμός) and idols (εἶδωλον). Likewise, in *Ant.* 18.344, he notes the custom of Mesopotamians carrying their idols (τὰ ἀφιδρύματα τῶν θεῶν).

106. Urban C. von Wahlde, *Gnosticism, Docetism, and the Judaisms of the First Century: The Search for the Wider Context of the Johannine Literature and Why It Matters* (LNTS, 517; London: Bloomsbury, 2015), p. 107.

107. Dunn, *Beginning*, p. 270.

to idols,¹⁰⁸ yet, in Isa. 16.12, the reference is to a sanctuary and, in Lev. 26.30, the reference is arguably to an incense-altar. Secondly, one finds in the LXX use of *χειροποίητος*, a degree of translational inconsistency insofar as it is sometimes used as a summary statement of a multiplicity of idols and, other times, as merely a singular idol within a list of other idols. The *לילי* of Egypt can be given in Isa. 19.1 as *τὰ χειροποίητα Αἰγύπτου*, yet Egypt's same *לילי* can then be given in Isa. 19.3 as *τοὺς θεοὺς αὐτῶν* instead. The use of *χειροποίητος* at various places may thus be due to an unconstrained translational method, a preference for introducing variations, along with the particular agendas of the LXX translators in their polemic against idol worship. Thirdly, grammatical constructions comparable to Acts 7.48 (viz., *ἀλλ' οὐχ ὁ ὕψιστος ἐν χειροποιήτοις κατοικεῖ*) are exceedingly rare. Nowhere does *χειροποίητος* appear near *κατοικέω* ('dwell') and it almost always appears as *χειροποίητα* rather than the dative *χειροποιήτοις*, and never in the prepositional phrase *ἐν χειροποιήτοις*.¹⁰⁹ Further, the use of *χειροποίητος* almost always has grammatical and contextual indicators that idolatry is in view, such as being used as an attributive adjective alongside *εἰδῶλα* or as speaking of *τὰ χειροποίητα Αἰγύπτου*, that is, handmade objects of Egypt. The clearest example of a stand-alone reference to *τὸ χειροποίητον* without contextual modifiers is Wis. 14.8 where it does refer to an idol and is described as accursed.

Fifthly, it should be noted that very frequently *χειροποίητος* is utilized in contexts where what is being stressed is the transcendence of Yahweh over that which is handmade (e.g., Dan. 5.4 or *Sib. Or.* 3.606, 3.618). Sixthly, in at least one instance, Isa. 16.12, the translational choice of *χειροποίητος* in the LXX, like the use of *במה* instead of *שרקמ* in the Targum, appears chosen to protect the legitimacy of the Jerusalem temple. Thus, using Isa. 16.12 as evidence against the Jerusalem temple appears, at best, precarious. Seventhly, the use of *χειροποίητος* in Wis. 14.8 is a notable example of where *χειροποίητος* does not denote simply any 'handmade object', since it is used after a reference to Noah's ark yet stands in contrast to it, to denote an idol particularly. Eighthly, it is important to observe that in all of the instances where *χειροποίητος* denotes idolatry, it refers to intrinsic rather than extrinsic idolatry. That is, *χειροποίητος* denotes constructions which were

108. Silva, 'Χείρ', IV, p. 663.

109. See, however, Jdt 8.18 and Isa. 10.11.

idolatrous in their very construction; one does not find instances where *χειροποίητος* refers to a legitimately constructed object which only later was turned into an idol by the perception of those interacting with it. This does not, of course, prevent Acts 7.48 from being interpreted as meaning that the temple is legitimate but that the religious leaders had begun to treat the temple idolatrously, only that support for this type of use is difficult to find in the LXX use of the term. Lastly, it should not be ignored that while the references in the LXX and Pseudepigrapha do denote idolatry, there exists a widespread and established use of *χειροποίητος* in both the Greco-Roman literature and in Jewish writers such as Josephus and Philo where the term appears in entirely non-idolatrous contexts. Clearly, in *Op. Mund.* 142, Philo does not draw from the LXX use of *χειροποίητος* to suggest that Adam should have lived inside of an idol or idolatrous dwelling, but instead merely means a handmade house which is contrasted with the natural earth. Too often discussions of *χειροποίητος* draw a direct line from the LXX to the New Testament, yet these examples show how frequently the term was being used in both Greco-Roman and Jewish contexts without any reference to the concept of idolatry but merely to denote something 'handmade'.

