Forward to the Past

Regression in Galatians

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οἱ ὑπομένοντες τὸν θεὸν

ἀλλάξουσιν ἰσχύν

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Contents

Maps, Images, Charts, and Tables ..... *v*

Chapter 1 Introduction **1**
- Proposal 6
- Consequences 7
- Methodology 8
- Argument 10

Chapter 2 Galatians in Context: Where? When? Who? **19**
- 1. Introduction 19
- 2. Where Were the Galatian Churches? 20
- 3. When Was Galatians Written? 38
- 4. Galatians: Dramatis Personae 55
  - 4.1 Paul 55
  - 4.2 The Galatians 58
  - 4.3 The Influencers 60
- 5. Conclusion 69

Chapter 3 Galatians in the Pagan Religious Context of Asia Minor **71**
- 1. Introduction 71
- 2. Sources 74
  - 2.1 Literary Sources 74
    - 2.1.1 Strabo 74
    - 2.1.2 Pliny the Younger 77
    - 2.1.3 Dio Chrysostom 78
    - 2.1.4 Pausanias 79
    - 2.1.5 Aelius Aristides 80
    - 2.1.6 Apollonius of Tyana 81
  - 2.2 Epigraphic Sources 82
    - 2.2.1 Votive Offerings 83
    - 2.2.2 Confession Inscriptions 91
    - 2.2.3 Funeral Dedications, Doorstones and Honorary Inscriptions 98
    - 2.2.4 Curses and Magical Texts 101
- 3. Analysis 105
  - 3.1 Regional Specificity 106
  - 3.2 Religious Change 109

3.3 Ethical Consciousness 114
3.4 Religious Motivation 115
3.5 Reciprocity 119
3.5.1 Non-Circularity 120
3.5.2 Priority 122
3.5.3 Incongruity and Efficacy 122
3.5.4 Superabundance and Singularity 124
3.6 Tangible and Lasting Memorialisations of Devotion 124
4. Galatians in the Pagan Religious Context of Asia Minor 127
4.1 Galatians and the Emperor Cult 128
4.1.1 Background 128
4.1.2 Application and Critique 133
4.1.2.1 Bruce Winter 133
4.1.2.2 Brigitte Kahl 134
4.1.2.3 Justin Hardin 136
4.1.2.4 Thomas Witulski 139
4.2 Galatians and 'Indigenous' Anatolian Cults 140
4.2.1 Background 140
4.2.2 Application and Critique 142
4.2.2.1 Clinton Arnold 142
4.2.2.2 Susan Elliott 145
5. Conclusion 148

Chapter 4 Paul and Returning to Paganism 151
1. Introduction 151
2. Paul and the Gentiles 151
3. Paul and the Challenge of Pastoring Gentile Converts 155
3.1 1 Corinthians 8.1-13 156
3.2 Romans 14.1-15.13 162
3.3 Pastoral Priorities in Galatians 166
4. Enslavement to the *Stoicheia* 168
4.1 Enslavement in Context 169
4.2 Enslavement to the *Stoicheia* as a Jewish Experience 171
4.3 Enslavement to the *Stoicheia* as a Gentile Experience 175
4.3.1 Knowledge of God in Gal 4.8-11 176
4.3.2 Repetition Vocabulary in Gal 4.8-11 178
4.4 The *Stoicheia* as Common Components of Religious Practice 182
4.4.1 Martinus De Boer – Judaism, Paganism, and Calendrical Observances 184

4.4.2 J. Louis Martyn – Judaism, Paganism, and Cosmic Dualities 185
4.4.3 John Barclay – Judaism, Paganism, and Components of Worth 187
4.4.4 Returning to the *Stoicheia tou Kosmou* 188
5. Enslavement to the *Stoicheia* and its Parallels 198
5.1 Enslavement to the *Stoicheia* and the Curse of the Law 198
5.2 Paul on Jews and Religious Works 200
5.3 Paul on Gentiles and Religious Works 204
6. Conclusion 210
7. Excursus – Mission and Habituation after the New Testament 211

Chapter 5 Galatians in the Jewish Religious Context of Asia Minor 217
1. Introduction 217
2. Sources 224
2.1 Literary Sources 226
2.1.1 Jewish Literary Sources 226
2.1.2 Pagan Literary Sources 227
2.1.3 Christian Literary Sources 231
2.2 Material Culture 240
2.2.1 The Synagogues at Sardis and Priene 240
2.2.2 The Noah Coins of Apamea Kibotos 243
2.3 Epigraphic Sources 245
2.3.1 Vows 245
2.3.2 Grave Inscriptions 247
2.3.3 Dedications 250
2.3.4 Declarations of Loyalty 255
2.3.5 Magical Texts 256
3. Analysis 258
3.1 Distinctiveness 258
3.2 Hostility 260
3.3 Engagement 262
3.4 Sympathisation 264
3.5 Integration 265
3.6 Conversion 269
4. Galatians in the Jewish Religious Context of Asia Minor 271
4.1 Is Paul Talking About Regression to Godfearer Status? 271
4.2 Is Paul Talking About Regression Construed More Broadly? 274
5. Conclusion 280
6. Postscript – Regression and Pauline Christianity 288

Neil Martin, Keble College

Chapter 6 The Galatian Reception of the Influencers' Message 295
1. Introduction 295
2. Paul Within Judaism 296
2.1 Matthew Thiessen – Proselyte Status as an Invalid Category 296
2.2 Michael Wyschogrod – Ongoing Obligation to the Noachide Laws 302
2.3 Paula Fredriksen – Gentile Circumcision as an Historical Anomaly 305
3. Regression as a Rhetorical Ploy 307
3.1 Similarities Between Jewish Christianity and Paganism 310
3.2 Similarities *and Differences* Between Jewish Christianity and Paganism 315
4. Regression and Non-Circularity 319
4.1 Different Forms of Non-Circularity 321
4.2 Non-Circularity and the Actors in Galatians 326
4.2.1 Paul's Audience 326
4.2.2 Paul Himself 328
4.2.3 The Influencers 328
4.3 Regression and Non-Circularity 330
5. Postscript: Regression in the History of Reception 333
5.1 Ignatius' *Letters* 334
5.2 Justin's *Dialogue with Trypho* 336
5.3 Origen 338
6. Conclusion 341

Chapter 7 Conclusion 343

Primary Sources 353
Non-Canonical Christian Sources 353
Intra- and Post-Biblical Jewish Sources 357
Rabbinic Sources 360
Qumran Sources 361
Graeco-Roman Sources 361
Other Sources 370
Inscription Corpora 371

Bibliography 373

Neil Martin, Keble College

Maps, Images, Charts, and Tables

Map 1	Asia Minor – Select Ancient Sites	23
Fig. 1	Tentative Pauline Chronology	54
Map 2	Asia Minor – Graeco-Roman Epigraphy and Material Culture	75
Fig. 2	Votive dedication. Pisidian Antioch. Sanctuary of Mēn Askaēnos. Roman Imperial Period. Reproduced courtesy of Cambridge University Press.	94
Fig. 3	Matar standing flanked by lions. Arslankaya Rock, Western Phrygia. Early sixth century B.C. Reproduced courtesy of Brill Academic Publishers.	110
Fig. 4	Meter seated with lion. Gordion. Late third/early second century B.C. Reproduced courtesy of the Gordion Excavation Project.	110
Fig. 5	Meter with headdress and tympanum, standing with Attis and lion. Provenance unknown. Late second century B.C. Reproduced courtesy of the American School of Classical Studies at Athens.	111
Table 1	στοιχεῖον citations, Blinzler Corpus. Reproduced courtesy of SAGE Publications.	196
Table 2	στοιχεῖον citations, First Century B.C. and A.D. Corpus. Reproduced Courtesy of SAGE Publications.	197
Map 3	Asia Minor – Jewish Epigraphy and Material Culture	225
Fig. 6	Noah Coins. Apamea. Early second century A.D. Reproduced courtesy of Wikipedia Commons.	243
Fig 7	The Role of the στοιχεῖα in the Galatian Crisis	317

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All scripture references are cited from the New Revised Standard Version unless otherwise noted.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

Paul's letter to the Galatians prickles with restless concern. Influenced by Torah-observant Christ-followers, his readers stand on the brink of proselyte conversion. If they capitulate – in Paul's mind, at least – a return to the norms of their pagan past will necessarily follow. In what sense could this possibly be true? Why does Paul oppose the Galatians' openness to Jewish calendrical commitments and dietary restrictions and even to circumcision with such passion? Why not rather welcome it as an encouraging sign of commitment? In the ancient world, conversion to Judaism involved a radical reconstitution of ethnic identity – 'abandoning,' as Philo has it, 'kinsfolk,… country,… customs,… temples and… gods' (*Virt.* 20.102). So why does Paul describe it in Galatians using the language of *regression*?

Gal 4.8-11, with its extraordinary concentration of regressive terminology, justly stands at the centre of this interpretative enigma:

> Formerly, when you did not know God, you were enslaved to beings that by nature are not gods. Now, however, that you have come to know God, or rather to be known by God, how can you turn back

> again to the weak and beggarly στοιχεῖα?[1] How can you want to be enslaved to them again? You are observing special days, and months, and seasons, and years. I am afraid that my work for you may have been wasted.

The 'days, and months, and seasons, and years' in focus here had come onto the Galatians' religious radar through the ministrations of *Jewish* Christian Influencers. The reference to 'beings that by nature are not gods,' however, clearly signals the relevance of their past *pagan* commitments to the present crisis. In some sense, accepting Jewish Law was reanimating that past – even to the point where their knowledge of God was in doubt. Paul's use of the verb ἐπιστρέφω powerfully captures the sense of returning to a past state. For the Galatians, in Paul's opinion, Jewish Law traced the path back to slavery.

This passage, however, is only the tip of the regressive iceberg.[2] Paul frames his diagnosis in regressive terms in Gal 3.3, strikingly dichotomising terms for beginning (ἐνάρχομαι) and completing (ἐπιτελέω). The paired narratives of 3.23-29 and 4.1-7 are predicated on the danger and folly of regression: Those who trust in Christ have been liberated from the supervision of the law as a παιδαγωγὸς (3.24-5) – how can they now willingly return to this state of bondage? Those who trust in Christ have entered into their long-promised inheritance as sons of God (4.4-5) – how can they

[1] Paul's use of the notoriously fluid term στοιχεῖα in Galatians will be analysed in detail in Chapter 4. Until that point in the argument, the word is rendered in the original Greek.
[2] Elliott, 2003, 254-5.

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now willingly return to the state of heirs under 'guardians and managers' (ὑ π ὸ ἐ π ιτρό π ους καὶ οἰκονό μ ους – 4.2)? Regression broods over Paul's allegorical interpretation of the Abraham narrative in 4.21-31 – embracing Jewish law implies turning back from Sarah to Hagar, from the new covenant to the old. Regression is reemphasised in 5.1 – 'For freedom Christ has set us free. Stand firm, therefore, and do not submit *again* to a yoke of slavery' (emphasis mine). Capitulation to the Influencers in 5.4 entails 'falling away from grace' (ἐκπίπτω). The striking use of the Aorist, Ἐτρέχετε, in 5.7 highlights the fact that the Galatians are *no longer* running well. Even in Paul's retelling of the Antioch incident, the problem with Peter's behaviour is couched in regressive terms. Peter built again (π άλιν οἰκοδο μ ῶ) 'the very things that [he] once tore down,' thus demonstrating his identity as a 'transgressor' (2.18) – a fault from which Paul is clearly keen to exonerate himself (cf. 5.11).

Throughout Christian history, careful readers of the letter have wrestled with the tension that this diagnosis of regression appears to introduce into Paul's argument. Augustine captures the problem with typical clarity in his commentary on Gal 4.8-9: 'When [Paul] says *turn back* he is certainly not saying that they are turning back to circumcision – they had never been circumcised' (*Com. Gal.* 33.3). Even if the Galatians had been enthusiastic participants in local Jewish communities prior to Paul's arrival, regression hardly covers their new passion for *exclusive* devotion to the God of Israel. Augustine prefigures traditional reformation exegesis in his response to this difficulty, bridging the gap between paganism and Judaism *from the Jewish side*. Like pagans, he argues, Jews were obsessed with the 'slavish'

observance of legal rites to the extent that they were 'carnal' (*Com. Gal.* 34.4). Paul's critique of Jewish legal observances in the letter constitutes a direct assault on his religious past.

Should the same Paul who willingly divided the work of global evangelisation with law-observant Jewish Christians in Gal 2.9, however, be thought to condemn Jewish rites as the equivalent of enslavement to pagan gods only two chapters later? Not all early Christian authors were willing to accept this result. For Jerome, Jewish law was only 'weak and miserable' in comparison to the new dispensation revealed in Christ (*Com. Gal.* 4.9). His interpretative instinct remains influential today thanks, in large part, to J. Louis Martyn and John Barclay, for whom Sabbath-observance and circumcision are equivalent to paganism in Galatians only in the sense that they represent a return to the logic of 'the old age' prior to Christ's coming.[3] Shaped by Paul's explicit emphasis on 'special days, and months, and seasons, and years' in 4.10, Ambrosiaster's concentration on calendrical observances as the key point of contact between the Galatians' pagan background and the Jewish Christianity of the Influencers also finds a modern echo in the work of Martinus De Boer.[4]

Readings of Paul's regression language that focus in this way on its rhetorical impact facilitate more positive interpretations of Paul's attitude to his Jewish heritage. The problem in Galatia was not Jewish legal observances themselves, but Jewish legal

[3] Martyn, 1997*a*, vol 33A, 393-400; Barclay, 2015, 389-91; 404-10.
[4] De Boer, 2011, 252-61.

observances used for a purpose the apostle deemed unacceptable. Following James Dunn and N. T. Wright, many interpreters trace the origins of the Galatian crisis to the use of law as a racial identity marker without which Gentiles lacked the necessary qualifications for fellowship with Jews.[5]

In recent years, contextual studies have sought solutions to the regression problem in a deeper understanding of the Galatians' religious background. For Justin Hardin, Brigitte Kahl, Bruce Winter, and Thomas Witulski, the Galatians' submission to Jewish law was an attempt to negotiate their obligations to the emperor cult, 'normalising' their abstention from participation in various ways.[6] For Susan Elliott and Clinton Arnold, their attraction to Jewish law is to be understood with reference to the analogous attractions of local pagan cults.[7] Recent contributions from the 'Paul within Judaism' school question whether the argument of Galatians applies to Jews at all, explaining the extremity of Paul's concern on the basis that legal observances were inappropriate for Gentiles though remaining thoroughly appropriate for Jews.[8] The specific accusation of regression, however, remains unexplained.

Each of these interpretative possibilities will be subjected to detailed scrutiny in the chapters that follow. Wherever regression is explicitly confronted, however, we find the attempts to explain Paul's logic inadequate. None of the alternatives

[5] e.g. Dunn, 2006*b*, 352-3; Dunn, 2008, 8-9, 12, 17, 23-8; Wright, 1991, 3; Wright, 1997, 29-35.
[6] Hardin, 2008; Kahl, 2009; Winter, 1994, 123-43; Winter, 2015, 226-49 Witulski, 2000.
[7] Elliott, 1999, 661-83; Elliott, 2003; Arnold, 2005, 429-49.
[8] Thiessen, 2016; Fredriksen, 2017; Wyschogrod, 2004, 188-201.

satisfactorily tackles *both* the bluntness with which the apostle associates his readers' behaviour with their pagan past *and* the tension between his apparent acceptance of law-observance among Jews (Gal 5.3, 6; 6.15) and his insistence upon its dangers among Gentiles (3.4, 4.11, 5.2,4).

Proposal

In this thesis, I propose that Paul's warnings about regression are more central to his overarching argument than has been acknowledged in extant works. As I read his intentions, the heart of the problem with the Galatians' incipient conversion lay *neither* in the supposition that Judaism was inherently 'legalistic,' *nor* in the supposition that Jewish legal observances, though valuable in themselves, were being used to erect false boundaries around God's covenant community. The problem lay rather in their capacity to trigger *the reanimation of religious assumptions to which the Galatians had become habituated in their pagan past* (Gal 4.8-11) fundamentally distorting and even eviscerating their Christian faith (4.11; 5.2-4).

As in 1 Cor 8.1-13 – where Paul, I argue, addresses a situation closely parallel to the situation in Galatia – 'strong' Christians were encouraging 'weak' Christians to embrace practices that were powerfully associated with religious assumptions rooted in their pagan background. In Galatia, however, the problem was not actual re-immersion in local cults.[9] The problem was exposure, under the auspices of Jewish

[9] Contra Martin, 1995, 437-61. See also Hardin, 2008, 141-2.

Christianity, to basic components of religious practice familiar from their past, and the consequent reanimation of the assumptions habitually associated with those practices in the present.

Paul, I argue, did *not* equate paganism and Judaism in Galatians, neither did he deny that it was possible or desirable for ethnic Jews to remain law-observant as believers in Christ. His concern focused on the fundamental components of religious practice they shared. He did not believe that Jewish Christianity, as it was being (mis)appropriated by his readers, was the same thing as Jewish Christianity as it was being practiced by ethnic Jews, and his critique of this (mis)appropriation of Judaism should not be understood as a critique of Judaism itself. His concern was rather with *the Galatians' reception of Jewish law*. Paul feared that the ministry of the Influencers was reawakening expectations characteristic of the Galatians' *pagan* past – expectations about the efficacy of religious works that Paul deemed inimical both to Judaism and to faith in Christ.

Consequences

On the basis of this proposal, I conclude that the dispute between the apostle and the Influencers in Galatia was less theological than it was pastoral and missiological. Paul's animus towards the Influencers was not focused so much on *what they said* as it was on *who they were saying it to*, and on their failure to anticipate or accommodate the weaknesses that he perceived among this audience – weaknesses

connected to the enduring magnetism and intuitive plausibility of their entrenched religious presuppositions.

These conclusions have significant consequences for our reading of the letter. The Galatian crisis becomes a worked example of Paul's larger theology of accommodation – a concrete manifestation of the dire consequences that he anticipated for 'weak' Christians exposed to the inconsiderate behaviour of 'strong' Christians in 1 Cor 8.11 and Rom 14.15, 20-21. The key dichotomy between faith and works in Gal 2-3 is also radically recontextualised. The emphasis shifts from a comparison between faith as Paul saw it and works as they appeared to his Jewish contemporaries, to a comparison between faith viewed from an integrated Pauline/Jewish perspective and works viewed from the pagan perspective – or at least from the pagan perspective *as Paul conceived it*.

Methodology

Where were the Galatian churches? When was the letter written? Who were the Influencers in Galatia and what were their motives? These classic contextual questions, kindled by the frustrating reality that we are eavesdropping on just one side of a many-sided conversation, rightly occupy the attention of all serious exegetes. In this study, while competing solutions are reviewed and the boundaries around what can be known with confidence are assessed and respected, I neither attempt, nor defend, a complete reconstruction of my own. Definition is sought only to the extent that it is necessary to adjudicate the proposal.

Extrabiblical data illuminating potential components of the Galatians' religious background are used to define the envelope of possible options, to shape and test the proposal, and to facilitate the assessment of alternative solutions. The quest for a complete, objective, or prescriptive account of this background, however, is explicitly eschewed as illusory. I do not seek to discern, or to define, the essential attributes of pagan, Jewish or Christian worship, or to mount an objective comparison between them. My focus lies rather on Paul's assertion that embracing Jewish-Christian observances entailed a return to paganism *for his readers* and *on what he thought this meant*.

Other solutions to the regression problem have sought to identify *features that are unique to the religious background of the region* and to use these features to a greater or lesser extent to control exegesis.[10] While sources that may constitute evidence of distinctive local religious practices and assumptions are considered in this study, however, I do not make such distinctiveness a criterion for consideration. I am interested in *both* the total religious experience of the Galatians – including commonplaces of belief and practice as well as local peculiarities to the extent that we have access to either from the available data, *and* Paul's distinctive personal perspective on that experience as we find it encoded in his correspondence, interpreted in the light of his larger Jewish milieu.

[10] e.g. Elliott, 1999; Elliott, 2003; Arnold, 2005, 429-49; Witulski, 2000, 204-18.

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Argument

In broad outline, the argument of the following chapters alternates between biblical exegesis and scrutiny of extrabiblical data, before drawing conclusions. Exegesis moves progressively from a wide to a narrow field, from situating Paul and the Galatian letter in their larger chronological and geographical context to engagement with the specific concerns of the Galatian crisis and regression as Paul's central diagnostic motif. Assessment of extrabiblical sources from the region begins with the Graeco-Roman religious background and progresses to the Jewish religious background.

Chapter 2 – Galatians in Context: Where? When? Who?

Chapter 2 situates the project within the larger landscape of research into the Galatian *Sitz im Leben*, exploring the major options and defining the limited number of commitments which will form the handrails for our discussion as it progresses.

While noting the historical importance of the debate about northern and southern Galatian destinations for the letter and the present (and perhaps decisive) renaissance of the southern option, for this project, the viability and importance of decoupling questions about location from questions about the readers' pre-existent religious sensibilities is stressed.

Chronological questions are pursued in some depth, weighing the relative strength of the various sources and datums relevant to the foundation of the Galatian churches and the writing of the letter with reference to Jewett, Campbell and other

key interlocutors, and drawing on travel data made available through the Stanford Geospatial Network Model of the Roman World, ORBIS. For this project, however, the primary conclusion is uncontroversial: *whenever* Paul wrote the letter to the Galatians, the congregations he addressed were still relatively immature.

Paul, the Galatians, and the Influencers are each briefly introduced on the basis of the available data. Here it begins to become apparent that agnosticism with respect to the identity and motives of the Influencers is *necessary* for secure exegesis and that it also forms *no obstacle* to satisfying exegesis. For structural efficiency in the argument that follows I assume the Influencers were ethnic Jews, but the underlying logic of the proposal is unaffected by alterative characterisations.

Chapter 3 – Galatians in the Pagan Religious Context of Asia Minor

Chapter 3 begins to probe the question of the Galatians' religious background. The letter famously, and infuriatingly, offers us only *Paul's* perspective on the Galatian crisis; there are no sources to which we can appeal to adjudicate the nature of the problem as *the Galatians* would have seen it. Literary, epigraphic and archaeological sources may still be consulted, however, in an effort to define the possible range of their religious influences and to inform our judgements about the relative probability and compatibility of each.

In upland Anatolia in the first century we find commonalities at the level of religious practice both within the region and beyond its borders, as well as local idiosyncrasies; no one cult can be elevated with any confidence to the status of an

interpretative key. Boundaries between sacred and profane space are carefully guarded. Past acts of devotion are memorialised with a particular focus on the creation of tangible and enduring monuments. Religious actions are repeated according to sacred calendars. Local cults display an attentiveness to religious ethics driven more, it seems, by a concern to keep doing what has worked in the past than by fear. Diachronic factors emerge as of particular importance. Diverse conceptions of divine-human reciprocity are attested.

Extant attempts to expound Galatians in its pagan religious context inform our understanding but none of them adequately represents the range and balance of these influences, or avoids distortion in consequence. Empire-critical exegeses of the Galatian crisis are examined, as are appeals to the ritual practice of the Cybele cult and to the Lydian-Phrygian confession stelae as possible backgrounds for the attraction of circumcision, but none provides a comprehensive survey of the kinds of powerful and enduring religious assumptions upon which Paul's warnings about regression in Galatians seem to hang.

Chapter 4 – Paul and Returning to Paganism

Chapter 4 turns once more to Paul himself – to the assumptions about pagan religion evident in his Jewish milieu, evident in his wider correspondence, and embedded in the argument of Galatians itself.

Paul, the first-century Jew, is interpreted first within the first-century Jewish debate about Gentiles and Gentile religion, identifying the principle danger of regression as

idolatry – the endowment of human beings with roles and functions reserved to God. Paul's analysis of Gentile converts using the language of 'weakness' (associated with longstanding habituation to pagan religious assumptions) and 'strength' in 1 Corinthians 8 (perhaps also in Romans 14-15) then leads us back into Galatians, where similar pastoral concerns are evident. A detailed exegesis of Paul's regression language follows, centring on a rigorous reassessment of the enigmatic phrase τὰ στοιχεῖα τοῦ κόσμου in Gal 4.3 that takes into consideration every instance of στοιχεῖα in the literature of the first centuries B.C. and A.D. In Galatians, I conclude that στοιχεῖα functions as a reference to the 'fundamental components of religious behaviour' common to pagan and Jewish worship.

In dialogue with Richard Hays' influential analysis of the narrative substructure of the letter, I conclude that 'enslavement under the στοιχεῖα' in Galatians 4 is equivalent to 'imprisonment under in the law' and 'life under the curse' in Galatians 3, and that all three expressions have relevance to Jews *and* Gentiles. Gentile perceptions of 'works' are found to be just as important, if not more important, than Jewish perceptions in the crucial interpretative debate about 'the works of the law' in Galatians 2 and 3, noting in particular the striking contrast between Jewish and Gentile knowledge in Gal 2.15-16: Jewish Christians (probably *all* Jews) 'know that a person is justified not by the works of the law.' 'Gentile sinner[s],' however, lack this knowledge and the protections afforded by it in their appropriation and practice of religious observances. Pagan, and not Jewish, presuppositions about the efficacy of

works in divine-human interactions emerge as the foil against which the letter's call to action is designed to make sense.

The chapter concludes with a brief excursus exploring vulnerability to the reanimation of entrenched pagan religious assumptions as a theme in the growth and spread of the church in the early centuries of the Christian era.

Chapter 5 – Galatians in the Jewish Religious Context of Asia Minor

In Chapter 5, our attention shifts to Jewish influences in Galatia and among the Galatians. Even if Paul believed his readers' habitual religious expectations were inimical to his own in many ways and that they remained dangerously close to the surface of their experience, ready to re-emerge at any moment, why would he think *Jewish Christianity* particularly likely to trigger this re-emergence? And why would he conceive of this danger as somehow more acute than the equivalent danger associated with his own vision of Christian discipleship, which was itself associated with religious observances like baptism (Gal 3.27) and various ethical laws (5.13-6.10).

Following the pattern established in Chapter 3, Chapter 5 assesses these questions in the light of extant literary and epigraphic sources and the material culture of Asia Minor in the early Christian period. Lessons for Galatians are appropriated by tracing the interplay of actions and reactions within and between pagan and Jewish communities. Evidence of Jewish distinctiveness is related to evidence of pagan hostility, pagan hostility to Jewish engagement, Jewish engagement to pagan sympathisation, pagan sympathisation to Jewish integration, and Jewish integration

to cases of pagan conversion. In each case, tensions and outlying examples fill out the complexities of the landscape.

Applying this material to Galatians, we explore the possibility that Paul's readers were former Godfearers and that Paul's regression vocabulary describes a return to Godfearing behaviour in their new Christian context, or at least a movement in the general direction of a Godfearing past. In the former scenario, the incompatibility of the Influencers' call to circumcision and the Godfearing lifestyle – with its characteristic engagement in the Jewish community and its enthusiasm for socially-acceptable elements of Jewish piety without any sense of exclusive commitment – is particularly striking. In the latter, the focus of Paul's concern on his readers' regression to their former religious affiliations (Gal 4.8) forces the conclusion that, in his mind, law-observant Jewish Christianity was *equivalent to paganism*, directly contradicting the evidence of 2.6-10. Even if this difficulty could be resolved, it is far from clear that conversion would have yielded the benefits of 'social normalisation' that have been claimed for it.

I conclude that Paul's concerns are best interpreted in conjunction with primary source data suggesting not only that Judaism in Asia Minor in the period was capable of accommodating and reimagining many of the trappings of pagan religious devotion to its own ends, but that pagans also reimagined Jewish traditions according to their own presuppositions. Through the practices used by Jewish Christians to articulate their new faith, Paul's readers were expressing the quintessential religious expectations of their old faith.

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On the susceptibility of Paul's own gospel to similar accusations, the important question is not whether it *eliminated* the dangers associated with the Galatians' former pagan commitments, but whether it *minimised* them in comparison to other options. Noting the transition from warnings to ethics in the movement from Gal 3-4 to 5-6, and flagging avenues for further research, I suggest that Paul deliberately minimised exposure to observances with the potential to reawaken entrenched religious assumptions for *new converts*, and that he laid out a path of spiritual transformation for *established believers* designed to neutralise their influence in the longer term.

Chapter 6 – The Galatian Reception of the Influencers' Message

In Chapter 6, responses to the regression problem tied less closely to specific facets of the underlying religious context take centre stage. Dialogue with Torah-observant portraits of Paul (Thiessen, Wyschogrod, Fredriksen) highlights the importance of the distinction between Jewish law as observed by Jewish Christians and Jewish Law as observed by Gentile Christians. None of these portraits, however, provides a compelling explanation for the extent of the danger Paul associates with the latter while apparently embracing the former not only for others but also for himself. Dialogue with scholars treating Paul's regression language as a rhetorical ploy (De Boer, Martyn, Barclay) highlights the importance of both the similarities and the differences between the Influencers' concept of Jewish calendrical observances, food laws, and circumcision, and the equivalent concept in the minds of Paul's

Galatian readers. Dialogue with both groups facilitates the clarification of the proposal under development.

The danger of Jewish observances for Paul's readers lay neither in their fundamental inappropriateness for Gentiles nor in high-level *religious assumptions* about worth and reciprocity that the Influencers and the Galatians may or may not have held in common. The danger lay rather in their common dependence on *basic elements of religious practice* – the calendrical observances and vows and purifications and memorialisations of devotion that undergirded Jewish Christianity and every form of pagan devotion attested within the envelope of options observable in our region and period. In Paul's mind, the enduring strength of the association between these στοιχεῖα and the religious expectations they had encoded in the Galatians' pagan past left his readers profoundly vulnerable. Far though it may have been from the Influencers' intentions, Jewish Christian practice for Paul's Gentile converts threatened to reawaken the assumptions of their former religious lives, destroying their Christian faith from within.

Selections from Ignatius, Justin and Origen augment this reconstruction of the Galatian situation, highlighting continuing awareness of Jewish law as a threat to Gentile Christians (even when it was deemed appropriate for Jewish Christians), and of the consequent potential for a return to the clutches of the former evil age. Origen, in particular, understands regression in Galatians as a return to a pagan

mindset under the guise of Jewish practice, treating Paul's regression motif as an exegesis of the Israelites' inclination to return to Egypt.

Chapter 7 – Conclusion

Chapter 7 summarises the findings of the foregoing argument, highlighting consequences for the exegesis of the letter. Texts which are typically taken as definitive Pauline judgments on Jewish Christianity – either as a legalistic distortion of the gospel or as a nationalistic brake on the expansion of the gospel – are found instead to be manifestations of Paul's larger concern for accommodation in ethnically diverse church situations. Jewish and Gentile Christians must consider the spiritual consequences of their religious practice on believers from different backgrounds. The weak must be protected from influences which, though harmless to the strong, have the capacity to reawaken harmful habituated religious assumptions.

Several potential avenues for future research are identified including further exploration of the consequences of the project for the relationship between Pauline warnings and ethics, a re-examination of the coherence of Paul's thought across the larger canvas of his literary output, and an assessment of the implications in the fields of religious psychology and conversion studies.

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Chapter 2
Galatians in Context:
Where? When? Who?

1. Introduction

Any serious discussion of Galatians – and particularly any discussion that seeks to situate Paul's argument within the larger socio-historical context of his readers – necessarily entails engagement with a network of complex and interrelated scene-setting questions that have been generating different answers since the letter first became an object of theological study. *Who* were Paul's readers? *Where* were they? *When* the letter was written? Who were the Influencers in Galatia and what were their motives?

Across the centuries, interpreters have ventured a dizzying variety of complete and more-or-less coherent reconstructions of the Galatian situation based on their commitments to specific answers in each of these areas. Recombining the data to yield yet another distinctive formulation of the letter's *Sitz im Leben* is not, however, the goal of this project. My target is more modest – seeking clarity *only to the extent that it is needed to evaluate interpretations of Paul's regression language*. Indications of the balance of the evidence as I judge it, together with supporting reasoning, are provided as the argument develops but, in each case, I seek to give due weight to

alternative assessments. My thesis is neither based on, nor tied to, one specific response to the letter's notoriously finely-balanced contextual conundrums. I argue, rather, that a fresh focus on the regression motif and its connection to his readers' religious past has much to add to our understanding of Paul's argument across a range of different solution sets.

The interrelated nature of the questions under discussion here necessarily renders the categorisation of the material under discrete headings somewhat artificial. For ease of navigation, the argument proceeds from *geographical* questions (*where* were the Galatian churches?) to *chronological* questions (when was the letter written in both absolute terms and relative to other key events in Paul's biography) and finally to *relational* questions (who were the Influencers in Galatia? How should Paul's dispute with them be characterised?)

2. Where Were the Galatian Churches?

Among the thirteen canonical letters of Paul only Galatians is addressed neither to a specific individual nor to believers in a specific city. In the introductory formula it suffices Paul to say merely:

> ταῖς ἐκκλησίαις τῆς Γαλατίας – to the churches of Galatia

The extent and variety of subsequent scholarly endeavours to determine *where these churches were actually located* amply demonstrates the ambiguity of this remark for modern readers. Nobody doubts there were churches in Galatia for Paul to write to,

but which churches were they? And what region did Paul have in mind when he used the term, 'Galatia'?

Before the battle of Actium in 31 B.C. and the ensuing accession of Octavian as Caesar Augustus, the connotations of 'Galatia' as a territory in Asia Minor were widely acknowledged and relatively stable. Galatia referred to the region settled by Celtic mercenaries who crossed the Hellespont in 278/277 B.C. at the bidding of Nikomedes I of Bithynia with the purpose, at least initially, of strengthening local resistance to the Seleucid monarch Antiochus I.[1] After demonstrating neither any great desire to return to their homeland nor any lack of zeal in their campaign to win extensive territories of their own, the Celts were ultimately subdued, and settled in northern upland Anatolia in three distinct tribal groupings – the Tolistobogii in the west in the vicinity of Gordion, the Tectosages in the vicinity of modern Ankara, and the Trocmoi in the east beyond the Halys river in the vicinity of Tavium.[2]

As far as we can tell, the Galatian settlers rapidly established themselves in this new situation and their influence, borne on the media of language and tribal organisation, expanded to fill the vacuum left behind by the collapse of the Phrygian Empire.[3]

Over time, however, Galatian culture itself assimilated the norms of the surrounding Hellenistic monarchies.[4] Galatian kings exchanged their stoutly-defended mountain

[1] Memnon of Heracleia is our primary witness to these events (Memnon *Hist.* 8.8-20.3).
[2] Lucian memorably reports the ultimate subjugation of the Celts at the hands of Antiochus and a force including sixteen elephants (Lucian *Zeux.* 8-11). See also Marek and Frei, 2016, 203-7.
[3] Breytenbach, 1996, 106.
[4] Breytenbach, 1996, 107-8.

fastnesses for cities organised on the model of Greek πόλεις. After the death of Julius Caesar in 44 B.C., the Galatian tribes united under the leadership of Deiotarus, the Tetrarch of the Tolistobogii.[5] Additional territories in the southern regions of Lycaonia and Pamphylia were secured by Deiotarus' grandson Amyntas through loyalty to Mark Antony, and retained under Augustus after Amyntas' dramatic switch of allegiance at Actium.[6] By the time he lost his life in a campaign against the Homonadensians and Augustus annexed his entire territory as the new Roman Province of Galatia in 25 B.C., it stretched from the northern frontiers of upland Anatolia to the southern coast, taking in large parts of eastern Phrygia, Pisidia, Isauria, Lycaonia and Pamphylia.[7]

[5] The ebbing and flowing fortunes of Deiotarus are captured in several classical sources, including the correspondence of Cicero who knew him personally during his tenure as governor of Cilicia 51-50 B.C. (Cicero *Att.* 110.3; 111.2, 4; 113.9, 114.2, 14; 115.4, 14, 23; 355.2; 366.1; 372.2; 413.6). Strabo records the gradual consolidation of power in Deiotarus' hands (Strabo *Geog.* 12.5.1). See also Mitchell, 1993, vol 1, 35-7.

[6] Dio Cassius *Hist.* 49.32.3; Plutarch *Ant.* 61.2. For Amyntas' retention of these territories under Caesar Augustus, see Dio Cassius *Hist.* 51.2.1. Horace provides a vivid poetic rendering of Amyntas' treachery against Antony, describing the pursuit of the defeated Triumvir by 2,000 Galatian horsemen (Horace *Epod.* 9.17-20).

[7] Dio Cassius *Hist.* 53.26.2-4. See also Mitchell, 1993, vol 1, 61-2.

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Where, then, were 'the churches of Galatia' mentioned in Gal 1.2? It remains possible that Paul may have been referring to churches in the, by that time, traditional homeland of the Galatians in northern Anatolia, in and around Ancyra (the so-called north Galatian or *Landschaft* hypothesis). But it is equally possible that he was referring to churches in the larger Roman province of Galatia which, with some slight modifications since the time of Augustus, continued to incorporate vast swathes of central Asia Minor, including many of its most important southern cities (the so-called south Galatian theory or *Provinz* hypothesis).[8]

How can the question be adjudicated? For some commentators, Paul's use of the terms Γαλατία for the letter's target region (Gal 1.2) and Γαλάται (literally – Celts) for its recipients (3.1) is sufficient to establish the northern option. Following Ernst Haenchen and Hans Conzelmann, J. Louis Martyn argues that Γαλάται 'is a very unlikely way of speaking to persons living in the southern part of the Roman province, where there were few if any Celts. It is, however, a natural way of addressing a group of ethnic Galatians.'[9] This conclusion is far from secure, however. Ruth Schäfer questions the whole premise of Martyn's argument – arguing from literary and epigraphic parallels that, in Paul's time, the use of the term 'Galatians' for inhabitants of the whole Roman province of Galatia should be

[8] In 6/5 B.C., Paphlagonia, and in 3/2 B.C., Galatian Pontus, were added to the territories of Galatia (Breytenbach, 1996, 110-11).
[9] Martyn, 1997*a*, vol 33A, 16. See also Haenchen, 1971, 483 note 2; Conzelmann, 1987, 126-7.

'considered proven.'[10] And even if the term Γαλάται *was* exclusively used to refer to ethnic Celts in this period, it is by no means certain that a letter addressed to Γαλάται necessarily had a northern destination. Contra Martyn, Cilliers Breytenbach provides a wealth of onomastic data to demonstrate the presence of ethnic Celts far beyond their traditional strongholds, particularly in the south.[11] Any argument that moves directly from the forms of address that Paul uses in the letter to the conclusion that his correspondents *necessarily* lived in northern Galatia stumbles over the abundant contemporary, and near-contemporary, evidence to the contrary – not least the testimony of Jerome, who remarks in his commentary on Gal 1.2 that the letter was addressed 'to the churches of the entire province.'[12]

Beyond the equivocal terms Γαλατία and Γαλάται, the letter itself carries very little additional information about the *location* of its recipients. In Gal 4.13, Paul informs us that his initial contact with the Galatians was occasioned by an illness – a

[10] 'Aufgrund von literarischen und epigraphischen Parallelen ist zudem die Möglichkeit als erwiesen anzusehen, daß Paulus Bewohnerinnen und Bewohner der ganzen römischen Provinz als „unverständige Galaterinnen und Galater" (Gal 3,1) anreden konnte' (Schäfer, 2004, 474). For uses of the term 'Galatia' to refer to the entire Roman province, see Pliny the Elder *Nat.* 5.25.95, 42.146-7; 6.2.6-7 and Tacitus *Ann.* 13.35; 15.6; *Hist.* 2.9.

[11] Breytenbach notes, in particular, the massive southward extension of ethnic Galatian influence under Amyntas, and the extensive conscription of Celts into the Roman legions that defended the region after the foundation of the Roman province, many of whom settled there with the rights of citizens on the completion of their military service (Breytenbach, 1996, 154-9). The urban communities of northern Galatia were also mixed, incorporating 'Phrygian natives, Hellenised Galatians, Italian immigrants and Romans' as well as ethnic Celts (Breytenbach, 1996, 152).

[12] '*Quod autem ait ecclesiis Galatiae, et hoc notandum quia hic tantum generaliter non ad unam ecclesiam unius urbis, sed ad totius prouinciae scribat ecclesias et ecclesias uocet quas postea errore arguat deprauatas*' (*Comm. Gal.* 1.2). Note here that Jerome uses the word *provincia* – a technical term for territories 'outside Italy under the direct administration of a governor from Rome' (Glare, 1990, 1506). On two occasions Jerome uses the word to refer to regions not officially constituted as Roman provinces (*Epist.* 78.39.2; *Vir. ill.* 14.1), but in instances where the territory named is, or had been, a Roman Province, the technical sense of the word is intended (e.g. *Vir. ill.* 53.1; 122.1).

condition that apparently caused them some inconvenience, possibly involving impairment of Paul's sight (4.14-16).[13] There are no obvious points of connection, however, to the biographical narrative in chapters 1 and 2, which is silent on the topic of Paul's missionary endeavours beyond the assertion that he spent a good deal of time in Arabia, Damascus, Syria and Cilicia after his initial encounter with the risen Jesus and that, by the time we reach the second of the two visits to Jerusalem recorded in the letter, he was already a seasoned evangelist among the Gentiles (2.2). Several commentators draw attention to the fact that Paul seems able to assume personal knowledge of Barnabas among his audience (2.1, 9, 13) but this sheds no light on the question of *where* this acquaintance was initially formed without appealing to other sources.[14]

Venturing more widely into the canonical Pauline corpus, we note that the phrase, 'the churches of Galatia,' also appears in 1 Cor 16.1. Here, Paul exhorts the Corinthians to contribute to his collection for needy believers in Palestine in the same way he urged the Galatians to do. This limits the location of the Galatian churches to places Paul had already visited prior to the composition of 1 Corinthians, but again this brings us little closer to the identification of a specific destination for the letter, without appealing to other sources. If we accept 2 Timothy as a source of insight, at least with respect to the sentiments and deeds associated

[13] De Boer, 2011, 281. On the history of interpretation with respect to Paul's illness, see Lightfoot, 1874, 23-4, 174-6; Bruce, 1982b, 2010-11; Longenecker, 1990, 192-3.
[14] In support of the proposal that Paul's readers knew Barnabas, see Dunn, 1993a, 17; Ramsay, 1899, 293; in dissent, see Martyn, 1997*a*, vol 33A, 185-6.

with Paul by his early followers, it is striking that the southern cities of (Pisidian) Antioch, Iconium and Lystra are remembered as locations where he endured persecution (2 Tim 3.11). Breytenbach's helpful survey of Pauline geographical terminology highlights both the apostle's tendency to subdivide the larger sphere of his missionary endeavours in terms of Roman provinces and his limited use of traditional ethnic alternatives.[15] None of this, however, moves us much closer to pinpointing the city or cities where Paul's Galatian correspondents lived. On the contrary, the Pauline data opens up the range of options more than it narrows them down, warranting possible settings throughout provincial Galatia and not only in the Celtic heartlands of the north.

Various avenues open up to us at this point in our quest for greater specificity. The case has been made that by writing to the Galatians in theologically and rhetorically sophisticated Greek, Paul tips his hat to the thoroughly Hellenised context of his readers.[16] And though Hellenised readers can of course be envisaged in northern Galatian cities, the observation points more naturally towards a readership in the south.[17] Early traditions associating Paul with the cities of southern Galatia – the

[15] For Pauline use of provincial names, see 1 Thess 1.7f.; 4.10; Phil 4.15; 1 Cor 16.5, 15; 2 Cor 1.1, 8, 16; 2.13; 7.5; 8.1; 9.2; 11.9f.; Rom 15.19, 26; 16.5 (Breytenbach, 1996, 151 n.23). Paul only uses ethnic identifiers to refer to Judea, which became a procuratorial province in A.D. 6 and attained proconsular status under Hadrian; and Arabia which became a *propraetorial* province in A.D. 106 under Trajan (1 Thess 2.14; Gal 1.17, 22; 4.25; 2 Cor 1.16; Rom 15.31; Breytenbach, 1996, 152 n.24-5).

[16] 'The fact that Paul wrote his well-composed and, both rhetorically and theologically, sophisticated "apology" forces us to assume that he founded the Galatian churches not among the poor and the uneducated but among the Hellenized and Romanized city population' (Betz, 1979, 2).

[17] The wealth of Hellenic and Roman epigraphic materials preserved in Stephen Mitchell's *Vestigia Ancyra* goes some way to undermining the assertion that the stylistic refinements of Paul's prose could *only* have been appreciated in southern cities (I.Ancyra, 2012), but there is an even greater abundance of equivalent epigraphic data to work with in the south.

passage from 2 Timothy discussed above and the second-century text, *the Acts of Paul and Thecla*, for example – are also susceptible to fruitful *archaeological* scrutiny. Cilliers Breytenbach and Christiane Zimmermann's recent comprehensive study, *Early Christianity in Lycaonia and Adjacent Areas*, convincingly demonstrates the unusual concentration of early Christian inscriptions located around these conurbations (complete with an unusual prevalence of individuals named Paul and Thecla) and presents diachronic evidence for the spread of early Christianity from them into the surrounding regions.[18] These data strengthen the case made 20 years earlier in Breytenbach's previous book, *Paulus und Barnabas in der Provinz Galatien*, in which he argues that Galatian Christians were being pressurised to join local Jewish synagogues as proselyte converts and that this is more readily believable in southern provincial Galatia than it is in northern ethnic Galatia where no synagogue communities from the period have yet been attested archaeologically.[19]

The elephant in the room here, however, is the book of Acts which purports to offer a comprehensive treatment of Pauline church-planting in southern Galatia, and which provides a narrative framework in which the possibility of church-planting in

[18] On the prevalence and dating of Christian inscriptions in the region, see Breytenbach and Zimmermann, 2018, 127-394 (developing the argument initially sketched in Breytenbach, 1996, 168-71); on the significance of Paul as a name in the region, see Breytenbach and Zimmermann, 2018, 73-91; on the diachronic expansion of early Christianity from southern-Galatian cities, see, for example, Breytenbach and Zimmermann, 2018, 237-9.

[19] Breytenbach, 1996, 127-33, 144-8. Breytenbach explores potential linguistic connections between the epigraphic remains of southern-Galatian cults and the modes of argument used by Paul in Galatians (e.g. the prevalence of ransom (λύτρον) language in the Mēn-cult that dominated the religious landscape of Pisidian Antioch, and the possible connection to Paul's discussion of redemption from the curse in Gal 3.13) but finds the case for conscious connection on Paul's part inconclusive (Breytenbach, 1996, 161-2).

northern Galatia can at least be imagined, even if it is not actually described.[20] How far ought Acts to be relied upon as a source for Paul's life and to what extent should uncertainties about the circumstances of its composition, the nature and origin of its sources, and the motives of its compiler/author, not to mention its own susceptibility to archaeological examination, affect our assessment of it as a historical/biographical record? Scholars throughout the history of exegesis have generally agreed that priority should be given to materials from Paul's own hand.[21] The extent to which prioritising Pauline material necessitates neglect, or even outright scepticism, with regard to Lukan material, however, has been one of the chief matters of contention in New Testament scholarship since the dawn of the critical era.

Important though these questions undoubtedly are for the wider study of Paul, *for this project,* they are only of peripheral interest. The religious practices and assumptions attested for *all the cities* that have been seriously proposed as centres for Paul's Galatian mission, in the north *and* in the south, have valuable contributions to make to the task of understanding Paul's regression language in its context. Ironically, the scholarly drive to pin down the *location* of the Galatian churches has contributed more to questions about *dating* the letter over the years

[20] Once the terminological red herrings associated with Γαλατία and Γαλάται have been cleared away, *both* the northern- and the southern-Galatian hypotheses lack a 'loadbearing argument' without appealing to the text of Acts: 'Erstens entbehrt die Landschaftshypothese selbst ohne die Angaben der Apg (16,1-6 und 18,23) tragfähiger Argumente… Wenn wir aber nicht wissen, wo die besagte Γαλατία liegt… wird es unmöglich, lediglich aufgrund der paulinischen Angaben den Abfassungs- und Bestimmungsort des Rundbriefes festzustellen' (Breytenbach, 1996, 101-2).
[21] e.g. Baur, 1845, 1-14; Meyer, 1880, 64; Munck, 1959, 78-9; Jewett, 1979, 23; Dunn, 1993a, 12; Martyn, 1997*a*, vol 33A, 17, 184; Lüdemann, 2005, 361-4; Murphy-O'Connor, 2012, 8-23; Campbell, 2014, 21; Fredriksen, 2017, 62.

than it has to the development of nuanced contextual readings. If the Galatian churches are southern the letter can be early – written perhaps only shortly after the visit to Jerusalem recorded in Gal 2.1-10. If the Galatian churches are northern the letter can be late – perhaps contemporary with the Corinthian correspondence.[22]

None of this, however, should necessarily dissuade us from evaluating the usability of Acts as a piece in the geographical puzzle before us or from venturing an opinion about the location of the Galatian churches in the light of its contribution. Many scholars take the opposite view. But neither *excision of Acts* from the debate nor *selectivity within Acts* on the basis of source-critical criteria automatically liberates us from precarious interpretative assumptions. It invites us to exchange one set of assumptions for another, but it does not absolve us from the task of assessing whether the assumptions it avoids are more or less problematic as components in our overall analysis than the assumptions it entails.

Douglas Campbell, for example – as a contemporary exponent of the approach espoused in different forms and for different reasons by F.C. Baur and the Tübingen school in the nineteenth century – argues that discussion of Acts ought to be

[22] Note Moisés Silva's exhortation to decouple the question of location from the question of dating (Silva, 2001, 129-32). The point is highlighted by the self-consciously unusual nature of Ruth Schäfer's proposed chronology for Galatians which combines acceptance of the southern-Galatian hypothesis with a later date of composition: 'Eher ungewöhnlich war hingegen der Vorschlag, die These einer *späten Abfassung des Briefes* auf der zweiten Reise des Paulus von Mazedonien durch die Achaia (also auf seiner sogenannten ‚dritten Missionsreise', etwa in Athen) mit der Annahme einer *frühen Gründung der galatischen Gemeinden* vor dem Apostelkonzil (also der ‚Provinzhypothese') zu kombinieren' (Schäfer, 2004, 474). On the historical, literary and theological importance of the geographical question, see Breytenbach, 1996, 100-1.

ruthlessly eliminated from the task of framing Paul's story in general and locating the Galatian churches in particular.[23] Campbell is at least *aware* of the problems attending Baur's bold assertion that the testimony of the Pauline epistles ought to be preferred on the basis that it 'nowhere [has] the intention to subordinate its historical material to a particular subjective purpose' (translation mine).[24] But not even the realisation that Paul himself is 'clearly imparting his own rhetorical bias to many of his biographical claims,' moderates Campbell's conclusion that there is 'a chasm in initial quality between the data in the letters and that found in Acts,' and that Acts should be given no positive role in our analysis in consequence.[25] Campbell seeks a solution to the location of the Galatian churches via an elaborate reconstruction of the relative chronology of the Pauline letters. Redactional analysis of Philippians identifies a letter within a letter – a copy of an earlier correspondence with the Philippian church that makes mention of opponents whom Campbell aligns with the opponents in Galatia, and whose influence Paul also fears in Rome. Bringing Galatians further into the orbit of Philippians and Romans, and explicitly associating it with concerns that characterise the later phase of Paul's ministry to which they belong, Campbell argues that 'the graceless syntactical complexity of Paul's account is… a deliberate rhetorical ploy designed to both distract from and to reframe the

[23] For Campbell, Acts-based models of Paul's life have 'serious problems' and hybrid models, taking data from both Acts and epistles, are 'muddled' and opportunistic (Campbell, 2014, xv).
[24] 'diejenige Darstellung den größern Anspruch auf geschichtliche Wahrheit zu machen hat, die als die unbefangenere erscheint, und nirgends das Interesse derräth, ihren geschichtlichen Stoff einem besondern subjectiven Zweck unterzuorden' (Baur, 1845, 5). In critique of Baur here, see Silva, 2001, 117-21.
[25] Campbell, 2014, 21.

collection [which he was gathering from churches in Asia Minor, Macedonia and Greece to relieve the hardships of believers in Judea].'[26] To complete the diagnosis of a late date, secondary matters in Galatians are explained as examples of *Nebenadressat* – whispers that, according to Campbell, are intended for Corinthian eavesdroppers listening in as Paul writes.[27] Few would judge this elaborate series of interpretative moves risk-free, and I for one am not convinced it is less problematic than a cautious use of Acts as a source of more contemporary insights for the basic outline of Paul's biography.

Robert Jewett is more open to the usability of Acts in his classic contribution to the reconstruction of Pauline chronology, *Dating Paul's Life*, and the more conservative set of assumptions he deploys reflects this fact. Acts is still to be carefully screened, however, for evidence of a Lukan political agenda which seeks to establish Jerusalem as the centre of Paul's activities, to emphasise harmony between the mother church and its Gentile satellites, and to establish an idealised periodisation for the spread of the Christian gospel.[28] Sections of the text where these emphases are evident are considered suspect as historical sources, and interpretative judgements about the Pauline letters which lead to perceived clashes with Acts are absolutised rather than probed for potential syntheses (e.g. the assertion, to which we will return later, that the list of Pauline visits to Jerusalem preserved in Galatians 1 and 2 is *exhaustive* and

[26] Campbell, 2014, 165.
[27] Campbell, 2014, 166-70.
[28] Jewett, 1979, 8-10, 21.

consequently irreconcilable with the rather different picture of the visits recorded in Acts).[29] Jewett's exegesis is more careful than Campbell's, and the application of his assumptions is more nuanced. Yet we still have to ask ourselves which is less precarious: To back our capacity to discern Lukan authorial/editorial motivations two thousand years after the fact and to identify their effects on sources that are lost to us, correctly separating the wheat from the chaff that remains; or to accept Acts as an essentially believable account of Paul's life at the time and in the circumstances in which it was composed, and to be ready at least to explore the potential for integrating the Lukan material into the larger picture of Paul's story in respectful dialogue with the letters as primary sources.

Critical evaluations of Acts as a composition constructed from various discrete elements must also be balanced with historical analysis.[30] In the subsequent chapters our assessment of Paul's regression language will entail a detailed study of Galatians in its Graeco-Roman and Jewish context considering a wealth of literary and epigraphic sources and insights from material culture. The data they provide have little to contribute to the question of where *exactly* Paul's addressees were located, but the broader picture they paint of life in Asia Minor in the first few

[29] Jewett advances considerably beyond the limits of secure exegesis when he claims that 'Paul *specifically denies* having made more than two such trips prior to the writing of Galatians' (Jewett, 1979, 23; emphasis mine). The claim is subsequently reiterated in positive form (Jewett, 1979, 89, compare Meyer, 1880, 12). Dunn is more careful when he notes that Paul intends 'to mark out in chronological sequence the most relevant events which followed his encounter with the risen Christ,' and that 'nothing of significance for the defence being offered has been omitted' (Dunn, 1993a, 71, 87).
[30] Breytenbach offers a perceptive overview of the tendency for critical and historical assessments of Acts to talk past one another (Breytenbach, 1996, 5-15).

centuries of the Christian era readily complements the equivalent portrait in Acts.[31] Working with a far-wider data set, Stephen Mitchell – who is himself explicitly aware of the difficulties involved in using Acts 'when there is so much room for argument about the sources from which it comes' – still warns against the kind of 'hypercriticism [that] has… led to a needless accretion of doubt on some basic issues.'[32] Mitchell's comments are particularly apposite given that the specific issue he has in mind here is precisely the issue that concerns us – the location of the Galatian churches. In his view, there is more than ample warrant for an appeal to Acts as a credible witness to Paul's missionary activities in the cities of southern Galatia when it is placed alongside the other sources to which one can turn for illumination in the period.[33] It is this balanced approach that I endeavour to adopt in the paragraphs and chapters that follow.