5. *Χειροποίητος* in its New Testament Context

In interpreting the use of Acts 7.48, the LXX usage has for many been determinative, and not unreasonably so, yet it is nevertheless important to compare this usage to that found in the New Testament. For example, although the *NIDNTTE* claims that *χειροποίητος* is 'always' used with reference to idols in the LXX, it finds that 'in the NT it never refers to idols', which suggests a curious dissonance between the two corpuses.¹¹⁰ Lohse finds that 'in the NT *χειροποίητος* in every passage in which it is used sets forth the antithesis of what is made with men's hands to the work of God' yet leaves unaddressed the question of how the LXX use of idolatry does or does not relate to the passages.¹¹¹ In the New Testament, *χειροποίητος* is used in six

110. Silva, 'Χείρ', IV, p. 663-64.

111. Eduard Lohse, 'χείρ, κτλ', *TDNT*, IX, pp. 435-36 (436). Bauernfeind, "Επαναπαύω", I, p. 436. Similarly, W. Rebell in summarizing in the New Testament simply quotes Lohse at this point. Likewise, while Acts 7.48 is mentioned where it is concluded that it does not express 'any fundamental criticism of the temple' but

places: Mk 14.58; Acts 7.48, 17.24; Eph. 2.11; Heb. 9.11, 24. Likewise present is the use of the term ἀχειροποίητος ('not made by hand')¹¹² which is not found in the LXX but appears in Mk 14.58, Col. 2.11 and 2 Cor. 5.1. These examples, like those surveyed, help to illuminate the manner in which Stephen's contemporaries employed the term.

In Mk 14.58, both χειροποίητος and ἀχειροποίητος appear in the context of the 'false testimony' against Jesus who was claimed to have said: 'I will destroy this temple that is made with hands (τὸν ναὸν τοῦτον τὸν χειροποίητον), and in three days I will build another, not made with hands (ἄλλον ἀχειροποίητον οἰκοδομήσω).'¹¹³ If this represents Jesus' words, then it is possible that Jesus, like Stephen, characterized the temple establishment as idolatrous.¹¹⁴ Others, however, while noting the LXX context, do not go so far as to say that Jesus identifies the temple as idolatrous but acknowledge that he is nevertheless critical of it (i.e. χειροποίητος means 'merely a human construction' and ἀχειροποίητος indicates 'built by God himself').¹¹⁵ Sylva has argued that Mk 14.58 represents a misunderstanding by the accusers of how the χειροποίητος terminology was used by Jesus, and that Luke attempts to correct this misunderstanding. Thus, he writes,

According to Luke, the Christian message is not that Jesus will destroy the temple "made with hands" (*cheiropoiēton*, Mk 14.58), but rather that God transcends (*ho hypsistos*, Acts 7.48) anything made with human hands (*cheiropoiētois*, Acts 7.48); the Christian message is not that Jesus will build another temple 'not made with hands' (*acheiropoiēton*, Mk 14.58), but rather that God's hands made all things (*hē cheir mou epoiēsen tauta panta*, Acts 7.50). In such a way, Luke attempts to explain the false witness that Jesus would destroy

'pick[s] up the idea of the limitation of the temple's significance', no mention of the LXX, idols or idolatry is made in the entire entry (W. Rebell, 'Χειροποίητος', *EDNT*, III, p. 464).