Acts 13 and 14, with their account of Paul's so-called first missionary journey, are clearly central to the geographical question we are seeking to resolve. Scholars have drawn a variety of contrasting conclusions about the sources underlying these chapters and the extent to which they were adapted to achieve stylistic conformity

[31] Among many examples, our discussion of the Aphrodisias synagogue inscription in Chapter 5, §2.3.3 highlights the striking resemblance of the mixed community to which it testifies and the similarly mixed communities that Paul and Barnabas encountered in the Lukan account of the first missionary journey (IJO, no. 14 and compare Acts 13.16, 26, 43, 48, 50). See also Van der Horst, 1990, 169-71; Trebilco, 1991, 152-5.
[32] Mitchell, 1993, vol 2, 3. Colin Hemer similarly critiques the presupposition of an irresolvable conflict between the historical data afforded by the epistles and by the Lukan account of Paul's life (Hemer, 1990, 244-51).
[33] Mitchell, 1993, vol 2, 3-10.

with the whole.[34] Whichever option we prefer, however, the resultant description of the evangelistic activities undertaken by Paul and Barnabas in southern Galatia remains a crucial witness to the early Christian retelling of Paul's story, brimming with credible local colour and detail.[35]

The Lukan accounts of the so-called second and third missionary journeys, with their sparse remarks about Paul's travels through Asia Minor (esp. Acts 16.1-8, 18.23 & 19.1) also form a central part of the discussion about possible Pauline missionary endeavours in Galatia. In the view of some interpreters, these verses document Paul's practice of returning to congregations he planted on earlier visits; in the view of others, they record more wide-ranging itineraries that may have included primary mission work in northern cities.[36] Various inconclusive attempts have been made to determine whether routes through northern or southern Galatia are directly implied in these verses on semantic grounds alone.[37] Alternative approaches tracing possible

[34] Breytenbach, 1996, 16-20.
[35] Serious critical exploration of the different sources that were woven together and edited to create the book of Acts begins with Martin Dibelius' book *Aufsätze zur Apostelgeschichte* (Dibelius, 1953). Breytenbach offers a perceptive analysis of subsequent scholarly interaction with Dibelius' material (Breytenbach, 1996, 5-15, 94-7).
[36] On returning to previously-planted churches, see Bruce, 1988, 306, 358. On Acts 16.6 as the commencement of a more wide-ranging itinerary, see Barrett, 1994, 766-9; Fitzmyer, 2010, 578 note 6.
[37] Note here the extensive debate about the interpretation of the expressions τὴν Φρυγίαν καὶ Γαλατικὴν χώραν (Acts 16.6) and τὴν Γαλατικὴν χώραν καὶ Φρυγίαν (Acts 18.23) seeking to discern references either to ethnic Galatia or to regions within the larger province of Galatia (Haenchen, 1971, 483 n2, 545; Barrett, 1994, 766-9, 881-2; Schäfer, 2004, 474). Breytenbach argues that the question cannot be settled on philological grounds alone (Breytenbach, 1996, 115). Hemer presents a more positive assessment, strongly favouring the southern option (Hemer, 1990, 277-307). See also Dunn, 1993a, 5-7.

routes along the road networks of the time offer a more promising path to the resolution of the question, marginally favouring the southern option.[38]

Perhaps the strongest integrative argument for the northern Galatian hypothesis is sketched briefly by Dunn in his synthesis of Gal 4.13 and Acts 16.6, aligning the circumstances of Paul's first encounter with the Galatians with the enigmatic Lukan tradition attributing Paul's excursion through Phrygia and Galatia at the beginning of the second missionary journey to the interposition of the Holy Spirit.[39] Certainly there is no equivalently obvious incident in the Lukan account of the first missionary journey to justify the attribution of Paul's activities in the cites of southern Galatia to ἀσθένειαν τῆς σαρκὸς (weakness of the flesh) although his flight from Lystra to Derbe after being stoned and left for dead there might be judged a candidate if Derbe was in fact the centre around which the original Galatian churches were located (Acts 14.19-20).[40]

[38] Note, for example, that the journey from Syrian Antioch to Ephesus described in Acts 18.23 would have been extended by more than 200 miles and by nearly two weeks' travel time if Paul had travelled via Pessinus as opposed to taking the more direct route through southern Galatia (journey data generated using the Stanford Geospatial Network Model of the Roman World, ORBIS). Breytenbach cautions against over-interpretation here – itineraries involving northern and southern waypoints are both possible (Breytenbach, 1996, 115-19). In the context of Acts 16.6, however, Mitchell is more forthright: 'It is hardly conceivable that the Γαλατικὴ χώρα mentioned here is the region of north Galatia, which lay some 200 kilometres as the crow flies north-east of any natural route between Lystra and the region of Mysia' (Mitchell, 1993, vol 2, 3).

[39] Dunn, 1993a, 8, 233-4. See also Breytenbach, 1996, 117-8; Murphy-O'Connor, 2012, 161-2.

[40] Hays, 2000, 293-4. The suggestion that Paul's excursion to Derbe was exactly the kind of detour narrated in Gal 4.13 is perhaps supported by the observation that all the other waypoints on the first missionary journey were Roman colonies (Breytenbach, 1996, 1). The suggestion also clearly falsifies Murphy O'Connor's claim that Paul 'must have been going somewhere else' in order to be diverted into Galatia; he may have been driven out of a place he wished to stay (Murphy-O'Connor, 2012, 24).

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Chronological considerations have yet to be added to our analysis which, as we will shortly see, significantly hamper attempts to append a substantial church-planting initiative in northern Galatia to the Lukan account of the second or the third missionary journeys. Even before the inclusion of these factors, however, I believe the arguments presented point quite decisively towards the southern option. The lack of positive evidence for early Pauline communities, or even Jewish communities, in the major cities of northern Galatia remains a key sticking point for the northern Galatian hypothesis, especially so in the light of Breytenbach and Zimmermann's findings regarding the early and extensive footprint of Christian epigraphy in the exact area that Acts identifies as the scene of Paul and Barnabas' missionary endeavours in the region. Absence of evidence is not evidence of absence and it may yet be shown that synagogues and churches existed in northern Galatia in the first century into which the Gentile converts could have been integrated. The lack of any positive account of outreach in northern Galatia, however, is also striking – indeed for Mitchell it is decisive.[41] Hence, while it is unnecessary to name either a northern or a southern location for the Galatian churches for the purposes of the discussion that follows, it is my own view that the southern-Galatian hypothesis should be judged both workable and preferable to the alternatives.

[41] 'There is virtually nothing to be said for the north Galatian theory. There is no evidence in Acts or in any non-testamentary source that Paul ever evangelized the region of Ancyra or Pessinus, in person, by letter, or by any other means' (Mitchell, 1993, vol 2, 3).

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3. When Was Galatians Written?

We now come to the challenge of locating Galatians in time. Unlike the challenge of locating the Galatian churches in space, the letter itself offers us substantial information – some of the most substantial information, in fact, to be found anywhere in the New Testament. After a letter-opening that omits Paul's characteristic thanksgiving formula and transitions abruptly to an expression of astonishment that the Galatians are 'so quickly deserting the one who called [them] in the grace of Christ and are turning to a different gospel' (Gal 1.6), the apostle launches into an extended defence of the origin of his ministry.[42] His approach involves the rehearsal of several key episodes from his life story including two visits that he made to Jerusalem complete with indications of the time elapsing between them. The temporal references that Paul provides are not, however, free from ambiguities.

Paul's autobiographical remarks commence in Gal 1.11-12 with an indication of their purpose in his larger argument:

> For I want you to know, brothers and sisters, that the gospel that was proclaimed by me is not of human origin; for I did not receive it from a human source, nor was I taught it, but I received it through a revelation of Jesus Christ.

[42] On the absence of the expected thanksgiving formula and its significance, see Weima, 2016, 80-9. Gal 1.6 itself carries important chronological overtones to which we will return later.

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Whether or not the Influencers in Galatia were explicitly questioning the origin and authority of Paul's gospel proclamation – John Barclay speaks for the majority when he judges this 'virtually certain' – Paul sets himself to establish it on an unassailable foundation, that of a revelation of Christ himself. [43] To this end he briefly narrates the circumstances of his first encounter with the risen Jesus, describing both his past zeal as a persecutor of 'the church of God' (Gal 1.13) and his calling, framed in prophetic terms (1.16a).[44] Echoing the purpose statement of 1.11, Paul's readers are assured that his immediate response was not to 'confer with any human being,' neither was it to travel to Jerusalem. Instead he 'went away at once into Arabia, and afterwards… returned to Damascus' (1.16b-17).

Gal 1.18 provides the first indication of the passage of time: 'Then after three years I did go up to Jerusalem (Ἔπειτα μετὰ ἔτη τρία ἀνῆλθον εἰς Ἱεροσόλυμα) to visit Cephas, and stayed with him fifteen days.' Clearly, his overarching purpose in writing remains paramount here: Paul stresses the brevity and the narrow terms of reference of this first meeting with the Jerusalem apostles, heading off the allegation that his gospel was derived from human authority in the strongest possible terms (1.20). The argument, however, is strung on a chronological thread. Thus 1.21-3: 'Then I went into the regions of Syria and Cilicia' (Ἔπειτα ἦλθον εἰς τὰ κλίματα

[43] Barclay, 1987, 88. Paul's appeal to Jesus himself as the immediate source of his gospel provides the conceptual firepower to sustain the extraordinary statement immediately foregoing that it cannot be countermanded even by 'an angel from heaven' (Gal 1.8).
[44] Betz, 1979, 69; Oakes, 2015, 55-6. Krister Stendahl helpfully discusses the question of whether Paul's 'Damascus Road' experience is best described as a conversion or a commissioning (Stendahl, 1976, 7-23; see also Dunn, 2006*a*, 160-1; Dunn, 2006*b*, 346-54).

τῆς Συρίας καὶ τῆς Κιλικίας) – where, Paul's readers are assured, he had no further contact with 'the churches of Judea' and that they only knew him by the report of his activities – and 2.1: 'Then after fourteen years I went up again to Jerusalem with Barnabas, taking Titus along with me' (Ἔπειτα διὰ δεκατεσσάρων ἐτῶν πάλιν ἀνέβην εἰς Ἰεροσόλυμα μετὰ Βαρναβᾶ συμπαραλαβὼν καὶ Τίτον).[45]

The incidental details Paul provides here have proved valuable to subsequent exegetes because they allow us, in principle at least, to establish the relative chronology of his calling and the crucial meeting in Jerusalem described in Gal 2.1-10, where the question of Gentile circumcision seems to have been settled and where discrete fields of operation for Paul and Peter were established. They also provide a terminus ante quem for the beginning of Paul's missionary endeavours (as noted above, according to 2.2, Paul was already a seasoned missionary before the meeting in Jerusalem) and a terminus post quem for the Antioch incident which, according to the most natural reading of the narrative, occurred after the proceedings in Jerusalem, at least with respect to the historical datums that Paul assumes.[46]

But what *are* these datums? Some indication of the date of Paul's commissioning as an apostle is accessible to us when scholarly inquiries into the date of the death and

[45] Paul's reference to 'the churches of Judea' apparently excludes the church in Jerusalem where he was evidently known according to the foregoing narrative.

[46] Not all scholars accept the argument for a continuous chronological flow from Gal 2.1-10 to 2.11-21. Gerd Lüdemann, argues for the transposition of the Antioch incident out of its natural place prior to the Jerusalem meeting, although it is not at all obvious what compositional problem this solves *for Paul* (Lüdemann, 2005, 374-8). See also Campbell, 2014, 177-81; Munck, 1959, 100-1.

resurrection of Jesus are combined with a tantalising autobiographical snippet preserved in 2 Corinthians 11.32-3.[47] Here, in the course of the description of his escape from Damascus, Paul mentions that the city was guarded by 'the ethnarch under king Aretas.' Aretas' jurisdiction over Damascus is not positively attested in any other ancient source but it can be tentatively located from references in Josephus within the brief period between late A.D. 36 and the summer of A.D. 37.[48]

How should this date-window be related to the three- and fourteen-year periods mentioned in Galatians? Even if we invoke the Lukan account of Paul's commissioning in Acts 9.19b-31, it is impossible to be certain that he visited Jerusalem *immediately after* his escape from Damascus.[49] And even if we accept the near proximity of his escape and subsequent arrival in Jerusalem as the most natural

[47] Scholarly debate about the dating of Jesus' crucifixion gravitates around two principle options: either at Passover in A.D. 30 or A.D. 33 (Jewett, 1979, 26-9; Hemer, 1990, 160 n.3; Hoehner, 2010, 65-114). The question is finely balanced, with gospel-oriented accounts favouring the latter date, and epistle-oriented accounts the former. The conclusions reached in this chapter tend to relieve some of the pressures driving epistle-oriented accounts and, on this basis, I tentatively assume the latter option.

[48] Debate about the jurisdiction of the Nabatean king, Aretas IV, over Damascus concentrates on Josephus' discussion of the events surrounding the death of Tiberius Caesar and the accession of his successor, Gaius in March A.D. 37, (*Ant.* 18.85-129). Scholars disagree as to whether Nabatean control of Damascus was most likely in the period immediately *preceding* the change of Emperor (Campbell, 2014, 182-6) or immediately *after* it (Jewett, 1979, 30-33; see also Murphy-O'Connor, 2012, 5-7). Hemer is not satisfied that any firm date can be established for Aretas' jurisdiction over Damascus beyond the *terminus ante quem* afforded by his death in A.D. 40 (Hemer, 1990, 164). On balance, however, the period of political fluidity associated with the transition of imperial power in the spring of A.D. 37 does seem the *most likely* setting for a temporary realisation of Nabatean ambitions in Damascus.

[49] If no significant interval is intended between Acts 9.25 and Acts 9.26, the escape from Damascus and the first visit to Jerusalem can be treated as coincident, and Paul's commissioning dated with some confidence to c. A.D. 33/4. If a significant interval *is* intended between Acts 9.25 and Acts 9.26, the date of the both Paul's commissioning and the first Jerusalem meeting drift forward.

reading of Acts (which, for the purposes of the subsequent argument, we will) we still have to determine when the fourteen-year period mentioned in Gal 2.1 *began*.

I will not summarise here the extensive scholarly debate about the relationship between the three- and fourteen-year periods in Gal 1.18 and 2.1 which can be accessed via the footnotes provided.[50] In summary, I conclude that arguments for a *consecutive* interpretation of these periods (arguments that insist, in other words, on a minimum of *seventeen* years between Paul's commissioning and the Jerusalem meeting) significantly overstate the strength of the textual evidence when they claim that this is the only possible reading of the chain of Ἔπειτα clauses by means of which Paul articulates himself.[51] In reality, the two time references that Paul provides are *incidental* to the logic of the Ἔπειτα clauses, which he uses to carry a sense of chronological progression through the narrative from the initial temporal expression in 1.15-16 ('*when* God… was pleased to reveal His Son to me,' emphasis mine), not to provide independent anchors for dating.[52] Paul's parenthetical remarks

[50] Early Christian exegetes tend to favour a consecutive interpretation of the three- and fourteen-year periods mentioned by Paul (Jerome *Comm. Gal.* 2.1); Marius Victorinus' ambiguous comments may perhaps represent an exception (Victorinus *Comm Gal.* 2.1). For Martin Luther the consecutive reading was so axiomatic that he situated the events of Gal 2.1-10 *and* 2.11-21 after the Jerusalem Council, between the second and third missionary journeys (Luther, 1979, 90-1). Among modern writers, opinions are divided and hard to separate from larger commitments to the priority of Pauline testimony and/or the reliability of Acts. For consecutive readings, see Jewett, 1979, 52-4; Murphy-O'Connor, 2012, 7-8. For contemporaneous readings see Ramsay, 1899, 287; Hemer, 1990, 261-2; Moo, 2013, 120-1. Betz considers the prospects for resolution of the issue 'hopeless' (Betz, 1979, 76 n.191, 83-4).

[51] e.g. Jewett, 1979, 96-100. Jewett thinks the 'plain sense' of the Ἔπειτα clauses is consecutive (Jewett, 1979, 52). Dunn is more moderate in his assessment of the evidence (Dunn, 1993a, 87).

[52] The point becomes obvious when we note the absence of a time reference from the second Ἔπειτα clause in Gal 1.21 and the sufficiency of Paul's logic when the time references are omitted from the others as well: 'then… I went up to Jerusalem' (Gal 1.18), 'then I went into the regions of Syria and Cilicia' (Gal 1.21), 'then… I went up again to Jerusalem' (Gal 2.1).

about relative chronology can be interpreted with greater probability as references back to this initial temporal expression, negating the suggestion that he was taught by the apostles in Jerusalem. '*When God*… was pleased to reveal His Son in me… *I did not immediately* consult with flesh and blood (that is, *immediately after the revelation*)… but… *three years later* (three years after the revelation) I went up to Jerusalem, and *fourteen years later* (fourteen years after the revelation) I went up to Jerusalem again' (1.18-21 excerpted and adapted).[53] Read this way, the temporal clauses reinforce Paul's overarching purpose, viz. denying the allegation that his authority was in any way derived.[54]

The questions under discussion here are finely-balanced and no single solution is assumed as a basis for the argument of the succeeding chapters. I do assume the contemporaneous reading for the remainder of this section, however. On this reading, the second of the two Jerusalem meetings recorded in Galatians (Gal 2.1-10) took place fourteen years (or so) after Paul's initial encounter with Jesus and around 11 years after the Ethnarch of Aretas' tenure in Damascus, i.e. c. A.D. 47-8.

[53] Martyn, 1997*a*, vol 33A, 180-2. Commentators customarily note the ancient practice of rounding up time periods to whole numbers here, eroding confidence in the precision with which timelines can be constructed using Paul's three- and fourteen-year periods sill further (Moo, 2013, 108-9; Dunn, 1993a, 87). Probing questions should also be asked about the significance of the number fourteen in Paul's idiom. The eye-catching repetition of the same time period in the chronologically-unrelated comments of 2 Cor 12.2 (Jewett, 1979, 54-5) points perhaps to its figurative connotations. In the Greek 'seven ages of man' tradition the passage of fourteen years indicates the onset of maturity (Philo, *Creation*. 104; see also Diogenes Laertius, *Vit. Phil*. 7.55.6; Michael Attaliates, *Pon. Nom*. 35.819).

[54] Note Martyn's helpful emphasis on the negative purpose towards which all the elements of the travelogue are bent (Martyn, 1997*a*, vol 33A, 178-80).

The Antioch Incident follows sometime shortly thereafter, and the composition of the letter at some point after that. Can we be any more specific?

Returning to the methodology of cautious engagement with Acts sketched above as a means to augment and elucidate the primary data provided by Paul's letters, several further steps can be taken. In addition to the tentative dating of Paul's first recorded visit to Jerusalem drawn from his comments about Aretas' jurisdiction over the city of Damascus c. A.D. 36-7, the Lukan description of Paul's missionary endeavours in Corinth points to a second externally datable event in his biography. Seemingly towards the end of his eighteen-month stay in the city, Acts reports that Paul was arraigned before Gallio the proconsul of Achaia by local Jews complaining that he was 'persuading people to worship God in ways that [were] contrary to the law' (Acts 18.12).[55] Gallio's presence in Corinth is independently attested by a fragmentary inscription recovered in various stages from the temple of Apollo in Delphi in the early-twentieth century.[56] This Claudian edict is datable with some

[55] The Lukan narrative does not specify the exact point at which this event took place. It *does* tell us that Paul's ministry in the city began in the Jewish synagogue where he sought 'to convince Jews and Greeks' (Acts 18.4) and that when they 'opposed and reviled him' he left the synagogue and began leading meetings in the house of a 'worshipper of God' (σεβομένο[ν] τὸν θεόν) named Titius Justus (Acts 18.6-7). Luke then summarises: 'He stayed there a year and six months, teaching the word of God among them' (Acts 18.11). In Acts 18.12-17, the incident with Gallio is narrated in some detail, documenting both the failure of the Jewish case against Paul and the proconsul's indifference to the plight of the Synagogue leader Sosthenes who was treated as a scapegoat. In Acts 18.18, however, the aorist participial phrase Ὁ δὲ Παῦλος ἔτι προσμείνας ἡμέρας ἱκανὰς… ἐξέπλει εἰς τὴν Συρίαν alerts us to the fact that Paul remained in Corinth for some time *after this*, making it impossible to determine the moment within the larger eighteen-month window described in verse 11 when the encounter with Gallio actually happened.

[56] On the discovery and reconstruction of the text, see Murphy-O'Connor, 2012, 15-16; Plassart, 1967, 372-8; Oliver, 1971, 239-40. For the Greek text with extensive annotations, see Murphy-O'Connor, 2002, 219-221.

confidence to the spring/summer of A.D. 52 and expresses the emperor's desire to see Delphi restored to its former glory in response to a letter he received from '[L. Jun]ius Gallio, [the emperor's] 'fri[end] an[d procon]sul.'[57]

When was Gallio's letter to the emperor sent? It cannot postdate the imperial edict itself and it is very unlikely to antedate the return of Gallio's younger brother, the well-known Roman Stoic Philosopher, Seneca the Younger, from exile in A.D. 49, before which the entire family was touched by his disgrace. This leaves two possibilities for Gallio's one-year term as proconsul, running from July to June in either A.D. 50-1 or A.D. 51-2. Most scholars prefer the latter of these two options, arguing from the rapidity with which Claudius is known to have responded to comparable administrative requests.[58] Chronological options for Gallio's encounter with Paul in Corinth are then reduced further by the testimony of his brother, who tells us that the proconsul's duties in Achaia were cut short due to health concerns (Seneca the Younger, *Ep.* 104.1). If the account in Acts can be believed, therefore, it is highly likely that Paul met Gallio in Corinth in the summer of A.D. 51.

How does this additional datum affect our thinking about Galatians? Returning briefly to the geographical questions addressed in the foregoing section, our tentative positioning of the visit to Jerusalem recorded in Gal 2.1-10 in A.D. 47-8 leaves very little time for a substantial church-planting campaign in northern Galatia

[57] On the dating of the Delphi inscription see Jewett, 1979, 38-40; Hemer, 1990, 251-3; Murphy-O'Connor, 2012, 15-18.
[58] e.g. Murphy-O'Connor, 2012, 20-1.

to be added to the Lukan account of the second missionary journey (say, at Acts 16.6) before Paul's appearance before Gallio in the summer of A.D. 51. Even if we assume Paul was in Corinth for less than the full eighteen months mentioned in Acts 18.11 prior to this event, we still have barely two years in which to fit an extensive chain of commitments before his arrival in the city: The circumstances that ultimately gave rise to the Antioch incident have to develop and mature, Paul has to travel overland from Antioch to Macedonia (a journey of at least two-months duration on foot, even if we assume summer travelling conditions and a relentless pace of twenty miles per day along the most-direct route possible), churches have to be planted in Philippi (Acts 16.11-39) and in Thessalonica (Acts 17.1-9), Paul has to visit Berea (Acts 17.10-15), and Athens (Acts 17.16-34).[59] If Jewett is right to assign a *minimum* period of six months for the establishment of congregations in northern Galatia, it is hard to imagine how the necessary detour can be accommodated.

If churches were planted in northern Galatia at the beginning of the third missionary journey (say, at Acts 18.23), time is still against us.[60] For now we must assume they matured so rapidly that Paul could use their response to his collection initiative as a

[59] Journey data generated using the Stanford Geospatial Network Model of the Roman World, ORBIS. Jewett's reconstruction of Paul's life – which remains the most chronologically rigorous among the various modern evaluations of the available data – is marred by the unrealistic assumption that *every* event in Paul's life must have taken place within a timespan deemed adequate for it in retrospect (Jewett, 1979, 95-104). By far the more common failure, however, involves the opposite tendency – to systematically underestimate the minimum lengths of time required for travel from place to place, to neglect seasonal factors, etc. (Jewett, 1979, 56-7).

[60] Even if a chronological case could be made for successful Pauline missionary work in north Galatia at either Acts 16.6 or 18.23, the question of why the author of Acts would have chosen to draw a veil over it remains to be answered (Dunn, 1993a, 7).

model when he wrote 1 Corinthians perhaps only a few months later (1 Cor 16.1). The suggestion that the Galatian churches were planted in the southern cites of the province and that they already existed prior to the Jerusalem meeting therefore seems by far the more probable option.

The brevity of the interval, as certainly as we can judge it, between the meeting with the apostles in Jerusalem described in Gal 2.1-10 (A.D. 47-8) and the meeting with Gallio in Corinth described in Acts 18.12-17 (summer A.D. 51) also affects our assessment of the relationship between Galatians and Acts. Careful readers of both texts note that, in the Lukan account, Paul's second post-conversion visit to Jerusalem (the so-called 'famine-relief visit') is recounted in Acts 11.27-30. Should this visit therefore be aligned with the second visit recorded in Galatians (Gal 2.1-10)? Both visits are explicitly attributed to divine revelation (compare Acts 11.28 and Gal 2.2) and associated with concern for those in need (compare Acts 11.29 and Gal 2.10). This synthesis opens up the possibility that the brief Lukan commentary on the circumstances motivating the 'Apostolic Council' (Acts 15.1-2) might in fact be a diplomatically worded summary of the Antioch incident which Paul records in gory detail in Gal 2.11-21 – a conclusion which is perhaps supported by the allusive reference to the trouble makers in both cases as 'certain people' (τινας ἀπὸ Ἰακώβου, Gal 2.12; τινες… ἀπὸ τῆς Ἰουδαίας, Acts 15.1). On this basis, Galatians would make no mention of the Apostolic Council at all and it would be reasonable

to conclude in consequence that the letter was written before the Council took place, giving us a date for its composition perhaps as early as A.D. 47.[61]

Several detailed objections to the equation of Acts 11.27-30 and Gal 2.1-10 must, however, be raised. The description of the 'false believers… who slipped in' among Paul and his friends 'to spy on the freedom [they had] in Christ Jesus' (Gal 2.4) fits much more naturally with the events of Acts 15.1-2 than it does with anything in Acts 11. The omission of Titus and the whole issue of circumcision in Acts 11 is also striking. If Acts 11.27-30 and Gal 2.1-10 describe the same event, and the Council of Acts 15 is a separate incident, circumcision was brought before the apostles twice and resolved twice in a similar way; Paul's relationship with Barnabas was also fractured twice (Gal 2.13 and Acts 15.36-41).[62] These difficulties are not necessarily insuperable, especially if our use of Acts is cautious and we make ample provision for its distinct origins and priorities. Constraints of time, however, ultimately undermine this reconstruction. If Gal 2.1-10 equates to Acts 11.27-30, and we can date the events of Gal 2.1-10 with some confidence to A.D. 47-8, we now have to add the entire first missionary journey to the list of events to be shoehorned into

[61] John Chrysostom offers support for this view in his Homilies on Acts (*Hom. Act.* XXV). Among more-modern writers, proponents include C. J. Cadoux (Cadoux, 1937, 177-91), F. F. Bruce (Bruce, 1968-9, 292-309), Richard Longenecker (Longenecker, 1990, lxxvii - lxxxiii), Richard Bauckham (Bauckham, 1979, 61-70), and Douglas Moo (Moo, 2013, 8-18).

[62] Dunn helpfully highlights some of these exegetical inefficiencies (Dunn, 1993a, 88). On the requirement that Paul's relationship with Barnabas is repaired and broken a second time, see Bauckham, 1979, 67.

Paul's schedule between the meeting in Jerusalem and the encounter with Gallio in the summer of A.D. 51 – and this does not seem possible.

Caution must clearly be exercised here, remembering that our estimate for the date of the Jerusalem meeting is *only* an estimate, based, in particular, on the accuracy with which we can determine the date of Paul's flight from Damascus, and the precision with which he intends the 'fourteen years' of Gal 2.1 to be read. The chronological difficulty, however, is considerable, and cannot simply be waved away, even if substantial flexibility on these points is allowed.[63]

How then should we proceed? Continuing along the path of cautious integration of the Lukan material with the primary data provided by Paul, alignment of the visit to Jerusalem recorded in Gal 2.1-10 with the Lukan account of the Apostolic Council in Acts 15 is the obvious alternative. Numerous commentators have drawn attention to the similarities that exist between the two accounts – with the weaknesses of attempts to equate Acts 11.27-30 and Gal 2.1-10 now generally becoming strengths.[64] In this reading, Paul's comments about the false believers in Gal 2.4-5 naturally refer to the visitors from Judea who urged the Gentiles in Antioch to get circumcised (Acts 15.1).[65] The centrality of circumcision in both texts is now striking, as is the efficiency of the argument that the issue was brought before the

[63] Note that if we allow the date of Paul's escape from Damascus to drift forward towards its *terminus ante quem* (the death of Aretas in A.D. 40) the chronological problem here becomes *more*, and not less, acute.
[64] e.g. Dunn, 1993a, 87-91; Silva, 2001, 132-4; Lüdemann, 2005, 374-8; De Boer, 2011, 104-8.
[65] Murphy O'Connor argues that the 'spying' referred to in Gal 2.4 must have taken place in Antioch (Murphy-O'Connor, 2012, 133); see also Munck, 1959, 96-7. In dissent, see Jerome *Comm. Gal.* 2.3-5.

apostles in Jerusalem once and dealt with definitively at that point.[66] The involvement of Barnabas and Titus in the Pauline account is accommodated in the Lukan remark about 'Paul and Barnabas *and some of the others* [being] appointed to go up to Jerusalem' (Acts 15.2; emphasis mine). The subsequent description of the disagreement between Paul and Barnabas in Gal 2.13 can also be coordinated with the parallel description of their disagreement and separation in Acts 15.36-41, although the Lukan account thoroughly mutes the underlying theological tension between them if this is the case.[67]

Several difficulties remain, not least the emphasis in Galatians on the private discussions that took place between Paul and the Jerusalem apostles, the division of their respective mission fields, and the omission of all but a hint of the Apostolic Decree which forms such a central part of the Lukan rendering of the incident.[68] Unlike Acts 11, Acts 15 also fails to explicitly mention a divine revelation as the trigger for the meeting – although we should not perhaps be surprised that such a revelation is mentioned in Galatians, given Paul's larger concern to establish the divine origin of his ministry, and dependence on immediate divine direction should

[66] Dunn, 1993a, 88.
[67] Dunn, 1993a, 13.
[68] On the omission of the Apostolic Decree from Paul's account in Galatians, it should be noted that including it may not have served Paul's purpose of demonstrating substantial independence from the Jerusalem Apostles (Silva, 2001, 134). The omission might also be explained on the basis that the contents of the decree were uncontroversial (Bockmuehl, 2003, 167).

also perhaps be assumed even in the Acts account, given what we already know about the *modus operandi* of the elders in Antioch (cf. Acts 11.27-30; 13.1-3).[69]

Several scholars have objected that if Gal 2.1-10 equates to Acts 15 the Pauline account invalidates the Lukan account, given that this is only the *second* visit to Jerusalem recorded by Paul, but the *third* recorded by Luke.[70] The difficulty is based, however, on a prior commitment to the idea that Paul's description of his travels in Gal 1-2 is *exhaustive*, at least in respect of his visits to Jerusalem. This cannot be sustained. As we have already seen, Paul's concern is not so much to be exhaustive as it is to answer the accusation that his gospel is of human origin. In principle, therefore, there is no reason to deny the possibility that Paul omitted the famine relief visit (and perhaps several other visits to Jerusalem) from his account in Galatians because it did not, in his judgement, make a positive contribution to the counternarrative he wished to present. On the same basis, he clearly felt free to omit several other major details (e.g. the entire first missionary journey).[71]

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[69] Munck, 1959, 93. To communicate the appointment of Paul and his fellows as delegates to the Apostolic Council, Luke uses a third-person plural aorist active form of the verb, τάσσω. τάσσω occurs on three other occasions in Acts and, of these three, two are divine passives referring to appointments initiated by God (Acts 13.48; 22.10). The third instance, however, describes the initiative taken by the Jews in Rome to meet Paul during his house arrest in the city (Acts 28.23) and we cannot therefore infer that the appointment in Acts 15.2 *presupposes* divine involvement on semantic grounds alone.

[70] For Johannes Munck, this was one of the principal reasons for rejecting Acts as a reliable historical source (Munck, 1959, 80). Ramsay also considers the list of visits provided in Galatians exhaustive (Ramsay, 1899, 302-3). For the contrary view, see Silva, 2001, 136f.

[71] Martyn, 1997*a*, vol 33A, 180-6. Jewett rejects the equation of Gal 2.1-10 and Acts 15 as a consequence of his consecutive interpretation of the three- and fourteen-year periods in Gal 1.18 and 2.1. Combining this assumption with a date for Paul's escape from Damascus in the summer of A.D.37 situates the Jerusalem meeting of Gal 2.1-10 and the arraignment before Gallio on top of one another (Jewett, 1979, 64-7).

Neil Martin, Keble College

What, therefore, can we conclude about the chronological setting of Galatians? The combination of Pauline and Lukan data is necessarily fraught with difficulties and the judgements we are required to make require several inferences beyond the strict demands of the evidence. The synthesis sketched above, however, accommodates the broad outline of the Lukan narrative without departing from the policy of according priority to Paul's own account and, on that basis, I see no reason to assume that it systematically misrepresents or substantially reorders the events that actually took place. The level of specificity we have reached is not required for participation in the argument of the chapters that follow. On the basis of the foregoing analysis, however, I think it likely that Paul's conversion from persecutor to apostle took place c. A.D. 33-4, that he escaped from Damascus and visited Jerusalem c. A.D. 36-7, that he visited Jerusalem again having already completed the first missionary journey and planted churches in southern Galatia c. A.D. 47-8, and that he met Gallio, the Roman proconsul of Achaia, in Corinth in the summer of A.D. 51.[72] I propose that the meeting in Jerusalem recorded in Gal 2.1-10 should be coordinated, at least in broad outline, with the Lukan account of the Apostolic Council in Acts 15.[73] I propose that the Antioch incident recorded in Gal 2.11f. took place shortly thereafter, culminating in the

[72] Note that, irrespective of our conclusions about the Aretas datum, the date of Paul's commissioning is still quite-narrowly specified by the *terminus post quem* yielded by locating the death and resurrection of Jesus in A.D. 33, by the fourteen-year period between Paul's commissioning and the Apostolic Council, and by the period of time required to accommodate the events separating the Apostolic Council and the meeting with Gallio in A.D. 51. On the basis of Gal 2.5, Murphy O'Connor argues that Paul's outreach in Galatia must have taken place *before* the meeting recorded in 2.1-10 (Murphy-O'Connor, 2012, 24). In agreement, see Dunn, 1993a, 7-8. In dissent, see Munck, 1959, 74, 122.

[73] 'On balance, the weight of considerations probably favours the view that Gal ii.1-10 is Paul's account of the Jerusalem council' (Dunn, 1993a, 8).

separation of Paul and Barnabas recorded in rather different terms in Gal 2.13 and Acts 15.36-41. I propose that the letter to the Galatians was written c. A.D. 49-50 during the second missionary journey, soon after Paul visited the Galatian churches for the second time on which occasion Timothy was circumcised and added to Paul's travelling party per Acts 16.1-5, making it one of the earliest letters in the New Testament.[74]

Can we speak with any confidence about a date for the establishment of the Galatian churches? If the timeline of Acts holds good more broadly than just in its account of Paul's activities, we can perhaps adopt the death of Herod Agrippa, recorded in Acts 12.19-24, and datable with some precision to the period after Passover in A.D. 44, as a useful point of orientation.[75] Taking the opening phase of the first missionary journey via Cyprus into account, I think it is safe to assume that the churches in Galatia could not have been planted before A.D.45 at the earliest and that they must have been planted by A.D. 47 at the latest, with the result that they would have been in existence for between two and a half and five years at the time Paul wrote to them.

[74] On this model, it is the proximity of this *second* visit to the composition of the letter that explains the astonishment with which Paul greets the news that the Galatian believers are 'so quickly deserting the one who called [them] in the grace of Christ and are turning to a different gospel' (Gal 1.6). Murphy O'Connor argues that the 'quickly' of 1.6 should be read in reference to the arrival of the Influencers in Galatia, not in reference to the Galatians' conversion (Murphy-O'Connor, 2012, 180-2). Martyn places the formation of the Galatian churches immediately prior to the writing of the letter (Martyn, 1997*a*, vol 33A, 17-9).

[75] Schäfer, 2004, 488, see also Jewett, 1979, 33-4. Herod's death serves neither as a true *terminus ante quem* for the famine relief visit, at which point Peter was still in Jerusalem (compare Acts 12.17), nor as a true *terminus post quem* for the start of the first missionary journey. The Lukan account inserts Peter's escape from prison and the death of Agrippa between these two events with an arm-waving Κατ' ἐκεῖνον δὲ τὸν καιρὸν ('and at about that time'). Josephus' account of Helena of Adiabene's efforts to relieve the effects of famine in the region in A.D. 46 or 47 perhaps offer another external reference point for the famine relief visit (*Ant.* 20.49-53).

Neil Martin, Keble College

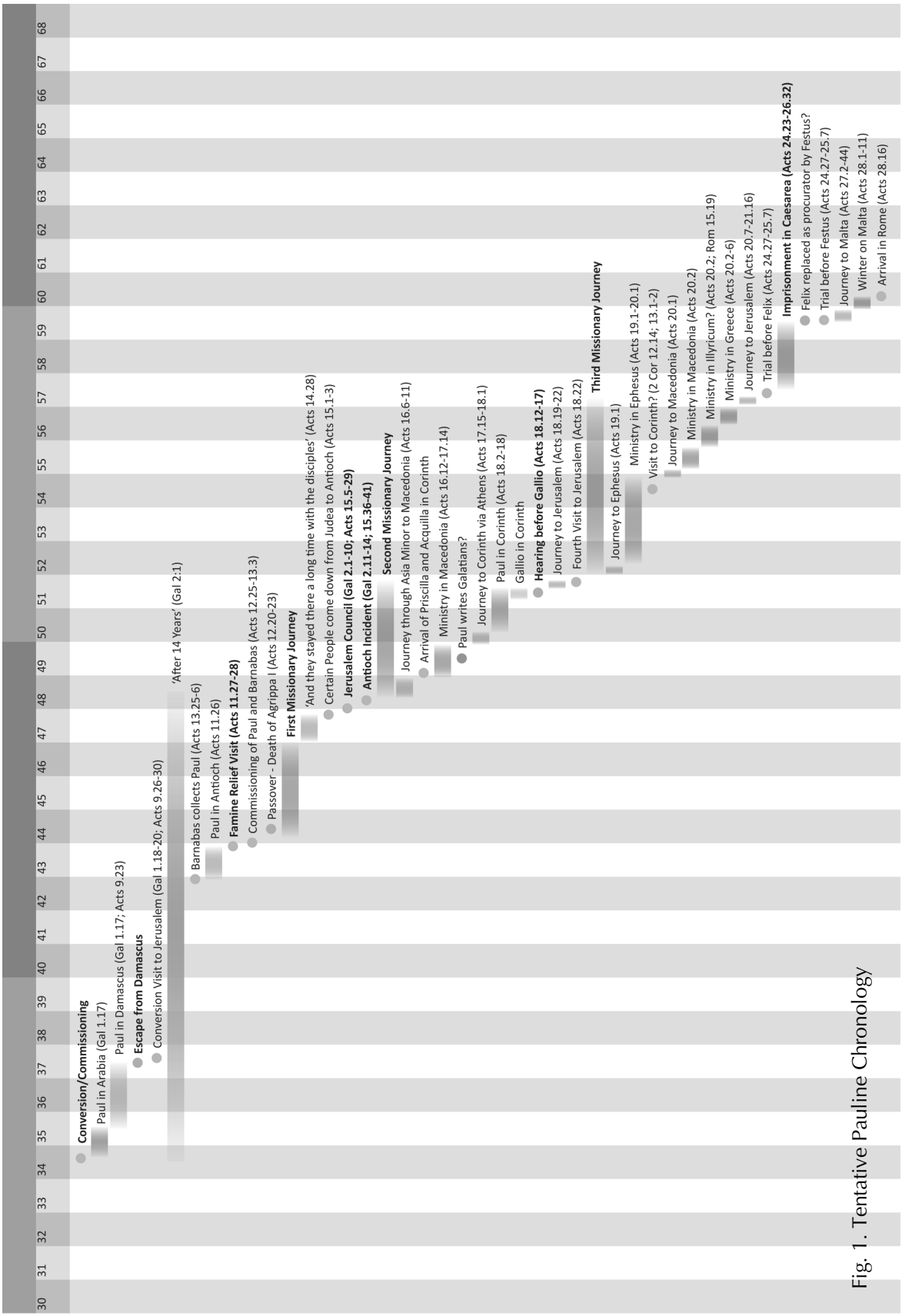

Fig. 1. Tentative Pauline Chronology

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4. Galatians: Dramatis Personae

We can now deal more briefly with questions pertaining to the key actors in the Galatian drama, not because they are in any way less complicated or controversial than the geographical and chronological questions explored above, but because some of them will be addressed at greater length in the chapters that follow, and others are less important for our unfolding argument than they might at first seem. We will focus in particular on Paul, on his Galatian audience, and on the Influencers at work among them.

4.1 Paul

Few individuals in history have been subjected to the degree of biographical scrutiny endured by the apostle Paul over the past two millennia, and I do not propose to add to the volume of those materials here. My concern in this section is simply to introduce a single restricted issue to which the chapters below contribute and which is the subject of intense debate within contemporary Pauline scholarship – namely, did Paul continue to perceive himself as a Jew after his life-changing encounter with the risen Jesus and did he continue to adopt a position of submission to the Jewish law?[76]

[76] David Rudolph offers an excellent introduction to the question in his monograph, *A Jew to the* Jews – challenging the mainstream reading of Paul in Cor 9.19-23 as an exponent of merely 'occasional conformity to Jewish Law' (Rudolph, 2011, 2).

Neil Martin, Keble College

Galatians might be thought, at first glance, to represent the *locus classicus* for negative answers to both these questions and it has been used in this way throughout the history of interpretation. Tertullian memorably describes the letter as Paul's 'most decisive against Judaism,' announcing the 'abolition of the ancient law… [as] foretold by the prophets of our God' (Tertullian *Marc*. 5.2.1). Marius Victorinus argues that, for Paul, 'both to preach Christ and live like the Jews,' on the model of the men from James (Gal 2.13), was a 'major sin' (Marius Victorinus *Comm. Gal*. 2.12-13). On the strength of Paul's remarks in Galatians and elsewhere, F.C. Baur famously claimed that the legally observant Paul of Acts was 'a quite different person from the Paul of the epistles.'[77]

The basic thrust of these arguments has been challenged in recent years, however, by scholars questioning whether Paul's negative remarks about the law were intended for Jews at all, and whether he might have remained essentially positive about law-observance as a way of life for Jewish Christians.[78] Paula Fredriksen argues that Paul nowhere 'says anything about (much less against) Jews circumcising

[77] 'Das wichtigste bleibt in dieser Hinsicht immer, daß der Paulus der Apostelgeschichte offenbar ein ganz anderer ist, als der Paulus der Paulinischen Briefe selbst' (Baur, 1845, 10). Despite self-consciously setting out to destroy Baur's legacy, Johannes Munck ends up with an even-more radical defence of Paul's law-free credentials (Munck, 1959, 70-2, 87-9).

[78] The idea is hardly new; indeed, it seems to have been assumed by some of the earliest Christian writers. Citing Gal 3.24, Irenaeus positions Paul as an advocate of Law in its proper context, arguing that law is not antithetical to belief in Christ (Irenaeus, *Haer*. 4.2.7). In response to a question posed by his dialogue partner, Trypho, about the possibility of salvation for those who 'desire to live in observance of the precepts of the Mosaic Law and yet believe that the crucified Jesus is the Christ of God,' Justin Martyr replies that 'such a man will be saved, unless he exerts every effort to influence other men (I have in mind Gentiles whom Christ circumcised from all error) to practice the same rites as himself, informing them that they cannot be saved unless they do so' (*Dial*. 46.1; 47.1).

their own sons'.[79] Matthew Thiessen explains the Apostle's warnings about law in Galatians as an indication of its inapplicability to Gentiles, not of its inherently negative valence for Jews.[80] Both authors highlight the ironic agreement between scholarship that champions Paul as an apostle of freedom from the law and the opinion of his accusers in Acts 21, who charge him with teaching 'the Jews living among the Gentiles to forsake Moses, and… not to circumcise their children or observe the customs' (Acts 21.21) – an accusation that the Lukan Paul specifically refutes by performing legal observances in the Temple (Acts 21.26).[81]

The argument of this thesis neither presupposes nor proves Paul's ongoing legal observance, although I believe it opens up that possibility – at least in the limited context of Galatians. Before we draw any conclusions, however, his statements about law in the letter, about his past experiences as a Jew, and about the relationship between Jewish and Gentile interactions with the Jewish God, each require detailed exegetical scrutiny in context, a context which is substantially informed by our understanding of the composition of Paul's audience.

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[79] Fredriksen, 2017, 113 *et passim*.

[80] 'Throughout his letters, he resisted the application of the law to gentiles not because he was the apostle of freedom, but because he believed that the Jewish law did not apply to gentiles' (Thiessen, 2016, 162). John Chrysostom also speaks about the *inappropriateness* of law-observant outreach to Gentiles in his discussion of the false brothers of Gal 2.4: 'the Apostles so acted in Judea, where the Law was in force but the false brothers, everywhere, for all the Galatians were influenced by them' (John Chrysostom *Comm. Gal.* 2.4).

[81] Fredriksen, 2017, 169-70; Thiessen, 2016, 164-7. Lüdemann argues that while Paul never explicitly taught Jews not to circumcise their children, 'the consequences of [his] preaching were similar to those expressed in the accusation' (Lüdemann, 2005, 379). Bockmuehl is also sympathetic to the perspective of Paul's accusers even if it was not strictly accurate – 'Paul's view that Gentiles are saved as Gentiles begins in practice to look as though Jews are not saved as Jews' (Bockmuehl, 2003, 172). See also Barclay, 2011, 73-4.

Neil Martin, Keble College

4.2 The Galatians

Pending more-detailed examination of Paul's argument I note here simply the clear indications in the letter itself that Galatians was written to a predominantly Gentile audience and the scholarly consensus that exists with respect to this conclusion.[82] Whatever else can be said about the geographical implications of Paul's direct challenge to his readers in Gal 3.1, 'You foolish Galatians!' we should assume that this is not an expression he would have used to address fellow Jews. The point is reinforced by the observation that the 'Galatians' were uncircumcised prior to the arrival of their unnamed Influencers (5.2-3, 6.12-13), and by noting Paul's assessment of their past lives in 4.8: 'Formerly, when you did not know God, you were enslaved to beings that by nature are not gods.'[83] 'Not gods' here is a quasi-technical reference to idols.[84]

Commentators ancient and modern follow the same underlying reasoning with minor variations. Jerome considers Paul's remark in Gal 3.1 indicative, not only of a rebuke to Gentile readers, but of his acceptance of an underlying framework of national stereotypes – Greeks are fickle, Phrygians are cowards and Galatians are foolish (cf. Titus 1.12).[85] Interpreting the text against the local cultic context, Susan Elliott argues that the audience were not just Gentiles but former devotees of the

[82] Murphy-O'Connor, 2012, 192; Dunn, 1993a, 6; De Boer, 2011, 5; Keener, 2019, 13-16.
[83] Dunn, 1993a, 6. See also Oakes, 2015, 4; Nanos, 2002, 78.
[84] Martyn, 1997*a*, vol 33A, 410. cf. John Chrysostom, *Comm. Gal.* 4.8.
[85] Jerome *Comm. Gal.* 3.1a. See also Cain, 2010, 117 n.268.

Anatolian mother goddess, Cybele.[86] Paula Fredriksen claims that Paul's Galatian readers were not just predominantly Gentile but *exclusively* Gentile. 'Paul' she writes, does not take 'the "good news" of God's approaching kingdom… to fellow Jews' and when he 'speaks negatively about the Law, he speaks *specifically with respect to Gentiles*, not with respect to Jews.'[87] This conclusion only heightens the difficulty observed more generally, however, that, if the audience were Gentiles, Paul seems to have written them a very Jewish letter.

In response to this latter difficulty, interpreters (especially those adopting the southern-Galatian hypothesis) commonly invoke the idea that Paul's readers were former Godfearers with substantial past experience in local Jewish synagogues.[88] The reconstruction certainly fits well with the Lukan depiction of the activities of the first missionary journey (cf. Acts 13.14, 43, 49-50; 14.1) although, as we will see later, it fails to address the question of why Paul thought circumcision in particular involved a return to their former way of life.[89] The question of the Galatians' past experience in Judaism will be discussed at length in Chapter 5 and for now it is

[86] Elliott, 2003, 8-12. See also Murphy-O'Connor, 2012, 191-3.
[87] Fredriksen, 2017, 2, 122. See also Nanos, 2002, 76-8.
[88] 'Paul drew his pagans from that penumbra of already-interested outsiders, the "god-fearers"' (Fredriksen, 2017, 126). See also Munck, 1959, 132. Even if Paul's readers were not themselves former Godfearers, Barclay argues that the attractions of synagogue worship were widely recognised in the Jewish diaspora of the first century and that 'by beginning to observe the law… the Galatians were following a path which many of their contemporaries would have understood' (Barclay, 1988, 69). Nanos rejects the idea that the audience were necessarily former Godfearers, arguing that their competence to grasp Paul's Jewish argument was a fruit of his own ministry among them (Nanos, 2002, 76-7).
[89] Chapter 5 §4.1.

sufficient simply to note that identifying the audience as Gentiles does not preclude some prior exposure to Jews and Judaism on their part.

Another common response to the strikingly Jewish character of Paul's argument in Galatians is to infer that Paul wrote not only for the benefit of his Galatian readers, but through them, or perhaps even largely ignoring them, in an attempt to confront the Influencers.[90] Barclay articulates the assumptions of many when he identifies 'the opponents' in Galatians as Paul's 'ultimate conversation partners.'[91] For the purposes of this thesis it will not be necessary to adjudicate the question of whether or not Paul *intended* his words to be overheard by the Influencers who were causing the difficulties he perceived in the Galatian churches. It will be sufficient to note, also with Barclay, that, either way, 'Paul is not directly responding to the opponents' message but responding to its effects on the confused Christians in Galatia.'[92]

4.3 The Influencers

Among the plethora of controversial judgements in which interpreters of Galatians have felt obliged to entangle themselves over the years, the question of the identity of the Influencers to whom Paul alludes in the letter is perhaps the most nuanced and the most hotly contested.[93] Whole theological systems have been constructed on the

[90] Commenting on Paul's retelling of the Antioch incident, for example, Martinus De Boer suggests that the Apostle 'directs [his] words primarily to the preachers in Galatia' (De Boer, 2011, 142; see also 199).
[91] Barclay, 1987, 76.
[92] Barclay, 1987, 75.
[93] Bernard Brinsmead presents a helpful historical survey of the options (Brinsmead, 1982, 9-22).

assumption that the question can be decisively resolved, identifying them at one extreme as representatives of a militant, principled, Judean faction systematically targeting Pauline communities wherever they were planted and, at the other extreme, as representatives of local Jewish communities, reacting to the destabilisation of their delicate relationship with mainstream Graeco-Roman culture.[94] The debate brings us to the vexed question of mirror-reading – to what extent is it legitimate to draw conclusions about the identity and opinions of individuals represented to us only in Paul's heated critique of their ministry and its effects?[95] Can we assume that his concerns articulate a true reflex of the Influencers' concerns, such that his insistence that his gospel was not of human origin (Gal 1.11f.) indicates a balancing insistence among the Influencers that it *was*, or that his lengthy interaction with the Abraham story (3.6f.) points to the Influencers' use of the same narrative to justify their insistence on circumcision as an essential component of true conversion? Barclay's landmark contribution to the debate, *Mirror Reading a Polemical Letter*, remains a uniquely helpful statement of the problems and a touchstone for segregating readings that should be considered certain or virtually certain, highly probable, probable, possible, conceivable, and incredible.[96]

[94] On the Influencers as representatives of a coherent Jewish/Jewish Christian opposition to Paul, see Baur, 1845, 253. Campbell argues that the same group of opponents threatened the Gentile Christian communities in Galatia, Philippi and Rome (Campbell, 2014, 142; see also Gager, 2015, 25-8). For a contemporary restatement of the idea that the Influencers represent a Pharisaic faction in the Jerusalem Church, see Tomson, 2017, 234-259. On the Influencers as representatives of local Jewish communities, see Munck, 1959, 87-129; see also Winter, 1994, 136-43).

[95] 'We know nothing about these challengers outside of Paul's hostile characterizations of them' (Fredriksen, 2017, 81).

[96] Barclay, 1987, 88-9.

Valuable though these debates doubtless are, however, in this thesis I am seeking to do something different. It is generally assumed that understanding, and perhaps even identifying, the Influencers is a prerequisite for understanding the situation in Galatia that Paul set himself to address and that the misconceptions of the Influencers as Paul perceived them *are* the misconceptions that the letter was designed to correct.[97] *The inquiry of the subsequent chapters begins from the premise that this is almost certainly not the case*. Taking the Galatians seriously as the addressees of the letter, I will argue that their distinctive response to the Influencers is Paul's primary focus in writing and that *this response may not have been anticipated or intended by the Influencers themselves*. Paul clearly had profound concerns about the Influencers and exposed them to a series of excoriating rebukes (Gal 1.7-9, 4.17, 5.10-12, 6.12-13). But there is no basis for the assumption that these concerns are *identical* to the concerns he expresses about the Galatians. On the contrary, I will argue that, as far as we can tell from the content of the letter, his concerns about the Influencers primarily have to do with their lack of pastoral and missiological good sense, whereas his concerns about the Galatians are theological, even soteriological. Paul is concerned that the Galatians are alienating themselves from Christ and falling away from grace (5.4).

With certain caveats, therefore, the argument that follows adopts a position of principled agnosticism with respect to the identity of the Influencers, decoupling the

[97] e.g. Martyn, 1997*a*, vol 33A, 147.

question as far as possible from the Galatians and their reaction. I choose the term 'Influencers' deliberately for this reason. Paul himself uses more pejorative language – he speaks about people who are '[perverting] the gospel of Christ' (Gal 1.7), who are hindering his readers from 'obeying the truth' (5.7). They are οἱ ταράσσοντες ὑμᾶς (Gal 1.7 cf. 5.10), οἱ ἀναστατοῦντες ὑμᾶς (5.12) – yielding a variety of legitimate English translations – 'agitators,' 'troublemakers,' etc.[98] Such renderings of Paul's prose, however, can unhelpfully foreclose a much-needed debate about the specific kind of trouble the individuals concerned may have been causing. In this study I am interested in how Galatian former-pagans responded to an initiative advocating Jewish legal observances as a necessary part of devotion to Christ and the problems this might have caused for their fledgling faith, not in who the Influencers were or their motivations. I will assume only that persuasive advocacy of Jewish legal observances was a central feature of the Influencers' programme, but this is not doubted by any serious interpreter of the letter.[99]

It is peripherally important to the subsequent chapters to address the possibility that the Influencers may not have been visitors to Galatia but locals and, in particular, that they may not have been ethnic Jews at all but Gentile converts to Judaism seeking to persuade their Christian neighbours to follow in their footsteps. This

[98] Nanos, 2002, 4-5.
[99] Barclay judges it 'certain or virtually certain' that the Influencers were Christians, that they were encouraging Paul's readers to embrace circumcision and 'at least some of the rest of the law, including its calendrical requirements,' that they challenged 'the adequacy of Paul's gospel and his credentials as an apostle,' and that their ministry was 'persuasive for many Galatian Christians' (Barclay, 1987, 88).

suggestion, initially proposed by Johannes Munck and subsequently defended and augmented by Michelle Murray, Mark Nanos and Martin Goodman, leans heavily on Paul's curious use of the present middle/passive participle οἱ περιτεμνόμενοι to describe the Influencers in Gal 6.13.[100] Noting the appearance of a similar phrase in 5.3 and twice in Justin's *Dialogue with Trypho*, Munck argues that 'the present participle in the middle voice of περιτέμνω never means "those who belong to the circumcision" but everywhere else "those who receive circumcision".' He concludes that Paul must be referring to people whose 'circumcision is still in the present' – i.e. Gentile converts to Judaism. [101] The grammatical case for the interpretation of οἱ περιτεμνόμενοι as an unambiguous reference to circumcision as a present reality, however, is precarious.

Per Munck's appeal to Justin Martyr, *Dial*. 27.5 does indeed employ a present middle/passive participle to denote an act of circumcision taking place in the present with respect to the action of the (implied) main verb.[102] In *Dial*. 123.1,

[100] Munck, 1959, 87-9 *et passim*. On Paul's use of οἱ περιτεμνόμενοι, Nanos offers an exhaustive taxonomy of interpretative options for the present passive participle in Greek, concluding that the Influencers were proselyte converts to Judaism, recruited as agents of local Galatian synagogues (Nanos, 2002, 234-44, 249-53). Murray notes the presence of the textual variant περιτετμημενοι in P^{46} and various other ancient manuscripts (Murray, 2003, 34-6; see also Goodman, 2018). Ropes argues that the Influencers were Gentiles without expressing a definite opinion about their origins (Ropes, 1929, 25, 44-5). Winter argues that the Influencers were *ethnically Jewish* members of local Galatian churches (Winter, 1994, 136-43). John counters that there is no evidence in the letter itself that the crisis can be attributed to internal division (John, 2016, 172-4; see also Murphy-O'Connor, 2012, 193).

[101] Munck, 1959, 89.

[102] ἐπεί, εἴπατέ μοι, τοὺς ἀρχιερεῖς ἁμαρτάνειν τοῖς σάββασι προσφέροντας τὰς προσφορὰς ἐβούλετο ὁ θεός, ἢ τοὺς περιτεμνομένους καὶ περιτέμνοντας τῇ ἡμέρᾳ τῶν σαββάτων, κελεύων τῇ ἡμέρᾳ τῇ ὀγδόῃ ἐκ παντὸς περιτέμνεσθαι τοὺς γεννηθέντας ὁμοίως, κἂν ᾖ ἡμέρα τῶν σαββάτων; 'Then tell me, [did God desire] the high priests to sin on the Sabbath by offering the offerings, or *those who are being circumcised* and those who circumcise [to sin] on the day of the Sabbath, having

however, the present middle/passive participle has a wider field of reference uniting proselytes (who are *being* circumcised) with the entire community of circumcised people.[103] The present middle/passive participle form of περιτέμνω occurs as a substantive in only two other texts dating from within two hundred years of the composition of Galatians.[104] In Josephus' *Against Apion* (*Ag. Ap.* 1.170) the phrase occurs in a quote from Herodotus (*Hist.* 2.104), probably best read as a reference to the nations of the world who currently practice circumcision.[105] In Artemidorus' *Onirocriticon*, however, οἱ περιτεμνόμενοι is used as a stative without any obvious sense of ongoing action. The word describes the medical benefits of 'cut cucumbers'

commanded those who have been born to be circumcised in the same way on the eighth day from among all (days), even if it is the day of the Sabbath' (*Dial.* 27.5; translation and emphasis mine).