112. BDAG, s.v. 'ἀχειροποίητος'.

113. Bruce opines that the fact that Jesus said this statement 'is not likely to have been false on this point' (*Book of the Acts*, p. 150).

114. Craig A. Evans, *Mark 8:27–16:20* (WBC 34B; Nashville: Nelson, 2001), p. 446.

115. Mark L. Strauss, *Mark* (ZECNT; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2014), p. 654. Cf. Pesch, *Das Markusevangelium*, II, p. 434.

the temple *cheiropoiēton* and build another *acheiropoiēton* as a misunderstanding of how these *cheiropoiēton* terms were used.¹¹⁶

It is possible, therefore, that Jesus' use of *χειροποίητος* and *ἀχειροποίητος* deals more properly with God's transcendence, a notion likewise embedded in the LXX usage of the terms.

After the use of *χειροποίητος* in Acts 7.48, it is found again in 17.24 in Paul's statement of God's transcendence during his speech at the Areopagus. Thus, he declares, 'the God who made the world and everything in it, he who is Lord of heaven and earth, does not live in shrines made by human hands' (οὐκ ἐν χειροποιήτοις ναοῖς κατοικεῖ). Here the language fits most closely with Acts 7.48, although *ναός* has been specified. While idolatry is no doubt in view throughout the entire pericope,¹¹⁷ L. Scott Kellum has suggested that the use of *χειροποίητος* 'is not the inflammatory statement of 7.48', and here draws on simply its Greco-Roman usage of 'hand-made' which 'would not be offensive to a Gentile about a pagan shrine'.¹¹⁸ Instead, the function of the description may be to stress more broadly God's transcendence, as C.J. Hemer writes: 'The nature of God is thus explained against the backdrop of the Athenians' own terminology, as Paul gently exposes the inconsistency between the transcendent reality to which their thinkers aspired and the man-made images of Athens.'¹¹⁹

In both Eph. 2.11 and Col. 2.11, Paul uses the language of *χειροποίητος* and *ἀχειροποίητος* as applied to circumcision. Paul speaks of Jews having merely 'a physical circumcision made in the flesh by human hands' (ἐν σαρκὶ χειροποιήτου; Eph. 2.11) and those in Christ being 'circumcised with a spiritual circumcision', as some translate it, or more literally, 'a circumci-

116. Sylva, 'Meaning and Function of Acts 7:46-50', pp. 270-71.

117. C.K. Barrett writes that the word 'cannot fail to recall its frequent use in OT denunciations of idolatry' (*A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Acts of the Apostles* [2 vols.; ICC; New York: T. & T. Clark, 2004], II, p. 840). See also Keldie Paroschi who notes 'the narrative framing of the speech [in Acts 17.22-31] around the issue of idolatry' ('On God's Side of History: Time and Apocalyptic History in Paul's Speech at the Areopagus', *AUSS* 59 [2022], p. 239 n. 65).

118. L. Scott Kellum, *Acts* (EGGNT; Nashville: B&H Academic, 2020), p. 204. Cf. Flavien Pardigon, *Paul against the Idols: A Contextual Reading of the Areopagus Speech* (Eugene, OR: Pickwick, 2019), p. 155 n. 70.

119. Colin J. Hemer, *The Book of Acts in the Setting of Hellenistic History* (ed. Conrad H. Gempf; Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1990), p. 423.

sion without hands' (περιτομῆ ἀχειροποίητω; Col. 2.11). Here, Paul appears to be using the term in its more generic sense of 'handmade' rather than importing notions of idolatry, although he may nevertheless have intended to draw on general negative connotations of the term.¹²⁰ This, then, would represent important New Testament evidence for χειροποίητος departing from LXX usage. Alternatively, some have found the LXX use as determinative in the present passage, and thus Nijay K. Gupta writes that 'By using this term, then, in Col. 2.11, Paul is alluding to the over-reliance on physical circumcision as a kind of reverence for what is merely "handmade"—tantamount to idolatry.'¹²¹ Notably, this view of the use of χειροποίητος is similar to the extrinsic view of idolatry concerning Acts 7.48. That is, if Paul employs χειροποίητος to mean not that circumcision at its inception was intrinsically idolatrous but that it has only become idolatrous because of subsequent attitudes toward the practice, then this would lend support to the view that Stephen does not mean that the temple at its inception was intrinsically idolatrous but only means that the temple became idolatrous because of subsequent attitudes toward the edifice.

In Heb. 9.11 and 9.24, χειροποίητος appears, yet the difficulty in taking the term as denoting an idol relates to the fact that it is applied to the tabernacle which God himself commanded. The author indicates that Christ has entered 'through the greater and perfect tent (not made with hands [οὐ χειροποίητου], that is, not of this creation)' (9.11) and again that he 'did not enter a sanctuary made by human hands [χειροποίητα ... ἄγια], a mere copy of the true one, but he entered into heaven itself' (9.24). Again, in 8.2 the

120. A number of commentators thus note that the LXX employs the term to denote idols, but find that this sense is not carried over to Paul's usage here, such as Thielman, *Ephesians*, p. 160; Harold W. Hoehner, *Ephesians* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2002), p. 354; Clinton E. Arnold, *Ephesians* (ZECNT; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2010), p. 154; Andrew T. Lincoln, *Ephesians* (WBC, 42; Dallas: Word, 1990), p. 136.

121. Nijay K. Gupta, *Colossians* (SHBC; Macon, GA: Smyth & Helwys, 2013), p. 94. Cf. 'Here, in noting the circumcision that is "not performed by human hands", therefore, Paul is indirectly accusing those who emphasize physical circumcision of worshipping false gods' (Pao, *Colossians and Philemon*, 165). Beale also opines that the reference 'indicates that to continue to affirm circumcision as the true identity marker of God's new-covenant people is idolatrous' (*Colossians and Philemon*, p. 187).

author stresses that Christ is now a ‘minister in the sanctuary and the true tent that the Lord, and not any mortal, has set up’. Yet the function of the text is not to stress that the handmade tabernacle was idolatrous, but that it was merely a copy and an imperfect representation of the heavenly tabernacle.¹²² Indeed, the author is clear that Moses constructed the handmade Tabernacle according to God’s command, indicating that Moses was told, ‘See that you make everything according to the pattern that was shown you on the mountain’ (8.5). Accordingly, Craig R. Koester, while acknowledging that the term *χειροποίητος* has a ‘pejorative connotation and was used for idols’, stresses that the author of Hebrews departs from such usage, writing, ‘The author understood that the Tabernacle was made by hand, since Moses had “made” it at God’s command (Heb. 8.5), although he did not consider the Tabernacle to be idolatrous.’¹²³ Both the tabernacle and the temple were handmade and temporary (cf. Mk 14.58; Acts 7.48) and stand ‘in contrast to the heavenly tent that God set up (Heb. 8.2)’, not because they were idolatrous but because they were merely copies.¹²⁴ Similarly, in 2 Cor. 5.1, the term *ἀχειροποίητος* is used to stress the earthly tent with the heavenly building ‘not made with hands’. There appears little indication in the text that notions of idolatry are in view; rather, ‘the description “not made with hands” (*ἀχειροποίητος*, *acheiropoiētos*) implies “not made by human effort or ability” and speaks of something that only God can do.’¹²⁵ Therefore, the application of the terms appears to have little relation to idolatry in the present

122. As William L. Lane stresses, ‘the expression “true tabernacle” is used in contrast not to what is false but to what is symbolical and imperfect’ (*Hebrews 1–8* [WBC, 47A; Dallas: Word, 1991], pp. 205-6).

123. Craig R. Koester, *Hebrews: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* (AB, 36; New Haven: Yale University Press, 1974), pp. 409-10. Cf. ‘*Χειροποίητου*, like *χειροποίητα* (v. 24), means “manufactured”, not “fictitious” (as applied to idols or idol-temples by the LXX and Philo)’ (James Moffatt, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Hebrews* [ICC; Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1924], p. 120).