[103] 'Ὡς οὖν πάντα ταῦτα εἴρηται πρὸς τὸν Χριστὸν καὶ τὰ ἔθνη, οὕτως κἀκεῖνα εἰρῆσθαι νομίζετε. οὐδὲν γὰρ χρήζουσιν οἱ προσήλυτοι διαθήκης, εἰ, ἑνὸς καὶ τοῦ αὐτοῦ πᾶσι τοῖς περιτεμνομένοις κειμένου νόμου, περὶ ἐκείνων οὕτως ἡ γραφὴ λέγει· *Καὶ προστεθήσεται καὶ ὁ γηόρας πρὸς αὐτούς, καὶ προστεθήσεται πρὸς τὸν οἶκον Ἰακώβ.* 'Therefore, as all these [texts] speak of Christ and the Gentiles, so you should account the others to speak. For proselytes need no [special] covenant, since, as one and the same law is valid with respect to *all who are circumcised,* the Scripture speaks concerning them as follows: *And the stranger also shall be added to them, and he shall be added to the house or Jacob*' (*Dial.* 123.1; translation and emphasis mine). This text *could* be read as an attempt to equate the covenantal status of proselytes and Jewish infants *at the moment of their circumcision*. The quote from Isa 14.1, however, indicates equality with all current members of the people of Israel, whether circumcised in the present or in the past. Rabbinic texts cited by Skarsaune on this verse are equivocal. *Yeb.* 47b affirms that 'when [the proselyte] comes up after his ablution he is deemed to be an Israelite in all respects;' *Yeb.* 48b, however, brings the experience of proselytes into explicit contact with that of Hebrew infants: 'One who has become a proselyte is like a child newly born' (Skarsaune, 1987, 349).

[104] In *On Agriculture*, Philo uses περιτεμνόμενοι adverbially to describe the ideal shepherd's careful stewardship of his animals, 'pruning [περιτεμνόμενοι] and cutting off all excessive and hurtful luxuriance' from them (*Agr.* 39.4). Josephus uses περιτεμνόμενα adverbially in *The Antiquities of the Jews,* recording the voluntary circumcision of 'many other nations' motivated by fear of the Jews after their deliverance from the clutches of Haman in his retelling of the biblical Esther story (*Ant.* 11.285). περιτεμνομένους is also used adverbially in the *fragmenta* of Cornelius Alexander (*Frag.* 9.53).

[105] After listing the Colchians, Egyptians as Ethiopians as the only nations 'with whom the practice of circumcision is primitive,' Herodotus lists various Semitic peoples as imitators of the Egyptians, and summarises: οὗτοι γάρ εἰσιν οἱ περιτεμνόμενοι ἀνθρώπων μοῦνοι καὶ οὗτοι Αἰγυπτίοισι φαίνονται ποιοῦντες κατὰ ταὐτά. 'For these are the only (nations) currently practicing circumcision among men and those who do such things show themselves [to be doing them] in reference to the Egyptians' (*Ag. Ap.* 1.170, translation mine). Note the similar use of the participle in Philo *Spec.* 1.7.

[σίκυοι… περιτεμνόμενοι] which 'are good for those who are sick because they cause moist things to be secreted' (*Onir.* 1.67.23, translation mine).

Various other factors militate against Munck's interpretation of οἱ περιτεμνόμενοι as a reference to those who are *being* circumcised in Gal 6.13. Arguing from Paul's use of second-person terminology for the Galatians and third-person terminology for the Influencers, Barclay locates their origin 'outside the Galatian congregations.'[106] James Dunn concludes that the Influencers were missionaries: Their implicit challenge to the nature of Paul's commissioning (1.1, 11f.) suggests they themselves were commissioned; Paul's description of them as bearers of 'a gospel contrary to what we proclaimed to you' (1.8) suggests they saw themselves as apostles, sent out with good news to proclaim.[107] Barclay judges it even more certain that the Influencers were Christians than that they were Jews.[108] We have, therefore, to ask if

[106] Barclay, 1988, 43. Though noting the probability of *links* to Jerusalem (Barclay, 1987, 88) Barclay is unimpressed by arguments identifying Jerusalem as the Influencers' point of departure (Barclay, 1988, 43). Compare Keener, 2019, 26-7.

[107] Dunn, 1993a, 10-11. The point is assumed in early Christian commentaries on the letter (Jerome *Comm. Gal.* 1.1; John Chrysostom *Comm. Gal.* 2.4). For Dunn, Antioch is the likely origin of this missionary endeavour, reflecting ongoing proprietorial interest in the churches of the first missionary journey (Dunn, 1993a, 13-14; see also Murphy-O'Connor, 2012, 193). Following Chrysostom, Lüdemann argues that the Influencers in Galatia can be equated with 'false brothers' whom Paul mentions in the context of his description of the Apostolic Council (Gal 2.4-5; Lüdemann, 2005, 377). The quest for clarity with respect to the Influencers' origins – either as locals or as visitors from Antioch, Jerusalem or some other location – has led to a particular scholarly preoccupation with Paul's brief and enigmatic remarks about their motives in Gal 4.17 and especially Gal 6.12-13 where Paul attributes their actions to fear and to a desire to boast about the Galatians' 'flesh' (e.g. Murray, 2003, 34-6). In what possible context or contexts might their Judaising initiative have constituted grounds for boasting or have mitigated persecution 'for the cross of Christ'? Paul's remarks here are especially susceptible to overreading given the highly-charged nature of his polemic (Barclay, 1987, 75) and multiple solutions are possible (e.g. Winter, 1994, 136-7). It is perhaps telling, however, to note that in 1 Thess 2.14-16, and more obliquely in Rom 15.31, Paul mentions the persecution faced by Jewish Christians from their fellow Jews *in Judea* (cf. Acts 21.21, 28).

[108] Paul is unlikely to have referred to the Influencers' message as 'another good news' if they were not believers in Christ. Barclay also thinks it probable that the disputes between Paul and Jewish

there was adequate time between Paul's arrival in the region and the composition of the letter for these individuals to convert to Christianity, to come under the influence of local Jews, to complete the process of proselyte conversion, and then to become advocates of proselyte conversion to their erstwhile coreligionists. J. Louis Martyn argues persuasively that Paul is opposing something too sophisticated, knowledgeable and connected to recognised trends in the Palestinian Judaism of the period to be identified with enthusiastic Gentile converts.[109]

Whichever conclusion we reach, however, the result influences only the *clarity* of the argument which follows, not its fundamental direction. My core proposal is that Jewish Christianity, as it was put forward and modelled by the Influencers, was not the same thing as Jewish Christianity as it was received by Paul's readers. There was some 'slippage' from the one to the other, such that in Paul's eyes the 'Galatianised'

Christians reported in Gal 2.1-14 function as parallels to the dispute between Paul and the Influencers (Barclay, 2015, 334-5).

[109] Martyn, 1997*b*, 7-24. Even if the Influencers in Galatia were not Gentile converts to Judaism, there is evidence that such people did exist and that their advocacy of Jewish law in Gentile churches was considered dangerous in the eyes of contemporary Christian leaders. In *Phld*. 6.1, Ignatius of Antioch tells us he would rather 'hear Christianity from a man who is circumcised than Judaism from a man who is uncircumcised' – simultaneously confirming the existence and local influence of both ethnic Jewish Christians and Gentile advocates of Jewish practice. In the next verse, Ignatius follows up with a warning to 'flee then the evil arts and plots of the ruler of this age!' – alluding to Paul's designation of the present age as 'evil' in Gal 1.4, and suggesting that embracing Jewish legal observances was a route back into the clutches of this evil infrastructure, in much the same way that Paul positions it in Gal 4.8-11 (Schoedel, 1985, 202-3; Murray, 2003, 87-91; see Chapter 6 §5.1). The denunciations of those 'who say that they are Jews and are not' in the letters to Smyrna and Philadelphia in the book of Revelation perhaps point to a similar phenomenon (Rev. 2.9; 3.9) although not all scholars agree (cf. Murray, 2003, 73-81 with Bauckham, 1993, 198).

version of Jewish faith in Christ looked more like a regression to his readers' pagan past than the thing itself.[110]

If we assume that the Influencers were ethnically Jewish Christ-followers visiting the region for the purposes of 'completing' or 'finessing' Paul's pioneering ministry there, the context in which this slippage would have taken place is clear-cut. Jewish Christians with Jewish assumptions would have advocated law-observance to Gentiles with Gentile assumptions, with consequent potential for misunderstandings and for the reconceptualisation of Jewish law according to pagan norms as their message was received. If the Influencers were ethnic Galatians, however, this picture of slippage becomes more complex. The Influencers would have learned law-observance themselves from somewhere – a process with its own potential for misunderstandings. If they were converted in local Jewish synagogues, differences between diaspora and Palestinian Judaism would also have to be considered. The Galatianisation of Jewish legal observances may have begun before Paul's readers ever heard about them.

[110] I use the term 'slippage' here in conscious debt to Margaret Mitchell's similar description of the discrepancy between Paul's presentation of himself and his audience's resultant concept of him in his correspondence with the Corinthian church (Mitchell, 2010, 18, 68, 72f., 80-1). Stephen Chester uses structuration theory to highlight similar differences between Pauline proclamation and Corinthian reception in his perceptive monograph, *Conversion at Corinth*. In particular, he highlights the enduring impact of religious assumptions formed *before* the Corinthians' first encounter with Paul. 'Converts,' he writes, 'bring their existing cultural resources to the task of interpreting their new faith, and the degree to which this interpretation matches that of the advocate varies' (Chester, 2003, 213). From this foundation, Chester argues that Corinthian Christianity was indebted not only to Paul but to residual assumptions developed through exposure to voluntary associations and mystery cults (Chester, 2003, 219-20).

Neil Martin, Keble College

In the chapters that follow, I assume, with the scholarly majority, that the Influencers in Galatia were ethnic Jews; but I hold this conclusion lightly. We *can* be certain that they were urging Jewish legal observances on the Galatians but, beyond this, we enter the realm of speculation. *Whoever* the Influencers were and *whatever* these observances meant to them, our attention in the pages that follow will therefore concentrate on the Galatians' response to this stimulus. If the possibility of slippage between the Influencers and Paul's readers is taken seriously, the Influencers' motives become less important for exegesis. Whether they advocated Jewish law with the motives of ethnic Jews or with the motives of Gentile converts to Judaism is relatively immaterial. The vital question is how the Galatians responded to the substance of this advocacy (or at least how *Paul* interpreted their response). *Whatever* Jewish Law meant for the *speakers* in Galatia, *Paul's letter* deals with its meaning for the *hearers*.

5. Conclusion

Having now surveyed the range of contextual questions facing all thoughtful readers of Galatians, we are equipped to proceed with a restricted set of guiding assumptions that will control our analysis of Paul's regression language in the succeeding chapters. In my view the case for the southern-Galatian hypothesis is strong and our selection of epigraphic and archaeological data will reflect this. My core argument, however, depends only on the conclusion that Paul wrote to churches in central upland Anatolia, populated for the most part by Gentile converts

with considerable experience of pagan religion and perhaps some prior exposure to Judaism – although by what means they received this exposure, we have yet to determine. In my view the letter is early, but not so early as to precede the Jerusalem Council to which I believe Paul refers in Gal 2.1-10. My core argument, however, depends only on the observation that Paul's correspondents were still relatively immature in faith at the point at which he wrote to them – an assumption which is common to many alternative reconstructions based on later dating. I will assume that Jewish Christian Influencers advocating circumcision and the observance of other elements of Jewish law as central components of mature faith in Christ had come among Paul's correspondents, and that the question of how the Galatians reacted to this advocacy (and how *Paul* reacted to their reaction) is both far more important for exegesis, and far more accessible to us as readers, than speculative questions about the Influencers' identity and motives. In my view the Influencers were ethnic Jews, either sent to Galatia or visiting Galatia on their own initiative from outside. My core argument, however, depends only on the supposition that, whether they were Jews or Gentiles, visitors or locals, the Galatian believers' reception of their ministry was critically dependent on their background and expectations *as recipients*, and that this background was at the forefront of Paul's mind in his response.

Neil Martin, Keble College

CHAPTER 3

GALATIANS IN THE PAGAN RELIGIOUS CONTEXT OF ASIA MINOR

1. Introduction

Having navigated the well-documented challenges of situating Galatians in its geographical and chronological milieu, the quest for contextual understanding of the letter now brings us to the world of central Anatolia in the middle of the first century. Few historical settings require the consideration of a comparably rich and complex range of influences. Christian Marek notes that even attempts to bring the relevant data together in accessible corpora are 'doomed to failure' on account of the sheer vastness of the task.[1] In the centuries prior to the New Testament era, central Anatolia was crisscrossed by violent winds of political, cultural and religious change and adapting to them became something of a regional speciality.

Geography, as so often, provides the motive power for history here – Asia Minor served as a bridge between east and west in the ancient world even more so than it does today. When the Hittite Empire collapsed in the second millennium B.C., Balkan settlers moved east, establishing the Phrygian Empire. They were followed by

[1] Marek and Frei, 2016, 45.

Neil Martin, Keble College

Cimmerians from northern Thrace and Macedonia and by Lydians who dominated the region until the westward expansion of the Persians culminated in the fiery death of their fabled king, Croesus in the sixth-century.[2] Energetic Greek settlers based in Asia Minor sent out colonising sorties as far as Italy, Corsica, France, and Spain.[3] Contacts between east and west in Asia Minor played a significant role in the development of Greek and Persian literary and scientific culture.[4] They also boiled over into war.[5]

The Persians brought with them a governmental model, and gods – who acquired the names and external trappings of Zeus, Artemis and Mēn, but retained the underlying sensibilities of their respective Persian alter egos, Ahura Māzda, Anāhitā and Māh.[6] After the conquests of Alexander, the Greeks embraced the Persian pyramidal administrative model and founded new communities on the Greek

[2] Barnett, 1975, 417-42; see also Marek and Frei, 2016, 94-6, 103-17. Cyrus' defeat of Croesus is memorably described by Herodotus (*Hist.* 1.85-93) although it is uncertain to what extent the account preserves an underlying historical reality. An incomplete reference in the *Nabonidus Chronicle* capable of synchronisation with the traditional date of the Persian conquest of Lydia in 546 B.C. makes tantalising mention of Cyrus: 'In the month of Nisan, King Cyrus of Persia mustered his army and crossed the Tigris downstream from Arbēla and, in the month of Iyyar, [march]ed on Ly[dia]. He put its king to death, seized its possessions, [and] set up his own garrison [there].'
[3] Ehrhardt, 1988.
[4] Marek and Frei, 2016, 133-8.
[5] Persian raiders attacked Greek coastal towns, Greek rebels resisted them, once even venturing as far as an expedition against Mesopotamia itself, the failure of which is recorded by Xenophon of Athens in his eyewitness account, the *Anabasis*, along with the miraculous escape of the expeditionary force after a 1,500-mile march to safety through Eastern Anatolia.
[6] Boyce, 1975, vol 2, 18, 143, 165 *et passim*, 220, 226-7, 229, 245-6, 257; see also Boyce and Grenet, 1975, vol 3, 254-308.

model, creating the platform for the Hellenisation of the interior and the beginning of the dominance of the πόλις in Asia Minor.[7]

Alexander's death unleashed a new wave of eastern and western influences – Seleucids east of the Taurus mountains and Attalids in Pergamum vied for power, with help and/or hinderance from various external influences, as we have already seen in the case of the Celtic settlers who later gave their name to the province of Galatia.[8] Tensions between the two groups finally drew the Romans into the region in the second century B.C.[9] Cicero vividly documents their exploitation of Asia Minor's vast economic potential in the period prior to his tenure as the governor of Cilicia from 51-50 B.C.[10] In the tumultuous years of the triumvirate the region was brought to its knees by the exaction of punitive tributes to fund the campaigns of the competing factions.[11]

But all this changed with the accession of Augustus. The peninsula, so long a victim of its location as a bridge/battleground between east and west, finally entered a period of 'prosperity unparalleled in the subsequent premodern history of the region.'[12] Roman colonies were established at an unprecedented pace in Lycaonia – including Lystra and Iconium, and in Pisidia – including Pisidian Antioch, which stood out in the time of Paul as the leading city in the region, boasting a multiplicity of official connections

[7] Marek and Frei, 2016, 179.
[8] On Seleucid and Attalid activities in Asia Minor, see Ma, 1999, 53-105; and Hansen, 1971, 14-165.
[9] Sherwin-White, 1984, 52-5, 80-92.
[10] e.g. Cicero, *Att.* 109.2-3.
[11] e.g. Plutarch, *Lives Brut.* 30.1-31.7 and *Lives Ant.* 24.1-6.
[12] Marek and Frei, 2016, 313.

to the imperial house and a host of extravagant monuments laid out across seven wards, evoking the seven hills of the capital.[13] Historic dynastic chains were broken and local rulers installed who owed their privileges to Rome.[14] This is the broad historical backdrop against which the drama of Galatians is set.

2. Sources

2.1 Literary Sources

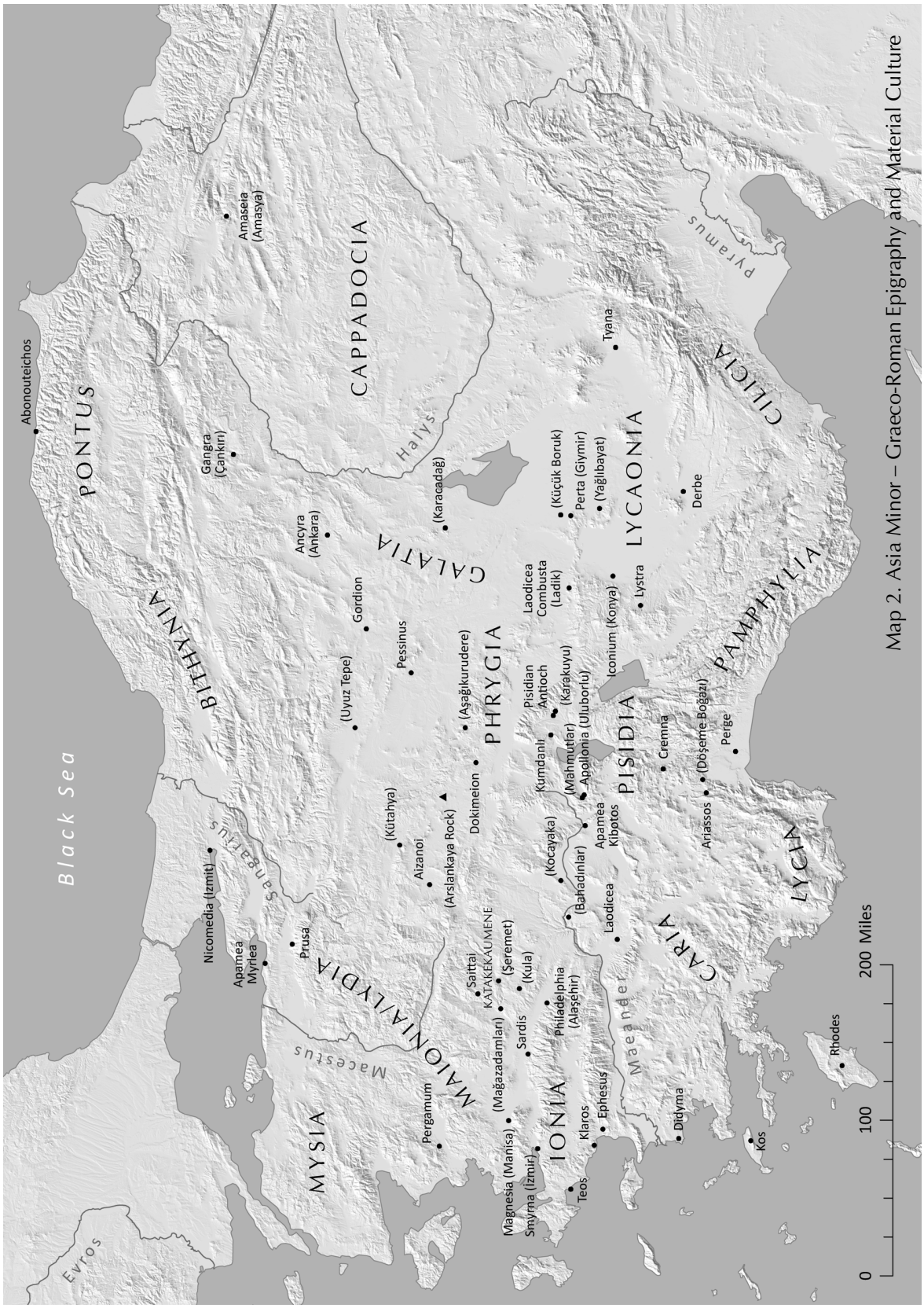
Despite the political importance of Asia Minor in our period and its deep history as a literary culture, the written resources at our disposal as we seek insights into the lives and assumptions of Paul's Galatian readership are comparatively thin.

2.1.1 Strabo

In books 12 and 14 of his pioneering *Geography,* written around the turn of the Christian era, Strabo provides a patchy but nonetheless informative guide to the regions comprising and surrounding the Roman province of Galatia, commenting on their economic circumstances and on notable curiosities of their history and culture. Strabo's background in Amaseia understandably skews his interest northward towards the Black Sea coast. Yet his account still provides valuable details about such important and relevant places as Pessinus, Iconium, Derbe, Cremna,

[13] Mitchell and Waelkens, 1998, 5-14; Mitchell, 1993, vol 1, 86-91; Levick, 1967, 33-8, 68-91.
[14] Marek and Frei, 2016, 313-26.

Neil Martin, Keble College



Map 2. Asia Minor – Graeco-Roman Epigraphy and Material Culture

Apamea Kibotos, Laodicea, and Pisidian Antioch – setting each within the context of larger trends that he perceives to affect the region. Strabo repeatedly alludes, for instance, to a decline in the apparatus and influence of traditional cults. In Pisidian Antioch, he notes the 'destruction' of the priesthood of Mēn Askenos by Roman officials tasked with administering the inheritance of the Galatian king, Amyntas, shortly after Augustus' assumption of the Principate (Strabo *Geog*. 12.8.14).[15] In Pessinus he notes that the priests of Agdistis 'were in ancient times potentates… who reaped the fruits of a great priesthood, but at present the prerogatives of these have been much reduced, although the emporium still endures' (Strabo *Geog*. 12.5.3, see also 12.3.32, 37).

Surveying the region of Laodicea, some 140 miles west of Pisidian Antioch, Strabo relates an intriguing anecdote concerning the meandering habit of its now-celebrated local river. He tells us that, here, 'lawsuits are brought against the god Maeander for altering the boundaries of the countries on his banks, that is, when the projecting elbows of land are swept away by him; and that when he is convicted the fines are paid from the tolls collected at the ferries' (Strabo, *Geog*. 12.8.19). Clearly, for the locals, it was not only reasonable to consider themselves accountable for the payment of tolls for crossing the god's property, but also to consider the god accountable for violations of their own property inflicted through the natural process of erosion.

[15] The Mēn temple, however, continued in use for several centuries, indicating that the 'destruction' described here involved the removal of the existing priestly dynasty and the suppression of local religious independence (Mitchell, 1993, vol 2, 24-5, 29).

Asymmetric though the relationship doubtless was between gods and human beings, one could still assume that both parties occupied a common environment of mutual obligation, and that violations of these obligations could be prosecuted.

2.1.2 Pliny the Younger

Pliny's correspondence with Trajan, composed during his brief governorship of Bithynia on the northern coast of Asia Minor commencing A.D. 110, offers only very remote hints about the world of central Asia Minor as Paul would have known it. The letters afford numerous sidelights, however, on the interaction between local cults and Roman power. In *Let.* 10.49, Pliny enquires about the protocol for relocating the temple of the mother of the gods in Nicomedia to make space for the construction of a new forum. Clearly the Romans were not deaf to local religious scruples, but neither were they impressed to the point of inactivity – as we soon discover in Trajan's reply (*Let.* 10.50) which flatly rejects the validity of local forms of consecration when they stand in the path of progress. Pliny's interaction with Trajan also offers a valuable insight into the ubiquitous practice of vow-making in the period, recording the annual drumbeat of the pledges he made on the emperor's behalf and their subsequent annual fulfilments (*Let.* 10.35, 51, 100). There is no indication that the emperor himself was directly invoked as the object of his vows, however – only that blessings for the emperor formed the substance of requests that were sealed with vows made to traditional deities.

Neil Martin, Keble College

2.1.3 Dio Chrysostom

The passages of Dio Chrysostom's *Discourses* pertaining to Asia Minor are broadly contemporary with Pliny's letters in place and time. Vow-making is, once again, the area they most helpfully illuminate, this time from the perspective of a local resident, albeit a thoroughly-Romanised one. According to Dio, vows are made in the hope of receiving 'boons' from the gods, and the greater the boons sought, the greater the variety of the vows made and the creativity applied in making them (Dio, *Disc*. 38.44). Like Pliny, Dio also sheds light on contemporary attitudes to reciprocity. In a fascinating section dealing with a quarrel between the Bithynian cities of Apamea Myrlea and Prusa – Dio's home town on the coast of the Sea of Marmara – he tells us, 'there is nothing more weighty, no debt bearing higher interest, than a favour promised. Moreover, this is the shameful and bitter kind of loan, when, as one might say, because of tardy payment the favour turns into an obligation, an obligation the settlement of which those who keep silent demand altogether more sternly than those who cry aloud' (Dio, *Disc*. 40.3). The giving and receiving of favours, and the constant threat that they would evolve into unspoken obligations, was the engine that kept civic society, as Dio knew it, turning – and, by extension, human interactions with divine society.[16]

[16] 'The believer in Antiquity approached his god, in word and deed, as though he was a great and powerful human being' (Versnel, 1981, 37-8). 'It is not, then, so surprising that the gods were concerned with honour and the due offering of gifts. They shared the attitudes which guided their worshippers' attitudes to one another. They were not just superior patrons, but powers of immense superiority: they were particularly touchy, then, about honour and were not committed to giving

Neil Martin, Keble College

2.1.4 Pausanias

Written in the second half of the second-century, Pausanias' conceptually unique 'travel guide' to mainland Greece is relevant to Asia Minor only because the author himself grew up in the region around Smyrna, and frequently connects his historical and architectural observations with recollections of his homeland.[17] Historical details about the Gaulish invasion are helpfully corroborated – with a strong stress on the order-restoring achievements of the Attalids of Pergamum – and there are several passages attesting to the veneration of various local gods with a particular emphasis on the Great Mother.[18] It is striking that when faced with the challenge of explaining the origin of Attis worship in Dyme on the northern coast of Achaia, Pausanias does *not* draw on his local knowledge of Anatolia but opts instead to reproduce the account of the fourth/third-century B.C. elegiac poet Hermesianax alongside the local (Greek) myth, thus casting doubt on the alleged Phrygian origin of the cult.[19] The story, as Hermesianax tells it, has Attis killed in Lydia in a boar hunt, which according to Pausanias led to the practice of abstaining from pork among the Galatians living in Pessinus in his time.[20]

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regular gifts in return' (Lane Fox, 2005, 38; see also Parker, 1998, 95). For Seth Schwartz, it is a striking feature of the inculturation of Josephus that he sees God more in the role of patron than Lord (Schwartz, 2010, 94).

[17] Habicht, 1998, 13-17.

[18] On the Gaulish invasion, see Pausanias *Descr.* Attica IV.1-6; Phocis, Ozolian, Lochri XV.2-3. On the Great Mother, see Laconia XXII.4; Achaia XVII.8-12; Phocis, Ozolian, Lochri XXXII.3-6.

[19] Pausanias, *Descr.* Achaia XVII.8-12.

[20] Abstention from pork was closely associated with Judaism in the period, thus Augustus' quipping response to the news that Herod's own son had been killed in the massacre of the innocents in Macrobius' *Saturnalia*, 'melius est Herodis porcum esse quam filium' – 'It's better to be Herod's pig than

Neil Martin, Keble College

2.1.5 Aelius Aristides

Aelius Aristides' late second-century text, Ἱεροὶ λόγοι, detailing the author's interactions with Asclepius and focussed primarily on the Asclepian shrine in Pergamum, directs our attention to the importance of healing cults in the religious life of Asia Minor.[21] Aristides sheds light on a form of religious devotion characterised by the quest for personalised medical and vocational guidance delivered through dreams during overnight 'incubation' sessions in the temple of the god.[22] Devotees discuss the revelations they have received on an ad hoc basis but there is no indication of a cultic communal life (*Hier. Log.* IV.16). Devotion to Asclepius fits more naturally within the established paradigm of oracular inquiry. Similarities to traditional cults are observable, however, at the level of religious practice. Aristides maximises the chances of divine favour on his work by applying creative 'artifice' to the composition of inscriptions (*Hier. Log.* I.31). He makes vows to Asclepius and is bound to fulfil

his son' (*Sat.* 2.4.11; see also Philo *Embassy. 361;* Juvenal *Sat.* 6.160; 14.98-9). There is no indication, however, that Pausanius saw this as an alternative aetiology for abstention in Galatia.

[21] Numismatic evidence firmly locates the cult of Asclepius in Pergamum in the early third century A.D. (Mitchell, 1993, vol 1, 204-5, fig. 35b) but the cult is much older. Asclepius was honoured with a temple on Kos, off the west coast of Asia Minor, in the third century B.C. (Edelstein and Edelstein, 1945, vol 2, 243). A new manifestation of Asclepius in Abonouteichos on the Black Sea coast of Asia Minor is immortalised by the second-century satirist, Lucian, in *Alexander or the False Prophet*. While corroborating the oracular emphasis of healing cults in general, however, the openly sardonic polemical agenda of this account renders it problematic as a basis for detailed historical analysis (Petsalis-Diomidis, 2010, 42-6).

[22] The treatments prescribed in the Ἱεροὶ λόγοι typically entail bathing in rivers in more-or-less unsuitable weather conditions (e.g. *Hier. Log.* II.18-23, 45, 49, 51, 71, 74-80; IV.11; V.49-55), vomiting (e.g. *Hier. Log.* I.9, 15, 32; IV.6) and bloodletting (e.g. *Hier. Log.* II.47-8). Chapter IV marks a shift towards vocational guidance focussing on divinely-scripted opportunities for Aristides to hone his oratorical skills (*Hier. Log.* IV.8, 14-18, 25, 27) and divine assistance in the avoidance of onerous public duties (*Hier. Log.* IV.71-108). Explicit references to incubation in the Asclepian temple (*Hier. Log.* II.9, 80; III.7, 21-3) are complemented by accounts of revelatory dreams in other contexts, (e.g. *Hier. Log.* II.13).

them (*Hier. Log.* I.32). He dedicates thank offerings to the god and positions them prominently in his temple (*Hier. Log.* IV.45-7).[23]

2.1.6 Apollonius of Tyana

The correspondence of Apollonius of Tyana purports at least to bring us closer in place and time to the audience and content of Galatians. The Neopythagorean philosopher, born early in the first century A.D. in Cappadocia some 130 miles east of Iconium, travelled widely and was a noted letter-writer. Philostratus tells us that the emperor Hadrian possessed 'certain of Apollonius's letters, but not all' (*Vit. Apoll.* 8.20) and it seems entirely plausible that such collections existed at an early date although we lack anything approaching a manuscript history for them. The letters certainly afford a number of interesting insights into at least one popular religious vision of the period, especially in the area of reciprocity.[24]

Critiquing the cult personnel of the Olympian Zeus, Apollonius declares that the gods favour those who acquire wisdom and who 'do all the good in [their] power to those humans who deserve it' (*Let.* 26). Correctly assessing and then responding to the merits of others is the way to ensure the gods respond *to us* in the way we desire. Ascetic rigour also plays an important part in Apollonius's system. His pupils are

[23] Alexia Petsalis-Diomidis argues that the Ἱεροὶ λόγοι is itself conceived as 'a votive thank offering requested by Asclepios' (Petsalis-Diomidis, 2010, 129). While the composition of the work is certainly commanded and associated with thanks, however, there is no indication that Aristides pledged it to the god on the condition that particular prayers were answered and he seems to have felt no obligation to complete the project either promptly or exhaustively (*Hier. Log.* II.1-4).
[24] The sources and compositional circumstances of Philostratus' *Life of Apollonius* are so obscure that I omit it as a source for the purposes of historical analysis (Jones, 2005*a*, vol 1, 1-13).

enjoined to maintain strict behavioural standards – remaining indoors, avoiding bathing, practicing vegetarianism, and keeping themselves 'free from envy, malignity, hatred, scandalmongering, and hostility' (*Let.* 43). A passing reference to the multiplicity of divine attributions in use in Sardis (about which the letters demonstrate strikingly contemporary knowledge) is also revealing.[25] Apollonius knows that the Sardeans' ancestral goddess Meter 'is called by some people "Mother of the Gods," by others "Mother of Humanity," and by all "Mother of Crops," but she is one, universal and belonging to all' (*Let.* 75).

2.2 Epigraphic Sources

If we wish to gain proximity to the actual situation of Paul's readers in Galatia, by far the most valuable body of resources at our disposal is not literary but epigraphic. On the literary side, the problem is the scarcity of the relevant material outside the confines of the New Testament. On the epigraphic side, however, the situation is reversed – the materials are unmanageably voluminous and often disorganised. Texts collected 'at various times and in various ways,' under various research methodologies, and frequently sundered from their historical and geographical contexts, are littered through more-or-less-inaccessible corpora and specialist journal articles, museums and private collections. Many, described (and, in favourable instances, drawn or photographed) by earlier generations of archaeological researchers, have now been lost. No study in this field can claim to

[25] Jones, 2005*b*, 6.

be comprehensive. Our goal here is simply to be representative, with a particular focus on the range of cities to which Paul's Galatian letter may have been directed.

2.2.1 Votive Offerings

Among all the various genres of inscriptions remaining to us from ancient Anatolia, the most striking in terms of sheer volume and breadth of distribution is the votive offering.

An example from Ladık, roughly 25 miles north of Iconium, dating from the period between A.D. 41 and 138 and published in the concluding volume of *Monumenta Asiae Minoris Antiqua* (MAMA XI), illustrates the principle elements:

> For Meter Zizimene, in fulfilment of a vow: Alexandros, son of Alexandros, citizen of Dokimeion and of Claudiconium.[26]

The dedicant is Alexandros, son of Alexandros and the beneficiary is a local manifestation of Meter, identified by the toponymn, Zizimene. The occasion of the offering is the fulfilment of a vow, implying an earlier – probably public – declaration with conditional clauses: 'if/when x desirable outcome obtains, I Alexandros will raise a monument as a testimony to the power of the goddess to answer prayer, etc.'[27]

[26] MAMA XI, no. 255.

[27] A late second-century text from Şeremet further clarifies the underlying order of events: 'In the year 282 [197/8 A.D.], on the tenth day of the month Pereitios, I, Tyrannis, daughter of Glykon, made a vow to Meis Petraeites while they (i.e. the people) were suffering from a harassing disease, and after the people had been raised (i.e. brought to recovery), I rendered the ex-voto' (*New Religious Texts from Lydia*, no. 185). 'Ex-voto inscriptions express the gratitude of worshippers who have been

Neil Martin, Keble College

In a very large number of cases, relief carvings portraying the deity in question or the objects upon which their blessing was sought either complement the inscribed text or stand alone as an indication of the original purpose of the vow. Examples focused on the wellbeing of livestock include representations of cows or horses.[28] Examples focused on physical health include representations of particular body parts – especially arms, legs and eyes.[29]

Similar examples can be multiplied almost without limit. Also from MAMA XI, three more equivalent inscriptions from the Roman imperial period derive from within 40 miles of Iconium.[30] A fourth example from the same region can be dated with greater confidence to the first or second century.[31] At the Mēn Temple in Pisidian Antioch, 55 of the 70 inscriptions from the south-west Temenos wall catalogued by Margaret Hardie were votives.[32] William Calder records an undated votive offering to Theos Hypsistos from Iconium itself.[33] Marijana Ricl records a similar third-century votive to *Hosios kai Dikaios* from the same city.[34]

granted the fulfilment of a wish. When worshippers asked their gods for particular favours, the request was very often accompanied by a promise of giving something in return if the wish was fulfilled' (Rostad, 2006, 92; see also Parker, 2011, 120; Bergman, 1987, 37; Burkert, 1987a, 69). 'A vow begins with a plea for *divine* action, followed by a conditional promise of the worshiper's response' (Cartledge, 1992, 16).

[28] e.g. *Phrygian Votive Steles*, no.s 297-335.

[29] e.g. *Phrygian Votive Steles*, no.s 11-69.

[30] MAMA XI, no.s 282, 297 & 298.

[31] ETAM 11, no. 2.

[32] Hardie, 1912, 111-150.

[33] MAMA VIII, no. 298.

[34] Hosios kai Dikaios, no. 99.

Spreading the geographical net more widely, Drew-Bear's massive catalogue of Phrygian votive stelae demonstrates the prevalence of these inscriptions in rural as well as urban settings. Concentrating on the regions around the modern Turkish villages of Aşağıkurudere, just 45 miles north of Pisidian Antioch, and Kütahya, 100 miles to the north west, Drew-Bear showcases locations that are uniquely equipped to illuminate the lives of the ordinary locals of the second century in the case of the Aşağıkurudere inscriptions, and of the late second to mid third centuries in the case of the texts from Kütahya. In both places, proximity to marble quarries – especially the great quarry at Dokimeion mentioned by Strabo (*Geog.* 12.8.14) which exported columns and sarcophagi of the highest quality as far as the imperial capital – facilitated the availability of affordable marble offcuts to strata of society whose voices are conspicuously absent from the epigraphic record under more typical economic conditions.[35] The catalogue runs to 609 items in total, all addressed to Zeus, with or without additional epithets.

Johan Strubbe's comprehensive catalogue of inscriptions from Pessinus records votives from the imperial period dedicated to Theos Hypsistos, Nemesis, Meter Magna and Herakles.[36] Stephen Mitchell's equivalent corpus for Ancyra records second-century votives to Asclepius and Hygeia, Isis, Mēn Uranius, Meter Theon and Zeus Tavianus.[37]

[35] Drew-Bear, Thomas, and Yildizturan, 1999, 13-14; see also Scheidel, Morris, and Saller, 2007, 684-6.
[36] I.Pessinous, no.s 23, 25, 171 & 174.
[37] I.Ancyra, no.s 194, 197, 200, 201 & 206.

Neil Martin, Keble College

The prevalence of vow-making over a vast area and in the context of a wide range of different cults is immediately evident from the foregoing summary. The texts cluster around the late second to mid third centuries but this should not be taken as an indication that vow-making postdates the Pauline era. On the contrary, a flowering of the epigraphic habit is evident across all inscriptional categories in this period; the greater volume of materials indicating only an increase in overall production.[38] Devotees of Magna Mater, Asclepius, Zeus, Isis, Theos Hypsistos and a Byzantine variety of alternative deities are united here by a practice that seems capable of expressing assumptions common to all. Indeed, as Cartledge notes, 'vow-making was an important element of popular or "folk" religion throughout the ancient Near Eastern world of the first millennium.'[39] The only striking exception is the absence of vows addressed directly to the emperors as gods. Such vows are only sparsely attested in other regions – in France, for example, where a vow using the conventional Latin votive formula *V*[*otum*] *S*[*olvit*] *L*[*ibens*] *M*[*erito*] was dedicated to Caesar Augustus.[40]

The importance of fulfilling vows to the gods is evident in the ominous warning articulated in an early second-century dice oracle from Cremna: 'It will be better for

[38] Drew-Bear, Thomas, and Yildizturan, 1999, 31-3. See also Ameling, 2009, 203-34; Mitchell, 1999b, 419-33.
[39] Cartledge, 1992, 28.
[40] '*Caesari Augusto Atespatus Crixi fil[ius] v[otum] s[olivit] l[ibens] m[erito]*' (CIL XIII, no. 1366; Clauss, 1999, 33). Manfred Clauss' helpful survey of vows dedicated to the emperors finds no examples in Asia Minor (Clauss, 1999, 526). Jerphanion's reconstruction of the second- or early third-century text, I.Ancyra, no. 29, interprets it as a vow made *on behalf of* an unspecified emperor, rather like the vows attested in Pliny's correspondence with Trajan, but the reading is uncertain.

you to repay the Daimon the vow which you have made, if you intend to accomplish what you care about.'[41] A Lydian confession text dedicated to Mēn Ouranios Artemidorou and dating from the late imperial period paints a similar picture:

> …from Saittai, daughter of Synodos… after I had disregarded my obligation to give him in return immediately the ex-voto, he punished me.[42]

Hasan Malay and Georg Petzl's recently published catalogue of Lydian inscriptions, many of which were identified in private collections and painstakingly reassociated with their original find-spots, offers similar insights into the underlying expectations of votive dedicants. A very early second-century confession text from Mağazadamları follows a similar pattern to the confession of Saittai above – a delay in the fulfilment of a vow after the sought-after blessing was received resulted in divine punishment.[43]

What factors motivated the making of vows in the first place? As far as we can tell, the concerns of the dedicants were uniformly 'this-worldly.'[44] Lynn Roller includes among the most-common motivating factors 'the health and safety of the individual, or his family or friends.'[45] In the context of the *Hosios kai Dikaios* cult, Marijana Ricl identifies similar drivers. In several inscriptions, dedicants mention past requests for restored health; in one, the dedicant gives thanks for his discharge from military

[41] I.Pisid.Cen., no. 5, lines 28-9.
[42] *New Documents from Lydia*, no. 55.
[43] *New Religious Texts from Lydia*, no. 131. Compare *Beichtinschriften*, no.s 62, 63, 65, 71.
[44] Barton and Horsley, 1981, 27.
[45] Roller, 1999, 329.

service.[46] Vows connected with the agricultural cycle, and subsequent votives taking the form of first fruits offerings, formed part of the annual religious routine of central Anatolia, 'linked in an unending chain throughout the year.'[47] But there is no evidence to suggest that vow-making was an exclusively rural phenomenon. Vows were malleable, adapting to accommodate the concerns of the audience that expressed them. Self-interest was also an important motive in vow-making. Ostentatious offerings were deposited in prominent places in the hope of impressing (or even intimidating) peers.[48]

In her discussion of anatomical votives, Justine Potts highlights the phenomenon of *reification*.[49] Depictions of legs or breasts on votive tablets should not be read merely as *representations* of body parts in need of divine healing but also as *presentations* of the body parts themselves to the gods so that, belonging to them, their restoration will now be perceived as an act in the divine interest.[50] A similar

[46] Hosios kai Dikaios, no.s 5, 9, 15, 16.
[47] Burkert, 1987a, 69. F.T. Van Straten explores the possibility that such offerings may have represented attempts to bind the gods to help their devotees. Interpreting a sixth-century B.C. black Attic kylix (drinking-cup) from Rhodes featuring a ploughing scene and a ritual dance involving the offering of a liknon (or winnow), he argues that it should be read as a record of a prospective 'sowing sacrifice [to which] we should probably attribute… a sort of inductive, more or less magical function' (Van Straten, 1981, 67-8). Bergman, however, makes the function of the cup retrospective: the ploughing scene is a remembrance of circumstances as they stood when vows for the harvest were taken, and the offering of the liknon is the fulfilment of those vows after the harvest came in (Bergman, 1987, 37-8).
[48] Linders, 1987, 118.
[49] Potts, 2017, 25-6. 'Our language of "representation" conspicuously fails in this regard, since in antiquity images held the promise of direct 'presentation' – of superseding or effacing their purely representative function' (Squire, 2009, 116; see also Platt, 2011, 31-50).
[50] Petsalis-Diomidis interprets Aelius Aristides' entire physical substance as a votive offering within the narrative of the *Ἱεροὶ λόγοι*, (Petsalis-Diomidis, 2010, 133). In one particularly striking example, the request that Aristides 'cut off some part of [his] body for the sake of the well-being of the whole' is remitted by the dedication of a ring to Telesphorus (*Hier. Log.* II.27).

attempt to recruit the interests of the gods to the cause of the dedicant, is observable in an early first-century B.C. - second-century A.D bronze votive, probably from Maionia, recording the consecration of several stolen objects to the divine mother in the hope that, as their new owner, she would be all the more diligent in her investigation of the offense and all the more robust in her execution of justice against the offender.[51]

In some cases, the physical location of the votive carried religious significance. Votive offerings were typically displayed in the sanctuary of the god or goddess to whom the vow was made as a permanent testimony to their power and to the efficacy of vows made in their name. According to Walter Burkert, the challenge of accommodating the overwhelming number of votive offerings that were dedicated in this way was one of the major drivers for the physical extension of temples in the ancient world.[52] In the Cybele cult of the Phrygian imperial period, votive offerings were deposited in shafts bored into the rock behind the carved façades that typically framed images of the goddess. 'It seems likely,' writes Roller, that by this means, the dedicants 'intended to keep [their offerings] closer to the goddess by placing [them] behind her "house".'[53] A similar practice is still evident in the early Christian era in the architectural details of a cave used as a Meter sanctuary from the first-century B.C. to the second-century A.D. in Aizanoi, 105 miles north west of Pisidian

[51] SEG 28, no. 1568. For the text and further discussion, see §3.5.1.
[52] Burkert, 1987a, 94.
[53] Roller, 1999, 98.

Antioch. Here comparable shafts located directly above the shrine may have been used as depositories for votive offerings, permanently memorialising the devotion of their dedicants and reducing the possibility that the goddess's reciprocal obligations might somehow slip her mind.[54]

The votives of our region and period assume a fundamental asymmetry in the relationship that exists between human beings and the gods – the parties to the exchange are not equals and the things exchanged are not of equal value. In all cases, human worshippers are expected to follow through on their commitments; to adapt the comment quoted earlier from Dio Chrysostom – 'there is nothing more weighty, no debt bearing higher interest, than a [votive offering] promised' (Dio, *Disc.* 40.3). Vows are a means to *incentivise* divine action, not to *demand* it. Yet attempts to recruit the interests of the gods to the causes of the dedicants and to maintain the divine attention through the careful positioning of votive offerings indicate that, in some cases, incentivisation could shade into an attempt to impose a sense of obligation on the divine conversation partner.[55]

[54] Roller, 1999, 337-40. Van Straten notes the common practice of 'recharging' votive offerings with fresh lamps or coins to remind the god of the dedicant's thankfulness and of their obligation to provide them with on-going aid (Van Straten, 1981, 74).

[55] Amid the range of functions attributable to votive offerings, Tullia Linders notes that, 'since a gift creates or maintains, a relationship, the donor could by right expect recompense from the god' (Linders, 1987, 118). On vows as means to motivate divine action, see Cartledge, 1992, 46; see also Wendel, 1931, 114-21, 121-6.

2.2.2 Confession Inscriptions

The Lydian-Phrygian confession stelae first came to prominence as a category distinct from other votive inscriptions in the early twentieth-century with the publication of Franz Seraph Steinleitner's doctoral thesis *Die Beicht im Zusammenhange mit der sakralen Rechtspflege in der Antike*.[56] These predominantly second- and third-century texts, found, for the most part, in the mountainous Katakekaumene region of Western Anatolia about 140 miles west of Pisidian Antioch, represent a unique response to experiences interpreted by their dedicants as divine punishments. After violating sacred space, failing to fulfil vows, or similar offenses – and subsequently experiencing misfortune either directly in their own persons or indirectly in the affliction other members of their households – the dedicants erected stelae declaring their guilt and the power of their gods to prosecute it, hoping by this means to restore harmony to the divine-human relationship going forward. More than 150 of these texts have so far been identified.

For students of religious experience in Asia Minor in the early Christian era, the attraction of these texts can scarcely be overestimated. In contrast to votive offerings which, despite their large number, provide only fleeting glimpses into the underlying life circumstances and motives of their dedicants, the confession texts offer a treasure trove of valuable details. Misdemeanours are frequently described at length, as are the processes by which they came to be uncovered and the dedicants'

[56] Steinleitner, 1913; Rostad, 2006, 89.

journeys from reluctant recognition of guilt to willing acknowledgement of the gods' power and advocacy of scrupulous observances to their peers.

Opinion is divided, however, as to just how relevant these inscriptions might or might not be for the interpretation of Galatians. Felix John speaks for many when he concludes that 'the bulk of the inscriptions evidently come from the period after the New Testament – from the second and third centuries A.D. The find spots are concentrated in Lydia and Phrygia.' [57]

While it is true that the confession texts available to us are drawn primarily from the decades either side of the turn of the third century, however, the argument that public confession was a new practice, unfamiliar to the religious landscape of earlier centuries is fragile. The number of extant examples that can be dated with precision is less than sixty, but even among these we know of three examples from the first century and between five and seven from the first quarter of the second.[58] Comparing the chronological distribution of confession texts to that of votive offerings more generally, Potts finds no evidence that confession flourished in a fashion out of keeping with the wider pattern of epigraphic activity discussed for

[57] 'das Gros der Inschriften doch aus deutlich nachneutestamentlicher Zeit – aus dem 2./3. Jh. n. Chr. – stammt. Die Fundorte konzentrieren sich auf Lydien und Phrygien' (John, 2016, 180). See also Hardin, 2008, 10. Despite his reservations, John is still willing to admit the relevance of the confession texts to the wider religious milieu of central Anatolia, noting especially their composition in Greek: 'Immerhin aber ist Griechisch die Sprache der Beichtinschriften. Auch ist nicht anzunehmen, dass im ländlichen Raum verbreitete religiöse Überzeugungen in den Städten völlig fehlten. Manches des in den Texten Genannten dürfte also den galatischen Christen aus ihrer Umwelt und der eigenen Sozialisierung vertraut gewesen sein' (John, 2016, 180).

[58] For first-century texts, see *Beichtinschriften*, no.s 41 & 56 and *New Religious Texts from Lydia*, no. 188. For early second-century texts, see *Beichtinschriften*, no.s 52, 54, 57, 67, 78 and possibly also 39 & 44.

votives above.[59] On the contrary, the similarities between confession texts and the numerous anatomical votives from the region attested across a wide date range persuade her that the distinction between these categories is itself somewhat artificial and that the presence of underlying confessional motives should be considered even when anatomical votives have no inscriptional components.[60]

Neither is the geographical range of the confession texts as limited as many suppose. Despite their undoubted concentration in Eastern Lydia, the breadth of the area already attested in Petzl's 1994 edition was complemented in 1997 by Ricl's republication of an early third-century text from the village of Uyuz Tepe, 100 miles north of Pisidian Antioch.[61] Barbara Levick points to examples found as far away as Macedonia, Justine Potts compares the Anatolian examples to the confession inscriptions of Southern Arabia.[62] In the course of my own research, I identified another confession text in the survey report published by Margaret Hardie following the discovery of the Mēn Temple by Sir William Ramsay in 1912 at Karakuyu, just outside Pisidian Antioch (fig. 2).

[59] Potts, 2017, 33. Marijana Ricl argues that the extant prayers of the fourteenth-century B.C. Hittite king Murshilish II 'prove beyond doubt that the contemporary Hittite religion… was already familiar with developed conceptions of slow, but inescapable divine revenge for transgressions against gods or men, of inherited sin and of its removal by confession and sacrifices' (Ricl, 1995, 68).
[60] 'The dedicants of confession stelai and anatomical votives appear to have been part of the same material and intellectual world which suggests that the corpora were different epigraphic expressions of [a] common religious mentality' (Potts, 2017, 42).
[61] Ricl, 1997, 35-43.
[62] Levick, 2013, 48-9; Potts, 2017, 24. On ancient Arabian expiatory texts, see also Agostini, 2012, 1-12.

Neil Martin, Keble College



Fig. 2.

Votive dedication. Pisidian Antioch. Sanctuary of Mēn Askaēnos. Roman Imperial Period.[63]

The text, also published as part of the *Corpus Monumentorum Religionis dei Menis,* reads as follows:

Κύντις Μηνὶ εὐχὴν	Kuntis – a vow to Mēn. He sinned when
ἁμαρτάνων τεκμο-	he performed τεκμορευειν with [his]
ρεύσας μετὰ γυναι-	wife and children (translation mine).
κὸς καὶ τέκνων.	

The date of the text is uncertain as is the meaning of the participle τεκμορεύσας.[64] Ramsay proposed dates in the third or fourth century A.D. for this and all other Antiochian instances of the conjectural verb τεκμορεύω, interpreting them as remains of the ξένοι τεκμορείοι, an association attested in the region around Sağir and Kumdanlı, approximately 12 miles north of Pisidian Antioch.[65] Aitor Blanco Pérez's convincing survey of the data brings the date more broadly into line with the

[63] Hardie, 1912, no. 65; CMRDM, no. 242.
[64] Translation of the text is further complicated by the apparent presence of two nominative singular masculine participles: a present active form of ἁμαρτάνω and an aorist active form of the conjectural verb τεκμορεύω. I take ἁμαρτάνων as an adverbial modifier of τεκμορεύσας translated as the participial component in a defective periphrastic construction. The assumption that the action was completed *before* the making of the vow is supported by the ubiquity of the aorist participle form of τεκμορεύω in the other occurrences of the word at Karakuyu (Blanco-Pérez, 2016, 132-3).
[65] Ramsay, 1906, 303-77; Ramsay, 1912, 151-70. See also Price, 1984, 97-8.

wider development of the epigraphic habit in the early third century, interpreting τεκμορευειν as a communal religious practice traditionally associated with the worship of mother goddesses in the region but adopted at the Mēn Temple by an eclectic mix of native Antiochians and Roman colonists.[66]

As in the case of votives, the confession texts attest abundantly to the prevailing concern to make religious devotion tangible and enduring. In an undated text from Kula, 16 miles north east of Philadelphia, a woman named Syntyche describes the circumstances surrounding the theft of a precious stone from her house by a local girl named Apphia. She appealed to Mēn Artemidorou Axiottenos for justice and Apphia promptly died. After being asked by the girl's mother to keep the incident quiet, however, Syntyche herself was punished for failing 'to make known and exalt the god,' and the stele represents her rectification of that fault.[67] Angelos Chaniotis notes this emphasis on the exaltation of divine power as a consistent theme of the confession texts.[68] Their function as exempla is self-consciously expressed in several instances.[69]

The maintenance of religious purity and the order of sacred space is a similarly recurrent theme in the confession inscriptions. Various infringements are recorded including cutting wreathes without permission, entering the sanctuary one day

[66] Blanco-Pérez, 2016, 117-50. The active life of the Mēn temple began in the second century B.C. (Mitchell, 1993, vol 2, 24-5). Nicole Belayche challenges the interpretative connection between τεκμορεύω and the ξένοι τεκμορείοι noting the use of τέκμωρ in Homer's Odyssey (*Od.* 4.373-4; Belayche, 2007, 327-48).
[67] *Beichtinschriften*, no. 59. Note the similar dynamics at work in a fragmentary text from Şeremet (*Beichtinschriften*, no. 8).
[68] Chaniotis, 2009, 116.
[69] *Beichtinschriften*, no.s 106, 111, 112, 120 & 121.

before the appointed time, examining the 'judgement seat' (τό βῆμα) of the god without proper ceremonial washing, entering the holy place in dirty clothes, seizing the god's sacred doves, defiling the holy place without knowing it, and 'having sex with Gaia in the holy place.'[70]

The gods like to have their requests answered promptly and precisely.[71] Success – as the following text from Saittai, 30 miles north of Philadelphia shows – depends on correct interpretation of their instructions: Δὶς ἠρώτησα τοὺς θεούς, ἐπέτυχα καὶ εὐχαριστῶ, 'I questioned the gods twice, *I hit the mark*, and I gave thanks' (translation and emphasis mine).[72]

The texts also add further colour to our understanding of reciprocity in divine-human relationships. Prayers for blessings are offered with promises of a return. If blessings are received and the promises are not fulfilled there is punishment. [73] 'Since a gift creates or maintains, a relationship, the donor [can] by right expect recompense from the god.'[74] But the gods also are entitled to repayment for answered prayers, and if their devotees are unable to pay, they become offenders and the erection of stelae becomes necessary.[75] A dedicant has a sick cow, he prays

[70] *Beichtinschriften*, no.s 4, 19, 36, 43, 50, 112, 110.
[71] *Beichtinschriften*, no.s 57, 65 & 71.
[72] *Beichtinschriften*, no. 17.
[73] e.g. *Beichtinschriften*, no. 45.
[74] Linders, 1987, 118.
[75] e.g. *Beichtinschriften*, no. 61.

and the cow is restored according to his wish, he fails to present thanks and he is punished.[76] This is the thought-world of the confession texts.

In a helpful essay, Chaniotis reconstructs the ritual context in which the confessions were located. Noting the iconographic portions of the stelae – which frequently depict dedicants with hands raised in worship or placing offerings on an altar – and the prevalence of acclamations – 'Great [are] Mēn Labanos and Mēn Petraeites' etc. – Chaniotis argues that the erection of the stelae coincided with the ritual performance of the inscribed texts.[77] 'Since sanctuaries were not always open and accessible, we may suspect that dedications – in particular in rural sanctuaries – did not take place on any given day, but preferably on the days of festivals.'[78]

In Petzl's collection of confession texts alone, we find dedications to Zeus, Mēn, Anaeitis, Meter, Apollo, Artemis and Helios – complemented by a dazzling variety of regional epithets – as well as an allusion to at least one mystery cult.[79] Confession as a practice was clearly capable of expressing assumptions common to each of these divergent religious traditions.

[76] *Beichtinschriften*, no. 113.
[77] Chaniotis, 2009, 119-28. Sample acclamation from *Beichtinschriften*, no. 37. Cartledge argues that Hittite vows, like Babylonian and Jewish vows, were typically made in conjunction with major feasts (Cartledge, 1992, 101).
[78] Chaniotis, 2009, 120, see also 123.
[79] *Beichtinschriften*, no. 108.

2.2.3 Funeral Dedications, Doorstones and Honorary Inscriptions

Alongside votives and confession texts, epigraphic tributes to the lives and achievements of noteworthy individuals form a significant subset of the inscriptional data from central Anatolia. In MAMA XI, 249 out of the 387 inscriptions listed are funeral dedications illuminating the names and social positions of the men and women memorialised. A second- or third-century monument from Ladık commemorates the wife of a member of the famous Sergii family from Pisidian Antioch, to whom Mitchell connects Sergius Paullus, the proconsul of Cyprus mentioned in Acts 13.4-12.[80] A first- or second-century text from Yağlıbayat 35 miles east of Iconium offers a touching tribute to an unnamed couple – recalling the wife's service as a priestess of the imperial cult, together with her 'self-restraint' and love for her children – with relief sculptures of the deceased 'so that even those mortals who are still to come may know the likeness of these (two).'[81]

Funerary inscriptions are frequently placed in the mouths of the deceased as messages to passers-by, but we should not assume this discloses larger expectations about life beyond death.[82] A Roman imperial-period epigram from Mahmutlar 45 miles west of Pisidian Antioch, gives us a clearer insight into contemporary attitudes to mortality, indicating a stance of resignation in the face of inevitable extinction:

[80] MAMA XI, no. 258, see also Mitchell, 1993, vol 1, 152; Mitchell and Waelkens, 1998, 10.
[81] MAMA XI, no. 345.
[82] e.g. MAMA XI, no. 77.

> To die is no terrible thing; rather (to die) before adulthood, and before one's parents.[83]

Or from Ariassos about 25 miles north west of Perge, a similar second- or third-century funerary inscription:

> *Be of good cheer, child, for no one is immortal.*[84]

Though few in number compared to the larger corpus of funerary inscriptions, Ute Kelp's diachronic analysis of doorstones offers a unique window on the 'momentum' and direction of cultural change in our region and period.[85] This characteristically Phrygian pattern of funeral monument with its distinctive doorway façade, initially reserved for the very wealthy and first appearing in Aizanoi in the 70's A.D., spread gradually eastward to cover an area stretching from Iconium in the south to Ancyra in the north, adapting as it went to accommodate the means of more modest dedicants.[86] If other inscriptional forms propagated in similar ways in response to similar pressures, the case for the inclusion of data from eastern Lydia and Phrygia in our interpretative toolbox for Galatia in the first-century is strengthened.

Honorary inscriptions celebrate the service of notable individuals, many of them priests or civic functionaries.[87] A first-century statue base from Kocayaka, 85 miles

[83] MAMA XI, no. 13.
[84] I.Pisid.Cen., no. 133.
[85] Kelp, 2013, 70-94.
[86] e.g. I.Ancyra, no. 300.
[87] These texts account for 29 out of the 387 inscriptions in MAMA XI, including 16 dedications to Roman magistrates and officials, and 7 to Roman emperors, two of which explicitly refer to them as

west of Pisidian Antioch is representative of the genre, recording the appreciation of the community for a certain '[…] Rufus' on account of his '[virt]ue and benefaction.'[88] A first-century B.C. text from Apollonia, just 45 miles west of Pisidian Antioch, commemorates the gift of 'a gilt equestrian statue' and 'a temple' to an anonymous municipal benefactor – one of many precedents for the bestowal of 'lifetime cult honours on the model of the civic cults of the Hellenistic monarchs,' even before the arrival of the emperor cult in Asia Minor.[89] Formulaic inscriptions addressing the emperor as 'saviour of the inhabited world' abound from the second century onward.[90] We also note the defining self-honorific of the time, the *Res Gestae Divi Augusti*, recording of the achievements of the emperor Augustus, which was publicly displayed in Pisidian Antioch in Latin, and in Ancyra and Apollonia in Latin and Greek.[91]

An honorific inscription commemorating the gift of a wooden amphitheatre to the people of Pisidian Antioch by the imperial priest L. Calpurnius Longus is considered by some scholars to be significant for attempts to reconstruct the background to Galatians on the assumption that it describes the inauguration of imperial cult festivities in the city in exactly A.D. 50.[92] Even if the date could be verified with this

gods (MAMA XI, no.s 5, 107; see also MAMA VIII, no.s 5 and 262). The first of these texts from Apollonia was dedicated by the wealthy priestess, and benefactor of the synagogue in Acmonia, Julia Severa (Chapter 5 §2.3.3).

[88] MAMA XI, no. 24.

[89] MAMA XI, no. 1; Thonemann, 2013, 2; see also Marek and Frei, 2016, 76, 313-4.

[90] e.g. I.Pisid.Cen., no.s 149-152, 154.

[91] Cooley, 2009, 7-17; see also Mitchell and Waelkens, 1998, 28; I.Ancyra, 66-138.

[92] For the inscription, see Ramsay, 1924, no. 5. For the assertion that imperial cult festivities in Pisidian Antioch antedate Paul's church planting activities in Galatia, see Witulski, 2000, 204-16. An apparently

degree of precision, however, there is no basis for believing that the rites it records were the *first* ever celebrated in the city, especially given the Augustan foundation of the imperial cult temple both in Antioch and in other major cities of the region.[93]

2.2.4 Curses and Magical Texts

Curses threatening grave desecrators with divine judgement and/or fines payable to local temple treasuries are widespread in central Anatolia. The inscriptions mirror the confession texts in their confidence in the gods as enforcers of universal moral order but go further still: the deities in question can be authoritatively invoked to vengeance.[94]

Two funerary stelae from the Roman imperial period located in Küçük Boruk and Giymir, both roughly 40 miles east of Iconium, illustrate this practice in the context of devotion to the moon god, threatening grave violators with the anger of 'the Mēns of the underworld.'[95] An early third-century text from the Döşeme Boğazı Pass, about 20 miles north west of Perge, threatens a fine of 2,500 silver denarii against anyone forcing entry into the burial chamber.[96] A Roman-imperial-period funerary stele from Karacadağ 90 miles north of Iconium puts the matter even more bluntly:

complete list of individuals who served as priests of the imperial cult in Ancyra from 5/4 B.C. to A.D. 16/17 is inscribed on the facade of the Temple of Augustus in the city (I.Ancyra, no. 2).

[93] Hardin, 2008, 71-8, 130-31.

[94] For a nuanced introduction to ancient curse inscriptions, see Eidinow, 2007, 143-59.

[95] MAMA XI, no.s 319, 320.

[96] I.Pisid.Cen., no. 168.

Neil Martin, Keble College

> […whoever wr]ongs [this stele], may he bury his children before their time, just as I too [lie?] in the tomb.[97]

Turning to magical texts we must wrestle first of all with a definitional problem. As Heidi Wendt notes, the designation of writers and teachers in the ancient world as 'magicians' or 'charlatans' was a feature of intramural competition among 'freelance religious experts' more than a technical assignation of their activities or opinions to clearly delineated categories.[98] The losers in this battle are remembered as 'magicians' but this does not imply a fundamental distinctiveness in the nature of their claims to authority or their dependence on ancient texts.[99] The category remains useful, as we will see in later chapters, but as a repository for more-confident accounts of the efficacy of human action in the divine-human relationship.

Our interaction with magical texts is further complicated by the paucity of resources available to us from our region – a paucity attributable, in all probability, to systematic acts of suppression such as those described in Acts 19.19 and Suetonius' *Life of Augustus* (*Aug.* 31.1).[100] Parallels between the small number of texts that can be positively associated with Asia Minor and the larger collection of extant Alexandrian documents encourage scholars to extrapolate from the latter to the

[97] MAMA XI, no. 232. For a similar curse see, MAMA XI, no. 63.
[98] Wendt, 2016, 114-45. Wendt cites the following revealing remark from the correspondence of Apollonius of Tyana, 'You think that you should call philosophers who follow Pythagoras Magi, and similarly, no doubt, those who follow Orpheus. But I think that even those who follow Zeus should be called Magi, if they plan to be godly and righteous' (*Vit. Apoll.* 16; Wendt, 2016, 128).
[99] Kindt, 2012, 90-122.
[100] Betz, 1986, xli-xliv.

former as an indication of the kinds of resources that have been lost.[101] In this study, however, data from outside Asia Minor will only be used to qualify and interpret observations that can be positively attested for the region.

The enunciation of strange, powerful and conventionally unutterable names as a means to sway, to manipulate, or even to bind the forces that control human experience is an almost universal feature of the texts commonly grouped under the rubric of magic – a fact that goes some way to explaining the massive assimilation of Jewish material to which they bear witness.[102] The attributes of the gods are enumerated and their symbols recited as means to consolidate control.[103] Some texts attest to the efficacy of trial and error, when needed, as a means to find the right names to use.[104] Strategies in prayer include pleading, assuring the god of one's best intentions, appealing to either the god's better nature or to their vanity, and reminding them of their good disposition towards one in the past.[105] Participants deploy various kinds of secret knowledge – pronouncing spells with specific

[101] Five texts which can be positively associated with Asia Minor (IJO, M1-5) are discussed in detail as Jewish epigraphic sources in Chapter 5 §2.3.5.
[102] Jewish names for God – Sabaoth, Adonai, Iao, etc. with manifold variants – are epidemic in the Greek Magical Papyri, with Iao by far the most common. Inscriptions featuring Jewish angel names include PGM, I 262-347; II 64-184; III 1-164, 282-409, 494-611; IV 1-25, 86-7, 1716-1870; VII 1009-16, 1017-26; X 36-50; XXIIa 18-27; XXXV 1-42; XXXVI 161-77, 295-311; XLIII 1-27; LXXIX 1-7; LXXX 1-5. References to Solomon include PGM, IV 850-929, 3007-86; XCII 1-16; XCIV 17-21.
[103] On the enumeration of attributes, see PGM, III 187-262; IV 1331-89, 2241-2358, 2441-2621, 2967-3006; V 370-446; VII 222-49, 505-28, 664-85, 993-1009; XII 201-69; XIII 734-1077; XVIIb 1-23; XXIII 1-70; XXXV 1-42; CII 1-17. On the recitation of signs and symbols, see PGM, III 494-611.
[104] PGM, I 222-31; III 424-66.
[105] On pleading, see PGM, III 187-262. On assuring the god of one's best intentions, see PGM, IV 475-829. On appealing to a god's better nature, see PGM, IV 2785-2890. On appeals to divine vanity, see PGM, IV 1596-1715. On reminding the gods of their good disposition in the past, see PGM, III 1-164.

physical or metrical forms, performing special magical gestures, and exploiting propitious times for making their requests.[106] They enlist the interests of the gods to their own causes by accusing their enemies of dishonouring them.[107] They pull rank on conjured powers by impersonating more senior deities, and cultivating relationships with them.[108] They practice sympathetic magic akin to modern forms of voodoo.[109] They invoke restless spirits.[110] They attempt to coerce the gods by threatening them, by terrifying them, by depriving them of needed assets, by taking hostages, and even by forms of physical constraint.[111]

Magical texts regularly overlap with the wider religious epigraphy of Asia Minor in their underlying religious expectations. The frequent references to the savant's past actions and past divine encounters are reminiscent of votive offerings, confession texts, funerary inscriptions and honorifics. Precision is a frequently recurring theme. In PGM XIII 1-343, the devotee must recite formulae precisely using precisely the right

[106] On the use of specific physical and metrical forms, see PGM, XIII 734-1077; XVI 1-75; XVIIa 1-25; XVIII b 1-7; XIXa 1-54; XXIII 1-70; XXXIII 1-25; XXXVI 102-33; XXXIX 1-21; XLIII 1-27; LXXXVIII 1-19; CXVI 1-17; CXX 1-13; CXXX. On magical gestures, especially the clenched thumb gesture familiar from relief carvings of the period, see PGM, LXIX 1-3; LXX 4-25; see also Deubner, 1943, 88-92. On propitious times, see PGM, VII 155-67, 284-99; XIII 646-734; XIII 734-1077.
[107] PGM, III 1-164; IV 2441-2621; VII 593-619; XXXVI 134-60.
[108] On rank-pulling in general, see PGM, VII 319-34, 376-84, 478-90, 795-845; VIX 1-14; XII 14-95, 107-21, 121-43; XXXII 1-19; LVIII 1-14; CI 1-53. On assimilation of the enchanter's identity to a higher power, see PGM, III 1-164; IV 94-153, 2967-3006, 3086-3124; V 96-172, 213-303; VII 319-34; VIII 1-63; X 1-23; XIII 1-343; XXXVI 283-94; LVIII 1-14; LXIX 1-3; LXX 4-25; LXXXIX 1-27; CI 1-53; PDM, XVI 1-92. On cultivation of relationship with divine peers, see PGM, VII 1017-26.
[109] PGM, IV 94-153, 296-466; 2943-66; VII 467-77, 593-619; X 36-50; XII 14-95; XXXVI 231-55, 295-311, 333-60.
[110] PGM, IV 1390-1495, 1872-1927, 2708-84; V 304-69; VII 593-619; XV 1-21; XXIII 1-70.
[111] On threatening the gods, see PGM, IV 296-466, 850-929, 2006-2125, 2891-2942; V 213-303; VII 300a-310; XII 121-43; CI 1-53. On coercion through fear, see PGM, IV 3007-86. On deprivation of assets, see PGM, XII 1-13. On taking hostages, see PGM, IV 52-85. On physical compulsion, see PGM, IV 930-1114, XII 1-13.

kind of incense at precisely the right time if the incantation is to work, although there are balancing examples where enchanters simply throw in 'the usual formulas.'[112] The belief that human beings and gods occupy a common environment of mutual obligation is clearly attested in magical texts, but it is sharpened to the point where the savant can do more than merely incentivising the gods to act – he or she can inflict discomfort upon them and also relieve it. In magical texts, the emphasis is less on humans fearing the gods than it is on making the gods fear humans. [113]

3. Analysis

In the foregoing section we assembled a library of pagan religious contextual data for Galatians, focused – as far as possible – on the route and probable timing of the first missionary journey. In practice, the limited and patchy nature of the sources available forced us to range more widely – to Ariassos in the south, to Ancyra in the north and to the cities and villages of Lydia in the west, and in time from the first century B.C. to the second and third centuries A.D. Can these materials be

[112] PGM, III 424-66.

[113] Arguing, on the basis of second-century inscriptions recovered from the temple of Apollo at Claros in western Asia Minor that mystery initiation rites provide the interpretative context for Paul's use of the verb ἐμβατεύω in Col 2.18, Clinton Arnold appeals to PGM, LXX 4-25 (a remnant from the mystery cult of the Idaean Dactyls, according to Betz, 1980, 287-95) and PGM, IV.475-829 (the so-called *Mithras Liturgy*) to illuminate the details (Arnold, 1995, 109-31, 136-41). There is no evidence, however, to link these texts either to Asia Minor or to the time and circumstances of Paul's ministry there. Despite attempts to ascribe the origins of the Mithraic mysteries to the region (e.g. Moga, 2007, 205-40), inscriptional evidence of the Mithras cult in our period and region is notable mainly for its absence and its associations with 'Iranian and Iranianizing [populations]' (Marek and Frei, 2016, 516; see also Mitchell, 1993, vol 2, 29-30). Attempts to contextualise either Colossians or Galatians by reference to the mysteries of Isis described in Apuleius' late second-century *Metamorphoses* are similarly speculative, given its setting in mainland Greece (Arnold, 1995, 131-6).

meaningfully used to augment our understanding of the religious background and assumptions of Paul's readers?

3.1 Regional Specificity

While our data attests to an abundant variety of religious practice at the level of specific cults with specific traditions in specific locations, none of this should mask the concurrent presence of substantial commonalities across the region surveyed or excuse us from the task of carefully applying lessons learned from one context to another.[114] Votives are widespread as is the range of expectations that informed them. The practice of confession is widespread – especially if Potts is correct to detect confessional overtones in the 'mute' anatomical votives that abound throughout the region.[115] The establishment of tangible and enduring honorifics and other memorials of devotion is widespread. None of these observations is particularly remarkable. They are commonplaces of ancient religious life – as true in Rome or Alexandria as they are in Asia Minor. But they are not for this reason unimportant for our understanding of the situation Paul encountered in Galatia. They are central features of the contextual envelope we are now seeking to describe, even if they transgress its boundaries. As Beate Dignas notes, Hellenistic Asia Minor is better conceptualised as a single 'religious realm' than it is as a melting pot of

[114] '[L]es cultes sont largement diffusés à travers toute la péninsule… et la fréquentation des sanctuaires réunit des fidèles d'origines ethniques ou culturelles bien différentes. De plus, l'analyse des conditions matérielles… montre que le temporel des dieux a été envisagé avec des points de vue qui ne sont pas antagonistes' (Debord, 1982, 291; see also Parker, 2011, 225-6).
[115] Potts, 2017, 29, 42.

assumptions and practices so diverse in terms of their social imprint that they require radically different handling in every location.[116]

What can we say about finer-grained variations, say between the rural and urban milieu *within* specific regions? Scholarly engagement with the early history of the Pauline churches has traditionally dichotomised these settings more or less absolutely. Wayne Meeks speaks for the majority when he characterises villages in the first-century as zones of cultural conservatism whereas cities were moving rapidly 'in the direction of a common Greco-Roman culture.'[117] This neat contrast between urban and rural life, however, masks a more complex underlying reality. Marek notes that the *poleis* of first-century Anatolia typically incorporated vast swathes of rural land – up to 10,000 square kilometres in some cases – and that villages considered themselves outlying manifestations of these civic communities, and intimately connected to them.[118] '[P]rominent village families were not only present in the urban elite, with offices, donations, and honours, but also appear on the provincial level and in the imperial service. The rural population attended the *polis's* festivals and a few city theatres permanently reserved seats with the names of

[116] Dignas, 2002, 107, 223. Parker highlights the ubiquity of appeals to 'the gods' conceived as an 'anonymous collective' – a fact reinforced by the activities of supra-cultic oracles who adjudicated on matters pertaining to the gods as a whole. 'There was always a sense in which the gods were not a collectivity of individuals with individual wills, but rather the uncontrollable and inevitable element shaping and constraining human life and human lives' (Parker, 2011, 13-16, 65-70). Mitchell acknowledges the importance of distinguishing Anatolian cults from one another, but cautions against 'excessive atomisation [which] makes it impossible to draw any wider conclusions from the evidence' (Mitchell, 1993, vol 2, 19; see also Morgan, 2007, 55-6; Chaniotis, 2009, 142-8).
[117] Meeks, 2003, 15.
[118] Marek and Frei, 2016, 449.

villages.'[119] Cilliers Breytenbach also injects useful balance into the discussion, with the reminder that three of the four cities Paul visited on the first missionary journey had thoroughly agricultural economies.[120]

In the religious sphere, differences certainly existed between rural and urban settings. Pierre Debord notes the emergence of an aristocratic priestly caste in the cities of the Roman imperial period while, in the villages, such developments were resisted.[121] According to Simon Price, none of the rural cults that can be positively located show any sign of the emperor cult assimilation that characterises their metropolitan counterparts, or even awareness of the emperor cult.[122] But these observations should not be used to smother important similarities. When we compare votive offerings from the Mēn Temple at Pisidian Antioch and from rural Aşağıkurudere and Kütahya, there is very little difference in the concerns they articulate or the form in which they are presented.[123] They confirm rather Beate Dignas' argument that 'the sharp distinction between the civic sanctuaries and the religious centres commonly labelled as indigenous, rural, or non-Hellenized' cannot

[119] Marek and Frei, 2016, 452. The deliberate synchronisation of market days with urban religious festivals emphasises the strength of the connection between the rural population and the rhythms of the city (Marek and Frei, 2016, 410).
[120] Breytenbach, 1996, 1-2.
[121] Debord, 1982, 292-3.
[122] Price, 1984, 94.
[123] Hardie, 1912, 111-50 and compare *Phrygian Votive Steles*, no.s 1-609.

be sustained.[124] 'All civic territories,' she writes, 'included… a rural area whose religious life was more or less integrated into the life of the civic centre.'[125]

3.2 Religious Change

As we have already seen in the work of Ute Kelp, extant sources for the religious practices and expectations of the peoples of Asia Minor are susceptible to informative diachronic analysis. Lynn Roller's book, *In Search of God the Mother*, represents an outstanding contribution to this field of study, monitoring the gradual metamorphosis of the Phrygian *Matar* cult into a variety of new but related forms under Greek and Roman influence.[126] The transition taking place in the Roman Imperial period is particularly interesting. After her adoption by Greek settlers as *Cybele* beginning in the early sixth century B.C. and her exportation to Rome as *Magna Mater* in the late third century B.C., the goddess was reintroduced in these new forms to Asia Minor. In her Phrygian pomp, she had been a mountain goddess, rarely associated with cities except to mark the boundaries between civilisation and the wild. She was depicted in rock-cut shrines, standing flanked by fierce animals, a

[124] Dignas, 2002, 224; see also Levick, 2013, 48. The very concept of 'indigenous' Anatolian religion is difficult to define given the extraordinary range of influences to which Anatolia was subjected through the centuries prior to the New Testament era.
[125] Dignas, 2002, 233; see also Lane Fox, 2005, 42-5. Note how Dignas' model of triangular relationships between kings, priests and polis allows for simultaneous allegiance to sacred and secular authorities eliminating the need to assert the predominance of secular authority in the city and sacred authority in the countryside (Dignas, 2002, 242-3).
[126] The Phrygian Matar was herself a metamorphosis of the relatively minor neo-Hittite goddess, Kubaba (the visual depictions of whom are strikingly similar), under the influence of the Urartians whose gods typically made their epiphanies from mountains. Roller, however, is keen to emphasise the original features of the Phrygian Mother – especially her unique position as a goddess without a pantheon (Roller, 1999, 44-62).

goddess more of personal devotion than public cult (Fig. 3).[127] By the time she returned to Anatolia as a Hellenic, and later as a Roman, cultural import, however, she had adopted Greek dress, a seated posture, and several new attributes including the tympanum associated by later writers with the hypnotic music that supposedly characterised her worship (Fig. 4-5).[128] She had exchanged mountain shrines for urban sanctuaries (in Athens her temple served as a civic archive) and, in Roman variants, she acquired a distinctive headdress and a consort – the castrated shepherd god, Attis (Fig. 5).[129]



Fig. 3.
Matar standing flanked by lions. Arslankaya Rock Western Phrygia. Early sixth century B.C.[130]



Fig. 4.
Meter seated with lion. Gordion. Late third/early second century B.C.[131]

[127] Roller, 1999, 108-15, see also Roller, 2011, 570-74.
[128] The transposition is also attested in the numismatic legacy of the region (e.g. MSL, no.s 156-165).
[129] Roller, 1999, 114, 232-4, 316-20.
[130] Bøgh, 2012, 37.
[131] Klein, 2016.

Neil Martin, Keble College



Fig. 5.
Meter with headdress and tympanum, standing with Attis and lion. Provenance unknown. Late second century B.C.[132]

How was this revised version of *Matar* received in the land from which she originally emerged? Roller is sceptical about the attempts of Greek and Roman writers to present the cult as they knew it as a manifestation of barbaric 'oriental' characteristics originating from Phrygia itself.[133] She finds no *local* evidence to support the idea that *Cybele* was a vengeful and destructive deity whose priests routinely castrated themselves in ecstatic initiation ceremonies.[134] On the contrary, the *local* picture of *Cybele* worship was comparatively restrained – adopting the outward trappings of the Greek and Roman versions of the goddess, but suffusing them once again with core

[132] Roller, 1994, Plate 56b.
[133] Roller, 1999, 227-32.
[134] One of the few contemporary epigraphic records pertaining to the priests of the Meter cult in Pessinus describes a father (Tib. Klaudios Heras) and son (Tib. Klaudios Deiotaros), clearly undermining the suggestion that such men were eunuchs (Devreker and Waelkens, 1984, vol 1, 19-20, 221 no.s 17-18). The inscription praises them in conventional style, suggesting that, 'serving as a priest of Meter was one of many public honors sought by prominent members of the community of Pessinous' (Roller, 1999, 342). 'Das Oberpriesteramt war prestigeträchtig und Angehörigen der Oberschicht vorbehalten. Dass Kastratentum die Zulassungsbedingung in den Priesterstand war, erscheint ausgeschlossen' (John, 2016, 124).

assumptions retained from her older incarnations.[135] In their focus on individual needs and their expression of conventional religious sentiments, the honorary inscriptions and votives dedicated to Meter in our dataset fall in line with the pattern established by offerings to other local gods.[136] At the Meter sanctuary in Aizanoi, the goddess retains the visual attributes of her Graeco-Roman reinterpretations, but her connections to wild animals and wild spaces have been reasserted.[137] She has once again become an object of personal devotion, no longer conforming to 'the standard Roman program of procession, sacrifice and games.'[138]

S.C. Barton and G.H.R. Horsley further illuminate these processes of religious change in their discussion of a late second-/early first-century B.C. inscription from Philadelphia documenting the founding of a private cult.[139] In response to a dream (and to the broader tide of Hellenisation, no doubt) the proprietor, Dionysius, repurposed a shrine that had previously been dedicated exclusively to Angdistis as a new home for altars to 'Zeus Eumenes, and [to] Hestia his coadjutor, and [to] the other saviour gods, and Eudaimonia, Plutus, Arete, Hygieia, Agathe Tyche, Agathos Daimon, Mneme, the Charitae and Nike' (lines 6-11). The innovation is not framed as a *replacement* of the previous cult, however, but rather as an *extension*, or *re-imagination*, of it. The ordinances of the new cult are still deposited with Angdistis and she continues to be

[135] Roller, 1999, 189-216.
[136] e.g. MAMA VIII, no.s 297, 396; MAMA XI, no.s 70, 255, 256, 279; I.Pessinous, no.s 24, 64, 171.
[137] Roller, 1999, 337-40. A similar reassertion of the divine mother's association with wild animals is evident in an early second-century dice oracle from Cremna (I.Pisid.Cen., no. 5 lines 244-7).
[138] Roller, 1999, 316.
[139] Barton and Horsley reproduce Sokolowski's edition of the text presented by Weinreich (Weinreich, 1919, 4-6; LSAM, no. 20; Barton and Horsley, 1981, 7-41).

invoked as the sponsor and generator of the kinds of strict moral conduct to which the members of the cult are required to commit themselves, (lines 51-54).

The evolution of *Matar* worship and of the private cult in Philadelphia illustrates broader historical and cultural realities in the life of Asia Minor in this period. Over hundreds of years, the people of the region learned to accommodate changing external influences – be they Phrygian, Cimmerian, Lydian, Persian, Greek or Roman – while retaining their connection to more stable core identities beneath the surface.[140] In Ephesus the name of the Greek goddess Artemis was attached to an underlying tradition of mother goddess worship dating back to the eighth-century B.C.[141] In Pessinus, devotion to Μήτηρ was expressed through the veneration of a sacred black stone with deep pre-Hellenic history (Livy *Hist.* 29.10.4-29.11.14).[142] Almost all the major Hellenic shrines in our period (Didyma, Magnesia, Klaros, Teos) stand on sites originally sacred to Anatolian deities.[143] 'This part of the world absorbed nearly everything that was believed, thought, prayed to, venerated, and prophesied between Iran, Mesopotamia, Egypt and the Mediterranean world,' writes Christian Marek. 'It is the land of syncretism as such.'[144]

[140] Marek and Frei, 2016, 509-18. Parker discusses two alternative theoretical models for the development of localised forms of major Greek deities – 'the "local divergence" and the "foreign/archaic substrate" positions' (Parker, 2011, 72-3). Chaniotis detects the presence of indigenous rituals bearing Greek names in the confession texts (Chaniotis, 2009, 138).
[141] Marek and Frei, 2016, 122-5; Elliott, 2003, 105-6.
[142] 'Der Kult war aus dem nahen Gebirge in das hellenistische Heiligtum importiert worden' (John, 2016, 123).
[143] Marek and Frei, 2016, 122-3; Arnold, 1995, 235.
[144] Marek and Frei, 2016, 508.

Neil Martin, Keble College

3.3 Ethical Consciousness

Barton and Horsley's discussion of the private cult inscription from Philadelphia opens a window on another feature common to our analysis of primary texts. The principle concern of the new institution had to do with *ethical purity*. Men, women, free people, and slaves seeking admission to the new cult were expected to foreswear the use of deceit, poison, harmful spells, love potions, abortifacients and contraceptives (lines 15-23). They were to abstain from sexual relations outside the context of marriage, and from participation in the rites of the cult while in a state of defilement on pain of 'evil curses from the gods' (lines 26-45). 'The gods,' we are told, 'will be gracious to those who obey, and always give them all good things, whatever gods give to men whom they love. But should any transgress, they shall hate such people and will inflict upon them great punishments.' (lines 46-51).[145]

Certainly, the link between religion and ethical rigour was an ancient one in Anatolia, going back at least as far as the Hittite period.[146] The main function of the deity, *Hosios kia Dikaios* was, 'to remind men to respect divine and human laws and to lead them in this way towards a more civilised mode of life' (translation mine).[147] Far from reinforcing the stereotypical picture of Phrygian religion as wild and ecstatic, Levick argues any such impulses were effectively neutralised by this

[145] Barton and Horsley, 1981, 9-10.
[146] Marek and Frei, 2016, 80.
[147] 'la fonction principale est de rappeler aux hommes le respect des lois divines et humaines et de les conduire de cette façon vers un mode de vie plus civilisé' (Ricl, 1992, 77).

emphasis on ethical strictness. We have already seen that social and ceremonial ethics are matters of prime concern in the confession texts. Mitchell suggests that this focus on 'the strict standards of justice and moral behaviour for which the Phrygians were famous,' might account to some extent for the appeal of the Christian message in the region and of the message of the Jewish Christian Influencers in particular.[148]

Care must be taken here, however, to honour variations within the contextual envelope we are defining. A certain *punctiliousness* is certainly observable in the religious life of central Anatolia in the first-century – a punctiliousness concerned with functional questions: the order in which things should be done, the accuracy with which they should be repeated, and so on.[149] But the larger picture is distorted if this observation is allowed to dominate our analysis, stereotyping the inhabitants of the region as slaves to religious law living in constant fear of divine punishment.[150] Other parts of our dataset create very much the opposite impression.

3.4 Religious Motivation

Why were the votives, confession texts and grave inscriptions upon which our understanding of religious life in first-century Asia Minor is so critically dependent created? The 'ever-elusive' nature of such motivational questions, even when we

[148] Mitchell, 1993, vol 2, 43; see also Arnold, 2005, 446.
[149] e.g. *Beichtinschriften*, no.s 19, 57, 58, 59, 65.
[150] e.g. Arnold, 2005, 435.

have texts to work with, should make us wary of extrapolating our findings to Paul's Galatian readers who have left us no such evidence.[151] Clearing the ground of improbable assumptions, and maintaining and nuancing probable assumptions is the extent to which a careful reading of our sources can reach.

In his helpful review of the history of interpretation of the confession texts, Aslak Rostad challenges entrenched presuppositions about the intentions of their dedicants, taking issue in particular with Franz Seraph Steinleitner's conclusion that the texts configure divine-human interactions according to the master-slave paradigm of the ancient world.[152] Rostad argues that the asymmetric relationships that existed between patrons and clients in the period offer a stronger interpretative model.[153] Neither should the texts be artificially isolated from the wider testimony of contemporary votives, dedications, and honorary texts. Fear of gods whose constant unsmiling supervision kept their devotees in line is by no means the only, or even the dominant, religious motive attested across this larger data set.[154] Thank offerings suggest the possibility of spontaneous gratitude, without any preceding vows obliging a response.[155] Grave inscriptions make no mention of death as a form of

[151] Potts, 2017, 36.
[152] 'Der Orientale übertrug von jeher seine Stellung zum Herrscher, die dem Verhältnis des Sklaven zu seinem Herrn nahe kam, auch in die Religion und das religiöse Leben' (Steinleitner, 1913, 76).
[153] Rostad, 2006, 100; Versnel, 1981, 51. On Patronage relationships in general, see Shelton, 1988, 11-15.
[154] Certainly, there was an appropriate fear of what might happen if votive obligations were not met (e.g. *Beichtinschriften*, no.s 62, 71, 113) but the argument that this created a 'climate of fear' (Arnold, 2005, 435) is no more secure than the argument that every citizen of a country governed by modern law and order *fears* enforcement.
[155] Malay and Petzl's recent volume of new religious texts from Lydia contains several instructive examples. Though the *omission* of references to vows or past sins *obliging* thanksgiving offers no definitive evidence that such obligations were absent, it remains striking that several texts are

divine punishment – though we would expect this if the confession texts provided the controlling paradigm for religious experience in the region.[156]

The realism of the contextual envelope we are now seeking to define for Paul's Galatian readers is improved if we place less stress on fear of the gods than we place on the underlying concern which animates our sources to keep doing things that had worked in the past.[157] Though religious responsiveness was undoubtedly important in Asia Minor, an underlying conservatism is also evident.[158] Despite the region's apparently bottomless capacity to accommodate superficial change, our data suggest that fundamental assumptions about religious rites and what they were capable of achieving were persistent, even when the devotees *perceived themselves* to be breaking the mould, say by embracing religious innovations like the emperor cult, or worshipping unfamiliar gods.[159]

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presented as examples of spontaneous thanksgiving, e.g. *New Religious Texts from Lydia*, no.s 6, 19, 38, 39, 108. See also Hosios kai Dikaios, no. 1.

[156] Rostad, 2006, 97.

[157] Parker cites Lysias's account of the trial of Nicomachus in the fourth-century B.C. as the quintessential statement of this form of religious motivation: '*Now our ancestors, by sacrificing in accordance with the tablets, have handed down to us a city superior in greatness and prosperity to any other in Greece; so that it behoves us to perform the same sacrifices as they did, if for no other reason than that of the success which has resulted from those rites*. (Lys. 30.18; Parker, 2011, 3).

[158] Inscriptional references to oracular enquiries, dreams and portents indicate the importance of religious responsiveness. Specialist oracles, like the famous institution at Didyma, were consulted by city assemblies far more frequently than they were by individuals. Oracular advice, however, still played a part in the popular piety of central Anatolia, as can be judged by the presence of at least nine dice oracles in the cities of the region (Horsley and Mitchell, 2000, 36; Nollé, 2007). On the practice of personal oracular inquiry in our sources, see I.Pisid.Cen., no.s 5, 83, 159 and *New Religious Texts from Lydia*, no.s 3, 13, 53. Dreams also were an important part of the infrastructure of divine communication in the confession texts, (e.g. *Beichtinschriften*, no.s 1, 11, 106) and in healing cults (e.g. Aelius Aristides *Hier. Log. II.9, 80; III.7, 21-3*).

[159] Note the foregoing discussion of religious change, especially the private cult inscription from Philadelphia (Barton and Horsley, 1981, 7-41). See also Price, 1984, 188-91.

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The motivational centrality of the belief that the gods invoked in any given religious monument were somehow *particularly interested* in the dedicant is also strikingly evident in our data. Confession stelae and votives are commonly devoted to particular manifestations of the gods denoted by locally-specific epithets – to *Zeus Petarenos*, to *Meter Zizimene*, to *Mēn Axiottenos* etc., not just to Zeus, Meter and Mēn.[160] Quite apart from the prestige and provenance attained through such associations, gods with connections to particular locations remembered from, or retrojected into, the past might be assumed to owe them special obligations in the present. The second-century B.C. *telephos* frieze, constructed under the Attalid king Eumenes II, links the foundation of Pergamum to the legend of Heracles.[161] Something very similar is observable in the assimilation of the biblical flood narrative to the Phrygian city of Apamea.[162]

Whichever motives were in play in any given interaction with the gods, however, there seems to have been an overwhelming confidence that these interactions were linked to concrete effects in the sphere of human experience. Teresa Morgan's survey of the religious consciousness of the early Roman empire derived from popular proverbs, fables, gnomic sayings, and *exempla* speaks equally well for our Anatolian sources here, highlighting the expectation that prayers 'appropriately

[160] The point is observable in the proliferation of divine epithets throughout our sources. Among the 609 Phrygian votive inscriptions catalogued by Drew-Bear et al., 126 are dedicated to Zeus Alsenos and variants, 23 to Zeus Ampeleites and variants, 6 to Zeus Orochoreites, and 33 to Zeus Petarenos (Drew-Bear and Naour, 1990, 371-3; see also Parker, 2011, 26-7).
[161] Marek and Frei, 2016, 240-42; Kahl, 2009, 77-128. Similar narratives were fashioned for Magnesia, Smyrna, and Halikarnassos (Marek and Frei, 2016, 474).
[162] *Sib. Or.* 1.261-82. The celebrated Noah coins of Apamea are discussed in detail in Chapter 5 §2.2.2.

performed may be successful,' and that the gods are 'highly responsive… reliably favouring those who make the right religious observances.'[163] Yet none of this is to say the relationship between human action and divine reaction was entirely linear or predictable. Unpredictability, in fact, was one of the most striking features of the pagan experience of the divine.[164] The inadequacy of the protections afforded by merely repeating religious actions performed in the past was a central driver in the renovation and extension of established portfolios of devotion.[165]

3.5 Reciprocity

The nature of divine-human reciprocity in Jewish and early-Christian thought has been much discussed in New Testament studies over recent decades. Sophisticated analytical tools have been developed to illuminate the issues at stake and, in our interaction with Galatians in the chapters that follow, we will make extensive use of them. These tools are capable of beneficial application, however, beyond the confines of New Testament exegesis. In this section, we will apply John Barclay's concept of grace perfections to our pagan sources, using it to characterise the nature

[163] Morgan, 2007, 76, 158. On responsiveness to human action and inaction, see *Beichtinschriften*, no.s 7, 8, 17, 20, 45, 50, 51, 58, 62, 64, 76, 108.
[164] Morgan, 2007, 110. Chance itself is addressed as a god four times in the early second-century dice oracle from Cremna (I.Pisid.Cen., no. 5 lines 31, 51, 96, 206) and thirty-nine times in Stephen Mitchell and David French's catalogue of inscriptions from Ancyra in the early Christian period (I.Ancyra, no.s 13-16, 20, 29, 36, 48, 52, 53, 56, 62, 88, 89, 96-106, 115, 117, 118, 128, 136, 140, 141, 145-147, 238, 250, 263, 299). See also Eidinow, 2016, 231.
[165] This behaviour forms the premise for many of the 'fortunes' enumerated in the Cremna dice oracle. In the event of adversity or uncertainty, the oracle directed enquirers to new forms of devotion (I.Pisid.Cen., no. 5 lines 10, 24-5, 60, 225, 233, 244). A third-century inscription from eastern Lydia records oracular advice to the people of Apollonis to add the propitiation of 'Mene (the Moon-Goddess), Helios, Hekate, Hermes and the Heroes Before the Gate' to their extant devotions if they wish to escape from 'pains and terrible evil' (*New Religious Texts from Lydia*, no. 3; see also no. 53).

and variety of the attitudes to reciprocity embedded within them.[166] Barclay scrutinises the giving and receiving of gifts in the religious context along six interrelated axes: Non-Circularity, Priority, Incongruity, Efficacy, Superabundance and Singularity.

3.5.1 Non-Circularity

Circularity and *non-circularity* are central issues for the interpretation of divine-human reciprocity in our evidence base. To what extent do our sources attest to a belief in the capacity of human beings to oblige the gods to act and vice versa, such that unending chains of obligation are established?

Vows, as we have already seen, are ubiquitous among the epigraphic remains of our period, conclusively demonstrating the right of gods to oblige humans. Vow-makers enmesh themselves in conditional processes such that, if the gods they address respond favourably to their requests, *they are bound* to respond as promised.[167] But do the votive offerings in our sources also demonstrate the right of humans to *bind* the gods? At minimum, they demonstrate belief in human ability to *incentivise* divine action.[168] They assume that memorials of divine action (which they themselves constitute) are *desired* by the gods. This is not to say they are equal in

[166] Barclay, 2015, 66-78.
[167] e.g. I.Pisid.Cen., no. 5 lines 28-9.
[168] Magical texts, of course, go considerably further than the mere incentivisation of divine action. Some take binding so seriously that they envisage physically restraining the god until they give the supplicant what they want (e.g. PGM, IV 930-1114; 2241-2358). The problems involved in confidently associating such sentiments with our region and period, however, limit their value for analysis.

value to the blessings sought.[169] No bargain is struck.[170] The whole process remains dependent on the divine volition.[171] But incentivisation, in our sources, does admit *degrees of forcefulness*.

The pictorial elements in the votive tablets of the region serve not only to portray the material things upon which blessings are sought, but to entrust them symbolically to the gods such that the gods' own interests are served by responding. This expectation is made explicit in the early first-century B.C. - second-century A.D. bronze votive from Maionia mentioned above:

> 'I consecrate to the mother of the gods the gold pieces that I have lost, all of them, so that the goddess will track them down and bring everything to light and will punish the guilty in accordance with her power and in this way will not be made a laughingstock.'[172]

Strabo's anecdote about the Laodiceans' interactions with Maeander strikes a similar note. Human gifts to the gods may not strictly equate to the blessings they seek, but

[169] Parker, 2011, 125. 'There is a moment of trickery involved in all these strategies of ransom... The loss involved is worth so much less than that which is preserved' (Burkert, 1987b, 45-6; see also Burkert, 1983, 7).
[170] 'Il y a longtemps que j'ai essayé de montrer que cette réciprocité de dons entre l'homme et la divinité n'a pas le côté sordide d'un contrat' (Festugière, 1976, 413). Cartledge undermines his otherwise helpful characterisation of vows through his incautious use of 'bargaining' terminology (Cartledge, 1992, 17, 71, 192).
[171] *Beichtinschriften*, no. 67 describes the dedicant's response to an experience of divine punishment with the word κεχαρισμένον – a form which Parker subjects to detailed analysis as part of his wider assessment of χάρις vocabulary in dedicatory inscriptions, and which he concludes is used as a more-or-less formulaic expression to signal saying or doing what is *pleasing* to the gods, as opposed to what is strictly binding (Parker, 1998, 108-10).
[172] SEG 28, no. 1568, published originally in Dunant, 1978, 241-44, translation in Versnel, 1991, 74. For further commentary on the text, see Roller, 1999, 329; Chaniotis, 2009, 126-8.

they do create a sense of obligation to respond favourably, and of legitimate offense when a favourable response is omitted (Strabo *Geog*. 12.8.19).

3.5.2 Priority

While the votive offerings in our dataset represent a range of strategies for incentivizing divine action, they share the conviction with votives from other regions and religious contexts that the dedicant defines the response that will trigger the fulfilment of the vow. Unlike the covenant relationships which so animate Paul's thought in Galatians where divine obligation is acknowledged but initiated *from the divine side* (cf. Gal 3.15-17; 4.24), examples like the Maionia inscription just discussed attempt to the initiate divine obligation *from the human side*.[173] Human priority is by no means uniformly asserted across our evidence base, however. Confession texts in general, and those describing the punishment of individuals otherwise unaware of their guilt in particular, constitute counter-examples, emphasising the importance of *divine priority*.[174]

3.5.3 Incongruity and Efficacy

Belief in ultimate gods was growing in popularity throughout the Roman Empire in the early Christian period creating the infrastructure for theologies of general

[173] It might be argued that the attraction of establishing connections between specific places and specific heroes or deities lay, at least in part, in the establishment of such quasi-covenantal obligations. Close associations of place and divine person through the creation or elaboration of myths and the addition of local epithets formed the basis for confidence in divinely-initiated self-obligation.
[174] e.g. *Beichtinschriften*, no.s 10, 11, 112.

beneficence.[175] There is nothing in our evidence base, however, to support the idea that belief in *incongruous* divine giving – gifts given to humans irrespective of their devotion – had any practical impact on the pagan piety of the kinds of people Paul would have encountered in Galatia. Literary and epigraphic sources combine to affirm the conviction that the gods favour those who are worthy of favour; those who are unworthy expose themselves and their communities to danger.[176]

Belief in ultimate gods is also strongly associated with the concept of *efficacious* divine gifts – gifts that infallibly attain the end at which they aim. Certainly, the confession texts frequently flatter their divine recipients with ascriptions of irresistible power to obtain anything they wish.[177] Such affirmations must be balanced, however, with an awareness of the larger testimony to the limited competence of pagan gods and the need to expand personal portfolios of devotion from time to time to gain influence in areas where gods that are already worshipped had proved impotent.[178]

[175] On the rise of monotheism, see Mitchell and Van Nuffelen, 2010; Trebilco, 1991, 128. On the ongoing presence of 'lesser gods' alongside ultimate gods, see Lane Fox, 2005, 34-5.
[176] Note the first- or second-century confession of Gaius Antonius Apellas – found at Bahadınlar, 100 miles west of Pisidian Antioch. The delinquent is urged to change his ways not only by the gods but also, implicitly, by his peers. They summon him to attend 'the mysteries' fearing the consequences of his non-participation for the community (*Beichtinschriften*, no. 108).
[177] e.g. *Beichtinschriften*, no.s 3, 5, 6, 9-11, 37, 39, 40, 47, 54, 55, 68, 72-4, 79, 109.
[178] A mid third-century inscription from north Galatia cited by James Harrison offers a poignant example of limited divine power. Bereaved parents record their 'thankless thanks' to the gods who failed to prevent the deaths of their three children (RECAM II, no. 392; see also Harrison, 2003, 249).

3.5.4 Superabundance and Singularity

Superabundance 'concerns the size, significance and permanence' of *the objects sought* in reciprocal interactions with the gods.[179] Despite massive variations in the range of deities invoked and the means by which that invocation took place, these objects in our sources are remarkably similar. The votives and honorifics of Asia Minor are not concerned with eternal life or eschatological blessings but with health and prosperity, with temporal justice and vengeance.[180]

Neither is there any emphasis on *singularity* – on the expectation that 'the giver's sole and exclusive mode of operation is benevolence or goodness.'[181] The emphasis of the confession texts is, if anything, rather the opposite – gravitating around concerns of justice and punishment. Across the entire dataset, however, the evidence is mixed. Thanksgiving inscriptions assert the gods' disposition to bless, curses assert their disposition to condemn; but by far the majority of our sources simply assert a capacity for shrewd adaptability.

3.6 Tangible and Lasting Memorialisations of Devotion

It might be argued that the significance ascribed to tangible and lasting memorials of devotion in our sources should be bracketed from our analysis on methodological grounds. Since the only artefacts capable of surviving to the present day are tangible

[179] Barclay, 2015, 70.
[180] Barton and Horsley, 1981, 27.
[181] Barclay, 2015, 71.

and lasting *by definition*, their prevalence is hardly surprising. To assert that the people who created them were disproportionately interested in establishing permanent memorials of their devotion to the gods on this basis alone would ignore the importance of the many intangible and transient expressions of their devotion which we know also existed – festivals, initiation rites, sacrifices, ritual cleansings, music and so on.[182] One of the reasons the emperor cult is so sparsely attested in our sources is the ephemeral nature of its games and public celebrations.[183]

The sheer preponderance of tangible, enduring forms of testimony to the religious life of the people of the region, however, is not the only information we have to work with. We know that these memorials of devotion actually *did something* in the religious sphere. The gods *commanded* the erection of stelae to commemorate their power and faithfulness and they were pivotal to the promotion of their respective cults.[184] 'The oral praise of the gods was a very effective but nevertheless ephemeral means of attracting the attention of the pilgrims to the divine power,' writes Chaniotis. 'The erection of a stele… made the ephemeral ritual into a perpetual exemplum… for others.'[185]

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[182] Burkert, 1987a, 55-118.
[183] Clauss, 1999, 328-34.
[184] Thus *Beichtinschriften*, no. 3: 'Great is Mēn Axiotennos, who rules Tarsi. Since the sceptre was raised [in judgement] in case anyone might steal something from the bathhouse, when an item of clothing was stolen, the god was moved to vengeance against the thief and after some time made [him] restore the garment to the god, and he confessed. Therefore, the god ordered through [his] angel that the garment [was] to be sold and that [his] powers [were] to be inscribed on a stele. In the year 249' (translation mine). 'The gods expect the mortals who have experienced their power, both the euergetic and the destructive, to tell others about it, to write hymns and aretalogies, to set up inscriptions with narratives for others to read' (Chaniotis, 2009, 141).
[185] Chaniotis, 2009, 140.

Human worshippers, who were by no means blind to the horizontal efficacy of physical monuments as a means to advertise their wealth and piety, were also aware of their vertical potential as means to secure and maintain divine goodwill for themselves.[186] Substantial, permanent dedications, carefully positioned to catch the eye of gods and goddesses in their sanctuaries, were judged effective as means to keep important issues before the divine attention, or to direct that attention to situations where it could be beneficially applied.[187] Marijana Ricl highlights a second- or third-century A.D. inscription from a village just south of Ancyra in which the dedicant, the son of Gellios, invokes *Hosios kai Dikaios* to avenge his wife for the theft of a woollen dress and two silver bracelets. He raises the stele not just as a form of remembrance but in confidence that the monument itself will 'direct their interest to this concrete case of injustice' (translation mine).[188] The confession texts refer repeatedly to 'setting up sceptres,' and to 'depositing imprecations' – tangible, public signs that the gods had been invoked in particular juridical disputes.[189]

[186] Rostad, 2006, 100-1.
[187] The inclusion of pronounced tenons on the lower edge of almost all the votive offerings from Aşağıkurudere reminds us of their original situation, fixed permanently into sockets in sanctuary walls, facing the gods they invoke, or on ledges like those discovered at the temple of Demeter at Priene (Drew-Bear, Thomas, and Yildizturan, 1999, 43). Aelius Aristides notes that the silver tripod he dedicated to Zeus Asclepius in Pergamum was positioned 'under the right hand of the god' (*Hier. Log.* IV.45-7).
[188] Hosios kai Dikaios, no. 88. 'L'idée motivant cette prière est claire: on attend une aide des divinités invoquées, en tant qu' omnivoyantes et omniscientes, et la malédiction a pour but de diriger leur attention sur un cas concret d' injustice commise anvers [sic.] le plaignant' (Ricl, 1992, 85).
[189] *Beichtinschriften*, no.s 35, 68, 69.

The tangibility of physical monuments was also exploited to endow religious actions with permanence. The foundation inscription of the private Philadelphian cult discussed above adjures its members to come forward and *touch* it at their monthly and annual sacrifices, renewing their connection to the vows it articulates and maintaining their place at the centre of community life (lines 55-59).[190] The votives in our dataset fulfilled a similar function. 'Through their connection with the durable votive offering,' writes Van Straten, '[prayers] obtained, as it were, a permanent effectiveness. The votive offering, a tangible proof of the relationship which had come into being between man and god, remained visibly effective as long as it hung in the sanctuary.'[191]

4. Galatians in the Pagan Religious Context of Asia Minor

How then should the powerful and enduring religious assumptions that Paul is likely to have encountered during his travels in Galatia affect our understanding of the Galatians in general, and of his curious diagnosis of regression among his readers in particular? Driven by the scarcity of the data and ambiguities about the actual location of the Galatian churches, interaction with these questions has traditionally been relatively insubstantial, albeit with the notable exception of Sir William Ramsay's

[190] Barton and Horsley, 1981, 7-41. Burkert notes the ubiquity of tripod cauldrons as votive offerings in the temples of the Graeco-Roman world, offered along with roasting spits and sacrificial axes as means of 'giving permanence to the sacrificial act' (Burkert, 1987a, 93). Linders highlights the consecration of endowments whose capacity to generate income of their own made them a natural choice for dedicants hoping to give a gift that kept on giving (Linders, 1987, 118).
[191] Van Straten, 1981, 74.

Historical Commentary on St. Paul's Epistle to the Galatians.[192] During the last two decades, however, the wider vogue for engagement with the social setting of Pauline letters has stimulated a renaissance of interest in the letter's historical background, and the contributions of several authors now require our attention. Bruce W. Winter, Brigitte Kahl, Justin Hardin, and Thomas Witulski, place particular emphasis on the potential relevance of the emperor cult for exegesis. Clinton Arnold and Susan Elliott stress the importance of 'indigenous' Anatolian cults and cult practices.

4.1 Galatians and the Emperor Cult

4.1.1 Background

Winter, Kahl, Hardin, and Witulski offer an analysis of the Galatian situation dominated by a single religious expression – the cult of the Roman emperors. More than thirty imperial cult temples were established in Asia Minor alone before the end of the first-century.[193] Augustus' birthday was adopted as New Year's Day in the province of Asia and popularly associated with the onset of the 'golden age' foreseen by Horace and Virgil.[194] Cities that failed to celebrate imperial cult festivals in due style were fined, and Augustus was invoked as a divine witness to the civic

[192] Ramsay, 1899.
[193] Price, 1984, 249-74; Hardin, 2008, 30.
[194] Hardin, 2008, 32-5. Following Hardin, I am indebted here to Brent's discussion of Virgil's fourth *Ecologue* (esp. *Ec*. IV.15-17, 24-30; Brent, 1999, 54-9) and to Benario's discussion of Horace's *Odes* (esp. *Odes*. IV.2.39-40; IV.4.25-27, 73-76; IV.14.15-16, 37-40; Benario, 1960, 339-52). On calendrical reforms in the province of Asia, see Witulski, 2007, 25-32.

'pledges of allegiance' that articulated his supremacy.[195] Might this flourishing of emperor worship contribute to a resolution of the regression problem?

Ruler worship, of course, was nothing new in Asia Minor. Hittite kings had been regarded as living embodiments of the gods and were formally deified after their deaths.[196] Local rulers were venerated before the deification of Augustus not only in Apollonia (see §2.2.3) but also in Pergamum and Ephesus, and continued to be so in several cities alongside the cult of the emperor. [197] Imperial cult inscriptions conform to the broader Anatolian pattern of memorialising acts of religious devotion in the belief that, by so doing, favourable reciprocal relations with the divine figure could be promoted. It remains to be asked, however, to what extent emperor worship was truly popular, and how it compared to and/or coexisted with extant religious expressions.

Taking Pisidian Antioch as his model, Hardin claims that the prevalence of Augustan city foundations in the early Christian period 'set [Galatia] on a trajectory of Romanisation' leading to widespread popular acceptance of the emperor cult.[198] Marek argues convincingly, however, that the colonies were too few in number and ill-located to effect such a sweeping cultural change.[199] Levick cautions against the

[195] Hardin, 2008, 44-6. A representative pledge of allegiance comes from Gangra in Paphlagonia, 60 miles north east of Ancyra (OGIS, no. 532). See also Marek and Frei, 2016, 314.
[196] Marek and Frei, 2016, 76. On the normality of leader worship in the east, see Clauss, 1999, 342-3; e.g. *Pseudo-Clementine Recognitions* I.31.1.
[197] Marek and Frei, 2016, 313-4.
[198] Hardin, 2008, 52-4, 58-63. See also Winter, 2015, 226-7.
[199] Marek and Frei, 2016, 322.

use of Pisidian Antioch as an exemplar, given the disproportionate influence of Italian immigrants in the city.[200]

Hardin also claims that the growing popularity of the emperor cult can be inferred from the contemporary decline in established Anatolian religious expressions described by Strabo. He marshals architectural evidence – in several cities, the scale and physical position of imperial temples demonstrably surpassed the equivalent attributes of traditional sanctuaries.[201] But once again it is to be questioned whether ideological assertion of the cult equates to evidence of its practical popularity. Strabo's reflections on the decline of local religions in various places – once, under the direct influence of Roman power – focus more on the waning authority of 'priest kings' ruling traditional 'temple states' than they do on the decline of popular devotion to the gods that they represented (Strabo *Geog*. 12.3.32, 37; 12.5.3; 12.8.14).[202] And while the architectural legacy of the emperor cult is certainly impressive, the rate of construction was nonetheless surpassed by the equivalent statistic for traditional cult buildings throughout the imperial period.[203] The development of emperor cult temples tells us just as much, if not more, about the preoccupation of local rulers with currying

[200] Levick, 1967, 190-1; see also 33-8, 68-91. As just one illustration of the city's uniquely Roman character, we note that members of the Sergii family from Pisidian Antioch were the first delegates to be sent to the Roman Senate from Asia Minor (Marek and Frei, 2016, 472).
[201] Hardin, 2008, 41-2.
[202] Mitchell, 1993, vol 2, 22.
[203] Price, 1984, 162-5. 'The building of the new temples to the emperor is not a mark of the decline of the old gods'(Price, 1984, 169).

favour and establishing regional pre-eminence than it does about the extent of commitment to the cult among their people.[204]

The emperor cult was undeniably popular if we judge by the scale of its events and the number of participants.[205] But is there any evidence that it inspired private devotion equivalent to that associated with traditional cults?[206] The question is difficult to frame without the anachronistic imposition of Christian religious assumptions.[207] Price notes the penetration of the cult beyond the realm of public festivals – inspiring the formation of private associations, establishing new calendrical landmarks, providing new points of reference for honorifics and sacrifices, curses and marriage vows, and making its presence felt both in the home and in the grave through the ready availability of cult statues and images.[208] Manfred Clauss claims that 'exactly the same personal connection existed [with respect] to the emperors as gods as to the Olympian [gods]' (translation mine).[209] H. W. Pleket

[204] In his thirty-eighth discourse, Dio Chrysostom chides the cities of Nicaea and Nicomedia in their battle for primacy, informing them that their lust for temple buildings and other marks of distinction was mocked in Rome as an example of Ἑλληνικὰ ἁμαρτήματα, 'Greek failings' (Dio, *Disc.* 38.38). See also Marek and Frei, 2016, 479.
[205] Price, 1984, 102-7.
[206] Traditional accounts of devotion to the emperor deprecate the possibility of personal engagement, stereotyping cult-observance, in the words of H. W. Pleket, as merely 'an expression of political loyalty clothed in a religious garment' (Pleket, 1965, 332; see also Nock, 1957, 115-23; Price, 1984, 101). On the significance of cognitive-affective religiosity in traditional cult contexts, see Chaniotis, 2010, 210-35; Eidinow, 2016, 205-32; Petrovic and Petrovic, 2016.
[207] Price, 1984, 117-8.
[208] Price, 1984, 118-20; Clauss, 1999, 419. The *Historia Augusta* describes the veneration of Marcus Aurelius in private homes in the late second century, noting how his statue stood among other household gods (*Hist. Aug.* 18.5-7). Price's argument that Lucius directs a desperate prayer to the emperor in *The Golden Ass* (Apuleius *Metam.* III.29) seems doubtful given his clear intention in the passage to seek 'recourse to the civil authorities.' The invocation seems more likely to signal the assertion of his rights as a Roman citizen (cf. *Metam.* III.5).
[209] '[E]s zu den Kaisern als Gottheiten ebensolche persönlichen Bindungen gab wie zu den olympischen' (Clauss, 1999, 339).

is more cautious, however. Not even evidence of mystery rites dedicated to the emperor in Asia Minor (including hymn-singing, sermons, and the exhibition of imperial images with special lighting effects) persuades him that we are dealing with the same category of piety attested in the votive offerings associated so commonly with other forms of religious devotion in Asia Minor but completely absent in the context of emperor worship.[210]

In reality, of course, the urge to position the imperial cult as a functional equivalent to traditional forms of religious devotion is itself anachronistic. In first-century Asia Minor there was no need to choose between them. Devotion to the emperor coexisted with traditional cults and in some cases depended upon them. Price notes the addition of the imperial title to numerous traditional cultic festivals, indicating in most cases the presence of 'genuinely joint cults which showed piety to both god and emperor.'[211] '[O]ften the public worship of the emperor, rather than supplanting the local pagan religions in the Greek East, was simply amalgamated with it [sic.],' writes Hardin. 'Most sacrifices that were part of the public worship of the emperor,

[210] Pleket, 1965, 347. Commenting on the passage in *The Martyrdom of Pionius* in which, after refusing to sacrifice to Nemesis, the eponymous hero is urged to 'make *at least* sacrifice to the emperor' (ἐπίθυσον οὖν κἂν τῷ αὐτοκράτορι, *Mart. Pion.* 8.4, emphasis mine), Lane Fox comments: 'The Emperor, then, was not such a full-blooded god in the eyes of a leading pagan in Smyrna. His cult might be present but not even the persecutors saw it as the most divisive issue. It was a cult, they felt, which allowed a compromise' (Lane Fox, 2005, 477).