124. Koester, *Hebrews*, p. 410.

125. George H. Guthrie, *2 Corinthians* (BECNT; Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2015), p. 278. Victor Paul Furnish thus writes that the adjective merely ‘describes what is “supernatural, immaterial, spiritual”’ (*II Corinthians: Translated with Introduction, Notes, and Commentary* [AB, 32A; New Haven: Yale University Press, 1984], p. 266).

texts, and merely contrasts that which is handmade to that which is made by God. Concerning the New Testament usage, therefore, there exists an array of texts where the LXX usage of *χειροποίητος* with its relationship to idolatry does not appear to have a controlling force. Such uses provide a context for questioning the degree to which Acts 7.48 should, therefore, necessarily draw from the LXX sense of idolatry.

6. Conclusion

The present study has attempted to provide a more detailed account of the use of *χειροποίητος* in Greco-Roman and Jewish literature since a lacuna of such studies exists and the term occurs in a prominent place in Stephen's speech, as well as throughout the New Testament. Determination of how Stephen employs the term in Acts 7:48, as well as of his view of the temple more broadly, ultimately relies on a series of complex and interrelated interpretive questions that cannot be decided on word choice alone. Nevertheless, at least four conclusions from the data may be highlighted. First, while it is true that *χειροποίητος* was a term employed in describing idols, it is also true that in many of these instances this term appeared in conjunction with other terms which provided clear indications that the object was an idol; thus, the notion of idolatry was not necessarily derived from the internal semantics of *χειροποίητος* but came from the larger linguistic context. In the construction *τὰ εἰδῶλα τὰ χειροποίητα*, for example, it is not that *χειροποίητος* stands alone substantively to denote an idol, but that *τὰ εἰδῶλα* already indicates the idols and *τὰ χειροποίητα* stresses its handmade, material quality. Similarly, when *χειροποίητος* is employed in the LXX frequently the surrounding language makes clear that the focus is on transcendence. Secondly, a response to the charge that Stephen views the construction of the temple as idolatrous has been to claim that *χειροποίητος* denotes a legitimately constructed edifice merely subsequently viewed idolatrously. While possible, none of the instances of the term in the LXX are used in this way, although in the New Testament, Col. 2.11 may offer support.

Thirdly, though the LXX has undeniable significance on the language of the New Testament, the widespread and well-established usage of *χειροποίητος* in both Greco-Roman and Jewish literature as denoting 'handmade' with no connotations of idolatry should nevertheless not be ignored. It is significant that Philo can speak of the idea of Adam dwelling in a

'handmade' house of silver or gold without any indication that the concept of idolatry is anywhere in view. Likewise, several New Testament texts also appear to employ the term to indicate 'handmade' with no relation to idolatry. These factors should mitigate drawing too quickly a correlation between LXX usage and a particular text, since this correlation tends to ignore established usage in other Greco-Roman and Jewish literature. Lastly, Sylva has noted that an interpretive key to Acts 7.48 is recognizing that Stephen always refers to God with θεός in his speech, except for 7.48 where he changes to ὕψιστος 'the Most High'.¹²⁶ Rather than drawing from the conceptual pool of idolatry, Stephen may therefore employ χειροποίητος in the more general sense of handmade to stress Yahweh's transcendence over any handmade entity, whether legitimately constructed or not.¹²⁷

126. Sylva, 'Meaning and Function of Acts 7:46-50', p. 267.

127. Accordingly, Sylva's observation has much to commend it when he writes, 'Luke's change in his manner of referring to God at this point (i.e. 7.48) in the Stephen episode is the result of his concern to convey in 7.46-50 the idea of God's transcendence (*ho hypsistos*) of earthly (*cheiropoiētois*) places of worship in general, and of the temple in particular' ('Meaning and Function of Acts 7:46-50', p. 267).