[211] Price, 1984, 103-4. Veneration of the emperor was added, for example, to the traditional cult of Artemis in Ephesus (Price, 1984, 104, 189). Alexia Petsalis-Diomidis finds a similar fusion of emperor worship with local forms of devotion in the coins minted to commemorate 'Caracalla's grant to Pergamon of a third neokorate temple in which he was worshipped as Asklepios synnaos' (Petsalis-Diomidis, 2010, 39).

were made to the gods on behalf of the emperor. These rites therefore required active participation in paganism.'[212]

4.1.2 Application and Critique

4.1.2.1 Bruce Winter

Bruce Winter argues that the emperor cult was the underlying cause of the crisis addressed by Paul in Galatians. Judaism, in his view, enjoyed *religio licita* status in the Graeco-Roman world – Jews and full converts to Judaism were formally immune from the obligation to participate in pagan cults.[213] Fearful of losing this status if it became known they were affiliated with local Gentile Christians who had withdrawn from their cult obligations without such formal protection, local Jewish Christian Influencers urged Paul's readers to get circumcised and observe Mosaic food laws and festivals.[214] By integrating them within the fold of Judaism, they sought to regularise their non-participation in emperor worship, and remove the cloud of suspicion hanging over the whole Christian community. [215]

Social pressure to conform to established religious norms *is* clearly attested in our sources.[216] Winter's attempt to explain the Galatian crisis as a manifestation of such

[212] Hardin, 2008, 40.
[213] Winter, 1994, 133. Winter argues that, if Gentile believers underwent the rite of circumcision, 'Galatian Christians as a whole would have a recognized legal entity that was distinctly Jewish… they would not be required to give divine honours in the imperial temples in the province of Galatia' (Winter, 2015, 241). See also Winter, 2015, 244-9; Gill, 2017, 82.
[214] In Winter's reconstruction, the prospect of losing *religio licita* status is the 'persecution' to which Paul refers in Gal 6.12 (Winter, 2015, 243-4; Winter, 1994, 141).
[215] Winter, 1994, 136-43.
[216] e.g. *Beichtinschriften*, no. 108.

pressures, however, is problematic. Josephus' account of the concessions made by Rome to Jewish communities living in Asia Minor will be considered in more detail in Chapter 5 §1, but it is better understood as a reminder of the spirit of the Roman-Jewish relationship in the past than as a watertight body of binding case law in the present. It certainly cannot support the hypothesis that Jewish immunity from participation in pagan cults amounted to a constitutional right.[217] Though membership of the local community is an exegetical possibility for the Influencers as we saw in Chapter 2, the suggestion that their actions were motivated by a general *obligation* to participate in local imperial cult activities founders on the lack of evidence for any such obligation until the reign of Decius in the third century.[218] Certainly neither compulsory participation, nor the infrastructure necessary to police it, were features of the cultural landscape of Bithynia before Pliny's famous correspondence with Trajan (Pliny *Let.* 10.96).[219] Winter's analysis also fails to engage with the suitability of regression as a means to describe the move Paul's correspondents were making toward Jewish proselyte status.

4.1.2.2 Brigitte Kahl

Brigitte Kahl's distinctive 're-imagination' of Galatians deploys literary and art-historical resources in quest of a holistic, first-century understanding of the terms

[217] Rajak, 1985, 20; Trebilco, 1991, 8-12; Hardin, 2008, 102-3.
[218] Marek and Frei, 2016, 536. According to Julius Capitolinus' biography of Marcus Aurelius in the *Historia Augusta*, in the late second century, those with sufficient financial means were expected to keep images of the emperor in their homes or be 'deemed guilty of sacrilege' (*Hist. Aug.* 4.18.5).
[219] Goodman, 1994, 46-9.

'Galatia' and 'Galatian.' Her findings are bold and original: The Galatians emerge not only as inhabitants of a specific geographical region but as paradigmatic opponents of Roman power – a power warranted by the distinction between the victors and the vanquished, justifying unconditional submission of 'the other' and facilitating integration into Roman society only on its own terms.[220]

Developing a fresh construction of the issues at stake in the letter in the light of this analysis, Kahl follows Winter in her attribution of the Galatians' puzzling enthusiasm for circumcision to fear. If conversion to Judaism was the only officially-sanctioned 'passport' to immunity from obligations to the imperial cult, unsanctioned withdrawal would bring punishment.[221] But she goes further. To assert membership of the Abrahamic family without this officially-sanctioned mark of inclusion was an act of insurrection against the Roman state.[222] To avoid idolatry, the Galatians must either be circumcised or return to their former status as enemies of the empire.[223]

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[220] '*Galatia*… is not a neutral geographical or ethnic description… From a Roman point of view, it was the region populated by the Celtic "counternation," that is, a peculiar species of "universal barbarians" who, after centuries of struggle, had at last been forced into compliance with the "world-saving" power of Roman victory' (Kahl, 2009, 33).

[221] Kahl, 2009, 210. Kahl notes that the acceptability of sacrifices made *on behalf of the emperor* at the temple in Jerusalem *did not* amount to a permanent acknowledgement of Judaism's status 'as a "licit religion"' (Kahl, 2009, 216). Her *working assumption* that such an acknowledgement did in fact exist is nonetheless repeatedly signalled: '[The Galatians'] foreskin clearly defines them as *not* Jews and thus not "licensed" to be fully Jewish, for example, to behave publicly as enemies of the gods, of humanity, of the city – and especially of the emperor' (Kahl, 2009, 220). 'Only if [the Galatians] could pass as proper Jews would they be entitled, at least theoretically, to participate in the arrangement available only to Jews with regard to imperial and civic religion' (Kahl, 2009, 226; see also 21, 222).

[222] Kahl, 2009, 205.

[223] 'Nonimperial models of unity and practices of nonallegiance to imperial religion emerge as the two core issues signified by Galatian "foreskin"' (Kahl, 2009, 26).

Kahl's belief in the inherent social instability of Pauline Christianity and the utility of conversion to Judaism as a means to resolve this difficulty will be considered in detail in Chapter 5 §4.2.[224] Like Winter, however, Kahl moves us little closer to an understanding of the regression motif and her dependence on his account of cultic obligations and Jewish immunities in Galatia leaves her thesis vulnerable to similar criticisms.[225] The variety and ongoing popularity of cults other than the imperial cult noted above also significantly undermines Kahl's assumption that emperor worship occupied a position of universal and overpowering cultural dominance in the region.[226]

4.1.2.3 Justin Hardin

Hardin reframes Winter's proposal, arguing that it was the willingness of the Jews to pray *for* the emperor (as opposed to praying *to* the emperor) and to engage in various other outward shows of loyalty, that effectively made them a 'normalised group' within Galatian society, functionally indistinguishable in this respect from practitioners of pagan religions who were willing to make the same concessions.[227] In Hardin's view, the location of Gentile Christians *outside* such a 'normalised

[224] On the social instability of Pauline Christianity, see Kahl, 2009, 222; citing Fredriksen, 2000, 135.
[225] For Kahl, regression more aptly describes Christian converts who refuse to embrace circumcision as a means of asserting Jewish identity and revert, in consequence, to the status of rebels (Kahl, 2009, 224). Kahl never satisfactorily absolves her argument from the critique that she anticipates against it: 'Galatian foreskin as such was surely of no interest to Rome; how much more far-fetched and awkward, then, to propose that the Galatians' motive in seeking circumcision might have been to make themselves acceptable to Roman law!' (Kahl, 2009, 210).
[226] Kahl's model positions Caesar as the 'supreme divinity,' as 'sole world creator, single world ruler, and the *one* world god' (Kahl, 2009, 165; see also Harker, 2018, 106-7). Barclay notes Kahl's 'liberal' application of the adjective 'imperial' as she widens the target of Paul's argument to 'any system of "imperial" power that perpetrates violence, competition, hierarchy, and exclusion' (Barclay, 2015, 348).
[227] Hardin, 2008, 109-14.

group' was the cause of the persecution that the Influencers feared, and the solution lay in them joining one.

Hardin relates this to the question of regression, discerning two very different trajectories at work within the Galatian congregations. Some Gentile Christians, he argues, were persuaded by the Influencers' plea for normalisation within the Jewish community – accepting circumcision and other Jewish legal observances as a means to obtain it. Others, however, were repelled by this proposal and sought normalisation within the pagan community, *returning* to the norms of emperor worship and the pagan festivals that had characterised their past. This latter path, according to Hardin, is the regression that Paul describes in Gal 4.8-10.[228] 'The beings that by nature are not gods' are the Roman emperors, and 'the special days and months and seasons and years' are imperial cult festivals.[229] Even the reference to the enslavement of the Jews under τὰ στοιχεῖα τοῦ κόσμου in 4.3 is a reference to domination by demonic forces parallel to the pagan gods in the Exodus story.[230] Paul is fighting on two fronts simultaneously here, talking one part of his readership down from the ledge of circumcision, while at the same time rebuking others for returning to the pagan cults from which they were converted.[231]

[228] Hardin, 2008, 141-2. Like Hardin, Gaston finds only references to Gentile enslavement in Gal 4.3, 9 (Gaston, 2006, 89).
[229] Hardin, 2008, 122-7. See also Kahl, 2009, 225.
[230] Hardin, 2008, 132-7.
[231] Hardin, 2008, 144-5. Troy Martin's proposal that apostasy to paganism is the central issue in the Galatian crisis elevates the second of these two fronts to the primary position (Martin, 1995, 437-461).

The rigour with which Hardin focuses our attention on the background of Paul's audience and the crucial role it plays in the Galatian crisis here sets a high bar for subsequent exegetes of the letter. Yet there are a number of problems with his synthesis. As we will see in more detail in Chapter 4 §4.4, Hardin's treatment of the references both to calendrical observances and to the στοιχεῖα τοῦ κόσμου is idiosyncratic. The major thrust of Gal 3.23-4.11 brings Jewish and Gentile religious experience into contact with one another. Twice Paul moves from observations about Jewish life apart from faith in Christ to observations about Jewish life after faith in Christ has come, confident that his conclusions are relevant to Gentile believers as well (3.23–29, 4.1–8). Hardin disregards this central facet of Paul's argumentative momentum.

Hardin's explanation is also unnecessarily bulky. Not only do we have Paul dealing with two very different reactions to the Influencers in Galatia, we have a highly stratified vision of the underlying cause: pressure to conform to the demands of the emperor cult leads to a threat of persecution against local Jewish Christians on account of their affiliation with non-participating Gentile Christians, whom they then pressurise to convert fully to Judaism. Hardin himself notes Muddiman's far more elegant proposal that the threat of persecution came not from the infrastructure of the emperor cult at all but directly from Jews – a proposal which, in reality, frees us from the obligation to assume the Influencers were *local* at all.[232] The threat of

[232] 'those [Jews] outside the church… [were] willing to use all the means of synagogue discipline, namely detention, fines, beatings and excommunication, to pressurize Jewish Christians into demanding that their fellow, non-Jewish, Christians accept circumcision' (Muddiman, 1994, 261; cf. Hardin, 2008, 113).

persecution from Jews *in Jerusalem* could have equally produced a similar initiative – motivating law-observant Jewish Christians to address the perceived excesses of Paul's Gentile mission. Felix John is surely correct to conclude, that 'Hardin's assumption of two completely contradictory reactions within the community – emperor cult acceptance through apostasy, and emperor cult avoidance through circumcision – has no foundation in Galatians and appears improbable as a historical background' (translation mine).[233]

4.1.2.4 Thomas Witulski

Thomas Witulski adopts a literary-critical solution to the regression problem. Noting the two contradictory directions in which Paul's readers appear to be moving at the same time – towards *both* Jewish proselyte conversion *and* pagan rites – Witulski reads Gal 4.8-20 as a later interpolation. Removing it restores the underlying clarity of the original text focusing on the activities of 'Judaizing intruders, who laid on the Christian Galatians the obligation to circumcision and the observance of Old Testament Jewish Law' (translation mine). [234] Only in the inserted text – and in 4.3 where the inclusion of the phrase στοιχεῖα τοῦ κόσμου also betrays the hand of the redactor – do we find references to a regression to pre-Christian paganism.

[233] 'Hardins Annahme von zwei völlig entgegengesetzten Reaktionen innerhalb der Gemeinde – Kaiserkultteilnahme und Vermeidung von Kaiserkult durch Beschneidung – hat am Gal keinen Anhalt und erscheint als historischer Hintergrund unwahrscheinlich' (John, 2016, 175).
[234] '[I]n Gal „A" kämpft er gegen judaistische Eindringlinge, denen daran lag, die Christen Galatiens auf die Beschneidung und die Beobachtung des alttestamentlich-jüdischen Gesetzes zu verpflichten' (Witulski, 2000, 72). See also Kahl, 2009, 225 n.65. 'Judaising' is used here in the confusing sense of encouraging others to adopt Jewish beliefs and practices. The term is more commonly and more accurately used to describe the process of embracing Judaism (Cohen, 1999, 175-97).

While usefully illustrating the extent of the interpretative challenge before us – how can Paul's concern that his readers are accepting Jewish legal observances be upheld *simultaneously* with his warnings about returning to the norms of their pagan past? – Wiltulski's hypothesis should be treated with caution. Excerpting Gal 4.8-20 fails to resolve the underlying tension. Regression remains an explicit concern even in the text portions he takes to be original, culminating in the explicit statement: 'For freedom Christ has set us free. Stand firm, therefore, and do not submit *again* to a yoke of slavery' (5.1; emphasis mine). Felix John notes the problematic lack of obvious precedents for the use of the word στοιχεῖον in imperial cultic contexts on which Witulski's argument depends.[235] Hardin also challenges Witulski's redaction hypothesis on the basis of problems with his dating and interpretation of the wooden amphitheatre inscription from Pisidian Antioch (see §2.2.3).

4.2 Galatians and 'Indigenous' Anatolian Cults

4.2.1 Background

Shifting from the imperial cult to the multiplicity of other forms of worship that were present in central Anatolia in the first-century, Clinton Arnold focuses on the Lydian-Phrygian confession stelae. After carefully analysing the underlying form of the genre, Arnold argues for a fundamentally 'nomistic orientation' among the dedicants indicative of a broader 'climate of fear.'[236] The people memorialised in these inscriptions were

[235] John, 2016, 170-2
[236] Arnold, 2005, 435, 446.

driven to perform religious duties promptly and diligently on the pain of 'stiff penalties.'[237] Relating this experience to that of Paul's audience, Arnold explains the Galatians' susceptibility to the message of the Influencers on the assumption that they were emerging from a similarly fearful, law-bound religious past.[238]

Taking a different tack through the maze of indigenous Anatolian religious expressions, Susan Elliott directs our attention to the cult of the mother goddess, Cybele. Echoing Arnold's interpretation of the confession texts, Elliott attaches central importance to Cybele's role in judicial matters. Despite the enormous variety of her local manifestations, the mother goddess consistently enforced 'cultic and social order' as part of a wider 'divine judicial system.'[239] Uneasily fused to her role as guardian of law and order, Elliott simultaneously develops the wild side of the goddess's character, concentrating in particular on the ecstatic self-castration rituals associated with the *galli*.[240] For Elliott, Cybele's eunuch priests – cast in the image of her ambiguously-gendered divine consort Attis and serving her under the shadow of the mountains on which she was supposed to dwell – embodied forms of theatricality and boundary-transgression and a desire to attain higher forms of initiation that contextualises the appeal of circumcision among Paul's readers.[241] As

[237] Arnold, 2005, 439. So also Elliott: 'The Anatolians lived in constant awareness of the watchful eye of their deities, believing in their power to protect as well as punish by an active righteous rage. This is the ethos of Anatolian popular religiosity' (Elliott, 2003, 88).
[238] Arnold, 2005, 437-46.
[239] Elliott, 2003, 62-88.
[240] Elliott, 2003, 159-229.
[241] Elliott, 2003, 221-29.

with Arnold, this provocative engagement with the Anatolian religious context offers a rich pool of potential insights for the exegesis of Galatians.

4.2.2 Application and Critique

Arnold and Elliott's attempts to situate Galatians in its Anatolian religious context embody significantly different research strategies. Arnold concentrates, for the most part, on a single source type – the confession text – facilitating visibility on a variety of different cults.[242] Elliott concentrates on a single cult (as do Winter, Kahl, Hardin and Witulski) facilitating visibility on a variety of different source types. Neither of these one-dimensional approaches, however, facilitates visibility on multiple cults and multiple source types *at the same time*. A two-dimensional approach, taking *both* the polyphony of the cults *and* the polyphony of the source types into consideration is required to generate a balanced picture. Indeed, a third *diachronic* dimension – as modelled by Ute Kelp and Lynn Roller's contributions to the debate – is also required if we wish to appreciate the adaptability of this religious background to new influences, which is precisely the situation we encounter in Galatians.

4.2.2.1 Clinton Arnold

Arnold's claim that the confession texts are relevant to the exegesis of Galatians is true and useful, provided we acknowledge that their contribution to the larger picture of divine-human interactions in our region and period is also *limited*. The

[242] Arnold's analysis also draws insights from Marijana Ricl's broader collection of *Hosios kai Dikaios* inscriptions (Hosios kai Dikaios, 1992).

assertion that fear of the gods constituted the dominant religious motive in Galatia fails to respect this limitation.[243] Fear is certainly an important component within the contextual envelope we have defined for the Galatian situation but it is by no means the *sine qua non* of Anatolian religious experience.[244]

Arnold's analysis *does* offer a coherent response to the interpretative problems posed by Paul's regression language. On his assumptions, the 'gospel' of the Influencers and the religious paradigm from which the Galatians were converted can be virtually equated. The Galatian Christians were used to '[fulfilling] cultic requirements and [performing] good works to maintain a favorable standing with the local deities,' and, for Arnold, this was exactly the Influencers' approach to Christianity.[245] Indeed it is Paul's awareness of this crucial facet of his readers' religious background that enables him to draw out the comparison to such devastating effect. [246]

We also note several other areas where Arnold sees connections between Paul's argumentative strategy and his knowledge of the underlying religious situation. The reference to 'bewitchment' in Gal 3.1 might reflect a wider cultural concern about illicit magic.[247] The frequent recurrence of curse vocabulary (1.8, 9; 3.10, 13) might reflect

[243] Rostad, 2006, 88-108.
[244] Wilson makes exactly this mistake in his short survey of the Anatolian backgrounds for Galatians, focusing almost exclusively on cursing and fear of divine vengeance and failing to engage with the wider body of evidence from the region and period (Wilson, 2007, 72-9).
[245] Arnold, 2005, 429.
[246] Arnold, 2005, 445-6.
[247] Arnold, 2005, 446-7. Arnold also detects an allegation of witchcraft in *Beichtinschriften*, no. 69.

local concepts of cursing as a powerful spiritual force.[248] Paul's remarks about the person 'detected in transgression' (6.1-5) might constitute an echo of the confession text genre.[249] The reference to Paul's 'public exhibition' of Christ as crucified (3.1) might also reflect the confession texts where the verb προγράφω appears twice with the same unusual meaning in the context of the erection of monuments.[250]

Arnold's central thesis, however, involves an interpretation of the Influencers that is both speculative and highly improbable. As we noted in Chapter 2, the letter does not tell us directly what Influencers thought; it tells us only how Paul reacted to the Galatians' reaction to their ministry. Arnold asserts that the Influencers were, 'emphasizing the importance of law-observance as a means of initiation into the new covenant and perhaps also as a means of maintaining that covenant status.'[251] The accuracy of this inference, however, is hotly disputed. James D. G. Dunn, to name but one contributor in a crowded field, argues that the Influencers made no such arguments. He vigorously critiques the idea that 'admission to the new covenant' was contingent on legal observances as out of step with the broader tenor of first-century Jewish thought.[252]

And even if it were true that the Influencers' message appealed to the Galatian Christians on the basis of its proximity to their established religious mindset, it is still

[248] Arnold, 2005, 447.
[249] Arnold, 2005, 448-9
[250] *Beichtinschriften*, no.s 15 & 59.
[251] Arnold, 2005, 445.
[252] Arnold, 2005, 445. 'The traditional interpretation of "works of the law" as self-achieved righteousness makes no sense against the background of classic Jewish theology' (Dunn, 1993b, 77).

to be doubted that such proximity could have motivated a drastic step like circumcision – regarded with widespread contempt in the Graeco-Roman world.[253] For Arnold, the Influencers' emphasis on keeping Jewish law as 'an absolute requisite' for Gentile Christians left the freedoms of the Pauline gospel looking 'too good to be true.'[254] But would mere disillusionment be a sufficient incentive to produce the radical change of life that Paul so clearly feared? For Felix John, it is also telling that the confession texts make no mention of bodily changes parallel to circumcision or the importance of calendrical festivals.[255]

4.2.2.2 Susan Elliott

Turning our attention to Susan Elliott's analysis of the Cybele cult, we note that her attempt to establish links to the text of Galatians ranges far more broadly than the question of regression. The Galatians' past experience with Cybele as a guardian of religious law drives an innovative interpretation of the Hagar and Sarah story read in the light of Cybele's association with the mountains of Asia Minor.[256] The phenomenon of ritual castration among the *galli* not only explains Paul's blunt comments about the Influencers 'emasculating themselves' (Gal 5.12), but also offers an interpretative framework for the Galatian crisis as a whole.[257]

[253] Chapter 5 §3.2.
[254] Arnold, 2005, 445.
[255] John, 2016, 180-1. Chaniotis challenges the latter assertion, arguing that the confession stelae were erected and their inscriptions publicly recited on festal occasions (Chaniotis, 2009, 120).
[256] Elliott, 2003, 17-31; Elliott, 1999.
[257] Elliott, 2003, 233-57.

Elliott's response to the regression question, however, is by no means underdeveloped. On the contrary, she identifies it as a central theme of the letter, not only in passages where the regression vocabulary is explicitly evident (Gal 4.8-11, 5.1) but also in the arguments from minority to majority (3.23-4-7) and from slavery to freedom (4.21-31) which precede them, and in Paul's broader concern with turning back the salvation-historical clock signalled at 3.3 ('having started with the Spirit, are you now ending with the flesh?')[258]

Elliott's most interesting interpretative move, however, is her explicit rejection of the equation otherwise generally assumed to exist between the Influencers' agenda and the Galatians' response. Arnold's argument depends on this false assumption: The Influencers preach a message of law-observance as a means to acceptance with God, and 'because of its similarity to the structure of their former beliefs,' the Galatians are predisposed to accept it.[259] But who is to say the Influencers had to preach such a message in order to be *heard* this way? 'The Galatians are positively considering being circumcised,' writes Elliott, 'probably for mixed and not necessarily fully conscious or articulated reasons related to their Anatolian context *as well as [for] the reasons those who advocate it give them*' (emphasis mine).[260] Allowing some scope for *slippage*, as I argued in the previous chapter, between the intentions of the Influencers and the Galatians' reception of their ministry frees Elliott

[258] Elliott, 2003, 254-5, 263.
[259] Arnold, 2005, 445.
[260] Elliott, 2003, 257.

up to consider the underlying religious assumptions that the Influencers' message might have unwittingly triggered or reactivated.

The elements of the religious background that Elliott identifies as relevant to this inquiry, however, are problematic. As we have already seen, there are substantial questions about the factual basis for her portrayal of the Cybele cult in the time of Paul. Roller's careful diachronic analysis questions whether the eunuch priesthood of Cybele even existed in first-century Asia Minor. The literary evidence comes from Greek and Roman writers who demonstrate systematic bias against 'oriental' religious practices.[261] The inscriptional evidence suggests that the connection between Cybele and Attis – on which Elliott rests so much weight – just like the connection between Cybele and religious law, was an extra-Anatolian innovation, not a vital expression of deep-seated local convictions.[262].

Even if we were to allow the doubtful conclusion that familiarity with self-castrated *galli* could be assumed among Paul's audience, Elliott's attempt to develop this familiarity into motives capable of enticing entire churches to embrace circumcision is flawed. The suggestion that cognoscenti of the Cybele cult might have thought circumcision desirable as 'the highest form of initiation' into their new religion is plausible (this is the explanation offered by Jewett) but it is surely implausible to imagine that a conscious (or unconscious) desire to *emulate* the *galli* necessitated

[261] Roller, 1999, 19-24. 'Was Lukian aus Syrien mitteilt, darf nicht einfach auf Zentralkleinasien übertragen werden' (John, 2016, 185).
[262] Roller, 1999, 114, 212.

the sustained argument against circumcision that we find in Galatians.[263] Elliott wants to have her cake and eat it here, arguing on the one hand that the prominence of the *galli* in the Cybele cult, their liminal authority, their close communion with the goddess, and their exclusive fellowship with each other might have enticed Paul's readers toward the analogous institution of circumcision and, on the other hand, that Paul deliberately exploits the negative public image of the *galli* as a means to dissuade them.[264]

5. Conclusion

The assessment of the pagan religious context of Asia Minor presented in the foregoing paragraphs defines the envelope within which our picture of Paul's Galatian readers and their world will be drawn in subsequent chapters. Primary sources, focused – as far as possible – on the route and probable timing of the first missionary journey, have been analysed in an effort to provide representative coverage of the cult types and sources types attested for the region and their adaptation over time.

The dedication of votive offerings was found to be widespread, as was the practice of confession and the establishment of tangible and enduring memorials of devotion in common with many other ancient cultures. Core religious expectations were

[263] Elliott, 2003, 225. See also Jewett, 1971a, 198-212. In critique, see Barclay, 1988, 49-50.
[264] Elliott, 2003, 244-54.

found to be persistent, notwithstanding superficial adaptations to the ebb and flow of external influences. Ethical rigour, manifested in various ways, was central to the life of many popular cults, as was confidence in the significance of human action in the divine-human relationship. Incentivisation of the gods was found to admit different degrees of forcefulness and divine obligations could be initiated from the human side, but the gods responded favourably only to the worthy, their power was limited by fate, and the interests of their devotees were typically earthbound.

Extant attempts to reconstruct the *Sitz im Leben* of Galatians and to interpret Paul's remarks about regression against its pagan background were evaluated in the light of these findings. Approaches concentrating on the emperor cult, on various manifestations of mother goddess worship, and on the confession texts as sources of insight into the contemporary religious milieu have much to teach us. None of them, however, offer a compelling explanation for the curious association of movement towards Judaism and movement towards paganism around which Paul's concern for his readers apparently gravitates. None prove immune to instabilities when assessed in the light of the full range of sources submitted.

In and of itself, the material reviewed in this chapter does not dictate an alternative interpretative strategy for the letter. There is too much variation within the envelope we have defined and there are too many gaps to make prescriptive statements about the specific religious influences that were affecting Paul's readers. We can name behaviours that are *likely* to have been present – some of which are regionally specific and others of which are more widely attested, and others whose presence is *less*

likely. But we cannot claim with any credibility that a particular cult or even a particular coalition of cults provides the key to understanding the Galatian crisis. Only positive testimony from the target audience themselves could establish the situation in Galatia to this level of specificity – testimony we are never likely to possess.

Despite the variety and patchiness of the background data, however, it is now possible to hold up our findings against the only positive testimony that *does* remain from the situation described in Galatians – the testimony of Paul himself. While eschewing prescriptive analyses of the Galatians' prior religious experience, we can compare the data surveyed and the relative proportions of the divergent behaviours to which they attest, with the concepts of faith in Christ and devotion to pagan gods reflected in the text of the letter. Paul, as we will shortly see, shared certain generic assumptions about pagan religion with his larger Jewish milieu and yet, in Galatians, he also responds to a specific situation unfolding in a region he knew and among people with whom he was intimately familiar. Wherever the past religious experience of the Galatian Christians lay within the envelope we have defined, we are now equipped to appreciate some of that responsiveness, and to highlight the kinds of powerful and enduring religious assumptions upon which his warnings about regression in Galatians seem to have hung.

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CHAPTER 4
PAUL AND RETURNING TO PAGANISM

1. Introduction

Having focused in some depth on Graeco-Roman religious backgrounds with potential relevance to Paul's Galatian readers, we turn now to Paul himself and to the religious background of his readers *as he saw it*. Our argument proceeds in steadily narrowing circles, moving from the general concept of pagan religion attested in Paul and in his wider Jewish milieu to the specific challenge of caring for Gentile converts struggling with persistent pagan religious assumptions as we see it discussed in 1 Corinthians and Romans. Detailed exegesis of Galatians focusses on the 'return to slavery' described in Gal 4.8-11, noting the parallel idea of accursedness in 3.10-14, and the significance of both themes for Paul's Gentile audience.

2. Paul and the Gentiles

The challenge of situating Paul within the context of contemporary Jewish attitudes to the Gentiles is significantly complicated by the fact that there is little unity of thought on the topic within the 'Judaisms' of the period. In the Palestinian setting, E. P. Sanders helpfully observes that the rabbis are comparatively disinterested in the

question of who may or may not be 'saved' outside the boundaries of Judaism. Their discussions fail to disclose a 'systematic position with regard to the fate of the Gentiles.'[1] In the diaspora setting, the question was more urgent; Terence Donaldson highlights *both* Gentile attraction to Judaism *and* Gentile hostility against Judaism as significant motives in the development of theological and practical responses to the question of Gentile status with respect to the God of Israel.[2] But even in this larger landscape, the extant sources support a spectrum of different options for dealing with Gentiles, from 'harsh exclusion' to 'quasi pluralism.'[3] Donaldson concentrates on the more 'positive' end of this spectrum, identifying 'patterns of universalism' by which Gentiles might be included within the house of Israel in various senses, some more tangible and rooted in the present, others more abstract and rooted in the realm of eschatological speculation.[4] At the less 'positive' end of the spectrum, James Dunn highlights canonical and apocryphal texts defining wickedness as life beyond the oversight of Jewish Law, and Gentiles as wicked in consequence.[5]

Notwithstanding the diversity of opinion about the prospects for Gentile inclusion in God's larger plans for the nation of Israel, however, there is considerable agreement

[1] Sanders, 1977, 207, 211.
[2] Donaldson, 2007, 2-3.
[3] Donaldson, 2007, 4.
[4] Donaldson, 2007, 469-505.
[5] On the connection between wickedness and disassociation from God's law, see Ps 1.1-5; 37.34-6; Sir 41.8. For the specific identification of Gentiles as sinners, see Ps 9.5, 15-17; Tob 13.6; Jub 23.23-4; Pss Sol 2.1-2 (Dunn, 1993a, 132-3). On the identification of Gentiles as sinners in wider Second Temple literature, see *T. Jud.* 23.2; *T. Dan.* 5.8*; T. Naph.* 3.3-4.1. Sanders' analysis of the book of Jubilees overstates its negative assessment of Gentile behaviour and yet still helpfully identifies positive commands given to Israel that they might *not* be like the Gentiles (*Jub.* 2.19; 3.31), and negative commands targeting behaviour characteristic of Gentiles that they are to avoid (*Jub.* 1.9, 11.16, 20.6-7; Sanders, 1977, 374-5).

on the subject of Gentile *religion*. In his discussion of 'ethical monotheism,' Donaldson draws attention to Jewish voices claiming that Gentile religious activity, within certain bounds, could be viewed as part of a legitimate quest for God.[6] *The Letter of Aristeas* goes so far as to endorse the claim that Zeus was just another name for the God of Israel (*Let. Aris.* 16).[7] But these examples in no way detract from the more general distaste for Gentile gods and forms of worship.

Central to this negative verdict is the equation of Gentile religion and idolatry implied in Isaiah 44 and explicitly stated in Jeremiah 10.2-5. The Isaianic text, in particular, is paradigmatic for subsequent Jewish interactions with idol worship.[8] Ridicule for the Gentile who bows down to an idol made from materials that have also been used for other, less flattering, purposes is a trope that reappears in *The Wisdom of Solomon* (*Wis.* 13.10-15; 15.7) and *The Epistle to Diognetus* (*Diog.* 2.2-3). Jeremiah's provocative taunts about nailing idols to the ground to stop them falling over cast a similarly long literary shadow (*Wis.* 13.16; *Diog.* 2.2). But the prophets have more substantial criticisms to lay at the door of Gentile religion than these.

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[6] Donaldson, 2007, 493-8. The importance of natural theology is widely attested, from rabbinic reworkings of Abraham's journey from paganism to God, (e.g. *Gen. R. 38.13*; see Davies, 1955, 28-9 and on the same theme in Philo (*Abr.* 69-70) and Josephus (*Ant.* 1.155-6), see Martyn, 1997*a*, vol 33A, 398-9) to texts in which failure to discern God in nature forms the basis for Gentile accountability (e.g. Rom 1.19-20). The need to discern the presence of the creator in creation is a regularly-recurring theme in Second Temple Jewish literature (e.g. Wis. 13.1-5; 13.*T. Naph.* 3.3-5). In *The Wisdom of Solomon*, Gentiles who worship the heavenly bodies are deemed less worthy of blame than idolaters, because they have '[gone] astray while seeking God and desiring to find him.' For all their efforts, however, the author of Wisdom – like Paul in Rom 1.20 – does not deem them worthy of excuse, (*Wis.* 13.6-8).

[7] 'Some Hellenistic Jews, in brief, advised and even advocated that Jews show a certain respect for their neighbours' pantheons' (Fredriksen, 2017, 39).

[8] '[*Wis.* 13.]11-19 [is] inspired by Isa 44.9-20' (Winston, 2007, 260). *1QpHab* 12 demonstrates at least an awareness of this tradition at Qumran.

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Through repeated use of the Hebrew verb יצר (Isa 44.2, 9, 10, 12, 21, 24), Isaiah draws attention to the contrast between the idol worshipper who *forms* the object of his devotion and true worship directed to the God who *forms* his devotees.[9] True worship assigns priority to God as the initiator and responsibility to human beings as respondents. Idolaters assert themselves in God's place but God's acts make a mockery of their efforts.[10] In *T. Naph*. 3.3-5 idolatry is an overturning of the natural order such that the roles and responsibilities of the creator and the creature are exchanged (see also *Jub*. 20.6-7). Sodom is invoked as both an illustration of this principle and of its inevitable moral consequences, contextualising Paul's similar (and, to modern eyes, puzzling) concentration on the departure from 'natural' sexual behaviour as the principle fruit of idolatry in Romans 1.18-32.[11] An association between idolatry and immorality is widely assumed in Second Temple texts dealing with Gentile religion (e.g. *Wis*. 14.12-14, 23-7; *T. Reub*. 4.6; *T. Naph*. 3.3-4.1; *Jub*. 20.6-7; *1QS* 4.5-9, *4Q271*, fr.2). Isaiah's denunciation of the idol maker himself as 'nothing' (Isa 44.9), may provide the basis for the striking, proto-Augustinian, conclusion of *The Epistle to Diognetus* that the idolater becomes like the object of

[9] God is also presented as a knower, in contrast to the idol that knows nothing through repetition of the Hebrew verb ידע (Isa 44.8, 9, 18).

[10] The idol-maker 'plants and tends' the tree he plans to use for his craft (Isa 44.14); God makes the descendants of Israel spring up 'like willows by flowing streams' (Isa 44.4). The metal-worker 'becomes hungry and his strength fails, he drinks no water and is faint' (Isa 44.12); God '[pours] water on the thirsty land, and streams on the dry ground' (Isa 44.3).

[11] In both Rom 1.24, 26, 28 and *Wis*. 12.23-7, Gentile religion constitutes its own punishment.

his worship (*Diog.* 2.5). The author of the *Wisdom of Solomon* describes idolatry as the product of various forms of enslavement (*Wis.* 14.21).

Paul's own thinking about Gentile religion was clearly influenced by this larger milieu. Notwithstanding controversy over the precise dating of *The Wisdom of Solomon*, the substantial similarities between *Wis.*12-15 and Rom 1.18-32 point at least to shared influences, even if they do not justify Sanday and Headlam's bold conclusion that 'at some time in his life St. Paul must have bestowed upon the Book of Wisdom a considerable amount of study.'[12] Dunn is supported by the majority of commentators in his judgement that the reference to 'Gentile sinners' in Gal 2.15 more probably demonstrates awareness of Paul's opponents' perspective in Antioch than it indicates his own.[13] But there is no evidence to cast significant doubt on Martyn's verdict that this was a 'standard expression' within Jewish discourse of the period.[14]

3. Paul and the Challenge of Pastoring Gentile Converts

Having situated Paul in the context of wider Jewish attitudes to pagan religion, we can now commence our approach to Galatians with a more focused question: How did Paul's concept of paganism shape his strategy for pastoring pagans *after their*

[12] Sanday and Headlam, 1898, 51-2. On the basis of the reference to making images of distant rulers in *Wis.* 14.17, the rare words attested in the text, and its general anti-Egyptian perspective, Winston assigns the composition of *The Wisdom of Solomon* to Alexandria during the reign of Gaius Caligula (37-41 A.D.; see Winston, 2007, 20-5). Lester Grabbe sees no after-effects of the anti-Jewish tumult of the early decades of the first century in Alexandria in the text, and assigns a date of around 20 B.C. (Coogan et al., 2007, 69).
[13] Dunn, 1993a, 132-4; see also Martyn, 1997*a*, vol 33A, 248-9; De Boer, 2011, 142; Boyarin, 1997, 114.
[14] Martyn, 1997*a*, vol 33A, 248. See also Dunn, 2008, 230-35.

conversion to Christianity? Two passages from the wider Pauline corpus stand out for particular consideration.

3.1 1 Corinthians 8.1-13

In 1 Corinthians 8, Paul begins a sustained engagement with the problem of difference in the Corinthian congregations and how it should be accommodated. Responding to a series of spikey questions quoted from a letter the Corinthians sent to him (1 Cor 7.1), the apostle highlights different approaches to participation in the ordinary business of life in a thriving pagan city, including cultic meals at idol temples (1 Cor 8.10) and private meals in the houses of pagan friends where the food may be tainted by idolatry (1 Cor 10.27-8).[15] The authors of the letter see no obstacle to participation in these events. '[W]e know that "no idol in the world really exists"' (1 Cor 8.4) they intone, standing on their monotheistic convictions – which Paul clearly shares. But he does not share their view of how these convictions should be *applied*. In the case of participation in public idol festivals, Paul argues for the moderation of their behaviour out of consideration for a group he calls 'the weak' (οἱ ἀσθενεῖς, 1 Cor 8.9, cf. 1 Cor 1.25, 27; 4.10; 8.7, 10; 9.22; 11.30; 12.22).

Who were the weak? Gerd Theissen has argued that, whatever additional theological freight we attach to this term, it follows the contours of an underlying

[15] For specialist treatments of the Corinthian *Sitz im Leben* see Winter, 1994, 165-77; Winter, 2001; Cheung, 1999; Chester, 2003, 227-316; Theissen, 2004, 121-43. On the importance of the idol temple as the setting, see Hays, 1997, 136.

sociological reality.[16] In 1 Cor 1.26-31, Paul introduces the vocabulary of weakness in a discussion about the humble origins of the majority of his correspondents – weakness should be viewed as an index of socioeconomic disadvantage. Theissen's thesis does not, however, command universal support.[17] Though meat consumption was certainly associated with religious festivals and banquets funded by the wealthy, Meggitt has demonstrated that it was not *confined* to such contexts.[18] Though eating *good quality* meats may have been associated with participation in pagan celebrations, the argument that 'the acts of eating meat and worshiping idols must have been much more closely connected for [the poor] than for members of the higher strata,' has been substantially undermined.[19]

Whether or not the weak should be aligned with the poor in Corinth, however, one thing we can say about them with confidence is that *they were Gentiles*. Their Gentile origins are essential to Paul's diagnosis of the pastoral problem: 'Some have become so accustomed to idols until now,' he writes, that 'they still think of the food they eat as food offered to an idol; and their conscience, *being weak*, is defiled' (1

[16] Theissen, 2004, 121-43.
[17] In critique of Theissen, see Garland, 2003, 382; Malherbe, 1983, 84-91. Gardner explores the seeming disjunction between the socioeconomic and moral interpretations of strength and weakness (Gardner, 1994, 40-66). Thiselton attempts to unify these interpretations (Thiselton, 2000, 644). Theissen's one-size-fits-all reading of ἀσθενής appears to break down at 1 Cor 11.30.
[18] Manfred Clauss presents a rich description of the public banquets organised in Ancyra under the aegis of the emperor cult (Clauss, 1999, 334). On shared meals in the context of private associations and their dependence on rich donors, see Ascough, 1998, 76, 83-5, 92. Against Theissen's assertion that regular meat consumption was a privilege of the rich, Meggitt argues that sausages, blood puddings and various unappetising 'off-cuts' were commonly available at the *popinae* or 'cookshops' frequented by the πολλοί (Theissen, 2004, 125-6; Meggitt, 1994, 137-41).
[19] Theissen, 2004, 128.

Cor 8.7; emphasis mine).[20] Habituation to idols, the ongoing effects of which Paul now wishes the Corinthians to accommodate, was a specifically Gentile experience.

How then should we interpret this vulnerability of the weak? Clearly it was not a problem that affected *all* Gentile converts – the authors of the letter from Corinth were themselves proof of the point. However we respond to Theissen's argument about socioeconomic privilege, *these individuals* had clearly managed to disaggregate eating meat from worship.[21] *For the weak*, however, no such disaggregation had taken place and the convictions associated with their pagan past were apt to be reanimated when they exposed themselves again to the context in which those convictions had been formed.

Anthony Thiselton stresses the *unconscious* nature of this threat to the weak: They sense the attraction of emulating those with stronger consciences, but they do not sense the danger of defilement.[22] So also David Garland: '[the weak] have a reflex reaction when it comes to idols… Eating sanctified food had always been an act of worship that honored the god lurking behind the idol. Their minds are still infused

[20] '"[T]he weak" about whom Paul writes here are not Jewish Christians but Gentile converts from paganism; they are the ones who would be "accustomed to idols"' (Hays, 1997, 141); see also Barrett, 1971, 194; Theissen, 2004, 123.
[21] Theissen, 2004, 125-9. See also Hays, 1997, 136-7.
[22] Thiselton, 2000, 639-40. In dialogue with Eckstein, Thiselton associates weakness of conscience with 'merely routinized, unthinking, habituated action' (Thiselton, 2000, 643; cf. Eckstein, 1983, 232-56, 311-14). On the appeal of emulating the strong, see also Theissen, 2004, 128-9). Garland analyses weakness and strength in terms of overactive and underactive states of conscience (Garland, 2003, 381-2; see also Barrett, 1971, 194-5). Jewett diagnoses among the weak Corinthians an inability to truly assimilate knowledge of the gospel on account of the 'dread of the idols' still affecting their consciences (Jewett, 1971b, 422-3).

with old conceptions that spring up involuntarily.'[23] In Richard Hays' assessment, these 'members of the fledgling church are so accustomed to thinking of the idols as real that they cannot eat the idol meat without conjuring up the whole symbolic word of idol worship; they are dragged back into that world and so "defiled".'[24] As they eat, the weak are drawn once more into the familiar complex of fear and reverence that attended eating in the past, and only afterwards perceive the spiritual implications of their actions – viz. faithlessness to Christ to whom they had pledged wholehearted devotion.[25]

Abraham Malherbe develops Clarence Glad's proposal that Paul's use of the term 'weakness' here may reflect its use in the wider Hellenistic philosophical paradigm.[26] Stoic thinkers including Cicero and Epictetus associate weakness and strength with immaturity and maturity.[27] For Cicero, the weak are subject to 'bad

[23] Garland, 2003, 380.
[24] Hays, 1997, 140.
[25] See also Hays, 1997, 142. 'Paul and the Corinthians share a common set of religious symbols and it is not in their choice of symbols that Paul finds fault with his converts. Instead, he is disturbed by the different manner in which the Corinthians construe the significance of these shared symbols' (Chester, 2003, 214). In this case, the symbols of meat and drink are construed by the weak according to the Graeco-Roman religious culture in which they were immersed prior to their conversion (Chester, 2003, 213-25). Theissen helpfully sketches Paul's concept of accountability for *both* conscious *and* unconscious intentions in his assessment of 1 Cor 4.1-5 (Theissen, 1987, 59-66). Jeremias explores the intentions of the strong (Jeremias, 1953, 151-2). Glad notes the inability of the weak to reach the same logical conclusions as the strong, even if they accept the same premises (Glad, 1995, 285-6).
[26] Malherbe, 1994, 233-8. Glad's work focuses on areas of overlap between Paul and the Epicurean philosopher Philodemus, whose handbook *On Frank Criticism* applies the labels 'weak' and 'strong' to individuals possessing greater and lesser degrees of moral and intellectual maturity (*Crit.* 7, 10, XXIVa). In 1 Cor 8, Glad argues that, by participating in idol food, the strong hope to teach the weak by example (Glad, 1995, 277-95).
[27] Cicero *Fin.* 5.43. See also Epictetus *Disc.* 2.15.20 where moral and intellectual weakness are described in terms of sickness. Jewett cites Horace *Sat.* 1.9.67-72 as an example of the association between weakness and religious scruples (Jewett and Kotansky, 2007, 834).

habits and false beliefs' which 'turn them in whatever direction they are inclined' (Cicero *Leg.* 1.29). Seneca dwells on the necessity of *unlearning* weakness – a 'toilsome' process on account of the familiarity of established vices and the fear associated with embracing unfamiliar virtues, yet hopeful on account of the natural attractiveness of the good and its persistence once acquired.[28] Following Malherbe's path from these sources to 1 Corinthians, Anders Eriksson considers 'weakness' a natural choice for a description of 'the moral sickness suffered by those recent converts who were not yet able to make correct moral judgements.'[29]

To the extent that these observations are on target, Paul's plea for accommodation in 1 Corinthians emerges as a pastoral response to a real *danger* as he perceives it. We have already noted the strong association between life as a Gentile and idolatry in Paul and his Jewish milieu. Idolatry is the antithesis of true worship and the highroad to judgment and death (Rom 1.21-3, 32). If immature Gentile converts eat in idol temples with their more-mature brothers and sisters their former convictions about idols will be reawakened and their fragile faith 'destroyed' (1 Cor 8.10-11).[30]

It should not surprise us, therefore, that Paul complements his admonitions in this passage with an allusion to the law intended to underscore their gravity. Paul

[28] Seneca *Ep.* 50.7-9.
[29] Eriksson, 1998, 143.
[30] Hays, 1997, 142. See also Garland, 2003, 380; Cheung, 1999, 128-9.

harnesses the powerful imagery of Leviticus 19.14 with its warning against mistreating those who lack the capacity to perceive the harm being done to them:

> You shall not revile the deaf or put a stumbling block (LXX: σκάνδαλον) before the blind; you shall fear your God: I am the Lord.

Mirroring rabbinic exegeses where the blind are 'interpreted metaphorically to represent any person or group that is unaware, unsuspecting, ignorant, or morally blind,' Paul draws blindness and weakness into contact with one another in 1 Cor 8.13 with his invocation of stumbling block (σκάνδαλον) language (compare the use of πρόσκομμα in verse 9).[31] Yet this is only part of a more complex engagement with the theme of stumbling in his larger argument. In 1 Cor 1.23, the σκάνδαλον is Christ crucified – alluding to another Old Testament text, Psalm 69.22-3, where a good gift of God becomes a stumbling block to his enemies.[32] Paul connects the two ideas in hope, apparently, that seeing what a terrible thing it is to stumble over the fact of the

[31] Friedman, 2002; cited in Rudolph, 2016, 164. Rudolph also cites the mid second-century commentary of Rabbi Nathan, 'How do we know that a man must not hold out a cup of wine to a Nazirite or the limb of a living animal to the children of Noah? Because it is stated, *thou shalt not put a stumbling block before the blin*d' (*b. Pesah*. 22b; Rudolph, 2016, 164). For a similar association between blindness and weakness compare Seneca *Ep*. 50.3 with *Ep*. 50.9. 'The Rabbis also applied the *skandalon* command to situations where a stumbling block could cause gentiles to commit idolatry (*b. Ned*. 62.b)' (Rudolph, 2016, 165).

[32] On the different contexts in which Paul uses σκάνδαλον language, see Das, 2007, 136. The Psalm itself is perhaps alluding to Leviticus, but with biting irony – if God's enemies stumble over even the good things he gives them they are *truly* blind.

cross, the strong will be inclined to think twice about placing stumbling blocks before the weak.[33]

3.2 Romans 14.1-15.13

This brings us naturally to a second passage whose connections to 1 Cor 8-10 are well documented.[34] In Romans 14.1-15.13, the specific situation at issue is different to that in Corinth – there is no mention of the idol food (εἰδωλόθυτος) which so dominates the discussion in 1 Corinthians (8.1, 4, 7, 10; 10.19) and the emphasis on abstention from all meat in Rom 14.2 is distinctive to Romans, although in 1 Corinthians 8.13 Paul does mention this as an option he himself would be willing to accept if by so doing he could guarantee the spiritual security of the weak.[35] Paul's use of stumbling block (σκάνδαλον) language follows the pattern established in 1 Corinthians, mirroring not only the allusion to Leviticus 19.14 in 1 Cor 8 – which serves once again as a warning to the strong against inconsiderate treatment of the weak (Rom 14.13) – but also its situation within a larger discussion of stumbling as the fate of those who refuse to accept the gospel (Rom 9.30-3; 11.7-12).[36]

The specific issue before us here, however, is whether the passage in Romans is parallel to 1 Corinthians 8 in opening a window on Paul's pastoral strategy *for*

[33] I am grateful to Dr David Rudolph for the germ of this connection between σκάνδαλον language and Paul's larger exploration of the accommodation theme.
[34] e.g. Karris, 1973, 165-7.
[35] Moo, 1996, 827-8; Hays, 1997, 142.
[36] Gagnon, 2000, 79.

former pagans. Max Rauer's proposal that 'the weak' in Romans 14.1-15.13 might be Gentiles has been generally rejected by more recent scholars.[37] Rauer explained the allusion to vegetarianism in Rom 14.2 as evidence of the ongoing influence of pagan religious stimuli on the weak – perhaps Orphism, or neo-Pythagoreanism as modelled in the letters of Apollonius of Tyana (e.g. *Let.* 43).[38] None of this, however, takes into account Paul's use of 'weakness' as a description of Gentile converts in 1 Corinthians.[39] In Corinth, the weak person is not a Gentile Christian obstinately holding onto their pagan past – Paul would not have advocated accommodation if they were; the weak person is a Gentile Christian *struggling to leave their past behind*, and vulnerable as a result.

Clearly there is a compelling case to be made that the weak in Rom 14.2 *could include* Jews. Abstention from meat is never mandated in the Jewish law and neither is abstention from wine (cf. Rom 14.21).[40] Abstention was clearly a recognised strategy, however, among Jews in the complex and unlegislated territory of Jewish-Gentile interactions in the diaspora, allowing individuals to uphold their personal scruples on a better-safe-than-sorry basis when the origins of shared food or the circumstances of its preparation were unknown.[41] If weakness is read in the sense

[37] Rauer, 1923. Rejecting Rauer, Käsemann speculatively attributes the ascetic inclinations of the weak in Rome to the presence of 'ein synkretistisch beeinflußtes Judentum' (Käsemann, 1973, 352).
[38] On the possibility of a background in Orphism, see Lagrange, 1950, 335-40.
[39] Glad notes the exegetical importance of the parallel between the fears experienced by the weak in both passages (Glad, 1995, 283).
[40] A point noted without qualification by Stowers (Stowers, 1994, 317; see also Käsemann, 1973, 352).
[41] Theissen, 2004, 122. David Rudolph provides an excellent introduction to the various models of accommodation practiced by Jews in the time of Paul. Principled abstention from food prepared by Gentiles was a recognised manifestation of Pharisaic halakha (Rudolph, 2011, 120-30). Several

Paul intends in 1 Corinthians, however, 'the weak' in Rom 14.2 could also include vulnerable Gentile converts.

Indeed, that reading encourages us to reconsider the identity of the weak in Rom 14.5. Here Paul turns to the question of sacred calendars, but omits to tell us how the labels 'strong' and 'weak' should be attached:

> Some judge one day to be better than another, while others judge all days to be alike.

Commentators universally assume that the weak in this verse are those who make distinctions between days.[42] The weak throughout the passage are those who make distinctions, whereas the strong are those who make none. A close reading of Paul's grammar here, however, naturally suggests the opposite. In 14.2, the strong, indicated with the use of the relative pronoun ὃς, appear as the first term in a μὲν… δὲ clause, with the weak appearing as the second term:

commentators note the vegetarianism of the Jewish priests sent to Rome under the procuracy of Felix as recorded by Josephus (Josephus *Life* 13-14). For other equivalent examples, see Barclay, 2011, 41. Rudolph offers a helpfully nuanced reading of the term κοινός as Paul uses it in Rom 14.14 (Rudolph, 2016, 155-6). He argues that under Hillelite halakha, individual Jews were charged with making their own decisions about what they considered κοινός and carrying them through consistently (Rudolph, 2016, 156-9).

[42] Moo, 1996, 827, 841-2; Dunn, 1988, 804-6; Cranfield, 1994, vol 2, 690; Barclay, 2011, 43; Gagnon, 2000, 74-5; Nanos, 1996, 96. Käsemann interprets weakness here as the belief that days stand 'unter glücklichem oder ungünstigem Gestirn' (Käsemann, 1973, 354). Jewett explores a range of possible bases for distinctions between days in Rome, but never doubts that the weak are making the distinctions (Jewett and Kotansky, 2007, 844-5).

ὃς μὲν πιστεύει φαγεῖν πάντα, ὁ δὲ ἀσθενῶν λάχανα ἐσθίει[43]

In 14.5, the same μὲν… δὲ structure is repeated. Those who 'judge one day better than another' occupy the first position, indicated once again with the relative pronoun ὃς, and those who make no distinctions the second:

Ὃς μὲν [γὰρ] κρίνει ἡμέραν παρ᾽ ἡμέραν, ὃς δὲ κρίνει πᾶσαν ἡμέραν

In Rom 15.1 – the only other place in Rom 14.1-15.13 where weak and strong are explicitly paired – the strong precede the weak in Paul's logic following the model of Rom 14.2.[44] How would things look if the same order was intended in Rom 14.5?

On the traditional reading, with 'the weak' functioning as a synonym for law-observant Jews and 'special days' indicating Jewish Sabbaths and festivals, this interpretation makes no sense. But if 'the weak' include Gentile Christians struggling to detach themselves from their pagan past, the compatibility of weakness and judging all days alike is immediately evident. We observed in the previous chapter that participation in pagan cults throughout the Graeco-Roman world entailed observance of pagan cultic calendars. The strong in Rom 14.5 would therefore be those who felt able to continue as participants, knowing, as the strong in Corinth knew, 'that "no idol in the world really exists," and that "there is no God but one"' (1 Cor 8.4). The weak in Rom 14.5 would be those who were still 'so accustomed'

[43] Käsemann also draws attention to the word order here: 'P[aulu]s wendet sich zunächst an die Starken, welche offensichtlich als Mehrheit die Minorität provozieren' (Käsemann, 1973, 351).
[44] In Romans 14.6, *three* types of behaviour are compared.

to their pagan religious context (1 Cor 8.7) that they feared exposure to it again, and the attendant potential for faithlessness to Christ.[45] In this rereading, neither strength nor weakness necessarily serves as an ethnic identifier.[46] In Rom 14.5 law-observant Jews can be the strong.[47]

3.3 Pastoral Priorities in Galatians

Whether or not we accept the proposal that the 'weak' in Romans 14.1-15.13 included vulnerable Gentile converts of the same type attested in 1 Cor 8.1-13, our survey of both passages has important consequences for our exploration of Paul's thought in Galatians. If our chronological conclusions in Chapter 2 are on target, Paul was pastoring a group of relatively immature believers in Galatia. And, like the weak in Corinth, they were in danger of returning, in some sense as yet to be determined, to the habitual norms of their pagan religious past:

> Formerly, when you did not know God, you were enslaved to beings that by nature are not gods. Now, however, that you have come to know God, or rather

[45] The reading is still viable, and even more interesting for Galatians, if the special days mentioned in Rom 14.5 are *Jewish* festivals. If so, Paul would have been advocating accommodation because exposure to *any kind* of regular religious festival was so reminiscent of the former pagan practices of the weak that it risked reanimating the assumptions associated with it (Chapter 6 §3.2). Barclay notes the curious fact that Paul does not urge the strong to accommodate the weak in the matter of Sabbaths in Romans 14.1-15.13, arguing that he did not want his converts '[entering] the ambit of the synagogue' (Barclay, 2011, 56). Perhaps the reality, however, was that it was *the strong* who felt free to observe Jewish Sabbaths and who were to refrain in deference to *the weak*?

[46] Stowers, 1994, 321; Conzelmann, 1975, 147. Barclay notes the problematic nature of weakness as a label for ethnically Jewish Christians, describing Paul's policy of accommodation as a 'Trojan horse' precipitating 'a crisis of cultural integrity among the very believers whose law-observance he is careful to protect' (Barclay, 2011, 58-9); see also Garland, 2003, 382; Rudolph, 2016, 151-2.

[47] David Rudolph also argues that law-observant Jews can be the strong in Rom 14.2, but his case rests on equating strength to a 'non-ontological view of purity' (Rudolph, 2016, 162).

> to be known by God, how can you turn back again to τὰ ἀσθενῆ καὶ πτωχὰ στοιχεῖα?[48] How can you want to be enslaved to them again? (Gal 4.8-9)

Like the 'weak' in Corinth, and in Rome, they were navigating this path into spiritual danger under the influence of other Christians who had a different approach to food and sacred days (and in the case of Galatians, of course, circumcision).[49] And, as in both 1 Corinthians and Romans, the consequences that Paul envisages were potentially catastrophic:

> Listen! I, Paul, am telling you that if you let yourselves be circumcised, Christ will be of no benefit to you. Once again, I testify to every man who lets himself be circumcised that he is obliged to obey the entire law. You who want to be justified by the law have cut yourselves off from Christ; you have fallen away from grace. (Gal 5.2-4; compare 1 Cor 8.9-13, Rom 14.20-21)

Might Galatians be an example of the same pastoral strategy? It is certainly striking that Galatians is the only other Pauline letter besides 1 Corinthians and Romans where σκάνδαλον vocabulary occurs. In Gal 5.11 Paul draws his readers' attention to the 'stumbling block' of the cross. In 1 Corinthians and Romans, where similar reminders appear, stumbling blocks are also being placed in the path of the weak by the strong. Might Galatians be a third example of the same phenomenon? Might the

[48] Note Paul's striking use of the word 'weakness' (ἀσθενής) to capture the essence of his readers' regression.
[49] If Clarence Glad's exegesis of 1 Cor 8.1-13 is correct, these 'other Christians' in Corinth, as also in Galatia, *intend* to educate not to destroy (Glad, 1995, 280-3).

context in which stumbling blocks are invoked in all three cases be the challenge of accommodating believers with different backgrounds, and the vulnerabilities associated with them?

Having grasped from 1 Corinthians (and perhaps also from Romans) that strength and weakness are not ethnic categories, might we also identify the Jewish Christian Influencers in Galatia as 'the strong,' and attribute Paul's antipathy toward them in part, if not in its entirety, to his frustration with their pastoral insensitivity? Might Paul have accepted their law-observant practice *in principle* as a legitimate expression of faith in Christ in the same way that he accepted the *laissez faire* approach of the strong in Corinth, *in principle*, and yet rejected it in the strongest possible terms *in practice* because of its devasting impact on the weak?

4. Enslavement to the *Stoicheia*

If the situations disclosed in 1 Corinthians 8.1-13 and Romans 14.1-15.13 are parallel to the situation disclosed in Galatians in the sense proposed above, we might now ask *what was* the habitual mode of thought and/or the unconscious set of assumptions that Paul feared would be reawakened if his readers embraced the programme of the Influencers? In 1 Corinthians the weak point was the entrenched connection between idol food and worship (1 Cor 8.7). But what about Galatians? What facet of the Galatians' former religious lives made them vulnerable to regression? If Paul's problem with the Influencers was their failure to accommodate

the weakness of his Gentile converts, *what was* that weakness? And *what was* the risk if accommodation was omitted?

In Galatians, 4.9 Paul answers these questions directly:

> Now, however, that you have come to know God, or rather to be known by God, how can you turn back again to τὰ ἀσθενῆ καὶ πτωχὰ στοιχεῖα? How can you want to be enslaved to them again?

Enslavement to τὰ ἀσθενῆ καὶ πτωχὰ στοιχεῖα was the focus of Paul's concern; this was the feature of the Galatians' religious past he feared to see reanimated. But what did these words signify in Paul's mind? Before offering my own interpretation of this notoriously ambiguous phrase, I begin by highlighting Paul's use of it to describe elements of *both* Jewish *and* Gentile experience.

4.1 Enslavement in Context

Before we tackle the theme of enslavement to the στοιχεῖα in detail, we pause first to consider the function of Gal 4.8-11 within the larger argument that runs from 3.1 to 5.12.[50] This central portion of the letter begins and ends with pastoral concern expressed in strikingly direct language.

[50] Scholarly analyses of Galatians typically acknowledge divisions in the argument before Gal 3.1 and after 5.12 without necessarily agreeing on the nature of the divisions or the unity of the material thus enclosed. Betz's rhetorical exegesis interprets 3.1-4.31 as the *Probatio* according to the established form of 'apologetic letters,' while 5.13 marks the opening of the second section of the *Exhortatio,* which he takes to begin at 5.1 (Betz, 1979, 14-28). DeBoer divides 3.1-5.12 into two parts, the first running from 3.1-4.7 focusing on the Spirit and Abrahamic inheritance, the second from 4.8-5.12

Neil Martin, Keble College

In Gal 3.1-6, Paul looks back to his readers' initial encounter with the gospel. The contrast between their present interest in legal observances and its absence at this decisive moment in the past arouses intense exasperation – 'You foolish Galatians!' he exclaims – 'Who has bewitched you?' Their reception of the Spirit, which he assumes they recall as well as he does, was a product of 'believing what [they] heard' not of 'doing works of the law' (3.5). In 5.1-12, Paul's exasperation breaks through again, famously in his wish that the Influencers would go all the way and 'castrate themselves' (5.12), but no less importantly in his concern that the Galatians are abandoning the good race they began and are no longer 'obeying the truth,' (5.7).

Between these two poles, the similarly pastoral emphasis of Gal 4.8-20 therefore rightly captures our attention. Once again, we have exasperation – Paul openly expresses fear that his efforts on the Galatians' behalf 'may have been wasted,' (4.11). And, once again, we have deprecation of the Influencers' ministry (4.9) and intentions (4.17-18), concluding this time with the arresting maternal image of Paul in the throes of painful and protracted childbirth as he wrestles for the establishment of the Galatians' faith.

Either side of this central pastoral section, Paul presents an exegetical engagement with the text of Genesis, focusing in particular on the question of how a person becomes a true child of Abraham. In 3.6-4.7, the argument has a broadly salvation-

focusing on the dangers confronting Paul's readers (De Boer, 2011, 11-15). Dunn holds 3.1-5.12 together as a united whole, noting especially the parallel appeals to scripture in 3.6-9 and 4.21-31 (Dunn, 1993a, 21-22).

historical flavour, in 4.21-31 it has a broadly allegorical flavour. That Paul opts to steer his response to the Galatian crisis along this peculiarly Abrahamic tack has generated a virtual cottage industry in reconstructions of the Influencers' ministry which we will pass over in this study. For our purposes, it suffices to note only that, for Paul, faith was the means by which true Abrahamic descent was established, that – for some reason as yet to be determined – legal observances such as those advocated by the Influencers were dangerous for his readers, and that fleeing from works to faith and freedom in the Spirit was the appropriate response (3.26-29; 4.6-7; 4.30-5.1).

If this analysis of the larger structure is accepted, Gal 4.8-20 occupies a central position in Paul's argument, and his diagnosis of renewed enslavement to the στοιχεῖα among his readers plays a pivotal role in explaining the nature of the danger to which he believes his readers are exposed.

4.2 Enslavement to the *Stoicheia* as a Jewish Experience

It is striking that, when Paul first introduces enslavement to the στοιχεῖα in Gal 4.3, he speaks in the first person:

> So with us; while we were minors, we were enslaved to τὰ στοιχεῖα τοῦ κόσμου.

Enslavement to the στοιχεῖα was clearly an experience *Paul himself* could relate to. Quite who the others with whom he grouped himself in this plural expression were,

however, is a matter of controversy.[51] According to Barclay, it is 'hard to deny' that the 'we' who are enslaved here are both Jews and Gentiles.[52] But this assessment masks substantial differences in scholarly opinion about the intended referents of the personal pronouns throughout the central section of the letter.[53]

Devoting a stand-alone comment to the problem, Martyn notes the appeal of arguments detecting coherent patterns in Paul's use of first- and second-person terminology, the majority of which see first-person expressions as references to Jews and second-person expressions as references to Gentiles or some combination of Jews and Gentiles. Ultimately, he expresses scepticism about the viability of such solutions noting the use of the first-person in Gal 3.13-14 as particularly problematic on account of the passage's apparently universal application. Martyn prefers to read Paul's ambiguous word-choices as manifestations of a Wittgensteinian 'language game,' designed to unmask 'all purported distinctions in the human race.'[54]

[51] The problem is noted in the very earliest exegeses of the letter. Augustine, for example, takes Gal 3.23-29 as a section devoted to Jewish experience and 4.1-7 as a section devoted to Gentile experience, interpreting the first-person pronoun at 4.3 as an example of Paul identifying himself with his Gentile readers, (*Comm. Gal.* 29.4).
[52] Barclay, 2015, 408-9.
[53] The interpretation of Paul's first-person pronouns, in particular, has been a controversial topic since the end of the nineteenth century (Williams, 1993, 11-23). Literal readings tend to interpret *singular* expressions as references to Paul himself and *plural* expressions as references to Paul and others – who may be co-senders of the epistle in question, other apostles, Paul's readers, or Christ-followers/human beings more generally (e.g. Blass, Debrunner, and Funk, 1961, 146-7). Following Karl Dick's landmark study, literary readings explore a variety of other nuances by which the author seeks to stress his authority or involve the reader to some degree in his own actions (Dick, 1900; following Dick's interpretative model, see Hafemann, 1990, 13). For our work on alternating pronouns in Galatians, Cranfield's examination of 'plurals of humility' and 'confessional' plurals is particularly apposite (Cranfield, 1982).
[54] Martyn, 1997*a*, vol 33A, 334-6. Martyn alludes to Wittgenstein's famous examination of the game-like processes by which words and their meanings are associated (Wittgenstein, 2009, 7, 23-4).

James D. G. Dunn, however, argues that Paul's pronominal choices have greater exegetical significance, noting especially the important distinction between the use of the first-person in Gal 3.23-5 and the second-person in 3.26-9. Dunn assigns the first-person references here, and also in 4.3, to Jews; although in the latter instance he acknowledges 'a transition in thought' which increasingly incorporates all those who have received adoption and the Spirit of Sonship.[55] Dunn's suggestion that Paul's use of pronouns may have a particular local significance in the section beginning at 3.23 liberates our investigation from Martyn's most significant objection to such readings (the broad scope of the references in 3.13-14) and yields some interesting fruit.

Galatians 3.23-9 and 4.1-7 may be read as parallel passages, the second offering commentary on the first. The pattern of pronoun usage in both passages is similar, moving from the first-person in 3.23-5 to the second-person in 3.26-9, and from the first-person in 4.1-5 to the second-person in 4.6-7.

Following Dunn's lead in the first passage, we note that the first-person pronouns refer most naturally to Jews. In Gal 3.23-5 we are eavesdropping on a discussion about the circumstances of the Jews under the law before the coming of Christ. After their long wait for liberation from the supervision of the Law, pictured as a Graeco-

[55] Dunn, 1993a, 197-8, 212. Several other commentators entertain the idea that Paul's shifting pronouns carry exegetical significance in Galatians (e.g. Longenecker, 1990, 164; Robinson, 1965, 29-48). De Boer's proposal that the shift to second person pronouns in Gal 3.26-29 identifies the section as a fragment of a pre-existent baptismal formula is weakened by the inclusion of very similar material in 1 Cor 12.13 with different pronouns (De Boer, 2011, 245-7). Martin Meiser supports the view that Paul uses the pronoun ἡμεῖς to refer specifically to Jews in Gal 4.3 (Meiser, 2007, 198).

Roman παιδαγωγός, the Jews have been brought into the new era of faith. And as the pronouns shift in 3.26-9, we discover that the advent of Christ also affects the destiny of the Gentiles. As indicated by the symbol of baptism, those once considered outside have been clothed with Christ and welcomed in. And *on this basis*, there is now no Jew nor Greek, male nor female, slave nor free.

Turning to the Gal 4.1-7, we find that the first-person pronouns refer similarly naturally to Jews. The image of the underage heir in 4.1-2 recapitulates the material in 3.23-9 about Jews living under a παιδαγωγός. And though the image of adoption to sonship in 4.5 seemingly clashes with this picture of maturation to inheritance, Paul clearly finds no difficulty in applying it to Jews, as indicated by his specification of the target as, 'those under the law.'[56] In 4.6 the same interrelationship between the advent of faith for the Gentiles and the attainment of majority for the Jews observed in 3.25-6 reappears: the coming of faith to the Gentiles is causally linked to the outpouring of the Spirit on the Jews, and Christian Gentiles now join Christian Jews as heirs who have reached their majority.

Paul's repetition of the phrase 'under the law' in this section, and especially his repetition of the introductory pronoun ὑπὸ – first in his description of Christ's earthly

[56] Barclay notes the difficulty of this transition (Barclay, 2015, 408). Elliot notes the awkward application of Paul's Graeco-Roman family metaphor to Jews in 4.3-5: 'It appears strange that the ones "under the law" are the adoptive sons and that Paul includes himself in that group, yet his language suggests that he is more interested in equating and merging the experience of those who were "under the law" with those who were previously under other enslaving forces rather than drawing distinctions' (Elliott, 2003, 41).

ministry (Gal 4.4) and second in his description of those who subsequently benefit from it (4.5) is particularly striking.[57] Coming immediately after his diagnosis of enslavement ὑπὸ τὰ στοιχεῖα τοῦ κόσμου, these references to the law *clarify* the kind of enslavement that Paul has in mind – an enslavement applicable to Jews to the extent that even Jesus can be said to have participated in it as part of his incarnate mission.

Whatever else we might be said, therefore, the enslavement that Paul envisages in 4.3 is not less than a *Jewish* enslavement.[58] By introducing it at this point in his argument he is critiquing pre-Christian *Jewish* spirituality, not pagan spirituality.

4.3 Enslavement to the *Stoicheia* as a Gentile Experience

In Galatians 4.8-9, Paul expresses his concern for his readers with balancing descriptions of their past and present situations:

> *But then*, on the one hand, not knowing God, you were enslaved to the gods which are by nature not [gods]…
>
> *But now,* knowing God, or rather being known by God, how are you returning again to τὰ ἀσθενῆ καὶ πτωχὰ στοιχεῖα to which you wish to be enslaved again as from the beginning? (translation mine)

[57] Barclay, 2015, 407-8.
[58] In Book 1 of his treatise, *The Teacher*, Clement of Alexandria declines to tell us what enslavement to the στοιχεῖα τοῦ κόσμου actually means in Galatians 4, but he *does* make it clear that it is Paul's way of referring to a *specifically Jewish* experience (Clement, *Paed.* 1.6.33).

Neil Martin, Keble College

Paul's stress on the Galatians' experience of slavery in *both* halves of this sentence is striking. Apparently, he saw slavery as an apt description of their past life in pagan religion (worshipping beings that were by nature not gods) and also of their present attraction to Jewish legal observances (recalling the description of his own past life in Judaism as slavery in Gal 4.3). Paul's comparison between the Galatians' old and new lives, however, does not turn on the matter of slavery only.

4.3.1 Knowledge of God in Gal 4.8-11

Paul is interested in the Galatians' *knowledge of God* in Gal 4.8-11 – in the fact that they *did not* know God in the past, and that their behaviour seems incompatible with knowing God in the present. This tension forms the nucleus of the question to which the whole sentence drives: 'But now, knowing God, or rather being known by God, how are you returning again to the weak and poor στοιχεῖα?' Or to paraphrase, 'How, if you really know God now, can you justify acting again in a way that is incompatible with this knowledge?' This sense of incompatibility is so profound in Paul's mind that he fears the Galatians' conversion may be a sham and that he has 'wasted his efforts on them' (4.11).

Paul tells his readers here that something which was appropriate to the era before their conversion *is no longer appropriate* to the era in which they now live. It was understandable that they were enslaved to 'not-gods' before they knew the God of the Bible, but now that they know this God, what they are doing is *not* understandable – it is out of place.

Neil Martin, Keble College

This observation necessarily impacts our understanding of the kind of slavery Paul believed the Galatians were now embracing. On a superficial reading of the text, we may imagine the Galatians had moved from the paganism of their past, via acceptance of Paul's gospel during his time among them, to the kind of law-observance modelled by the Influencers – and perhaps by Paul himself before his encounter with Jesus on the road to Damascus. But looking at the text more closely, this clearly will not do. Paul certainly *did not* believe that law-observance in general, and law-observant practice among Jewish Christians in particular, was incompatible with knowing God. His own practice among Jewish Christians is sufficient proof of the point. It is highly unlikely that Paul would have deemed the Galatians' new behaviour incompatible with *knowing God* if it was an unalloyed reproduction of the Jewish Christianity to which they were now being exposed, which, for all its flaws, was still a 'gospel' in Paul's estimation (Gal 1.6, 8).[59] The slavery that he had in mind here must be a *different* kind of slavery.

[59] If, as Barclay assumes, the trouble in Galatia lies in the incompatibility of a gospel based on 'old age' assessments of worth and the new, incongruous gospel of Jesus which bears no relationship to such systems, we would expect the link between Gal 4.8 and 4.9 to focus not on knowledge or lack of knowledge of God, but on the distinctive which marks the difference between these two eras everywhere else in the letter – possession or non-possession of the Spirit:

> But then, on the one hand, not knowing God, you were enslaved to the gods which are by nature not [gods]. *But now that you have received the Spirit of God,* how are you returning again to the weak and poor στοιχεῖα to which you wish to be enslaved again as from the beginning?

Paul, however, identifies the problem *further back in the process*. The problem is not about how the blessings of God are appropriated, it is about whether God is even known.

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4.3.2 Repetition Vocabulary in Gal 4.8-11

The intense concentration of repetition vocabulary found in Gal 4.8-11 is another striking feature of this section of Paul's text. His perplexity about the Galatians' present religious affiliations, is described in terms that stress the repetitive nature of their behaviour four times in the space of just fourteen words:

> πῶς ἐπιστρέφετε πάλιν ἐπὶ τὰ ἀσθενῆ καὶ πτωχὰ στοιχεῖα οἷς πάλιν ἄνωθεν δουλεύειν θέλετε;
>
> How are you *returning again* to the weak and poor στοιχεῖα to which you wish to be enslaved *again as from the beginning*?

The same emphasis is evident in Gal 5.1 where the Greek word πάλιν is added to a sentence that makes thoroughly adequate sense without it:

> Τῇ ἐλευθερίᾳ ἡμᾶς Χριστὸς ἠλευθέρωσεν· στήκετε οὖν καὶ μὴ πάλιν ζυγῷ δουλείας ἐνέχεσθε.

Why did Paul express himself in this way? He openly accuses his readers of doing something they have done *before*.[60] Whatever conclusions we come to about the interpretation of στοιχεῖα as we go forward, the Galatians' engagement with the

[60] The sense of Paul's regressive terminology is clarified by his use of similar expressions in Gal 1.13-2.1. In 1.17 the phrase πάλιν ὑπέστρεψα describes Paul's return to *a place* (Damascus) where he has been before. πάλιν has a similar function in 2.1, where it captures the idea of going up once more to Jerusalem.

στοιχεῖα was no novelty; it was a repetition of their past behaviour in some sense. They were not just *turning* to these religious influences, they were *returning* to them *again*.

Paul's use of the compound phrase πάλιν ἄνωθεν in 4.9 (literally 'again, from the top') is particularly interesting and repays closer analysis.

The earliest occurrence of πάλιν ἄνωθεν in extant Greek literature comes from *the Wisdom of Solomon* where the author describes the interruption of the natural order that took place when the Israelites were delivered from their Egyptian pursuers on the shores of the Red Sea. 'For the whole creation was fashioned anew (πάλιν ἄνωθεν), complying with your commands, so that your children might be kept unharmed' (*Wis* 19.6). The details of their deliverance are then recounted in a conscious reworking of the original creation account: the cloud overshadowing the camp (*Wis* 19.7a) equates to the Spirit of God hovering over the waters (Gen 1.2), the division of the water and the appearance of dry ground (*Wis* 19.7b) recalls the original division of water and land (Gen 1.9), and the fanciful reference to the emergence of a 'grassy plain' in the midst of the Red Sea (*Wis* 19.7d) recalls the emergence of vegetation in the Genesis story (Gen 1.11). The author is struck by the 'incredible' nature of the Israelites' journey, but he does not conceive it as an *innovation* from God's perspective. On the contrary, it is a *recapitulation* of what happened in the past. 'The whole creation was fashioned anew' in the sense that it was re-executed according to the original pattern.

Neil Martin, Keble College

Two more instances of πάλιν ἄνωθεν appear in close succession in the works of Nicomachus of Gerasa, whose sophisticated mathematical writings provide a fascinating insight into the intellectual life of one of the major cities of the Decapolis in the early first century. As part of a lengthy description of the 'superparticular relation,' $\frac{n+1}{n} = 1 + \frac{1}{n}$, Nicomachus avoids the necessity of deriving the series for all values of n by advising his readers that the terms emerge 'πάλιν ἄνωθεν' – by going back to the beginning and repeating the same procedure again (*Int. Arit.* I.22.2.24).

From the late second century, πάλιν ἄνωθεν appears three times in the works of the prolific surgeon, physician and philosopher, Galen, who lived in Pergamum on the West Coast of Asia Minor. In his treatise, *On the Doctrines of Hippocrates and Plato*, πάλιν ἄνωθεν occurs in the transition from a hypothetical dialogue with Chrysippus – one of the founding fathers of Stoicism – to a more general audience:

> 'But since our purpose is to persuade not the Stoics only but also all others who have been nurtured in fallacious habits of reasoning but whose minds are not yet incurably perverted, I shall begin again at the beginning (πάλιν ἄνωθεν) and show, with reference to our present inquiry, how you may find scientific premises which produce a valid demonstration, and how you may distinguish these from all other premises' (*Plac. Hip. Plat.* 2.4.1.1-7).

Here, πάλιν ἄνωθεν signals a return to the principles that Galen used in the narrower argument with Chrysippus and the reapplication of them in a new context.

Neil Martin, Keble College

In, *Of the Semen,* Galen uses πάλιν ἄνωθεν to encourage his readers to apply an investigative procedure that has served him well in the past:

> ἤδη μοι πάλιν ἄνωθεν ἀρξάμενος καὶ προσέχων ἀκριβέστερον τὸν νοῦν, (*Sem.* 4, 4.566.8-9)
>
> As already [proved] by myself, [do this] *again*, by beginning and paying attention more exactly to the intellect…, (translation mine).

In his *Commentary on the Aphorisms of Hippocrates,* he critiques Hippocrates for failing to go back to the beginning (πάλιν ἄνωθεν) and make an assessment of the medical vulnerabilities specific to each life stage on a reasonable basis and relying instead on his own personal experience, (*Hip. Aph. Comm.* 17b.794.8). In each case πάλιν ἄνωθεν is used to capture the idea, not just of returning to the beginning, but of returning and *rearticulating a procedure that is already familiar*.

Several later instances of πάλιν ἄνωθεν with similar meanings could be adduced but it is already clear that in Galatians, as in the examples already cited, the phrase probably refers to the re-execution of an action *according to a pattern with which Paul's readers were already familiar*. Paul uses πάλιν ἄνωθεν because his readers were doing something again that they had done before. Taken together with the reference to their past life worshipping pagan not-gods immediately foregoing, we naturally infer that pagan worship is the source of the pattern about which Paul

wishes to warn them. Enslavement to the στοιχεῖα in Gal 4.8-11 involves a recapitulation of the Galatians' Gentile religious experience.

In Galatians, then, Paul uses enslavement to the στοιχεῖα *flexibly* to describe both Jewish and Gentile religious experience.[61] He detects this enslavement in his own Jewish past and his readers' Gentile experience of it forms the core of his concern about their regression. How then should the phrase itself be interpreted?

4.4 The *Stoicheia* as Common Components of Religious Practice

The word στοιχεῖον, deriving from the root noun στοῖχος, was originally used to refer to 'rows' of soldiers or 'courses' of bricks. Over the years, it evolved to encompass a wider range of meanings – summarised in the Bauer Danker lexicon (BDAG) under two broad categories: 'basic components of something,' and 'transcendent powers.'[62] Within the first category, BDAG specifies three more nuanced options: 'elements' – usually the four basic elements of classical cosmology: earth, air, fire and water; 'heavenly bodies,' and 'fundamental principles.'

The case for interpreting στοιχεῖον in Galatians as either 'transcendent powers' or 'heavenly bodies' is significantly complicated by the fact that the earliest comparable examples in other literature – where the elements are not just 'brought

[61] '[T]hat these στοιχεῖα are apparently associated *both* with the Galatians' former pagan worship *and* with their adoption of a Jewish calendar (4.9-10) has seemed to many either impossible or nonsensical. But it is hard to deny that Paul makes these associations in both directions' (Barclay, 2015, 408-9).
[62] Arndt, Danker, and Bauer, 2000, 946.

into close relationship with spiritual essences' but are considered 'spiritual essences' in and of themselves – date from the second century or later.[63] Recent scholarship has also tended to neglect the possibility that Paul used στοιχεῖον with the meaning, 'fundamental principles.' Despite the opinion of the editors of BDAG that this meaning is in fact 'probable' for Gal 4.3, 9; Martinus De Boer speaks for many when he claims that the lexicographical research of Josef Blinzler, Eduard Schweizer and Dietrich Rusam has demonstrated 'beyond any reasonable doubt' that the references, in both Galatians and Colossians, must be to "the basic elements".'[64] J. Louis Martyn and John Barclay agree with this assessment, citing the same scholars as justification.[65] And thus we arrive at scholarly consensus: στοιχεῖα τοῦ κόσμου, 'the elements of the world,' means earth, air, fire and water.[66] This interpretation, however, is problematic.

[63] 'Immer wieder bestätigt sich, dass man auch da, wo die Elemente mit Geistwesen in engen Zusammenhang gebracht wurden, zwischen jenen und diesen terminologisch unterschieden hat. Die Elemente sind das, was von den Geistwesen bewohnt, verwaltet, beherrscht wird, nicht die Geistwesen selbst' (Blinzler, 1963, 436). For a comprehensive review of the relevant texts, see Blinzler, 1963, 432-4. Arnold mounts an extended case for the reading, 'transcendent powers,' despite the lack of early citations, arguing that the magical tradition on which the extant citations are based is early even if the citations themselves are late (Arnold, 1995, 158-94; see also Betz, 1979, 204-5). As part of his broader allegorising agenda, Philo, along with other writers, occasionally asserts that worship of the pagan gods amounts to worship of the elements – when the gods are properly interpreted, each with their own equivalent in the physical world (e.g. Philo, *Contempl.* 3-4). Only in one instance does he appear to describe worship of the elements as such (*Spec.* 2.255).

[64] De Boer refers here to Blinzler, 1963; Schweizer, 1988 and Rusam, 1992 (De Boer, 2011, 253).

[65] 'The lexicographical labors of Blinzler and Rusam have shown this [the physical elements] to be the most common meaning of the term *stoicheia, and* the only meaning attested for the expression *stoicheia tou kosmou*' (Martyn, 1997*a*, vol 33A, 394-5). So also Barclay, 2015, 409.

[66] Robert Ewusie Moses' work on cosmic powers in Galatians embodies the enduring appeal of this consensus (Moses, 2014, 119-56).

Neil Martin, Keble College

4.4.1 Martinus De Boer – Judaism, Paganism, and Calendrical Observances

Despite his acknowledgement of the lexicographical conclusions of Blinzler, Schweitzer and Rusam, Martinus De Boer is not satisfied that interpreting στοιχεῖα τοῦ κόσμου as a reference to the four traditional elements in Galatians does full justice to Paul's intentions. The phrase must be read 'in some other way, or perhaps better, in some additional way,' he writes, if we are to make sense of the technicalities of the argument.'[67] The alternative meanings, 'transcendent powers' and 'heavenly bodies' (but interestingly not 'fundamental principles'), are therefore brought back into consideration, despite the lack of first-century attestation observed above.

De Boer marshals two texts from *The Wisdom of Solomon* in an attempt to prove that the Galatians could have been involved in *formal veneration* of the physical elements prior to their encounter with Paul and that this worship was strongly characterised by calendrical observances.[68] The wisdom teacher, he argues, equates 'the elements' with the 'times,' 'solstices,' 'seasons,' and 'cycles of the year,' and attributes to these elemental forces a personal, spiritual character. These are the forces to which Paul then alludes in Galatians. If the Galatians' past lives were characterised by regular seasonal festivals as expressions of worship to the elements,

[67] De Boer, 2011, 253.
[68] Wis 7.17–19: 'For it is he who gave me unerring knowledge of what exists, to know the structure of the world and the activity of the elements (τῶν στοιχείων); the beginning and end and middle of times, the alternations of the solstices and the changes of the seasons, the cycles of the year and the constellations of the stars…' Wis 13.1–2: 'For all people who were ignorant of God… supposed that either fire or wind or swift air, or the circle of the stars, or turbulent water, or the luminaries of heaven were the gods that rule the world' (De Boer, 2011, 254-5).

their new enthusiasm for Jewish festivals may not have looked that different in practice and Paul's diagnosis of regression might thus be explained.

The strength of De Boer's conclusions, and their applicability to first-century Asia Minor, however, is questionable. As Blinzler's analysis also indicates, *Wis* 7.17–19 equates the 'times,' 'solstices,' 'seasons,' and 'cycles of the year,' with 'the *activity* of the elements' ([τήν] ἐνέργειαν στοιχείων), not with the elements themselves (emphasis mine).[69] And while the wisdom teacher's *association* of στοιχεῖον with calendrical matters is intriguing, and Paul, as we have already seen, may have been familiar with it, it is overbold to assert the existence of the same association in Galatians without evidence that the two things are similarly associated in either other Jewish, or other Gentile, sources of the period.

4.4.2 J. Louis Martyn – Judaism, Paganism, and Cosmic Dualities

Like De Boer, J. Louis Martyn also acknowledges the difficulties with the 'physical elements' reading of στοιχεῖον, but he finds a different interpretative escape route.[70] Combining De Boer's citations from *The Wisdom of Solomon* with Apuleius' reference to the temple of Cybele in Pessinus where the goddess was worshipped as the 'mistress of all the elements' (*Met.* 11.5), Martyn endorses the view that Paul's Galatian readers were element-worshippers before he met them.[71] In addition, he

[69] Blinzler, 1963, 436.
[70] '[This] is surely the reading with which to begin one's work, but… the study of Galatians cannot come to rest there' (Martyn, 1997*a*, vol 33A, 395 note 31).
[71] Martyn, 1997*a*, vol 33A, 396.

argues that the central dualities of pagan cosmology – earth and air, fire and water – were mirrored in the Jewish worldview by similar dualities between Jew and Gentile, sacred and profane, law and not-law.[72] This then becomes the basis for Paul's accusation that, by embracing Judaism, they were returning to the same kind of system that had dominated their lives in the past.

Once again, however, there are significant problems with this interpretation of Paul's logic. Martyn's association of paganism and Judaism under the rubric of shared dependence on cosmic dualities is so wide-ranging that it is difficult to identify any rationale for assigning the well-known dualities of Pauline thought (grace and works, freedom and slavery, flesh and Spirit and so on) to a distinctively different age.[73] By setting God's new work in Christ in strict antithesis to *anything* that '[grows] out of the present scene,' it also voids the connection to the salvation-historical narrative on which Paul's argument seems to depend.[74] Like De Boer, Martyn assumes that the association of στοιχεῖον vocabulary and calendrical matters found in *The Wisdom of Solomon* is directly relevant to Paul's text. He assumes that Apuleius' comments about religious life in Northern Galatia in the second century can be applied to Paul's readers in the first century who lived more probably in Southern Galatia. He assumes that the Influencers at work in the Galatian churches made use of traditions about Abraham that presented him

[72] Martyn, 1997*a*, vol 33A, 402-6.
[73] Martyn himself acknowledges the importance of these new pairs of opposites in the gospel era (Martyn, 1997*a*, vol 33A, 100).
[74] Martyn, 1997*a*, vol 33A, 100. See also Davies, 2016, 150-51.

journeying towards the knowledge of God 'by an astrological contemplation of the elements.'[75] The reality, however, is that we know very little, even about who the Influencers were, let alone about the details of their opinions (see Chapter 2 §4.3).

4.4.3 John Barclay – Judaism, Paganism, and Components of Worth

Perhaps in response to the practical difficulties of applying Blinzler, Schweizer and Rusam's work to the text of Galatians, John Barclay acknowledges their conclusions but immediately sidesteps their consequences. 'Recent research has confirmed,' he writes, 'that τὰ στοιχεῖα τοῦ κόσμου most likely refers to the physical elements of the world.'[76] But rather than seeking to legitimise slavery to earth, air, fire and water as an apt description of Paul's, or the Galatians', religious life prior to their acceptance of Christ, he talks instead about slavery to '*the natural order of the cosmos* through alignment to its elemental, physical components' (emphasis mine).[77] Barclay's interpretation of στοιχεῖον thus revised, floats upward from BDAG's tightly circumscribed definition, 'physical elements,' to the broader category, 'basic components of something.'[78] For Barclay, στοιχεῖον refers to the basic components of

[75] 'The Teachers are almost certain to have shared the Jewish view of Gentiles as people who ignorantly worship the visible parts of creation, and they may have spoken in this connection of the Gentile tendency to confuse the elements with God' (Martyn, 1997*a*, vol 33A, 399). '[There are] grounds for thinking that the Teachers made extensive use of traditions that present Abraham as the first Gentile to come to the true knowledge of God… they will not have overlooked the traditions in which the patriarch is said to have made the journey to the knowledge of God by an astrological contemplation of the elements' (Martyn, 1997*a*, vol 33A, 400). Contrast Barclay's guidelines for appropriately cautious mirror-reading (Barclay, 1987, 73-93.)

[76] Barclay, 2015, 409.

[77] Barclay, 2015, 409.

[78] Not even Martyn's apocalyptic treatment of the στοιχεῖα is sufficiently stable to resist this upward definitional pressure, as witnessed by his précis of Gal 4.3: 'Like all other human beings, we were

the *old age* – an age which he characterises, following Martyn, in terms of the human attempt to move toward God in contrast to the apocalyptic movement of God toward humanity that characterises the *new age*.[79] And from there the term is rapidly transposed to mean basic components of 'worth' as it was assessed according to these *old age* priorities in pagan and Jewish religious culture at the time.[80]

4.4.4 Returning to the *Stoicheia tou Kosmou*

In my 2018 JSNT article, 'Returning to the *Stoicheia tou Kosmou*: Enslavement to the Physical Elements in Galatians 4.3 and 9?' I argue that the lexicographical case for the 'physical elements' reading attributed to Blinzler, Schweizer and Rusam is, in fact, fundamentally flawed.[81] By analysing a corpus of citations including every occurrence of στοιχεῖον in the Greek literature of the first centuries B.C. and A.D., I confirmed Blinzler's view that 'physical elements' was indeed the most common reading in the period (see tables 1 and 2, pp.196-97). 'Physical elements' faithfully translates 67% of the occurrences cited in Blinzler's original study, and 56% of the occurrences in my new, broader corpus. Validating Andrew Bandstra's undeservedly neglected work on the 'formal' character of στοιχεῖον, however, I was also able to demonstrate an extremely strong correlation between the meaning of στοιχεῖον and

held in a state of *slavery* by the very *building blocks of the cosmos*' (Martyn, 1997*a*, vol 33A, 388). Keener also recognises the necessity, and the difficulty, of applying Paul's στοιχεῖα vocabulary to Jews *and* Gentiles. He renders the phrase, 'elementary matters,' despite remaining committed to the view that the Galatians formerly worshipped the physical elements (Keener, 2019, 330-33).

[79] Barclay, 2015, 345.

[80] Barclay, 2015, 391.

[81] Martin, 2018, 434-52.

the literary context in which it appears.[82] Among Blinzler's selection of authors, 78% of the citations drawn from natural-historical, exegetical and apologetic contexts were found to mean 'physical elements,' but in citations drawn from *outside* these categories, the figure dropped to just 26%. In the larger first-century B.C. and A.D. corpus, the trend was even more pronounced with 84% of the citations drawn from natural-historical, exegetical and apologetic contexts meaning 'physical elements,' and only 15% carrying this meaning in other contexts.

In summary, the word στοιχεῖον was found to possess considerable flexibility in the early Christian period. Despite its adoption by philosophical and natural-scientific writers after Plato as the word of choice for referring to the elements of the physical world, it did not for this reason cease to enjoy a wide variety of other uses.[83] Like the word 'element' in modern English which has a fixed, technical meaning in the context of chemistry but which can refer equally well to 'elements' of mathematical proof, 'elements' of good character, or even the 'elements' of the communion meal in other contexts, στοιχεῖον served as a utility word in the Greek of the first century. As Bandstra argues, it 'receives its "specific content" from the context in which it is

[82] Bandstra, 1964, 33.
[83] Vallance, 2012, 499. Note, however, that Plato, like Aristotle, preferred to use the word στοιχεῖον for properly indivisible constituents of things like letters and syllables, and was consequently tentative in applying it to the physical elements (e.g. *Tim.* 48b). 'For Plato it was the elementary geometrical figures that lay behind the physical elements that were the real στοιχεῖα' (Bandstra, 1964, 37).

used.'[84] Outside scientific, philosophical and apologetic settings, there is no compelling reason whatsoever to assume that στοιχεῖον means physical elements.

Alongside their wider analysis of the noun, στοιχεῖον, Blinzer, Schweizer and Rusam give detailed attention to the specific phrase στοιχεῖα τοῦ κόσμου. This aspect of their work was also thoroughly reassessed in my contribution to JSNT. Though the number of comparable citations is dramatically reduced when the genitive modifier, τοῦ κόσμου, is added, context still clearly emerges as the key to correct interpretation. In cases where the literary genre of the citations is scientific, philosophical or apologetic in character (ten of Blinzler's eleven examples) the fact that the expression is used to mean 'physical elements' should hardly surprise us. It says less about the addition of τοῦ κόσμου than it says about the function of στοιχεῖα in these settings. Just because the word 'elements,' plus the genitive modifier, 'of the table,' in English, refers to chemical elements in 100% of citations drawn from chemistry text books, does not indicate that it refers to chemical elements when it appears, say, in books about making furniture, or dinnertime etiquette.

The claim that even examples drawn from scientific, philosophical or apologetic contexts refer uniformly and unambiguously to the physical elements, however, was also found to be overdrawn. Blinzler's three citations from *the Sibylline Oracles* refer to 'elements' including air, land, sea, light, the vault of heaven, days and nights;

[84] Bandstra, 1964, 33.

without any clear correlation to the traditional four.[85] His citation from the Orphic Hymns extols fire as κόσμου στοιχεῖον ἄριστον (the world's best element) but it is unclear whether the implied comparison is with the other three traditional elements or with the entities singled out for praise in the adjacent hymns which include night, heaven, the sun, the moon and various primeval deities, (*Orph. Hym.* 5.4).

Eight of the nine citations considered by Rusam share the same contextual connection to scientific or philosophical discussion that we observe in Blinzler's examples. In the one example where the context differs, however – the late second-/early third-century text of Sextus Empiricus' *Outlines of Pyrrhonism* – we learn that, according to the Pythagoreans, the basic components of reality (στοιχεῖα τοῦ κόσμου) were in fact numbers, (*Pyrr. Hyp.* 3.152.1).[86]

Similar divergences from uniformity in the meaning of the phrase στοιχεῖα τοῦ κόσμου are observable in texts omitted by Blinzler or Rusam. In his commentary on Hesiod's *Theogonia*, the third-century B.C. Stoic philosopher, Zeno of Citium aligns the στοιχεῖα τοῦ κόσμου with the names of the Titans interpreted allegorically (*Test. Frag.* 100.2).[87] Zeno is unconcerned to establish a correlation with the four traditional elements and στοιχεῖα here should be interpreted as a general reference to 'basic

[85] *Sib. Or.* 2.207, 3.80, 8.337. Bandstra also notes the improbability of an intentional reference to the four traditional elements in these texts (Bandstra, 1964, 35).
[86] Clement of Rome makes a very similar reference to Pythagoras, whose enquiry into the origins of the world is said to have resulted in the conclusion that numbers were τῶν ἀρχῶν τὰ στοιχεῖα (*Rec.* 8.15.1.5).
[87] Meijer, 2007, 33.

components.'[88] An ambiguous text from the astrologer, Antiochus of Athens, dating from sometime between the first century B.C. and the second century A.D., uses the phrase τῷ ψυχικῷ τοῦ κόσμου στοιχείῳ ('by the spiritual element of the world') to refer to light as a transcendent power (*Frag. Ap.* 110.17). The late second-/early third-century church father, Clement of Alexandria, interprets Paul's use of the phrase στοιχεῖα τοῦ κόσμου as a reference to the physical elements in scientific and philosophical contexts, and to the basic components of philosophical or religious education in other settings.[89] In Book 5 of the *Miscellanies,* Clement's only use of the phrase στοιχεῖα τοῦ κόσμου that is independent of Paul (*Strom.* 5.8.49) suggests a range of meanings broad enough to encompass ploughs, furrows, seed, rain, phases of the moon, seasons, night, planets, and the sea. Tertullian's reception of Paul similarly undermines the assertion that physical elements is the only possible reading for στοιχεῖα τοῦ κόσμου. Contending for a literal interpretation of bondage to the elements of the world in *Against Marcion*, he argues that Gal 4.9 critiques the distinctively Roman dependence on the basic elements of learning.[90]

[88] 'Indeed two of the traditional elements (water and fire) are later identified with deities *outside* the pantheon of the Titans' (Martin, 2018, 446).

[89] Clement, *Strom.* 6.8.62. In Heb 5.12, where στοιχεῖα appears with the modifier τῆς ἀρχῆς, it is striking that στοιχεῖα is used, as in Gal 4.9, in close association with πάλιν ('you need someone to teach you *again* the basic elements of the oracles of God') and that it forms part of a discussion about maturity.

[90] Tertullian, *Adv. Mar.* 5.4. While it is impossible to date, or geographically locate, the origin of the Greek Magical Papyri with precision, it is striking that the only instance of the phrase στοιχεῖα τοῦ κόσμου in this voluminous resource (Ἐξορκίζω σε τῶ<ν> δῶδεκα στοιχείων | τοῦ οὐρανοῦ καὶ ἰκοσιτέσσερα στοιχεί|ων τοῦ κόσμου, ἵνα ἄγῃς μοι Ἡρακλῆν, ὅν ἔτεκεν Τα|ᾶϊπις, πρὸς Ἀλλοῦν, ἣς ἔτεκεν Ἀλεξανδρία, ἤδη ἤδη, ταχὺ ταχύ) almost certainly refers to the twenty-four letters of the Greek alphabet (PGM, XXXIX.1-21; for Greek text, see Preisendanz, 1931, vol 2, 177).

Neil Martin, Keble College

In Galatians, the context has nothing to do with science, philosophy or apologetics. Paul is not '[expatiating] on the natural world as such,' and there is no basis for the assumption that he is referring to the physical elements.[91] Gal 4.3 forms part of a discussion about maturation from the pre-Christian state to the Christian state. In this context, στοιχεῖα most probably refers to *the fundamental components of pre-Christian living* as contrasted to fullness of life in Christ. Paul is not necessarily claiming that these components are *rudimentary*, only that they are fundamental and irreducible.

Why did Paul use the genitive modifier τοῦ κόσμου if this was his intention? He could have used στοιχεῖα on its own, or perhaps the phrase στοιχεῖα τοῦ νόμου, if he meant simply to specify the fundamental principles *of Judaism*, thus avoiding the ambiguity of a reference to the fundamental principles *of the world*. But this fails to consider the trajectory of Paul's argument which becomes apparent with the reintroduction of στοιχεῖα at Gal 4.9, coordinating his experiences as a Jew prior to his conversion with the experiences of his Galatian audience.

In Gal 4.3 Paul had Jews principally in mind when he said, '*we* were enslaved to the στοιχεῖα του κόσμου.' In 4.9, however, his attention is focused on his Galatian readers who are returning again to the patterns of their past – patterns that he classifies almost identically as enslavement to 'the weak and poor στοιχεῖα.'[92] The

[91] De Boer, 2011, 253.

[92] According to Bandstra, στοιχεῖον was 'always associated with a certain quality or power,' in the ancient world and this association is evident in the application the word in Galatians (Bandstra, 1964, 39 *et passim*). Paul describes patterns of past behaviour that are not simply being *chosen* by the

reason for the addition of του κόσμου in 4.3, then, is simply to spread the net wide enough to include these distinctively Gentile experiences when he reaches that part of his argument. [93]

Caution is certainly required as we draw conclusions here. Paul does not *spell out* his intentions in the use of these flexible terms and the data from which inferences can be drawn is thin. Assembling the clues as best we can, however, we determine that στοιχεῖα του κόσμου in Galatians functions as a reference to the 'nuts and bolts' of religious belief and practice outside Christ for *both* Jews *and* pagans – as a reference to 'worldly religious principles,' if we take the recurrence of κόσμος in Gal 6.14 as an indication of the likely nuance in 4.3.

The στοιχεῖα in Galatians are the building blocks of religious action. They have no ethical content as such; they are neither good nor bad. They are morally significant only to the extent that they instantiate specific higher-level religious commitments, and the variety of the commitments they are capable of expressing is, in principle, limitless. The στοιχεῖα are common to Jewish and Gentile spiritualities. They

Galatians in place of the gospel that was proclaimed to them – they have an *inherent magnetism* that is drawing Paul's readers back into their grip.

[93] Exegesis of the phrase στοιχεῖα τοῦ κόσμου in Galatians must also consider the two parallel occurrences in Colossians (Col 2.8, 20). As in Galatians, the lexical imperative to assign the meaning 'physical elements' proves unwieldy in practice (e.g. Schweizer, 1988, 466-7). The phrase is commonly elided as part of a Jewish mystical explanation of the situation (focusing on the desire to ascend to heaven and the associated obstacles) or embraced by broadening the definitional constraints to allow the reading, 'transcendent powers.' As in Galatians, however, the alternative, 'elementary principles,' fits the context well and has rich support in the history of exegesis (e.g. Lightfoot, 1886, 178-9). Suggestions that the return to the 'nuts and bolts of the world' in Colossae also involved the invocation of personal spiritual mediators are adequately supported by the reference to the worship of angels at 2.18 without the need to assert this meaning for στοιχεῖα.

include the observance of sacred calendars and festivals, the making of vows, the maintenance of ritual purity, the memorialisation of past acts of devotion – the basic components of religious behaviour observable throughout the ancient world. In Paul's argument there are Jewish ways to practice these things (and to be enslaved by them) and there are Gentile ways to practice these things (and to be enslaved by them). His concern for his readers was regression to the latter.[94]

[94] Note the potential here for a resolution of the dilemma perceptively observed by Christopher Tuckett between the moral neutrality of circumcision in Galatians (Gal 5.6, 6.15) and its pivotal significance in salvation itself (5.2; Tuckett, 2019, 338-9). The act itself is morally neutral, but it carries significance according to the religious expectations invested in it.

	Natural Historical Context		Exegetical Context			Exhortative Context		Philological Context		Mathematical Context			Historical Context	Devotional Context		Totals
	Description/Classification of Physical Realities	Philosophy	Naturalistic Exegesis	Allegorical Exegesis	Bible Commentary	Apologetic/Dialogue with Contemporary Philosophy	Moral Exhortation	Etymology	Grammar	List of Opposites	Mathematics	Numerology		Reciprocal	Apotropaic	
Basic Components	0	4	0	0	0	1	2	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	8
Physical Elements (earth, air, fire, water)	43	0	10	39	0	32	2	1	0	0	1	0	5	2	0	135
Heavenly Bodies	1	0	0	0	1	9	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	11
Fundamental Principles	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Letters	3	0	0	1	5	6	3	0	9	1	0	4	2	0	0	34
Mathematical/Geometrical/ Geographical Foundations, Elements of Number	0	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	2	0	1	0	0	5
Elements of the Good	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2
Elementary Truths	0	0	0	0	5	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	6
Basic Components of Sound/Language/Argument	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1
Transcendent Powers	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Undetermined	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
Totals	47	4	10	41	11	48	12	1	9	2	3	5	8	2	0	203

Sources: Aristides, Athenagoras, Clement of Alexandria, the *Epistle to Diognetus*, the *Shepherd of Hermas*, Irenaeus, Josephus, Justin Martyr, LXX, New Testament, Philo, Tatian Theophilus

Table 1. στοιχεῖον citations, Blinzler Corpus[95]

[95] Martin, 2018, 442.

	Natural Historical Context	Exegetical Context			Exhortative Context	Philological Context		Mathematical Context			Historical Context	Devotional Context	
	Description/Classification of Physical Realities	Philosophy	Naturalistic Exegesis	Allegorical Exegesis	Bible Commentary	Apologetic/Dialogue with Contemporary Philosophy	Moral Exhortation	Etymology	Grammar	List of Opposites	Mathematics	Numerology	Reciprocal	Apotropaic	Totals
Basic Components	3	6	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	2	0	4	0	17
Physical Elements (earth, air, fire, water)	84	34	10	63	0	2	3	1	1	0	1	1	10	2	212
Heavenly Bodies	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
Fundamental Principles	3	2	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	6
Letters	4	0	0	3	1	2	3	2	48	1	0	3	4	0	12	83
Mathematical/Geometrical/ Geographical Foundations, Elements of Number	7	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	6	1	5	0	0	21
Elements of the Good	0	0	0	0	0	0	4	0	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	6
Elementary Truths	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
Basic Components of Sound/Language/Argument	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	7	0	0	0	3	0	0	12
Transcendent Powers	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	10	10
Undetermined	1	3	0	0	0	0	1	0	4	0	0	0	0	0	0	9
Totals	103	46	10	67	1	4	13	5	62	2	9	5	27	2	22	378

Sources: Antiochus of Athens, Anonymus Londinensis, Apion, *Apocalypsis Adam*, Apollonius of Tyana, Aristonicus of Alexandria , Arius Didymus, Boethus, Clement of Rome, Comarius, Demetrius, Diodorus Siculus, Dionysius of Halicarnassus, Dioscorides Pedanius, Erotianius, Josephus, Gaius Musonius Rufus, Heraclitus, Hero of Alexandria, Longinus, Lucius Annaeus Cornutus, Moderatus, New Testament, Philo, Philodemus, Philoxenus, Plutarch, Pseudo-Archytas, Severus, Strabo, Teucer, Theon, Trypho of Alexandria, Tyrranion, *Vitae Aesopi*.

Table 2. στοιχεῖον citations, First-Century B.C. and A.D. Corpus[96]

[96] Martin, 2018, 443.

Neil Martin, Keble College

5. Enslavement to the *Stoicheia* and its Parallels

But what was the *nature* of this enslavement? And why was it important for Paul that the Galatians were *regressing* to the same form of enslavement they had experienced before he met them?

5.1 Enslavement to the *Stoicheia* and the Curse of the Law

In response to these questions we now proceed in dialogue with Richard Hays' influential book, *The Faith of Jesus Christ: The Narrative Substructure of Gal 3.1-4.11*. Hays brings methodological rigour to the observation (made on more intuitive grounds by many other commentators) that Paul's talk of the redemption of those under the law in 4.5, and of redemption from 'the curse of the law' in 3.13 – each with the consequence of inclusion in God's family and the reception of God's Spirit – play *equivalent roles in the larger gospel story* he sets out to tell.[97] His description of enslavement under the στοιχεῖα in 4.3 (in context: subjection to the law) is closely related to his description of accursedness in 3.10-14 (in context: failure to the keep the law).[98]

For Hays, life 'under the curse' in Gal 3.10 and enslavement 'under the στοιχεῖα' in 4.3 – not to mention imprisonment 'under the law' in 3.23 – all serve as descriptions

[97] Hays, 2002, 73-117. On the parallels between these two sections of Paul's text, see also Betz, 1979, 150-1, 208; Martyn, 1997*a*, vol 33A, 317, 334-6, De Boer, 2011, 211-2; Bruce, 1982a, 34. Martyn arrives at the same equivalence, albeit by a different route (Martyn, 1997*b*, 237-8, 240, 246).
[98] For an insightful historical survey of interpretative engagements with the curse of the law in Gal 3, see Riches, 2008, 170-87.

of the 'initial state of deprivation' or the 'situation of lack' from which Paul characteristically launches his gospel story.[99] As we saw in our analysis of Paul's pronominal choices in above, this story characteristically runs from Jewish experience to universal experience, and from Jewish realities to universal realities.[100] In 3.23-29, as Jewish life under the law/the 'guardian' (ὑπὸ νόμον/ὑπὸ παιδαγωγόν) gives way to freedom, so also Gentiles are set free. In 4.1-7, as Jewish life under worldly religious principles (ὑπὸ τὰ στοιχεῖα τοῦ κόσμου) gives way to sonship, so also Gentiles are welcomed into God's family. And so also in 3.10-14.[101]

Though the initial diagnosis that 'all who rely on the works of the law are under a curse' (ὑπὸ κατάραν) applies primarily to Jews (Gal 3.10), its location in Paul's larger narrative, moving from Jew to Gentile, and from the promise to Abraham to the blessing of the nations, indicates that this 'situation of lack' is also applicable to Gentiles in some sense, of which more below.[102] And this should not surprise us given the larger context in which these observations fall. Paul's stated concern in Galatians 3 is the 'bewitchment' of his Gentile converts (3.1). Twice he asks them

[99] Hays, 2002, 198-204. 'The correspondence between [Gal 3.23-9 and 4.3-7] reinforces the unavoidable identification between the Law and the στοιχεῖα τοῦ κόσμου which is such a peculiar feature of Paul's thought in Galatians' (Hays, 2002, 201). De Boer notes the semantic relationship between Christ's work of 'redemption' (ἐξαγοράζω) in Gal 3.13 and the enslavement language used in Gal 4.3, 8-9, 25 (De Boer, 2011, 210). See also Longenecker, 1998, 91-5.
[100] On the curse as applicable to humanity as a whole, see Martyn, 1997*a*, vol 33A, 334-6; Dunn, 1993a, 176-7; De Boer, 2011, 209. According to Hays, 'the entire argument of Galatians presumes [it to be] axiomatic [that] Jews and Gentiles alike were in a state of longstanding slavery' (Hays, 2002, xxxiii). In dissent see Betz, 1979, 148; Wright, 1991, 137-56.
[101] A narrative parallel similar to those identified by Hays in Galatians, can also be observed between Rom 2.12-13 and Gal 3.10-12.
[102] 'For Paul, Gentiles as well as Jews fall under the law's curse' (De Boer, 2011, 209).

whether the experience of the Spirit that attended their conversion flowed from legal observances or from believing in the gospel message he preached to them (3.2, 5). The reason for Paul's transition to the Abraham story and to the larger landscape of the curses and blessings attending disobedience and obedience to the Jewish law in 3.7-14 has been much discussed, with scholars making competing claims about the importance of these themes in the ministry of the Influencers.[103] But none should doubt that, in Paul's mind, all of these observations were still aimed at the same object – namely dissuading *Gentiles* from submitting to Jewish legal observances. The conclusion of 3.14 answers the rhetorical questions that Paul asked his Gentile audience in 3.1-5: it is *'through faith'* that we 'receive the promise of the Spirit.'[104]

5.2 Paul on Jews and Religious Works

In the light of the close relationship that Paul establishes between 'the curse of the law' in Gal 3.10 and 'enslavement under the στοιχεῖα' in 4.3, what does his description of the curse teach us about the *nature* of this enslavement for Jews? [105]

[103] Note the discussion in Barclay, 1987, 87-8.
[104] On the importance of reading Gal 3.10-14 in the context of Paul's larger argument about the acceptance of Gentiles, see Dunn, 2008, 43. Dunn's conclusion, however, that 'the curses of covenantal nomism' (here we assume he means the impact of covenantally nomistic practice on those deemed outside the covenant) 'prevented the blessing coming to the Gentiles' seems forced. Hays' reading from Jewish archetype to Gentile application, by contrast, encourages us to perceive rather a warning that embracing law involved embracing the curse for Gentiles just as it had always meant embracing the curse for Jews.
[105] In the course of his discussion of Romans 7, Gager attempts to restrict the scope of the curse in Galatians to Gentiles (Gager, 1985, 220-3). Apart from the implausibility of this interpretation in the light of Paul's very deliberate reference to 'the book of the Law' (Gal 3.10) we have already seen that, as in 3.23-29 and 4.1-7, Paul's characteristic movement from Jewish realities to universal realities is also evident in 3.10-14.

Neil Martin, Keble College

The significance of *the curse* in Paul's argument in Galatians has been a matter of extensive debate in recent decades.[106] Traditional readings, built on the assumption that obedience to the law – understood in an individualistic sense – is impossible, have been challenged by readings that see the curse in more corporate terms. [107] The case is made that in Paul's adapted version of Septuagint Deuteronomy 27.26 – 'Cursed is *everyone* who does not observe and obey *all* the things written in the book of the law' (Gal 3.10) – the curse is not to be understood in Edenic terms, as an abstract reality hanging over every human being in consequence of their inability to keep God's perfect moral standards, but in the light of Israel's failure to uphold the Torah and her consequent exile.[108] The Galatians are not being warned about the folly of trusting in religious works as a means to satisfy God, they are being warned about joining themselves to Israel and sharing in their fate.

Some clarification of Paul's intentions is required here, especially in the light of his claim to be 'blameless' in respect to 'righteousness under the law' himself in Phil 3.6. The point is well taken that second temple Jewish texts, on the whole, appear unfamiliar with the intrinsic unachievability of Torah-observance.[109] 'The general

[106] Moo provides an excellent summary (Moo, 2013, 201-5).
[107] For traditional readings, see Chrysostom *Comm. Gal*. 3.10; Luther, 1979, 241-53; Longenecker, 1990, 116-18; Silva, 2001, 231. For corporate readings, see Wright, 2013, 863-7; Hays, 2000, 258-9; Stanley, 1990, 481-511. Martyn interprets the phrase ἐξ ἔργων νόμου as a matter of identity, but sees the curse not as a matter of guilt 'but of enslavement to powers lying beyond the human being's control' (Martyn, 1997*a*, vol 33A, 308).
[108] On the relationship between the Pauline citation and the underlying Septuagintal and Masoretic texts see, Bruce, 1982a, 27-9. Wright provides the most well-known exegesis of the curse as exile, (Wright, 1991, 144-8; Wright, 2013, 863-7). See also Scott, 1993, 187-221.
[109] Bockmuehl notes 1QS and 4 Ezra as exceptions (Bockmuehl, 2006, 202). Barclay, however, ranks 4 Ezra alongside Pseudo-Philo and the Qumran Hodayot as likely parallels for Pauline pessimism 'about the capacity of those governed by the Torah to remain faithful to it' (Barclay, 2015, 405).

Pharisaic assumption… that one could indeed keep the Torah's 613 commandments' does indeed seem more 'realistic' when we take into account the fact 'that it provided its own regular procedures for the observant to receive absolution and purification.'[110] Indeed this observation may bring us to the core of Paul's argument in Gal 3.10-14 if accursedness is in fact the state that obtains for all those who do not avail themselves of these means of atonement on an ongoing basis.[111]

Adjudication of this debate lies beyond the scope of this thesis. Whichever path we take, however, certain key observations about the Jewish experience of law-observance remain constant. Neither individualistic nor corporate readings of the curse entail an intrinsically negative concept of law.[112] On the contrary, legal

[110] Bockmuehl, 2006, 202. 'The suggestion, still often heard, that the law required perfect obedience and that nothing less would suffice, completely ignores the fact that the possibility of repentance and the provision of atonement have been prominent features of Jewish theology and practice from the first' (Dunn, 1993b, 77). On the significance of atonement in Jewish thought, its various means, and its relationship to covenant membership, see Sanders, 1977, 157-80.

[111] It is striking that both the Pauline citation and the Septuagintal text of Deut 27.26 turn on the use of the verb ἐμμένω, stressing the importance of *continuing* to observe the requirements of the law. If the contents of the book of the law are understood to include its provisions for atonement, *ongoing* dependence on them would be precisely the thing that liberates its adherents from the curse. Paul's quotation from Leviticus in Gal 3.11, 'the righteous will live by faith,' would serve as a reminder that no-one living under the Torah could consider themselves justified before God without explicit dependence on his mercy. The allusion to the achievements of Jesus in 3.13-14 would include the cessation of this need for constant atonement, following a similar logic to Heb 10.11-14.

[112] In the minds of some interpreters, Paul veers towards the equation of the law and the curse in Gal 3.19 (e.g. De Boer, 2011, 200, 210, 225-36). Wilson's attempt to connect the phrases ὑπὸ νόμον and ὑπὸ κατάραν in Galatians discerns a similar negativity about law in Paul's thought (Wilson, 2007, 23-45, 117-20). Wyschogrod is surely closer to the mark in his dissent: 'When Paul says in Galatians 3.13, "Christ bought us freedom from the curse of the Law by becoming for our sake an accursed thing: he does not mean that the Law is a curse, a thought that is pure madness and contradicts Paul's clear statement in Romans 7.12: "therefore the Law is in itself holy, and the commandment is holy and just and good." He does mean that there is a curse attached to disobeying the holy Law' (Wyschogrod, 2004, 189). Within Galatians, note also Bruce's convincing argument that Paul's positioning of *Christ* under the law in Gal 4.4 implies that the law 'involved no curse in itself' (Bruce, 1982a, 31).

observances emerge in both cases as a credible path to blessing.[113] It is only the failure to do the things the law requires that brings the curse. On both readings, law for Jews is both the locus of true fellowship with God and an index of alienation from God. Alienation from God is the problem that the rites of atonement embedded in the law address and from which the accursedness of Christ ultimately effects redemption (Gal 3.13).

Following the breadcrumb trail laid by Hays forward from these conclusions to Gal 4.3, our picture of Jewish enslavement under the στοιχεῖα is thus enriched. Before his encounter with the risen Jesus and the revelation of his achievements, Paul considered himself a slave to the basic religious practices of Judaism, reliant on them for assurance of acceptance with God, and cursed to the extent that he did not continually avail himself of the forms of atonement they facilitated.[114] As a follower of Christ, however, Paul's situation was changed.[115] In 3.13-14 he describes himself as a recipient of redemption from the curse, and of the promised Holy Spirit consequent upon that redemption.[116] He is liberated from the law acting in the role of a παιδαγωγός (3.25);

[113] Note the parallel logic in Rom 2.7, 15.
[114] Michael Wyschogrod expounds this tension between exposure to judgment and dependence on mercy as an essential element of Jewish experience, rooted in the rabbinic understanding of the character of God (Wyschogrod, 2004, 196-7).
[115] 'With the Christ event and with faith in Christ, God's aspect of mercy becomes the permanent and exclusive mode of his relationship to Israel' (Wyschogrod, 2004, 197).
[116] De Boer interprets the blessing of Abraham as the gift of the Spirit and absence of the Spirit as the curse in a version of Paul's logic influenced by Isaiah 44.3 (De Boer, 2011, 198, 202, 215). See also Dunn, 1993a, 180; Hafemann, 2014, 126.

he is adopted to sonship (4.4). The consequences of his transgressions were born by Christ (3.13) and his need of atonement permanently resolved.

5.3 Paul on Gentiles and Religious Works

Valuable though these insights into *Jewish* experience are, we have already seen that, in its larger context, Paul's discussion of the curse in Galatians forms part of his response to a *Gentile* problem. The curse of Gal 3.10 is the natural foil to the blessing promised to Abraham in 4.9 and, through Abraham, to 'all the Gentiles' (4.8).[117] Redemption from the curse brings the gift of the Spirit in 3.14, answering Paul's rhetorical questions about the conversion of the Gentile Galatians in 3.2, 5.[118]

Paul's description of the curse in Gal 3.10, however, is thoroughly *Jewish*. Whichever solution we adopt to the apparent tension between the pronouncement of the curse on those who identify themselves with Jewish legal observances (Ὅσοι γὰρ ἐξ ἔργων νόμου εἰσίν, ὑπὸ κατάραν εἰσίν) and the scripture quotation (ἐπικατάρατος πᾶς ὃς οὐκ ἐμμένει πᾶσιν τοῖς γεγραμμένοις ἐν τῷ βιβλίῳ τοῦ νόμου τοῦ ποιῆσαι αὐτά) where the curse comes on *all those who fail to continue* in legal observances, the

[117] 'Talk of God's blessing inevitably called to mind its antithesis – God's curse' (Dunn, 1993a, 169). '[I]f – as stated in v9 – the "men of faith" are blessed together with Abraham, those who are not "men of faith" must be "men of [the] Torah" (οἱ ἐκ νόμου) and they must be "under a curse," (Betz, 1979, 144). See also De Boer, 2011, 198, 201, 209-10. For Dunn, it is possible that, by drawing his allusions to God's promise to Abraham from the early parts of the Abrahamic story (Gen 12.3; 18.18), Paul implies 'that the promise had a universal aspect from the first' (Dunn, 1993a, 164).

[118] 'With the two purpose clauses of 3.14 Paul has now summarised the argument of 3.1-5 and 3.6-13 in reverse order' (Martyn, 1997*a*, vol 33A, 323). See also Oakes, 2015, 114.

curse is articulated in relationship to 'all the things written in the book of the law.'[119] The description applies naturally neither to Abraham nor to the Gentiles subsequently inheriting his blessing. De Boer attempts to rescue the situation, locating a common denominator between Jewish and Gentile experiences of accursedness in their shared inhabitation of 'the present evil age.'[120] To the extent that the curse was dependent on familiarity with Jewish law in Paul's thought, however, the situations he envisages for Jews and Gentiles must have been *different*.[121]

Paul's concept of accursedness for Jews, as we saw in the previous section, may not have involved languishing under a system of legal observances that could not be fulfilled. If keeping Torah is rightly construed as inclusive of dependence on its inbuilt means of atonement, accursedness was experienced more in the perpetual necessity of recourse to these means than in the fundamental hopelessness of obedience. But this is not an insight which Gentiles could have been expected to share. Following the breadcrumb trail forward once again from accursedness to enslavement under the στοιχεῖα in the narrative structure of the letter, this difference begins to explain why the Galatians' incipient return to the στοιχεῖα was such a great concern for the Apostle.

In Galatians, I see no obstacle to the conclusion that, in Paul's mind, ongoing observance of the Jewish law was acceptable – and even desirable – for *Jewish*

[119] The tension between Paul's premise and the quotation he uses to support it has been extensively debated. De Boer offers a helpful summary of both the problem and the interpretative options (De Boer, 2011, 199-201).
[120] De Boer, 2011, 210; see also 198.
[121] 'The Law was central to God's covenant with Israel; it was law-keeping which marked out the Jew from the (by definition) law-less Gentile. The antithesis was fundamental to Jewish identity' (Dunn, 1993a, 169).

Christians (his remarks about the obligation on Jewish proselytes to keep the whole law are no empty threat – Gal 5.3).[122] Though law-observance among Jewish believers might be construed as a return to the στοιχεῖα, or at least as ongoing acceptance of the στοιχεῖα as a legitimate means to express religious devotion, this would not necessarily constitute *enslavement*. *Enslavement* to the στοιχεῖα, for the Jew, we recall, was closely related to accursedness in Paul's thought – a curse from which believers were now liberated. For the Jewish Christian, though religious works remained an index of alienation from God, at every point where this alienation expressed itself they now heard the voice of acceptance in Christ (3.13). Continuing under the law did not lead them back into the slavery – it pointed them to Jesus' curse-bearing death.

For the Gentile Christian, however, ongoing acceptance of the στοιχεῖα was not so benign. As we saw in the previous chapter, and as we will see in more detail in Chapter 6, the sacred calendars and festivals, the vows, purifications, and memorialisations of past acts of devotion with which Paul's readers would have been familiar fulfilled a variety of religious functions and articulated a range of religious expectations – not all of which had near analogues in Judaism. Among Jewish Christians like Paul, whose familiarity with the στοιχεῖα had been gained as

[122] Bockmuehl, 2006, 202. After noting the striking warning of Gal 5.3, Michael Wyschogrod argues that questions about ongoing Torah-observance for Jewish Christians are settled in Acts 15. When 'certain individuals came down from Judea and were teaching the brothers, "Unless you are circumcised according to the custom of Moses, you cannot be saved"' (Acts 15.1) the fact that there was even a *debate* indicates that, for Jews, 'Torah obviously was thought of as remaining obligatory in the view of the Jerusalem church' (Wyschogrod, 2004, 194). See also Chapter 6 §2.2.

part of the larger infrastructure of Torah-observance, these practices served as constant reminders of the curse and as spurs to thankfulness for the coming of the curse-bearer (Gal 3.10-14). Among Gentile Christians, however, habituated to the norms of pagan religious devotion, Paul could assume no such connections. Even though his Gentile correspondents had clearly been exposed to the Jewish law by the time he wrote to them, both the parallels to 1 Corinthians and Romans explored above and the prevalence of the regression motif throughout Galatians suggest it was a return to these more deep-seated assumptions that Paul feared.

An equivalent concern also seems to have animated Paul's contribution to the Antioch Incident – at least in the way he retells the story for the benefit of his Galatian readers. After charging Peter with hypocrisy for living like a Gentile and yet 'compelling' Gentiles to live like Jews, Paul introduces the dichotomy between faith and works that drives the subsequent argument of Gal 3.1-14 as follows:[123]

> Ἡμεῖς φύσει Ἰουδαῖοι καὶ οὐκ ἐξ ἐθνῶν ἁμαρτωλοί· εἰδότες [δὲ] ὅτι οὐ δικαιοῦται ἄνθρωπος ἐξ ἔργων νόμου ἐὰν μὴ διὰ πίστεως Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ
>
> We [who are] by nature Jews and not from the sinful Gentiles know that a person is not justified from works of the law but through faith in Jesus Christ (Gal 2.15-16a; translation mine).[124]

[123] Fredriksen helpfully contextualises the meaning of 'compulsion' in this verse (Fredriksen, 2017, 98-9).
[124] I take Gal 2.16a as a subordinate clause clarifying the difference between Jews and Gentiles flagged in v.15 before Paul completes his positive statement about Jews in 2.16b (De Boer, 2011, 141). Even if one takes v.15 as an independent clause, however, the Jewish conception of

Neil Martin, Keble College

In this more-or-less re-crafted version of events, Paul felt able to assume that Peter, like every other Jewish Christian, would affirm the impossibility of justification ἐξ ἔργων νόμου.[125] The statement, as we have already seen, is far from incompatible with the idea that the law could actually be kept (Gal 3.10). If keeping the law included dependence on its provisions for atonement, it assumed in itself the reality of transgression and the necessity of forgiveness. No Jew keeping the law in this sense would envisage standing justified before God without a record of habitual dependence on divine mercy.[126]

The striking observation for our exploration of regression in Galatians, however, is the contrast Paul draws here between Jewish and Gentile *knowledge*. Paul says, 'we

'justification' is still framed in the light of the contrast between being a Jew and being a Gentile (on the underlying text-critical issue here, see Carlson, 2015, 154-7).

[125] Whether or not we accept De Boer's conclusion that Paul is citing traditional material in Gal 2.16a, there is widespread agreement that he draws attention to a foundation common to all Jewish Christians, including the Influencers (De Boer, 2011, 143; Martyn, 1997*a*, vol 33A, 264). Butticaz limits Paul's argument here to 'l'ensemble des judéo-chrétiens' (Butticaz, 2018, 133). Dunn, I think, argues correctly, however, that his language would have been comprehensible 'to anyone who was "a Jew by nature"' (Dunn, 1993a, 135). Paul appeals to 'the axiomatic assumption… that God exercised and would exercise the role of end-time judge in relation to the world, both Jew and Gentile' (Dunn, 1993a, 134). 'Paul is wholly at one with his fellow Jews in asserting that justification is *by faith*… Paul's appeal here is not to *Christians* who happen also to be Jews, but to Jews whose Christian faith is but an extension of their Jewish faith in a graciously electing and sustaining God' (Dunn, 2008, 108). The same point is made with greater nuance by Menachem Kister in his exegesis of *4 Ezra* 8.31-36, where God's willingness to be merciful to 'those who have no store of good works' is brought into a parallel relationship with the observation that 'there is no one among those who have been born who has not acted wickedly, and among those whose have existed there is no one who has not transgressed,' and with *Sifre Deuteronomy* 26, which establishes a preference for dependence on divine mercy even among Old Testament paragons with formidable stores of good works (Kister, 2019).

[126] Wyschogrod offers a helpful assessment of what it would mean for a Jew to affirm that justification was actually obtainable by works of the Law, affirming in the process the rabbinic orthodoxy of Paul's challenge to Peter: 'A person who believed that he was justified by works of the Law alone would, in effect, be saying to God: "judge me in accordance with my deeds, give me what is coming to me, but I do not ask for mercy, for anything more than what I deserve."… it is unthinkable for Judaism or a Jew to strike such a pose before God. Judaism has always understood that if judged by the strict demands of the Law, no Jew can prevail' (Wyschogrod, 2004, 199).

who are by nature Jews *know* that a person is not justified from works of the law.' By implication, he thinks 'sinful Gentiles' *do not* know this.[127] In fact, it seems reasonable to assume that, for Paul, what 'sinful Gentiles' knew was precisely the opposite: their past experience conditioned them to believe that justification *could* be obtained by works of the law. Peter with his knowledge takes the role of 'the strong' here according to the taxonomy of 1 Corinthians 8. Indeed, a paraphrase explicitly drawing out the implications of the connection to 1 Corinthians helps illuminate the point:

> 'It's all well and good for us to continue practicing the works of the law in Jewish company, Peter, because we Jews know what they're for. But our Gentile brothers and sisters don't have this knowledge. So, when they, with their weak consciences, see you with all your knowledge keeping the Jewish law, won't they be emboldened to do the same and be destroyed?' (Gal 2.15-16 cf. 1 Cor 8.7, 10-11)

[127] The point is helpfully highlighted by Mark Elliott in his comments on Paul's use of ἐὰν μὴ in Gal 2.16 – '[P]agan sinners might mistakenly think that the Torah is a mechanism for justification, but Jews know better than to make that category mistake' (Elliott, 2014, 144). Failure to notice this distinction between what Jews know and what Gentiles know in Gal 2.15-16 has significant exegetical consequences. Introducing his analysis of 'the works of the law' from these verses in his celebrated article, *The New Perspective on Paul*, James Dunn argues that, '"works of the law" are nowhere understood here, either by his Jewish interlocutors or by Paul himself as works which *earn* God's favour, as merit-amassing observances. They are rather seen as *badges*: they are simply what membership of the covenant people involves, what mark out Jews as God's people given precisely for that reason, they serve to demonstrate covenant status' (Dunn, 2008, 111). Dunn's doubtless accurate analysis, however, completely misses Paul's point. Paul is not concerned about what 'works of the law' mean to 'his Jewish interlocutors' or even to himself. He is concerned about what they mean to Gentiles who don't share their Jewish assumptions. It is Gentiles, in Gal 2.15-16, and not Jews, who imagine that justification is by the works of the law.

Neil Martin, Keble College

6. Conclusion

Paul's comments about returning to slavery in Galatians 4.8-11 are helpfully contextualised both by the larger Jewish milieu in which he operated and by the striking case study of pastoral concern for Gentile converts afforded by 1 Cor 8.1-13 (and perhaps also by Rom 14.1-15.13). If the association between pagan religion and idolatry attested in Romans 1 is indicative of his connectedness to the larger Jewish literary tradition, Paul saw his readers' past lives as a realm in which the roles of creator and creature were dangerously inverted, according priority to make gods, and responsibility to protect them, to their human devotees. If accommodation of 'weakness' is the lens through which the Galatian crisis should be correctly read, we can well imagine how the influence of 'strong' believers leading his immature converts back into the orbit of their former religious practices would have caused the Apostle profound disquiet.

Quite why Paul believed *Jewish* legal observances might serve as a means to reawaken his readers' past *pagan* religious assumptions remains to be discussed. What is already clear, however, is that the threat gravitated around certain fundamental elements of religious practice common both to that past and to the way of life advocated by the Influencers. Paul does not seem to have considered these things problematic or destructive in and of themselves, but returning to them in the form of Torah-observance was potentially problematic *for Gentile converts*.

Though Paul had been 'enslaved' to the στοιχεῖα τοῦ κόσμου before his encounter with the risen Jesus (Gal 4.3), he no longer considered himself enslaved when he observed the requirements of Torah. As a *Jew*, he knew that 'a person [was] not justified by the works of the law' (2.15). The works of the law were associated rather with accursedness in Paul's mind – with continual exposure to the consequences of disobedience in his pre-Christian past and with the sufficiency of the redemption achieved by the curse-bearer in his Christian present (3.10-14). For *Gentiles*, however, who for Paul, by implication, thought a person *was* 'justified by the works of the law,' circumstances were different. Jewish practice could enslave them just as pagan practice had enslaved them before if they (mis)appropriated it according to the habitual assumptions associated with their religious past.

7. Excursus – Mission and Habituation after the New Testament

This chapter has begun to explore the possibility of slippage between the Influencers' advocacy of Jewish law in Galatia and the Galatian reception of their ministry driven by the power of habituated religious assumptions. Here, before we consider the particular significance of Judaism as a trigger in this process, we pause to illustrate the importance of pre-existent religious norms in select missionary settings from the patristic and early-medieval periods.[128]

[128] MacMullen rightly critiques analyses of Christian mission that 'ignore the prior views of converts' and 'depict Mission as operating on a clean slate' (MacMullen, 1981, 206 n.16).

Neil Martin, Keble College

Tracing the growth of the church in the early centuries of the Christian era, Alan Kreider notes both the awareness of, and the energy expended in combatting, the enduring power of ingrained patterns of thought and behaviour among pagan converts (Cyprian *Don.* 2-4). Processes of catechesis designed to overwrite pagan norms could last for more than three years in Saint Cyprian's Carthaginian context before candidates were baptised and admitted into the fellowship of the church.[129] Applying Pierre Bourdieu's concept of *habitus*, or 'corporeal knowledge,' to his third-century data, Kreider notes the emphasis on formation 'by repetition, by the sheer physicality of doing things over and over, so that they become habitual, reflexive and borne in [the body].'[130] In the account of the martyrdom of Perpetua and Felicitas in Carthage in A.D. 200, Kreider interprets several key elements of their behaviour in the arena as reflexes formed by the regular repetition of specific physical and verbal patterns during corporate worship.[131] As Tertullian, who may himself have edited the martyrdom account, wrote 'Christians are made, not born!' (*Apol.* 18.4).[132]

The significance of these observations becomes apparent when read against the evolving policies of Gregory the Great (Pope, A.D. 590-604) for the Christianisation of Germanic tribes. In the course of two letters written within a month of each other to King Æthelbert of Kent (c. 589-616) and to the Abbott Mellitus, both preserved in

[129] Kreider, 2016, 152-70.
[130] Bourdieu, 1990, 66-79. See also Bourdieu, 2000, 128-63; Kreider, 2016, 39-40, 133-6; Smith, 2013, 110-124.
[131] Kreider draws particular attention to their references to each other as 'sister' and to the holy kiss they exchange in the extremity of their suffering (Kreider, 2016, 44-51).
[132] Shaw, 1993, 30-1.

Neil Martin, Keble College

Bede's *Ecclesiastical History of the English People*, Gregory articulates a shift in strategy from the destruction of local pagan shrines (*Ecc. Hist.* 1.32) to an approach involving the preservation of existing holy sites and festal days in the hope that they could be repurposed for Christian worship (*Ecc. Hist.* 1.30).[133] Combined with 'the vitality of pre-Christian Germanic religiosity' and 'the decline of the catechumenate system of religious formation,' this policy led directly to what Russell calls the 'Germanization' of Christianity in the 7th and 8th centuries in Europe.[134] 'Doubtless,' as Carole Cusack notes, 'Pope Gregory did not intend that the doctrines of the two religions become intermingled, only that the externals be utilised to facilitate a smooth transition. Form and content are not so easily separable, however, and form sometimes determines content.'[135] Form determining content, as we have aleady seen, was Paul's prime concern in 1 Corinthians 8. It is the argument of this thesis that the same diagnosis also applies to Galatians.

Cusack notes continuity in burial customs, polygyny and pagan sacrifices.[136] Russell notes continuity in attitudes to warfare and the ongoing pagan overtones of words adopted by Catholic translators to articulate the key Christian concepts of sin and

[133] The policy was not a complete innovation but drew on prototypes going back to the mid third-century missionary endeavours of Gregory of Pontus, subsequently narrated by Gregory of Nyssa. Gregory repurposed extant pagan practices like the *Refrigeria* (banquets held in cemeteries on the graves of the dead) as remembrances of Christian martyrs (Kreider, 2016, 125-8).
[134] Russell, 1994, 183-4.
[135] Cusack, 1998, 179. 'The initial result of attracting members of a folk religion to Christianity is often the reinterpretation of Christianity as a folk religion which focuses on the same worldly needs and desires which had previously been addressed by the supernatural forces associated with the pre-Christian folk religion' (Russell, 1994, 180).
[136] Cusack, 1998, 76-7, 109.

salvation.[137] The epic literature of the period bears traces of the transformation: In Beowulf the eponymous protagonist operates in a Christianised world – engaging in Davidic conflict with the offspring of Cain (*Beowulf* 102-14, 1260-8) – but his ethics are those of a traditional Germanic hero.[138] *Hêliand*, a Saxon retelling of the canonical gospel narratives, presents Jesus as a great chieftain, his disciples as his retinue of warrior-companions, the towns of Judea as hill forts, and the Lord's prayer as a repository of secret runes.[139]

In some situations, these survivals of pre-existent pagan religious norms reflect principled resistance to alien cultural impositions.[140] In others more closely related to the Galatian setting, the process is unconscious, indicative of a 'void' where old convictions, and especially old practices used to lie, and of 'a sense of loss which [creates] the conditions for a restoration of the old faith, only slightly altered.'[141] Similar forms of slippage between the intentions of the evangelist and the reception

[137] Russell, 1994, 40, 163, 206.
[138] Cusack, 1998, 110-11; Russell, 1994, 178-9.
[139] Cusack, 1998, 129-30. In *Hêl*. 1134-5, Jesus is 'mâri drohtin, cuningo craftigost' ('the great chieftain, the strongest of kings'); in *Hêl*. 1254, the disciples are 'gesîð skepea' ('warrior-companions'); in the nativity scene, angels make their announcement to 'uuiggeo gômean' ('[men] watching over the horses,' *Hêl*. 389): 'Thar gi ina fîðan muguyn, an Bethlehemburg' ('You can find him at fort Bethlehem,' *Hêl*. 403-4); in the introduction to the Lord's Prayer, the disciples say to Jesus, 'gerhiti ûs that gerûni' ('teach us the secret runes,' *Hêl*. 1595).
[140] Russell, 1994, 142, 159. From a very different cultural context, Nicolas Saunders' account of the retention of pre-Columbian religious sensibilities in Mesoamerica after the Spanish conquest through the surreptitious use of obsidian – the dark volcanic glass associated with the supreme Aztec deity, *Tezcatlipoca* – in crosses and church buildings, is a paradigmatic example of syncretism as principled resistance (Saunders, 2001, 220-36).
[141] Taylor, 2007, 441. Reflecting on the Christianisation of Gaul in the fourth-century, Charles Taylor concludes that local converts 'must have seen the new religion in terms of those categories of sacred power that they were already familiar with… it is obvious that the meaning of the new rites for them would be different from the correct, canonical meaning held by the clerical missionaries' (Taylor, 2007, 63). See also Cusack, 1998, 178.

of their ministry among the evangelised should be anticipated not only in the Galatians' reaction to Paul's initial gospel proclamation, but also in their subsequent reaction to the ministry of the Influencers.

Chapter 4: Paul and Returning to Paganism

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CHAPTER 5

GALATIANS IN THE JEWISH RELIGIOUS CONTEXT OF ASIA MINOR

1. Introduction

In Chapter 3, we defined the envelope of pagan religious influences potentially affecting Paul's Galatian readers – interacting, in the process, with interpretations of his regression vocabulary connected to that background. In Chapter 4, we considered the Galatians' past from Paul's perspective, interpreting the Galatian crisis as a case study in the failure of the 'strong' to accommodate the vulnerabilities of the 'weak,' vulnerabilities associated in particular with their habituation to pagan religious norms.

Plausible though this reconstruction of events appears – especially given the close parallel to the situation described in 1 Corinthians 8 – two obvious questions remain. In Corinth, the religious assumptions of 'weaker' Christians were being reanimated through participation in *pagan* sacrificial food. But in Galatia the issue was the Influencers' advocacy of *Jewish* law. Why would Paul think exposure to *Jewish* Christianity/explicit calls to convert to *Judaism* likely to reanimate expectations connected with his readers' *pagan* religious past? And why would he

associate this danger with the proclamation of a distinctively *Jewish* Christianity but seemingly not with his own vision of Christian discipleship?

To answer these questions, the foregoing exploration of the pagan religious context must now be joined to a similar exploration of the Jewish diaspora context in Galatia, highlighting modes of engagement with Judaism already established in the region and interacting, in the process, with interpretations of Paul's regression vocabulary that are dependent upon them.

Large numbers of Jewish settlers in Asia Minor can be located with confidence from the third century B.C. onwards thanks to Josephus' account of the mass relocation of two thousand Jewish families from Mesopotamia to Lydia and Phrygia in 205 B.C. under the Seleucid king, Antiochus III (*Ant.* 12.148-153).[1] Antiochus' edict anticipates many of the details expressed in future manifestations of Roman Jewish policy – the settlers were allowed use of their own laws, enjoyment of a (limited) exemption from agricultural taxation, and protection from molestation.[2] A letter preserved in 1 Maccabees from the Roman Consul Lucius to a diverse group of local rulers hints at a considerable expansion both in numbers and geographical

[1] The earliest reference to a Jewish presence in the region may go back to the prophecy of Obadiah – probably composed in the early post-exilic situation of the fifth century B.C. (Allen, 1976, 131). Obad 20 mentions 'the exiles of Jerusalem who are in Sepharad' – a place name otherwise unknown in the Hebrew Bible but which may also occur in a fifth-/early fourth-century Lydo-Aramaic bilingual inscription, where it is translated with the Lydian name for Sardis (Littman, 1916, 23-38). A fifth-century inscription from nearby Daskyleion indicating the presence of a wealthy Jewish family in the area increases the probability that Sardis was Obadiah's intended reference (Lipinski, 1973, 368-70 and Van der Horst, 2014, 144; for the inscription, see Dupont-Sommer, 1966, 112-7). Trebilco remains sceptical about the connection (Trebilco, 1991, 38).

[2] Note also, from the late third century B.C., an awareness of Jews, or at least an awareness of traditions *about* Jews, in the lost works of Hermippus of Smyrna, cited by Josephus (*Ag. Ap.* I.162-65).

distribution by the latter half of the second century B.C. (1 Macc. 15.15-24).[3] This reading of the situation is indirectly supported, albeit almost a century later, by Cicero's description of the large amounts of gold sent back from the region to Jerusalem as part of the *Fiscus Judaicus* (*Flac.* 68).[4]

Exactly how substantial the Jewish diaspora in Asia Minor became is a matter of controversy. By the time we reach the reign of Augustus, Louis Feldman claims Jews accounted for some 10 percent of the Empire's entire population, perhaps even 20 percent in the east, and that they were 'too numerous to risk antagonizing.'[5] As Margaret Williams notes, however, the relevant primary source data provide only occasional population estimates for a limited number of specific locations.[6] The figures that are available, such as Philo's estimate of the Jewish population of Egypt at 'no less than a million' (*Flacc.* 43), may themselves have been inflated for rhetorical purposes, although the public nature of such documents necessarily limited the scope for statistical creativity.

Whatever conclusion we draw regarding numbers, Josephus remains a key witness to Jewish experience in the region as we move from the second half of the first

[3] Van der Horst, 2014, 145. The Lucius in question here is either 'Lucius Caecilius Metellus, consul in Rome 142 BCE, or Lucius Valerius Flaccus, praetor 134 BCE and consul 131 BCE, with whom Josephus associates an almost identical Jewish mission' (Coogan et al., 2007, 238).
[4] Huttner, 2013, 70-2.
[5] Feldman, 1993, 92. Feldman's figures are drawn from analyses conducted by Salo Baron, who leans heavily on a questionably reliable twelfth-century Syrian account of a census taken by the emperor Claudius in A.D. 48 (Baron, 2007, 381-400) and Adolf von Harnack (Harnack, 1962, 1-8). For a similarly maximalist use of the underlying data, see Wilson, 1995, 21.
[6] Williams, 1998, 13. See also Delling, 1987, 65.

century B.C. into the first half of the first century A.D. thanks to his practice of reproducing official documents relating to Roman-Jewish relations.

Josephus' citations indicate that, after entrusting Jerusalem to John Hyrcanus II as an enduring possession (*Ant.* 14.200) and exempting his lands from conscription in appreciation of his friendship and military assistance (*Ant.* 14.203-4, 185f.), Julius Caesar conferred privileges on the wider diaspora including an exemption from the interdict on the formation of religious collegia in certain locations (*Ant.* 14.213). After Caesar's assassination, Hyrcanus successfully appealed to the Senate for the continuation of these arrangements (*Ant.* 14.221).

In Asia Minor, Jews in Ephesus were exempt from military service (*Ant.* 14.226). In Sardis, a Roman edict confirmed the right of local Jews to enjoy 'a communal life and adjudicate suits among themselves,' ordering 'that a place [should] be given them in which they may gather together with their wives and children and offer their ancestral prayers and sacrifices to God,' (*Ant.* 14.260). In both cities, specific provision was made to ensure the availability of foods compatible with Jewish dietary restrictions (*Ant.* 14.266, 261).

Contemporary decrees issued to Laodicea (*Ant.* 14.241-3), Miletus (*Ant.* 14.244-6), Pergamum (*Ant.* 14.247-55) and Halicarnassus (*Ant.* 256-8) demonstrate the need for periodic protection of Jewish privileges in these cities also.[7] Roman support for

[7] In Halicarnassus, the rationale for Senatorial intervention was that accommodation of the Jews was congruent with the Halicarnassians' longstanding 'deep regard for piety toward the Deity' (*Ant.*

the collection and exportation of the temple tax was sought and secured in the face of local and provincial opposition under Augustus (*Ant.* 16.166-7, 171). In sum, according to Josephus, the customs of Jewish communities in Asia Minor were officially accommodated, and where they were not, Jews had sufficient influence to seek redress from Rome.

How reliable is this representation of the situation?[8] Josephus' selection of data certainly creates an implausibly uniform impression of official accession to Jewish requests. Prior to the innovations of Julius Caesar, the Senate repeatedly forbade Jews from exporting gold from its provinces to Jerusalem and Cicero complained that 'the demands of their religion were incompatible with the majesty of our Empire' (*Flac.* 67, 69). When the Jews of Caesarea appealed to Nero to uphold their rights in the years before the first Jewish war, he pointedly refused (*War.* 2.285-92).[9] Josephus omits to reproduce the actual rescript – it would have undermined his otherwise unequivocal portrait of Roman compliance with such appeals – but he *does* at least report the 'massacre' that resulted from this conspicuous failure of official protection (*War.* 2.306).

Even the edicts that Josephus *does* include, however, hint at underlying questions about Jewish status at the local level.

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*14.*257) locating Judaism in the region, at least as it was perceived from distant Rome, within the broader Henotheistic assumptions developing in the period (Van Nuffelen, 2010, 32-3).

[8] For a parallel debate about the usefulness of Josephus as a witness to Hellenistic politics, see Schwartz, 2004, 47-61.

[9] Rajak, 1985, 31.

These tensions may have been attributable to, or at least exacerbated by, economic factors. A we saw in Chapter 3 §1, the aftermath of Caesar's assassination was marked by extreme economic unpredictability in Asia Minor. Punitive tributes were imposed by claimants to power on all sides.[10] Only with the new stability of the Augustan age did things improve, and it is perhaps telling that this is exactly the point at which Josephus' citations dry up.[11] Certainly, we can see how the practice of exporting funds for the upkeep of the temple in Jerusalem might have sparked resentment among Gentiles whose own temples lay in ruins and how Roman support for this Jewish tradition could have provoked anger, especially in Greek cities with strong memories of their own proud independence.[12]

Jewish social distinctives like the celebration of the Sabbath and the requirement for special courts and special foods, however, became no less noticeable or aggravating with the onset of the Augustan era. The scarcity of Josephan material from the early first century could in principle indicate a *worsening* of relations, not an improvement: the less common it became to uphold Jewish privileges, the less material he would have had to work with.

Do the edicts preserved by Josephus point to the existence of an official charter of Jewish rights? Probably not. Josephus' testimony is 'anecdotal and partial (in both

[10] Marek and Frei, 2016, 301-8.
[11] Barclay is attracted to this reading of the data, although he acknowledges that it involves 'an argument from silence' (Barclay, 1996, 279).
[12] Barclay, 1996, 265-9, 274, 278.

senses of the word)'.[13] The edicts point to the vision of Jewish life in the diaspora that Josephus espoused more than they tell us about conditions on the ground beyond their limited scope. But they are not without value for this reason. Josephus' practice of recounting official concessions operates within a recognisable literary tradition and good history can be extracted from his material if the norms and limitations of that tradition are respected.[14] His concern is to remind his contemporaries of the spirit of the Roman-Jewish relationship in the past, as part of a larger 'plea for mutual understanding between Jews and Greeks,' in the present.[15]

Though Josephus' editorial selectivity necessarily blinds us to the presence of Jews in cities where the Julian privileges were *not* upheld, his citations do also offer additional indirect testimony to the scale and geographical extent of the diaspora in this period. Josephus positively attests to the existence of Jewish communities all along the western and southern coasts of Asia Minor, as well as in the major inland economic and cultural centres of Sardis and Laodicea. Combining this testimony with that of Cicero and 1 Maccabees, the consolidated picture accords well with Philo's claim that, at the time of the Alexandrian embassy to Caligula in A.D. 40, Jews were 'very numerous in every city [in] Asia and Syria' (*Embassy*. 245).

[13] Barclay, 1996, 260.
[14] Barclay, 1996, 263.
[15] Rajak, 1985, 20.

Neil Martin, Keble College

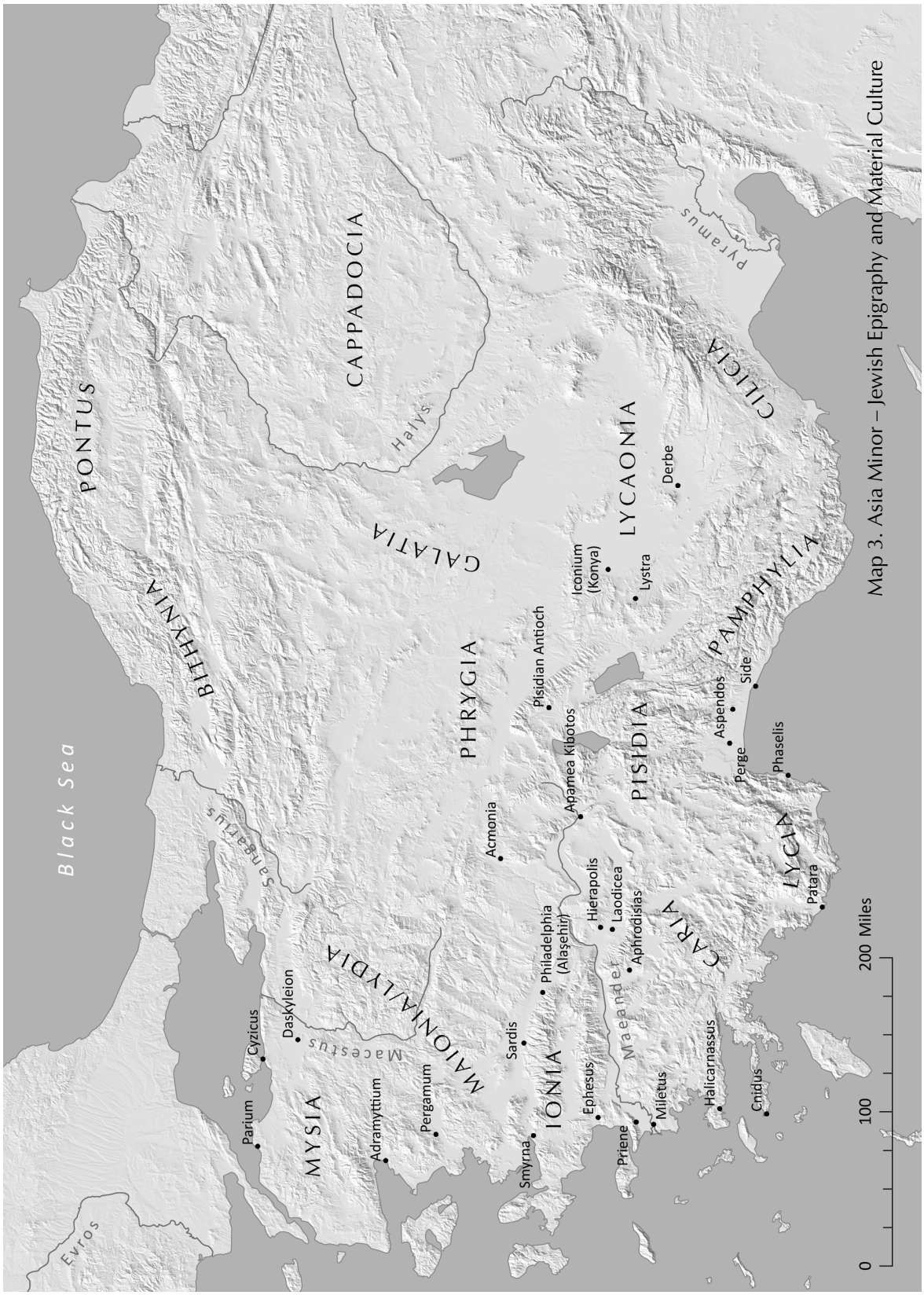
2. Sources

In contrast to our exploration of the pagan religious background of Galatians in Chapter 3, the quest for similar insights into its Jewish background is hampered by lack of data. Walter Ameling's comprehensive volume of Jewish inscriptions from Asia Minor, *Inscriptiones Judaicae Orientis,* features over 260 examples but, in line with the broader flowering of the epigraphic habit in the region from the second to the fifth centuries A.D., there is scant evidence to work with from the time of Paul, and almost none from the cities of Galatia itself.[16] Material culture yields some valuable insights, especially the famous Noah coins of Apamea, and the similarly famous synagogue at Sardis – but neither source is contemporary with Paul (the Noah coins are second-century, the bulk of the relevant architectural details in Sardis are fourth-century or later) and the two cities are located 60, and more than 170, miles west of Pisidian Antioch respectively.[17] Literary sources, in particular, are in short supply. Even when pagan and Christian reflections on Jewish life and culture in Asia Minor are included, our data set is severely circumscribed. In the sections which follow, sources of both types are therefore supplemented by selections from a broader pool of authors, facilitating the assessment of local data within the wider diaspora context.

[16] Ameling, 2009, 203; Ameling, 2004, 335-41. The portability of insights from one urban context to the next is complicated by the very different character of the cites in the region. Unlike Acmonia and Hierapolis, for example, where Jewish data is relatively abundant; Pisidian Antioch, Iconium and Lystra were Roman colonies and Derbe was subject to dynastic rule under Antiochus IV, (Hardin, 2008, 52-3; Marek and Frei, 2016, 329).

[17] For a brief summary of the history of the Sardis synagogue, see Kraabel, 1992f, 270-3.

Neil Martin, Keble College



Map 3. Asia Minor – Jewish Epigraphy and Material Culture

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2.1 Literary Sources

2.1.1 Jewish Literary Sources

The sole exception to the otherwise conspicuous absence of Jewish voices in the literary landscape of Asia Minor in the early imperial period is the enigmatic Jewish core text of the first two books of the *Sibylline Oracles* dated by John Collins to the the turn of the era.[18] The place of writing can be situated with some confidence in Phrygia due to the conspicuous identification of the region as the location of Mount Ararat (*Sib. Or.* 1.261-82) and as the homeland of the 'golden' generation who are subsequently charged by the Sibyl with the responsibility of renewing the earth (1.195-8). It is possible that the text emerged from the Jewish community in Apamea mentioned by Cicero as a regional hub for the collection of the *Fiscus Judaicus* (*Flac.* 68), and where interest in the local contextualisation of the Noah story is corroborated numismatically as we will see in more detail below.

Despite several features attesting to the ongoing distinctiveness of Jewish communities in this region, the Oracles also raise questions about the nature and extent of their engagement with the surrounding pagan culture.[19] The very form of the narrative is indebted to the literary model of Hesiod's *Works and Days*, conformity to which requires an ingenious adaption of the biblical narrative to

[18] Charlesworth, 2009, vol 1, 331-2. J. L. Lightfoot fails to present positive evidence for the proposal that the text is a later composition of Christian sources (Lightfoot, 2007, 99-104).
[19] As just one example of the ongoing importance of Jewish distinctives in the text, note Noah's harsh words of condemnation for his Phrygian neighbours (*Sib Or.* 1.174-9).

accommodate the Hesiodic paradigm of inexorable decline through a series of stereotypical generations.[20] The narrative appears open to the possibility that 'righteous men' may practice 'divination by birds' and other forms of magic (*Sib. Or.* 1.88-96), and to the existence of the Titans (1.308-23, 2.230-2), the mother of Zeus, Rheia (1.184), and Hades and the pagan gods who rule there (1.85-6, 230-2, 2.227-9). There are also several interesting glimpses of Persian cultural influence, including elements of the Babylonian flood myth and possibly the inclusion of a Gematriac riddle at the beginning of the flood story (1.137-46).[21]

2.1.2 Pagan Literary Sources

Turning to pagan literary sources, our earliest glimpses of Jewish life and experience in Asia Minor are preserved in Josephan citations from the otherwise lost works of Mnaseas of Patara and Agatharchides of Cnidus from the second-century B.C. Mnaseas, a pupil of Eratosthenes, uses a story from Judas Maccabeus' campaign against the Idumeans as a vehicle for his view that Jews are credulous and that their temple contains an image of an ass (*Ag. Ap.* 2.112-4).[22] Agatharchides, whom Menahem Stern rates as 'one of the great historians of the middle Hellenistic period,' ridicules Jews as beholden to 'dreams and traditional fancies' (*Ag. Ap.* 1.209-12).[23]

[20] Charlesworth, 2009, vol 1, 334.
[21] These Persian connections possibly lend credence to Josephus' account of the Jewish settlement of the region from Babylon under Antiochus III (Charlesworth, 2009, vol 1, 334).
[22] This citation from Mnaseas is the earliest recorded version of the tale that Jews worshipped an ass as espoused by numerous Greek and Latin writers in popular Jewish origin myths (Stern, 1976, 1119). Tacitus offers his own elaborated version of the story (*Hist.* 5.3-4).
[23] Stern, 1976, 1120-1).

Neil Martin, Keble College

The most negative portrayal, however, comes from the first-century B.C. Carian writer, Apollonius Molon who, according to Josephus, reviles Jews 'in one place as atheists and misanthropes, in another… as cowards, whereas elsewhere, on the contrary, he accuses [them] of temerity and reckless madness' (*Ag. Ap.* 2.147-8). After repeating the story about Jewish worship of an ass's head (*Ag. Ap.* 2.80), Molon adds the more disturbing allegation that they kidnap a Greek every year and fatten him up for sacrifice (*Ag. Ap.* 2.92-6). He condemns them as unwilling 'to associate with those who have chosen to adopt a different mode of life' (*Ag. Ap.* 2.258-9). In summary, they 'are the most witless of all barbarians, and are consequently the only people who have contributed no useful invention to civilization' (*Ag. Ap.* 2.148).[24]

Strabo represents an altogether more positive take on Judaism viewed from the vantage point of Asia Minor. His historical works are sadly lost but surviving citations in Josephus' *Antiquities* reveal a striking agreement with Philo's assessment of the diaspora in this period: 'This people has already made its way into every city, and it is not easy to find a place in the inhabited world which has not received this nation and in which it has not made its power felt' (*Ant.* 14.115.)[25] Strabo's

[24] Eusebius quotes extensively from the first-century B.C. work *Concerning the Jews* by the Milesian author Alexander Polyhistor in his *Preparation for the Gospel*. Even if Polyhistor's own opinions are in principle recoverable from this text, they tell us more about his observations as an adult in Rome than they do about his roots in Asia Minor (*Prep.* IX.17, 19-21, 23, 25-6, 29). The first-century B.C. author, Teucer of Cyzicus, is also known to have written a six-volume work on Jewish history, but it is entirely lost.

[25] Strabo's *History* betrays the same misconception of the Sabbath as fast day that we see in Augustus' letter to Tiberius and Martial (*Ant.* 14.66-8; cf. Suetonius *Aug.* 76; Martial *Epig.* 4.4).

Geography unfortunately offers no commentary on Jewish life in Asia Minor as such, dealing with Judaism only in the Palestinian context.[26] Notwithstanding this limitation, however, it is as a writer deeply experienced in the life and culture of Asia Minor that Strabo produces his broadly favourable account of Moses as the orchestrator of the Jewish migration from Egypt and as the founder of a nation characterised by imageless worship (*Geog*. 16.2.35-7).

Epictetus, like Strabo, was a native of Asia Minor, and his late first-/early second-century *Discourses* preserve a similarly positive vision of Jews and Judaism. *Disc*. 1.11.12-13 and 1.22.4 use the different dietary customs of Syrians, Jews, Egyptians, and Romans as examples of the importance of correctly distinguishing right from wrong, and holiness and from unholiness. In both cases Epictetus considers the Jews sufficiently well-known and substantial in number to be worthy of comparison with these other nations and he discusses their food laws without fear of prejudice among his readers (or if such prejudice exists, he deliberately subverts it).

Epictetus' third reference to the Jews famously discusses pagan interactions with Judaism, including the possibility of *conversion to* Judaism (*Disc*. 2.9.19-20). In the course of arguing that men and women are only truly fulfilled when their inner character is actualised in practice, Epictetus scolds the person who '[acts] the part of a Jew' – subsequently clarified as the state of 'halting between two faiths' – and

[26] Stern, 1976, 1131.

urges them to make a choice and get baptised.[27] These remarks are consistent with his larger vision of religious commitment. Epictetus eschews negativity about conversion itself, unlike many of his contemporaries – it is only lack of total commitment that irks him. His acknowledgement that such marginal 'pagan Jews' existed in his experience and that they were sufficiently familiar to his Greek audience to serve as an exemplum of his larger point, however, is important in and of itself, albeit of limited weight for Asia Minor.

Plutarch, like Epictetus wrote in Greece, but without even the connections to Asia Minor afforded by the latter writer's upbringing, the applicability of his early second-century comments to the Galatian situation is limited. In *Table Talk,* Jewish abstention from pork is discussed in detail, as is the possibility that the Jewish God might be identified with Dionysius (*Quaest. Conv*. 4.669C-5.672C). The tone of the debate is generally respectful, though an introductory anecdote recalls the 'derision' in which Jews were held by an elderly relative of one of the participants, (4.669D).[28]

Distance from the Galatian context similarly limits the value of Latin writers on the subject of Jews and Judaism. The Roman scholar, Marcus Terentius Varro (116-27

[27] Some take the reference to baptism as an indication of Epictetus' failure to distinguish Christians and Jews (Oldfather, 1998, 266 n.40). Forms of baptism in the Jewish context, however, are attested from an early period (*Barn*. 11.1-3; Justin, *Dial*. 14.1; 19.2; see also Murray, 2003, 77-8).

[28] In *On Superstition*, Plutarch alludes to the Jewish Sabbath in a passage making derogatory remarks about a whole range of practices imported into Greek culture from the east (*Superst*. 166A). The folly of Sabbath-keeping is explicitly highlighted in a recapitulation of the story of Ptolemy's unopposed conquest of Jerusalem (*Superst*. 169C). The attribution of the text to Plutarch, however, is problematic (Betz, 1975, 3-6). Elsewhere Plutarch is considerably more sympathetic to the 'superstitious' perspective, arguing that, 'eager credulity and excessive incredulity are alike dangerous' (*Cam*. 6.4).

B.C.) offers a refreshingly positive assessment of Judaism in the fragments of his works preserved by Augustine, praising aniconic worship (*Civ*. 4.31) and seeking to integrate the Jewish God into the Graeco-Roman pantheon as a manifestation of Jupiter (*Cons*. 1.22.30). Negativity is far more common, however, ranging from the playful mockery of Horace (65-8 B.C.) to the vituperative abuse of Seneca (c. 4 B.C.-A.D. 65) and Tacitus (c. A.D. 56-c. 120).[29] The phenomenon of conversion to Judaism is considered particularly disturbing, entailing abstention from pork, circumcision, exchanging the laws of Rome for those of Moses, and refusing to offer even basic acts of kindness to Gentiles – if the Roman poet Juvenal (c. A.D. 60-c. 130) is to be believed (*Sat*. 14.96-106).[30]

2.1.3 Christian Literary Sources

The New Testament itself provides the start point for our exploration of Christian literary responses to Jews and Judaism in Asia Minor. Four of the thirteen canonical letters of Paul are written unambiguously to destinations in the region, and all of these – with the exception of Philemon – testify clearly to the presence and

[29] Horace *Sat*. 1.5.96-104, 1.9.60-78. As part of his broader distaste for eastern religious influences in the Roman world, Seneca considered the Jewish Sabbath a pretext for idleness, and its popularity an indication of the low ebb to which Rome had descended (*Civ*. 6.11). Tacitus' extended critique of Judaism is laced with racial contempt, although as Stern notes, our assessment of Tacitus, and Seneca, must be balanced with an awareness of the similar comments they make about other eastern influences (Tacitus (*Hist*. 5.4-5); Stern, 1976, 1157). Cicero's denigration of Syrians and Jews as people 'born to be slaves' (*Prov*. *Cons* 5.10) has no clear connection to attitudes outside Rome. Fredriksen attributes the abundance of ethnic abuse against Jews in extant ancient texts to the rise of Christianity, and to the re-use of this material by later Christian authors (Fredriksen, 2017, 45).

[30] Horace alludes tantalisingly to Jewish proselytism with an offhand remark that assumes widespread awareness of the Jewish practice of 'compelling' others to join their 'throng' (*Sat*. 1.4.139-43). Goodman's attempt to dismiss this as a reference to Jewish intimidation in legal contexts is not entirely convincing (Goodman, 1994, 74). Conversion to Judaism is also a central concern for Tacitus (*Hist*. 5.4-5).

importance of Judaism in the surrounding culture. Whatever view we take of the authorship of Ephesians and Colossians, the former supports at least the plausibility of the idea that the Ephesian church had a substantial Jewish-Christian component, and the latter attests to the presence of Jewish communities in the Lycus valley in the early Christian period and to significant Jewish influences in the 'philosophy' affecting the church there.[31] The letters addressed to the churches in Revelation 2 and 3 similarly attest to the presence of Jewish communities in Smyrna and Philadelphia, and probably to the presence of Gentile Jewish sympathisers or full converts in each location through the repeated reference to 'those who say that they are Jews and are not' (Rev 2.9, 3.9).[32]

As we have already noted in Chapter 2, and as our examination of material culture and epigraphy will shortly confirm, Acts cannot be neglected as an important source of insight into the circumstances of Paul's missionary endeavours in Asia Minor. For Galatians in particular its contribution is vital, for whether we favour a northern or southern destination for the letter, the archaeology of neither region has yielded plentiful contemporary Jewish data, leaving Acts as the only substantial source for Jewish life in a region where the Galatians might actually have lived.

In Pisidian Antioch, the Lukan account indicates the presence of a thriving synagogue community comprising 'Jews and devout converts to Judaism' (Ἰουδαίων καὶ τῶν

[31] On the extent of the Jewish influence on the Colossian 'philosophy,' see Chapter 6, note 86. See also Arnold, 1995, 4-5.
[32] Murray, 2003, 76-80. See also Feldman, 1993, 357; Gaston, 2005, 17-24.

σεβομένων προσηλύτων, Acts 13.43). Paul's preaching here provoked a hostile response from segments of his Jewish audience, precipitating his decision to focus on 'the Gentiles' (13.44-6). There is no indication in the text up till this point that these 'Gentiles' were already attached to the synagogue. At the conclusion of the episode at 13.50, however, the reference to 'God-fearing women of high standing' (τὰς σεβομένας γυναῖκας τὰς εὐσχήμονας) suggests that the community incorporated not only born-Jews and proselytes but also Gentile sympathisers enjoying proximity to Jewish culture without making an exclusive commitment to the Jewish God.[33] In Iconium we learn that Paul and Barnabas 'went as usual into the Jewish synagogue' where their preaching inspired a great number of Jews and Greeks (Ἰουδαίων τε καὶ Ἑλλήνων πολὺ πλῆθος) to believe (Acts 14.1). No additional information is supplied about the extent of these Greeks' commitment, but the parallels to the foregoing incident in Pisidian Antioch support the hypothesis that they were Godfearers more naturally than the alternative view that they were proselytes.

Acts 16.1-6 picks up the story in southern Galatia with its account of the opening moves of the second missionary journey. Paul returns to Lystra and recruits Timothy as a travelling companion following (we presume) his conversion during the previous visit (14.8-20). Hints of a Lystran Jewish community emerge in the puzzling account of Timothy's circumcision, expounded convincingly by Irina Levinskaya as an early

[33] Levinskaya, 1996, 122-5.

attestation of matrilineal decent as a Jewish concept.[34] Drawing on the reference to Timothy's upbringing in the knowledge of the Jewish Scriptures in 2 Tim 3.15, Levinskaya argues that only common acceptance of Timothy as a Jew (despite the Gentile lineage of his father – Acts 16.3) can explain Paul's actions as a coherent response to the Jerusalem Council which declined to enforce circumcision for Gentile converts but, by implication, reaffirmed this obligation for Jews (cf. Gal 5.3).[35]

In the wake of the extensive recent debate about the origins of the widely-accepted middle recension of Ignatius's letters, it is now possible to talk about the collection with more-informed confidence as a product of the *early* second century, if not of the *very early* second century as indicated by Eusebius (*Eccl. Hist.* 3.36).[36] The letters preserve the reflections of the shortly-to-be-martyred septuagenarian on his journey from Syria to Rome – broadly supporting the New Testament portrayal of the Jewish communities in the cities of the region – incorporating Gentile sympathisers and/or converts and, in the letters to the Magnesians and the Philadelphians in particular, exercising a degree of influence over their Christian neighbours through them.[37]

[34] Levinskaya, 1996, 12-17. In dissent, see Cohen, 1986, 251-268.
[35] The assumed incoherence here, not only between Paul's actions in Acts 16 and the decision of the Council as recorded in Acts 15, but also between the circumcision of Timothy and the non-circumcision of Titus in Gal 2 and the negative portrayal of circumcision in Galatians in general, is commonly thought to undermine the credibility of Acts as a source for early Christianity, (Fitzmyer, 2010, 575-6).
[36] Weijenborg and Joly question the authenticity of the middle recension as a whole (Weijenborg, 1969 and Joly, 1979) and Hübner presses for a later date, synchronising with the emergence of mature Gnosticism (Hübner, 1997, 44-72) but 'most scholars have not found their arguments convincing' (Ehrman, 2003, vol 1, 209-13; see also Foster, 2012, 3392-5).
[37] While Ignatius' letters doubtless reflect his intellectual formation in Antioch, there is no reason to believe they represent mere *superimpositions* of Antiochean norms on the cities to which they are directed (Wilson, 1995, 164; Murray, 2003, 83). See also Chapter 6, §5.1.

Neil Martin, Keble College

The *Martyrdom of Polycarp* provides the next unambiguously local Christian testimony to the attitudes of Jews in Asia Minor, dating from a period between the mid-A.D. 150s and the mid-A.D. 170s.[38] The text describes the trial and death of the aged bishop of Smyrna after his refusal to confess Caesar as Lord and make a sacrifice (*Mart. Pol.* 8.2). Local Jews and pagans unite to denounce him as a 'teacher of impiety, the father of the Christians, the destroyer of our own gods, the one who teaches many not to sacrifice or worship the gods,' cooperating in both the construction of his pyre and the subsequent effort to prevent his followers from recovering his body (*Mart. Pol.* 12.2, 13.1, 17.2-18.1). The text confirms that Jews and Christians were clearly distinct groups in Smyrna in the A.D. 150s and that the relationship between them was already marked by 'religious rivalry.'[39]

Dialogue with Trypho can be reliably attributed to Justin Martyr and dates from a period between the early A.D 150s and 160s.[40] Lack of data, however, limits the confidence with which the text can be ascribed to a particular location. Few see any positive reason to doubt the *plausibility* of Eusebius' claim that the *Dialogue* (or dialogues) on which the text is based took place in Ephesus – probably in the A.D. 130's, (*Hist. Eccl.* 4.18.6-8). Few venture beyond this observation, however, to the conclusion that the debate and the debaters are wholly *real*.[41]

[38] Ehrman, 2003, vol 1, 362.
[39] McCreedy, 2005, 154-5.
[40] On the dating of the text, see Marcovich, 1997, 278; Marcovich, 1994, 11. On the relationship between the final form of the *Dialogue* and putative earlier versions, see Horner, 2001, 19-23, 61-3.
[41] Marcovich favours Rome as the place of composition (Marcovich, 1997, 1). Halton, following Hamman, locates the debate itself in Caesarea (Halton, 2003, xii; Hamman, 1995, 231-39). Horner

Neil Martin, Keble College

Justin's *Dialogue* offers us valuable glimpses of Jewish integration into Hellenistic society. Justin's Jewish interlocutor, Trypho, is walking in a gymnasium with his friends when we first meet him; he is well-versed in the classics (*Dial*. 67.2) and is quite at ease striking up a conversation with a 'Philosopher' (*Dial*. 1.1). Yet Jewish distinctiveness – indeed, separation – from pagan society is also central to his argument. Christians are hypocrites because they 'claim to be pious and believe [themselves] to be different from the others [but they] do not segregate [themselves] from them nor do [they] observe a manner of life different from that of the Gentiles, for [they] do not keep the feasts or Sabbaths, nor do [they] practice the rite of circumcision' (*Dial*. 10.3). For Trypho, these distinctives are a necessary condition, if not a formal cause, of acceptance with God.[42]

Melito's *Peri Pascha*, composed in the late A.D. 160s or 170s and recovered from the codices of the Chester Beatty collection and the Bodmer Papyri in the middle decades of the twentieth century, provides our next glimpse into early Christian perspectives on Judaism in Asia Minor, this time from Sardis.[43] Mentioned by Eusebius among the 'great luminaries' who defended the eastern tradition for the dating of Easter (*Hist. Eccl*. 5.24.2-6), Melito offers a typological reworking of the biblical movement from Old Testament to New Testament focussing especially on

provides an excellent survey of the various scholarly positions on the historicity of Trypho and the *Dialogue* (Horner, 2001, 16-31). By comparing Justin's Trypho with the Jew in Origen's *Contra Celsum*, Wilson notes the improbability of a Caesarean provenance for either (Wilson, 1995, 280).

[42] 'First be circumcised, then observe the precepts concerning the Sabbath, the feasts, and God's new moons; in brief, fulfil the whole written law, and then, probably, you will experience the mercy of God' (*Dial*. 8.3).

[43] For a detailed introduction to the text including a description of its discovery, see Hall, 2012, xi-liv.

the Passover, demonstrating *en route* how all the leading characters in the drama point forward to the Christ. Although specific references to Melito's contemporary situation are conspicuously absent, the venom with which he attacks Judaism provides at least circumstantial evidence for the marginalisation of the Christian community as compared to the Jewish community in Sardis – the scale and influence of which in later centuries is still attested by the spectacular remains of their synagogue.[44]

The martyrdom account of Polycarp's biographer and third-century successor as bishop of Smyrna, Pionius, has been preserved through twelfth-century Greek and fourth-century Armenian copies and various Latin and Slavonic fragments.[45] Robin Lane Fox's convincing analysis identifies it as a largely autobiographical production, completed after the death of the protagonist – as were many similar narratives – by his followers.[46] As in the martyrdom of Polycarp, Jews are closely involved in the proceedings – a large crowd of Jews and Greeks gathers to drag him off to the forum with his companions (*Mart. Pion.* 3), and Pionius addresses them directly in a style reminiscent of Melito, reaching back into the Old Testament for examples of their past sins (*Mart. Pion.* 4) before exposing their uttermost crime: the betrayal and

[44] On Melito's attitude to Jews and Judaism, note his assumption of narratival continuity between the Old and New Testaments (e.g. *Per. Pas.* 40) and his excoriating treatment of Jewish responsibility for Jesus' execution (*Per. Pas.* 72, 81, 91-2) – culminating in their arraignment before the nations on the charge of regicide (*Per. Pas.* 94) – in contrast to his broadly excusing remarks about the Romans (*Per. Pas.* 92). On the remains of the synagogue at Sardis and their interpretation, see §2.2.1. See also Aasgaard, 2005, 156-74.
[45] Lane Fox, 2005, 460. For the text itself, see Musurillo, 1972, 136-67.
[46] Lane Fox, 2005, 469-72.

crucifixion of Christ (*Mart. Pion.* 13). For Lane Fox, however, the text's most striking insights lie in its alignment of Jewish and pagan interests. Joining the Smyrnaean synagogue is presented as an officially-sanctioned option for Christians seeking to avoid persecution (*Mart. Pion.* 13).[47] And if Lane Fox's reconstruction of events is accepted, the 'great sabbath' which forms the backdrop to the account may even represent a synchronisation, if not a formal unification, of the Jewish feast of Purim with 'the city's ancient Dionysia.'[48]

Moving now, as we did with pagan authors, from texts composed in Asia Minor to a broader range of witnesses to Jewish life and culture, we begin with the *Epistle of Barnabas* which offers a Christian perspective on Judaism from no later than the first few decades of the second century.[49] Barnabas' agenda is largely retrospective, offering a novel, if unsophisticated, reading of the Old Testament in which the Jews were irrevocably alienated from God and from his covenant at the point of their failure with the golden calf (*Barn.* 4.6-14, 14.1-5). The purpose of the polemic, however, is probably contemporary – Barnabas' Gentile Christian readers are attracted to Judaism in the present, having been influenced by the idea that the original inheritors of the covenant still possess it.[50] In response, he announces the obsolescence of regular offerings and Sabbaths (*Barn.* 2.4-5) – participation in such

[47] Lane Fox, 2005, 479-82. See also Trebilco, 1991, 30-1; Feldman, 1993, 371.
[48] Lane Fox, 2005, 485-7.
[49] For late first-century dating, see Williams, 1935, 16-18; for early second-century dating, see Ehrman, 2003, vol 2, 6-8. Wengst locates the place of composition in Asia Minor (Wengst, 1971), but the majority of scholars favour an Alexandrian or Syro-Palestinian origin (Ehrman, 2003, vol 2, 7-8).
[50] In *Barn.* 4.6, the author distinguishes himself and his audience as Gentile possessors of the covenant from Jews who no longer possess it.

customs capitulates to the plans of the Evil One who hopes to '[hurl] us away from our life' (*Barn*. 2.10).

Roughly contemporary with Justin's *Dialogue*, the *Epistle to Diognetus* engages briefly and stylishly with contemporary Jewish practice but its usefulness as a commentary on the situation *in Asia Minor* is hampered by our inability to speak with any certainty about its geographical origin beyond the suggestion that it comes from somewhere in the diaspora.[51] Together with the early Christian texts assessed above, however, we note its testimony at least to several key Jewish distinctives – including dietary restrictions, Sabbath keeping, and circumcision – and the calendrical observances and the astronomical observations associated with them (*Diog*. 4.1-5). *Diog*. 5.17 complements the picture emerging from the Smyrnaean martyr texts, accusing Jews of persecuting Christians. *Diog*. 3.1-5 berates Jews for assuming that God needs their offerings – an attitude indicative of either conscious or unconscious imitation of the surrounding pagan world. The reference is too vague, however, to contribute either positively or negatively to our assessment of the proposals that have been made concerning Jewish syncretism in Asia Minor in the period.

New Testament and Ignatian allusions to Godfearers in Asia Minor are helpfully supplemented by the third-century Christian Latin author, Commodian, who wrote two apologetic poems designed to confront Gentile Jewish sympathisation.[52] Before

[51] Holmes, 2007, 687-9.
[52] The geographical context of Commodian's *Instructions* remains frustratingly enigmatic (Poinsotte, 2009, ix-xvii).

summoning Godfearers to wholehearted devotion to Christ, Commodian describes them, in a manner reminiscent of Epictetus, as 'duplicitous people' who attend the synagogue but then 'go outside again [searching] for pagan temples' (Commodian *Instr*. 1.24.11-14; 1.37; translation mine).[53]

2.2 Material Culture

2.2.1 The Synagogues at Sardis and Priene

The discovery of the largest known synagogue in the Graeco-Roman world at Sardis during excavations in 1962 remains one of the outstanding achievements in the archaeological study of ancient Judaism. Originally constructed in the second century A.D. as the southern wing of a vast public gymnasium complex, the building was taken over by the local Jewish community in the third century triggering a series of architectural modifications including the elimination of doorways communicating with the main courtyard of the gymnasium, the installation of semi-circular banked seating for community elders and guests in the apse at the west end of the main auditorium, and the construction of Torah niches in the entrance hall at the east end, facing Jerusalem, from which the scriptures were brought for public reading every Sabbath.[54] The origins of the building as a municipal space, however, continued to be felt, especially in the on-going prominence of a public fountain at the entrance. By the

[53] For commentary on the interpretation of the texts, see Poinsotte, 2009, 211-17, 278-84. See also Van der Horst, 1990, 179-81.
[54] Seager, 1972, 425-35. See also Kraabel, 1992d, 226-8; Kraabel, 1992e, 242-8; Trebilco, 1991, 40-3.

time the finishing touches were added in the late fourth century, the building could accommodate over 1,000 people – its physical scale and central location indicating the size and influence of the Jewish community which worshipped there.[55]

The extant furnishings of the Sardis synagogue include a massive marble table in the apse supported by stone eagles repurposed from a previous application, and two life-size stone lions, similarly repurposed.[56] Mosaic floors dating from the middle of the fourth century feature floral and animal patterns on the contemporary pagan model, with the names of the donors, in Greek, incorporated into the design.[57] Shop buildings attached to the outside of the structure preserve evidence of Jews and Christians working at close quarters when the structure was finally abandoned in the early seventh century.[58] The synagogue was used not only as a place of assembly but also as a school, as a Jewish court, as a communal dining room, as a hostel for travellers, and as a hiring hall for local trades.[59]

The inscriptions recovered from the building indicate the breadth of occupations practiced by members of the community including shop owners, goldsmiths, and sculptors. [60] A fifth- or sixth-century inscription commemorates a 'priest' named

[55] Trebilco, 1991, 41, Kraabel, 1992d, 230. As an indication of the enduring nature of Jewish influence in the city, Trebilco notes the absence of any evidence that the synagogue was later converted into a church (Trebilco, 1991, 53).
[56] Kraabel, 1992e, 245-7; Trebilco, 1991, 42.
[57] 'Had the mosaic been discovered in an otherwise unidentified building, there would be no way to prove it Jewish' (Kraabel, 1992e, 245).
[58] Hanfmann and Mierse, 1983, 161-7.
[59] Kraabel, 1992f, 287-8.
[60] IJO, no.s 57, 59, 86, 98, 135.

Samoe, but this is more probably a reference to the dedicant's priestly ancestry than it is to the existence of a functional priesthood in this or any other diaspora community of the period.[61] Nine city councillors are commemorated (possibly ten, if we accept Ameling's reconstruction of one particularly fragmentary text), as well as an assistant in the city archives, and a dedicant described as a κόμης – denoting a 'leading military [or] civil [functionary]' in the middle of the fourth century when the text was inscribed.[62] Several instances of the adjective, θεοσεβής, are also attested – very probably indicating the presence of Gentile Jewish sympathisers in the synagogue community.[63]

The synagogue at Priene in Ionia is an altogether more modest affair, recollecting a more modest, and perhaps more typical, form of Jewish experience in the diaspora communities of Asia Minor.[64] The building was converted from a private house into a large meeting space by the removal of several walls and the addition of a Torah niche and a large marble basin for ritual washing perhaps as early as the third

[61] IJO, no. 63. See also Kraabel, 1992b, 26.
[62] IJO, no.s 62, 72, 77, 78, 86, 87, 92, 95, 98 all include βουλευτής or derivatives. Ameling reconstructs IJO, no. 85 as follows: [Σ]αρδ., βο[υλ.,]; [ἐκ τῶν τῆς προν]οίας τὸ [δια-]; [χώρον ἐσκούτλ]ωσα – 'I,… citizen of Sardis, councillor, had the wall section ornamented from the gifts of providence' (translation mine). For the archival assistant, see IJO, no. 76. For the κόμης inscription, see Trebilco, 1991, 48. References to councillors and other officials in the Sardian inscriptions all antedate the early third-century reforms of Severus and Caracalla which 'allowed Jews to hold city offices, while stating that they were exempt from obligations which infringed their religion' (Schürer, 2014, vol 3i, 131).
[63] IJO, no.s 67, 68, 83, 123, 125, 132. Kraabel famously announced the 'disappearance of the God-fearers,' arguing that θεοσεβής was used in Sardis to describe Jewish donors (Kraabel, 1992c, 119-30). The inscription from Aphrodisias discussed at §2.3.3, however, is now regarded by most scholars as a clear indication that the word was frequently used to denote Gentile Jewish sympathisers.
[64] Trebilco, 1991, 55-6; Levine, 2000, 266-7.

century A.D. It has none of the rich mosaics or furnishings that characterise its more easterly neighbour. Three engravings depicting menorot and other Jewish motifs are all that remains of its decorative elements.

2.2.2 The Noah Coins of Apamea Kibotos



Fig. 6. Noah Coins. Apamea. Early second century A.D.

A series of coins minted in Apamea in Phrygia from the time of Septimus Severus (emperor, A.D. 193-211) to the time of Trebonianus Gallus (emperor, A.D. 251-3), depict Noah and his wife aboard a crude rectangular ark marked **ΝΩΕ** with the dove and the raven familiar from Genesis 8 above their heads, and also on dry land with their hands raised in the 'orans' gesture of praise familiar from other Hellenistic sources.[65] How are we to explain the presence of such overtly Jewish imagery in the civic self-expressions of a Phrygian city?

In the light of local pagan flood traditions – including the story of Suidas and Zenobius who escaped a flood by climbing a mountain near Iconium – Trebilco diagnoses bidirectional influence between Jewish and pagan communities in these artefacts.[66] The use of the plural form of **Κιβωτός** (box, chest), **Κιβωτοί**, on coins minted under Hadrian clearly rules out a Jewish origin for Apamea's civic nickname

[65] Trebilco, 1991, 87.
[66] Trebilco, 1991, 86-95. See also Van der Horst, 2014, 149. In dissent, see Schürer, 2014, vol 3i, 30.

– in the biblical narrative there is only one ark. Κιβωτος alludes more probably to the commercial success of the city in the period when the association is first attested.[67] Nevertheless, the use of Κιβωτος as a description of the ark in the LXX (Gen 6.14 *et passim*) combined with pre-existent local interest in flood stories would have made Apamea a logical base for a rearticulation of the biblical account. The coins suggest that *Jews* in Apamea embraced the prominence of two heroes in local flood narratives and conventional Hellenic norms for their depiction, and that *Gentiles* in Apamea embraced Noah as a central character in the story and the reimagination of the Κιβωτος as an ark. Why? In line with the development of other contemporary civic origin myths, Trebilco suggests the ancient pedigree of the biblical account may have been attractive to its pagan hosts.[68] For the Jews, the coins may have served to cement their status as an integral component of Apamean culture. Whatever the actual reasons, the association between Apamea and the biblical flood story clearly had striking endurance. As we saw in §2.1.1, its first attestation in the Sibylline Oracles dates back to the turn of the era.

[67] Schürer, 2014, vol 3i, 29; Van der Horst, 2014, 149; Lightfoot, 2007, 367-70; Trebilco, 1991, 92-3. Κιβωτος is first attested as a nickname for Apamea shortly before the turn of the era (Strabo *Geog.* 12.8.13).
[68] Trebilco, 1991, 93. See also Wilson, 1995, 21.

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2.3 Epigraphic Sources

2.3.1 Vows

Ameling's comprehensive collection of Jewish inscriptions from Asia Minor contains a large number of vows. Sixteen percent of the total use explicit vow-making terminology (εὐχή and variants, εὔχομαι and variants, and on two occasions forms of נדר), but a great many more disclose the same underlying logic. A fourth-century inlaid inscription from the synagogue in Sardis captures the typical progression from vow to fulfilment in the form of an offering:

> …]ρος **K**[…] τὸ ἔ[ργ]ον το[ῦτο …]**ΙΝΠΟ**[… εὐξ]άμε[νος ἐπο]ίασα
>
> I, …ros,… made this work… after taking a vow, (translation mine)..[69]

The incompletely-named dedicant here commissioned the inscription having previously pledged to do so if their prayers were answered. Exactly what kind of assistance was requested we do not know, but other inscriptions are more specific. A contemporary text from Sardis recalls the prayer of a high-ranking official 'on behalf of [his] son.'[70] A later text taken from the Torah shrines at the eastern end of the Sardis synagogue is even more specific:

[69] IJO, no. 116. Note the aorist tense of the participle suggesting past time with respect to the action of the main verb.
[70] IJO, no. 92.

> The same Memnonios also decorated me, the Torah shrine, with chequer-work for his health's sake, (translation mine).[71]

A third-century text from Philadelphia records the donation of a basin for ritual cleansing by a Godfearer, either as an expression of thanks for, or in the hope of, answered prayers for his brother.[72]A text from Aspendos in Pamphylia, less than 20 miles east of Perge, takes us back as far as the first or second century A.D. – although Ameling is unwilling to attribute anything more to it than Jewish *influence*.[73]

The religious provenance of these texts is difficult to determine. Six vows in *Inscriptiones Judaicea Orientis* are explicitly attributed to Godfearers but, beyond this group, there is no reason to assume the use of Gentile names offers a failsafe indication of Gentile origins – some of the dedicants provide Jewish *and* Gentile options.[74] On the whole, as we observed above, the texts are disappointingly late, hindering our search for conclusive information about the practice of Jewish communities in the time of Paul.

Jewish vows do have distinctive features of their own – their dedicants make no sacrifices, they have no altars, and the conviction that their offerings are merely returns from what God has already given them, ἐκ τῶν τῆς προνοίας (from the gifts

[71] IJO, no. 129.
[72] IJO, no. 49.
[73] IJO, no. 218.
[74] For votives dedicated by Godfearers, see IJO, no.s 49, 67, 83, 123, 125, 132. For a dedicant with Jewish and Gentile names, see IJO, no. 95.

of providence), is certainly unusually concentrated in the synagogue in Sardis.[75] On balance, however, it is striking how close these Jewish votive texts are, in form and content, to the pagan votives surveyed in Chapter 3 – indeed for Ameling, these similarities indicate a similarity in 'religious motivation.'[76] Like pagan votives, Jewish inscriptions commonly focus on the health of the dedicants or of their friends or family members, and they are commonly displayed in communal religious spaces.[77]

2.3.2 Grave Inscriptions

Another area of striking overlap between the epigraphic practice of Jews and pagans in the region is the tradition of inscribing curses on funerary monuments – threatening grave violators with anything from modest financial penalties to divine vengeance on their entire families.[78] The curses frequently contain biblical references but nothing of the kind appears on Jewish graves in Palestine – they are a distinctive feature of Jewish-pagan interaction in Asia Minor.[79]

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[75] On the question of whether Jews or Gentile members of Jewish communities in Asia Minor built and used altars, see §2.3.3. On the differences between pagan and Jewish vows, see Ameling, 2009, 209-10. For acknowledgements of indebtedness to providence, see IJO, no.s 71, 77, 78, 80, 81, 82, 83, 84, 85, 124, 132. Despite the distinctiveness of the locution ἐκ τῶν τῆς προνοίας in the Jewish inscriptions from Sardis, the use of the Greek word προνοία to articulate the idea of divine providence is probably pagan in origin (Kraabel, 1992f, 283). For the articulation of a parallel sentiment in a pagan inscription, see the fragmentary mid third-century text of Miletos, no. 95.
[76] Ameling, 2009, 208. Commonalities in form and vocabulary are also carried over into early Christian vows in the region (ETAM 15, no.s 54, 70-75, 145, 325).
[77] cf. Hosios kai Dikaios, no.s 5, 15, 16, 42.
[78] Of the twenty nine Jewish grave curses considered in this study from Galatia and its adjacent provinces; nineteen threaten financial penalties (ranging from 50 to 10,000 Denarii), and two threaten 'the entire race' of any potential offender with destruction by 'the wrath of God' (IJO, no.s 177, 178).
[79] Ameling, 2009, 207. See also Schwartz, 2010, 89-91.

Neil Martin, Keble College

Three inscriptions explicitly brandish 'the curses that are written down in Deuteronomy' – an allusion to the blessings and curses enumerated in Deuteronomy 28 almost certainly repeated, albeit with less precision, in two further inscriptions from the same region.[80] Similar Old Testament echoes, this time from Exodus 34, are detectable in the eight inscriptions from Acmonia and the neighbouring area threatening consequences not only against grave violators but also against their 'children's children.'[81] The enigmatic reference to 'the sickle of the curse' (το ἀρᾶς δρέπανον) in two other Jewish texts from the region makes a similar Old Testament connection – in this case to Septuagint Zechariah 5.1-5 which announces a curse against thieves and oath takers delivered by the medium of a 'flying sickle.'[82]

In his doctoral thesis, Thomas Kraabel read these inscriptions as (mis)appropriations of Jewish material for magical purposes – a phenomenon that was certainly very common throughout the Jewish diaspora at the time as we will see below.[83] Fifty years on, Trebilco's interpretation of the grave curses as reflections of mainstream Jewish exegesis in the period is more convincing, but the underlying point remains: substantial interactions existed between the pagan and Jewish communities whose norms and assumptions the curses preserve.[84] Jews in the Phrygian diaspora were

[80] For the three explicit references to Deuteronomy, see IJO, no.s 173-4 from Acmonia, dated A.D. 248/9 and second/third century respectively and IJO, no. 213 from Laodicea, dated second/third century. For the probable references, see IJO, no. 172, 179. See also Trebilco, 1991, 62-3; Van der Horst, 2014, 148.
[81] Trebilco, 1991, 69-74; e.g. MAMA VI, no. 287.
[82] IJO, no.s 175, 176.
[83] Kraabel, 1968.
[84] Trebilco, 1991, 66-9, 71-3.

aware of grave curses as an important part of local pagan burial customs and adapted them to their own needs, carrying over the central elements of form and content.[85] And pagans, for their part, were sufficiently aware of Jewish culture (or, at least, of the reputation of the Jewish God) to render references to 'the curses of Deuteronomy' 'the law of the Jews' and 'the Sickle of the Curse' effective as deterrents.[86]

Grave inscriptions commissioned by Jews also provide valuable commentary on the nature of their interactions with the surrounding culture. A third-century text from Acmonia records the last will of a Jew named Aurelius Aristeas whose children built a tomb to house his remains and those of his wife Aurelia on land he bought for the purpose.[87] Trebilco reads the text's injunctions to 'the Neighbourhood of the First Gate' as a reference to a 'legally constituted burial society' with which Aurelius and his family were associated. The remaining members of the group were provided with equipment to maintain the grave at Aurelius' expense on the condition that 'they deck [it]… with roses every year' – a reference to the *rosalia* tradition commonly attested in pagan contexts.[88]

A similar funerary testimony to Jewish involvement in guilds and associations, comes from Hierapolis in the same period. An inscription records a bequest made

[85] For parallel examples of financial threats in the pagan inscription corpora see MAMA XI, no.s 35, 38, 80.
[86] The high status of at least two of the Deuteronomic curse dedicants (as indicated by the subscription of the various civic responsibilities and liturgies they undertook) offers another indication of Jewish engagement in public life after the reforms of Severus and Caracalla (IJO, no.s 172-3).
[87] IJO, no. 171.
[88] e.g. SGRA, no. 173. On the popularity of the *rosalia* tradition in Asia Minor, see Marek and Frei, 2016, 459.

by Publius Aelius Glykon to the local guilds of purple dyers and carpet weavers to decorate the family tomb with wreaths on the festivals of Passover and Pentecost respectively.[89] Very few similar attestations to Jewish calendrical distinctives exist in the region and it is striking to find evidence of their ongoing importance blended together so closely here with a balancing testimony to Jewish involvement in the major industries of the city in which the dedicant lived.[90] A second-century inscription, also from Hierapolis, similarly emphasises Jewish involvement – commemorating the Jew, Hikesios, as 'the greatest victor in the holy games.'[91]

None of this data connects directly to regions in which Paul's correspondents could have lived but the presence of Jewish communities with similar burial conventions in Galatia may be inferred from later Christian monuments.[92] A third- or fourth-century inscription from Ladık, for example, discloses local Jewish influence by invoking divine retribution against grave desecrators in the language of the Old Testament: '[they] shall have to reckon with the outstretched arm and the coming judgement.'[93]

2.3.3 Dedications

One of the earliest and most-celebrated inscriptions pertaining to Jewish life and experience in Asia Minor is a late first-century text dealing with the restoration of the

[89] IJO, no. 196.
[90] Van der Horst, 2008, 286. On the importance of purple-dying industry in ancient Hierapolis, see Strabo, *Geog.* 13.4.14.
[91] IJO, no. 189; see also Huttner, 2013, 75-6.
[92] Breytenbach and Zimmermann, 2018, 677-683.
[93] MAMA XI, no. 271.

synagogue in Acmonia originally constructed by the wealthy Gentile, and sometime priestess of the local imperial cult, Julia Severa.[94] Julia Severa is well-known to us from other inscriptional evidence as the mother of a future Roman senator and for her service as a co-magistrate in the A.D. 50s and 60s alongside Servinius Capito, a high-ranking Roman immigrant.[95] While Kraabel viewed her support for the Jews in Acmonia merely as an act of disinterested philanthropy, Cohen's categorisation of her behaviour within a larger spectrum of Gentile-Jewish sympathisation represents a less tendentious response to the evidence.[96] Whatever conclusion we come to, however, the willingness of the Jewish community to publicly commemorate their indebtedness to a pagan benefactress is striking.[97] And neither is it an isolated incident. A third-century text from Tralles records the donation of an ornate staircase to the local synagogue by another wealthy Gentile noblewoman, [Claudia] Capitolina, who is explicitly classified as a 'Godfearer.'[98]

The best-known and, for most scholars, decisive evidence for the inclusion of Gentile Godfearers within the synagogue communities of Asia Minor, however, emerged in 1976 with the discovery of a massive marble pillar in Aphrodisias

[94] IJO, 168.
[95] Schürer, 2014, vol 3i, 30-1; Donaldson, 2007, 464; Van der Horst, 2014, 148; Trebilco, 1991, 58-60. Recent excavations have also revealed Julia Severa's involvement in the establishment of the imperial cult in Perge (Bru, Demirer, and Önen, 2016, 65-82).
[96] Kraabel, 1992a, 12; Kraabel, 1992c, 119-30; cf. Cohen, 1999, 147. See also Overman, 1992, 150 and Donaldson, 2007, 465-6.
[97] 'Apparently [Jews in Acmonia] were prepared to honor a Gentile who demonstrated support and appreciation for the Jewish community in such a public way without either expecting that she demonstrate exclusive loyalty to the God of Israel or feeling that their own identity was somehow compromised or threatened in the process' (Donaldson, 2007, 466). See also Goodman, 1994, 55.
[98] IJO, no. 27. See also Van der Horst, 1990, 177; Trebilco, 1991, 157-8.

enumerating, on one side, the membership of a group known as the δεκανία and, on the other, contributors to a building project interpreted by the original publishers of the text as a soup kitchen.[99] Of the eighteen members of the δεκανία, three (with adopted Jewish names) are termed προσήλυτος and two (retaining their Greek names) are termed θεοσεβής – leaving a remainder of thirteen born-Jews, although they are not specifically classified as such. Of the 125 donors listed on the second side of the pillar, 3 are termed proselytes and 54, Godfearers. The remainder, as on the first side, are Jews.

The dating of the text is controversial – some scholars favour the third century, others the fourth.[100] Either way, the fact that it very probably postdates the early third-century reforms of Severus and Caracalla which allowed Jews to serve in public office without infringing their religious scruples makes it impossible to judge whether the presence of nine city councillors among the Godfearers listed indicates the acceptance of a lower threshold for consistent Torah-observance among this group.[101] Further down the inscription, however, the inclusion of Godfearers

[99] IJO, no. 14. See also Trebilco, 1991, 152-5; Collins, 2000, 267. The identification of the building as a soup kitchen is insufficiently certain to justify Van der Horst's reconstruction of the synagogue community in Aphrodisias as consciously submissive to Mishnaic guidelines concerning public charity (Reynolds and Tannenbaum, 1987; see also Van der Horst, 1990, 169; Feldman, 1993, 70; Levinskaya, 1996, 70-80).
[100] For the earlier date, see Van der Horst, 1990, 169; for the later, see Mitchell, 1999a, 117 n.108.
[101] Goodman, 1994, 118.

employed as 'boxers,' 'athletes' and 'sellers/producers of mincemeat' *does* support the idea of such a lower threshold.[102]

It is hazardous to extrapolate from the relative sizes of the groups on the second side of the pillar to the composition of the synagogue in Aphrodisias or synagogues more broadly. All the individuals listed had the financial means to make donations, but if either Gentiles or Jews were overrepresented as a result we have no way of knowing.[103] But, either way, the inscription goes some way toward substantiating the testimony, not only of Acts, but also of Josephus (*War*. 7.43-45), that Godfearer communities in diaspora synagogues could be sizeable.[104]

Other important texts include a late second- or early third-century inscription from the theatre in Miletus indicating the presence of a seating reservation for Jews and Godfearers.[105] This text attests to the comprehensibility of the term θεοσεβής, as distinct from Ἰουδαῖοι, within wider Milesian society in the period, as well as opening a window on the complex combination of engagement and critique which characterised Jewish theatre attendance in the period.[106]

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[102] Trebilco, 1991, 153-4, 182; Schürer, 2014, vol 3i, 166-7. Julia Severa's involvement in official civic and cultic roles points to a similar conclusion if we have rightly deduced that she too would have been considered a Godfearer.
[103] On Jewish sympathisation among wealthy and influential pagans, see Murray, 2003, 16-21. Cohen finds no evidence for substantial differences in socio-economic status between diaspora Jews and their pagan neighbours (Cohen, 1999, 27-34).
[104] Van der Horst, 2014, 150.
[105] IJO, 37. Note Christian Marek's helpful survey of the interpretative options for this text (Marek, 2018, 133-4). See also Trebilco, 1991, 159-62.
[106] Jay, 2013, 218-53. Philo was well-known for his participation in theatrical spectacles (e.g. *Drunkenness* 177; *Good Person* 141) but 'in most of the passages in which he mentions these entertainments [he] is rather critical' (Jay, 2013, 223). See also Feldman, 1993, 62.

A second-century text from Pergamum with distinctive Jewish characteristics has puzzled scholars with its reference to the dedication of an altar.[107] Elias Bickerman argues that the dedicant, Zopyros, was a Godfearer, and that the structure was indicative of a broader tolerance within diaspora Judaism for unorthodox forms of worship among Gentile sympathisers which accommodated the norms of their pagan past.[108] Bickerman makes some important observations about the grudging Rabbinic acceptance of Gentile altars to the Jewish God in later centuries, and the connection he traces to the rescript preserved by Josephus from the Magistrates and Council of Sardis to Lucius Antonius allowing Jews to 'offer their ancestral prayers *and sacrifices* to God' (*Ant.*14.259-61; emphasis mine) is intriguing.[109] The Zopyros inscription itself, however, offers an unsteady foundation for this reconstruction. Trebilco argues that the word translated 'altar' by Bickerman – βώμος – should in fact be translated 'base' and that the structure was the base of a lantern stand.[110] Ameling resolves the anomaly far more satisfactorily, however, by noting that 'altars' were commonly used as grave markers in the period, and that the full range of terms used to describe them, including βώμος, need have no greater significance than the indication of a burial.[111]

[107] Donaldson, 2007, 460-2.
[108] Bickerman, 2007, 596-617.
[109] Bickerman, 2007, 606-8.
[110] Trebilco, 1991, 163.
[111] Ameling, 2009, 207.

Neil Martin, Keble College

An early second-century 'altar' dedicated by 'former Jews' (οἱ ποτὲ Ἰουδαῖοι) in Smyrna presents a similar interpretative puzzle and is susceptible to the same solution.[112] 'Former Jews' here almost certainly refers to former residents of Judea rather than Jewish apostates. The true value of the inscription lies in its testimony to Jewish engagement in civic society by making modest donations to public works.[113] A second- or third-century inscription also from Smyrna, adds further weight to the case for Jewish social engagement in the city, commemorating a wealthy Jewess, Rufina, who built a tomb 'for her freed slaves and the slaves raised in her house' and who entrusted the relevant documentation to 'the [public] archives' for safekeeping.[114]

2.3.4 Declarations of Loyalty

An inscription from Acmonia – for which Ameling offers no more specific date than 'late antiquity' – corroborates the foregoing examples of Jewish loyalty to the cities in which they lived as follows: ὑπὲρ εὐχῆ<ς> πάσῃ τῇ πατρίδι 'for the sake of a vow made on behalf of the whole city' (translation mine).[115] A clearer – and precisely dateable – example is discernible in the rescript preserved by Josephus from the emperor Augustus to the Jews of Asia who passed a motion celebrating his

[112] IJO, 40.
[113] Trebilco, 1991, 175; Barclay, 1996, 333. Robin Lane Fox, finds indirect contemporary corroboration here for the kind of socially-engaged and influential Jewish community we see depicted in the Smyrnaen martyrdom texts (Lane Fox, 2005, 481).
[114] IJO, no. 43. See also Trebilco, 1991, 104; Lane Fox, 2005, 481.
[115] IJO, no. 169. On the correct interpretation of πατρίς in his context, see Trebilco, 1991, 81-2.

piety and committing themselves to support him and the future consul and governor of the province, Gaius Marcius Censorinus, in 12 B.C. (*Ant.* 16.165).[116]

2.3.5 Magical Texts

Ameling discusses five inscriptions from Asia Minor which, in common with magical papyri from other locations, are very difficult to date with precision. An amulet from Cyzicus on the northwest coast of Asia Minor from the second half of the third-century assures the wearer of protection by invoking the Jewish angels Michael, Gabriel, Uriel and Raphael; and banishes the evil angel Araaph from their presence with the threefold declaration 'holy, holy, holy' and a conjuration of Solomon.[117] A similar amulet from Smyrna follows the same pattern, but here the underlying dependence on the text of Isaiah 6.3 is even more obvious.[118] An undateable amulet from Ephesus invokes the 'forever-living Adonai,' 'beside whom stand myriads of angels.'[119] The final two examples come from Henry van Lennep's account of the amulets he observed in and around Smyrna in the late nineteenth century featuring

[116] Trebilco's tentative support for Rabinowitz's theory that an inscription recovered from the synagogue in Sardis preserves the remains of a similar declaration of loyalty to the second-century emperor Lucius Verus is probably misplaced (Trebilco, 1991, 44; see also Hanfmann and Mierse, 1983, 179). The text more-probably dates to the third century or later, and preserves the common Latin name [Se]verus (Cross, 2002, 3-8).
[117] IJO, M5; see also Arnold, 1995, 64-6.
[118] IJO, M4; see also Arnold, 1995, 66-7.
[119] IJO, M1; see also Arnold, 1995, 68.

similar enumerations of angel names, and 'the most remarkable [of which] bore a fine representation of a seven-branch candle stick.'[120]

This handful of texts merely scratches the surface of a genre that seems to have thriven in Asia Minor, as elsewhere in the Jewish diaspora, in the early Christian period. As a whole, the Greek Magical Papyri attest to a spectrum of engagement with Jewish material that ranges from total ignorance of its original context to detailed knowledge of, and respect for, its original context. At the most-informed end of this spectrum, a small number of texts seemingly betray their origins within the Jewish community, or at least within a community of well-informed Jewish sympathisers.[121] At the other end of the spectrum, Jewish elements are incorporated seemingly at random by enchanters who knew the Jews, and Moses in particular, as masters of 'the "divine arts"' and whose objective was little more than the pragmatic deployment of arcane scripts and powerful names as effective strategies for influencing the divine world.[122]

It is impossible to say to what extent individuals on the margins of Jewish communities in Asia Minor in the first-century may have practiced or peddled

[120] van Lennep, 1870, vol 1, 20; IJO, M2; Arnold, 1995, 68. On the magical significance of the menorah, see Simon, 1986, 354. Jewish angel names also feature prominently on the famous early third-century Pergamum Magical Apparatus (Arnold, 1995, 63-4).
[121] PGM, XXXVI 295-311 represents perhaps the most thoroughly-contextualised engagement with Jewish sources in the catalogue but it is still unequivocally a spell. Several other spells demonstrate accurate understanding of the Jewish milieu (PGM, IV 1167-1226, 3007-86; V 96-172; XXIIb 1-26).
[122] Gager, 1985, 107-8. See also Feldman, 1993, 69. In PGM, I 222-231 and several other spells, the name of the Hebrew God appears in an extensive list of names and name variants that the enchanter is encouraged to recite, hoping to strike upon at least one powerful combination of vowels and consonants. According to Marcel Simon, Hebrew letters 'assumed greater power the less they were understood' (Simon, 1986, 343). On the allegation that Moses taught sorcery to the Jews, see Origen, *Cels.* 1.26.

magical rites.[123] What is indisputable, however, is that Jewish religious components were attractive to pagans as part of the larger contemporary quest to control the future and master one's fate.

3. Analysis

Various attempts have been made to create analytical frameworks within which the complex interactions of the Jewish, pagan, and emerging Christian cultures outlined above can be characterised.[124] Our goal here is less ambitious. Turning our attention to the background of Galatians, we restrict ourselves to tracing the interplay of actions and reactions within and between the various communities that are relevant to the letter.

3.1 Distinctiveness

The foregoing survey of sources clearly highlights distinctiveness as an enduring priority for the Jews of Asia Minor. With greater or lesser degrees of strictness, Jewish communities continued to be known for their historic peculiarities: adherence to distinctive dietary laws, observance of distinctive calendrical commitments, circumcision of children, and continued allegiance to a larger trans-civic, trans-

[123] Simon, 1986, 348-9; Kraabel, 1992b, 21-2; Barclay, 1996, 332. Lightstone, by contrast, argues that diaspora Judaism was thoroughly comfortable with 'religious virtuosi' who practiced magical arts (Lightstone, 1985, 133-45).
[124] Barclay's proposal, assessing the diversity of Jewish experience in the diaspora according to various levels of assimilation, acculturation and accommodation, marks a particularly notable contribution to this enterprise (Barclay, 1996, 82-102).

national community as manifested in their ongoing commitment to the temple tax.[125] To these, several additional peculiarities were added over time, such as a distinctive focus on prayer and the reading of the scriptures, and multiple different forms of interaction with the distinctive institution of the synagogue.[126]

Eventually, as the Smyrnaean martyr texts attest, Jews distinguished themselves clearly from Christians as well as pagans. Just how sharply defined this distinction was in the *Sitz im Leben* of Galatians, however, is a matter of considerable controversy. Should the Pauline churches be pictured as distinct from local synagogues from the outset, or should we characterise them as variations on the theme – each with its own penumbra of Gentile sympathisers and proselytes – at least in the view of the larger Gentile culture in which they were situated?[127]

Whatever approach we take to the question of Jewish distinctiveness from Christians, however, their distinctiveness from pagan culture should not be thought to entail complete separation.[128] There is little evidence to suggest that Jews in Asia Minor

[125] On dietary laws, see Trebilco, 1991, 18. On Sabbath-keeping and exemption from military service, see Trebilco, 1991, 16-17; Kraabel, 1992b, 26-7. On circumcision, see Trebilco, 1991, 23. On payment of the *Fiscus Judiaicus*, see Trebilco, 1991, 13-16. On the trans-national character of diaspora Judaism, see Schwartz, 2010, 25-33.
[126] On prayer and Bible-reading, see Schürer, 2014, vol 3i, 144. On the central importance of the synagogue, see Wilson, 1995, 22; Collins, 2000, 1.
[127] Even among scholars arguing for a full-scale 'parting of the ways' between Judaism and Christianity in the early-Christian period, the date of the Galatian crisis proposed in Chapter 2 is too early for such developments to have already matured and settled in the public mind. Dunn, for example, argues that the issues of circumcision and food laws which shattered the illusion of similarity between Christian and mainstream Judaism were not even broached until the early A.D. 50s (Dunn, 2006*a*, 164-84). Others, however, are sceptical that such a parting even took place (e.g. Rudolph, 2011, 204-8).
[128] Goodman, 2004, 3-14.

lived in ghettoised communities or that they perceived themselves as aliens among their Gentile peers.[129] According to Collins, 'even the most conservative strands of Diaspora Judaism still [attempted] to strike a balance with Hellenistic culture.'[130] David Rudolph highlights the important difference between distinctiveness and withdrawal from society in his work on commensality. All but the most conservative Jews saw their food laws as a framework within which to manage interaction with Gentiles, not as an absolute interdict on interaction.[131] But distinctiveness remained a central feature of Jewish experience none-the-less, as witnessed, in particular, by the scale of the change experienced by individuals who crossed the boundary from one community to another. As Philo describes it, the journey to full proselyte status for Gentiles entailed 'abandoning their kinsfolk by blood, their country, their customs, and the temples and images of their gods' (*Virt.* 20.102).[132]

3.2 Hostility

Among the several pagan reflexes to Jewish distinctiveness observable in our sources, the most notable is hostility.[133] Distinctiveness is the centrepiece of Tacitus'

[129] Kraabel, 1992a, 8, 13. Feldman notes the experience of Jews in Alexandria as the closest thing to ghettoisation in the period (Feldman, 1993, 64). See also Delling, 1987, 11.
[130] Collins, 2000, 274. The Noah coins of Apamea discussed above afford just one among many striking examples of this kind of accommodation.
[131] Rudolph, 2011, 125-30.
[132] On Jewish distinctiveness in general, see Schwartz, 2010, 80. On conversion as a measure of distinction, see Philo *Spec.* 1.52, 4.178. Surveying sources discussing proselyte conversion, Donaldson concludes that conversion entailed monotheistic worship, identification with the Jewish community and adoption of the practices prescribed by the Jewish Law (Donaldson, 2007, 488). Cohen comes to very similar conclusions (Cohen, 1999, 156).
[133] Schürer, 2014, vol 3i, 152. Note that separatism is also commonly highlighted as a vice in Egyptian and Hellenistic renderings of Jewish origins (Barclay, 2011, 161-70). *Christian* hostility to Jews – which, as we saw in §2.1.3, emerges and crystallises as we move forward from the first

excoriating critique of Judaism – which highlights exactly the same list of requirements for converts noted by Philo: 'the earliest lesson they receive is to despise the gods, to disown their country, and to regard their parents, children, and brothers as of little account' (*Hist.* 5.5). Circumcision, Sabbath-keeping and abstention from pork are also common points of focus in the anti-Jewish polemic of the period.[134] Rajak concludes that 'the strangeness of the invisible Jewish God and the supposed barbarousness of the rites and "superstitions" believed to be associated with Him was deeply disturbing to many Greeks and Romans.'[135] The pagan notion of the 'collegiality' of the gods entailed automatic disapproval for anyone who disregarded the entire system.[136]

In Asia Minor in the mid-to-late first century, hostility is less clearly attested than it is in other regions – particularly Alexandria. As we saw in §1, however, there is no reason to assume that the amelioration of tensions attributable to economic factors in the Augustan age brought with it a concomitant reduction in tensions attributable to religious differences of the kind we see attested in previous generations. In the citations that survive from Apollonius Molon, economic factors are eclipsed by religious and relational motives for hatred of the Jews. By far the most disturbing feature of diaspora Judaism from the pagan perspective, however, remained the

century – depends less on their distinctiveness than it does on Christian perceptions of their response to Jesus and his followers.

[134] Philo *Spec.* 1.2-3; Horace, *Sat.* 1.9.67-70; Juvenal, *Sat.* 14.96-106. See also Gager, 1985, 56-7.

[135] Rajak, 1985, 30.

[136] Goodman, 1994, 24-5. See also Schürer, 2014, vol 3i, 132.

phenomenon of proselyte conversion.[137] Scholars are divided on the extent to which proselytism was an active priority for Jews in our period – perhaps converts were drawn to Jewish communities on their own initiative?[138] The existence of proselytes and the social tensions surrounding them, however, is undeniable – a fact which may account for the comparatively low numbers of proselytes mentioned in our inscription corpora as compared, for example, to Godfearers.[139]

3.3 Engagement

While one understandable reflex to pagan hostility was the further entrenchment of Jewish distinctions, we also see a response in various forms of engagement.[140] Whether or not Jewish apologetic was actually aimed at a pagan audience or at reinforcing the convictions of the Jewish community itself, the content clearly demonstrates an awareness of external criticisms and a capacity to '[highlight] the aspects of Judaism which were most acceptable to cultured Gentiles.'[141] The

[137] Feldman, 1993, 293-304; Malherbe, 1983, 51-2; Barclay, 2011, 15.
[138] The classic poles in this debate are well represented by Feldman, 1993 and Goodman, 1994. On the question of whether active outreach was needed to attract converts, see Donaldson, 2007, 492, 512. See also Delling, 1987, 80; Wyschogrod, 2004, 190-3.
[139] However we read the significance of the relative proportions of proselytes and Godfearers in the Aphrodisias inscription, the number of proselytes is strikingly low (IJO, no. 14).
[140] Collins notes the dichotomy here: diaspora Jews engaged in polemic against the Gentile culture while simultaneously desiring Gentile approval (Collins, 2000, 261). 'Für den Juden, der sich um eine geistige Bewältigung der Diasporasituation bemüht, ergibt sich ein Ineinander des Ja zum Judentum und des Ja zu dem, was ihm die Umwelt an Möglichkeiten erschließt – sofern sie nicht dem Judesein widersprechen' (Delling, 1987, 63).
[141] Collins, 2000, 15. See also Delling, 1987, 29; Collins, 2000, 14, 271; Donaldson, 2007, 6-7; Schürer, 2014, vol 3i, 153-5.

declaration of Jewish loyalty to Augustus preserved in Josephus *Ant.* 16.165 affords a further glimpse of engagement deployed as a means to combat pagan suspicion.

The Noah coins of Apamea provide a paradigmatic example of engagement – Jews and pagans drew near to one another by adapting their foundational narratives if not their foundational beliefs. Paradoxically, the definition and defence of Jewish privileges could also facilitate engagement in a hostile environment.[142] Although Josephus' account of official interventions in support of Jewish privileges in Sardis is several centuries older than most of the relevant archaeological data, it seems reasonable to conclude that their promulgation in the public square paved the way for Jews to participate in the wide range of activities, and to enjoy the wide range of influences, to which their material legacy testifies. Jews spoke and wrote and named themselves in Greek.[143] They owned businesses, they engaged in local politics. There is no reason to believe that they restricted themselves to distinctive professions or that they could be identified by wearing distinctive forms of clothing.[144] Cohen concludes that it was possible for a Jew to pass as a Greek, or a Greek as a Jew, in our period without difficulty – provided of course that the identity of the individual in question was not known in advance.[145]

[142] Trebilco, 1991, 181.
[143] Feldman, 1993, 54-5; Cohen, 1999, 35-7.
[144] Cohen, 1999, 27-34.
[145] Cohen, 1999, 37-9.

Neil Martin, Keble College

3.4 Sympathisation

A necessary corollary of Jewish engagement in pagan society is pagan awareness of Jews and Judaism and one of the ways in which this awareness manifested itself was sympathisation. From the New Testament's references to Jews in Asia Minor through to modern epigraphic catalogues documenting the history of the region, our sources consistently support the thesis that Jewish communities attracted, and welcomed, not only full proselytes but also Gentile participants in their worship. Sympathisation did not, however, entail a parallel rejection of pre-existent pagan religious affiliations.[146]

In Asia Minor, no less than any other area of the Graeco-Roman world in our period – and probably more so – it was normal for free people to assemble personal portfolios of gods to worship and religious traditions to adhere to. It may seem surprising that Jews tolerated Gentile engagement with their God and with their communities on this basis, but they did – as the pagan occupations of the Godfearers in Aphrodisias attest.[147] Sympathisers enjoyed the celebration of the Sabbath and imageless worship in the synagogue, and they appreciated the antiquity and austerity of Jewish moral formulations even if they stopped short of complete

[146] Collins, 2000, 270.
[147] IJO, no. 14. Outside the boundaries of Israel defined in the Abrahamic narratives, Bockmuehl encourages us to anticipate a distinctive set of Jewish moral and ethical expectations for Gentiles informed by the so-called Noachide commandments (Bockmuehl, 2003, 61-70, 145-73). See also Donaldson, 2007, 481. Even these restricted expectations for righteous Gentiles, however, fail to prepare us for the tolerance of idolatry which the practical details of sympathisation entail (Bockmuehl, 2003, 154, 159).

submission to them.[148] Sympathisation, as we saw earlier in the poetry of Commodian, facilitated proximity to Judaism without circumcision (for men) or withdrawal from the labyrinthine infrastructure of pagan worship that supported every thread of the wider social fabric from commerce to expressions of civic loyalty and social unity.

As a central component of Jewish life and worship, monotheism might seem to militate against the popularity of sympathisation in Asia Minor. In reality, however, the pluralistic religious landscape of the region was strangely receptive to ultimate gods at this time.[149] Many deities were elevated to forms of ultimacy, but this did not render their erstwhile peers in the pantheon redundant. By a henotheistic sleight of hand, they re-emerged as angels or messengers.[150] The *ultimacy* of the God of Israel was not an obstacle to participation in synagogue life for contemporary Gentiles. *Exclusive* devotion to the God of Israel *would have been* an obstacle – but exclusive devotion was never a price sympathisers were asked to pay.

3.5 Integration

If the proximity between Jews and Gentiles observable in Asia Minor produced sympathisation on the Gentile side, was there also a balancing integration of Gentile

[148] 'Godfearers, who were not full converts to Judaism, had a relative freedom in following or not following the commandments of the Jewish Bible' (Van der Horst, 2014, 151).
[149] Mitchell, 1999a, 108-10.
[150] Peter Van Nuffelen charts the rise of Henotheism in the Roman world (Van Nuffelen, 2010, 16-33).

norms into religious life on the Jewish side? The question uncovers a sharp division in the scholarship.

At minimum, the evidence from Sardis testifies to the incorporation of pagan architectural, decorative, and linguistic norms into the life of a major Jewish community. Many elements of the synagogue in Sardis are attributable to its pagan past, but even when it was securely in Jewish hands, the community installed pagan mosaics and read the scriptures from a table supported by Roman eagles and flanked by Lydian lions. Kraabel interprets these facts as a testimony to the self-confidence of the Sardian Jews – their religious identity was so resilient that not even high levels of social engagement could shake it.[151] But while he is surely right to resist the previously dominant image of diaspora Judaism as syncretistic, preoccupied with proselytism, socially and intellectually backward, and self-consciously separate from the rest of society, his own picture is no less one-dimensional.[152] It is true that the Sardian Jews blocked the doorways connecting their synagogue with the adjacent gymnasium and their communal life gave a central place to the reading of Torah, but these observations fall a long way short of proving that pagan norms left no mark whatsoever on their worship.[153] If Justin's *Dialogue* does indeed represent a plausible portrait of life in second-century Asia Minor, the degree to which Trypho

[151] Kraabel, 1992f, 279-84.
[152] Kraabel, 1992a, 6-11.
[153] On the blocking of the doorways and the centrality of Torah-recitation as evidence of religious self-confidence, see Kraabel, 1992e, 244; Kraabel, 1992d, 232.

has appropriated Hellenic norms, and frames his argument according to them, forms a powerful counterexample.

Mitchell argues controversially that the phenomenon of sympathisation itself was an expression of religious integration not only from the Gentile perspective, but also from the Jewish perspective. The very large number of Θεὸς ὕψιστος inscriptions which form the basis of his thesis have been probed for evidence of Jewish syncretism in the past and the claim that the word ὕψιστος indicates Jewish influence, even in obviously pagan contexts, is now widely discredited.[154] Mitchell, however, takes a different tack, arguing that the physical remains of the ὕψιστος cult and the literary legacy of its activities overlap precisely with what we know about Godfearers, and that its existence as an independent identity indicates Jewish-Gentile cooperation.[155]

If viable, this reading might perhaps illuminate the regression question in Galatians, offering a new approach to the troublesome proximity Paul apparently discerns between Jewish law and returning to pagan religious norms.[156] Christian Marek's

[154] On the large number of Θεὸς ὕψιστος inscriptions, see Mitchell, 1999a, 99. Cumont proposed that pagan instances of the term ὕψιστος were generally attributable to Jewish influence ('En Asie Mineure, «Hypsistos» est l'appellation qu'on employait pour désigner le dieu d'Israël' Cumont, 1929, 99). In reality, the term has a long and independent history in both pagan and Jewish literature (Trebilco, 1991, 128-33). Cumont's association of Judaism with the Lydian-Phrygian cult of Sabazios has proved similarly fragile (Trebilco, 1991, 140-42).

[155] Mitchell justifies his equation of Hypsistarians and Godfearers by comparing the physical settings in which their respective acts of worship may have taken place and the descriptions of each offered by Epiphanius and Gregory of Nazianzus, and Cyril and Juvenal respectively (Mitchell, 1999a, 92-5, 120). He concludes: 'The Jews of the Dispersion had found a common religious language with a vast number of Gentile worshippers and they forged a shared tradition' (Mitchell, 1999a, 121).

[156] Clinton Arnold's reconstruction of the *Sitz im Leben* of Colossians runs along similar lines (Arnold, 1995).

recent response to Mitchell, however, highlights the slender text evidence for his formal equation of Hypsistarians and Godfearers, and casts doubt on the suggestion that ὕψιστος inscriptions point to the existence of a unitary religious phenomenon.[157] Marek helpfully reinforces Mitchell's methodological scepticism about the possibility of accurately attributing Jewish or Gentile origins to individual texts, highlighting several examples where Christians and Jews appear to 'borrow' elements of the pagan milieu, and not just the other way around.[158] Certainly there is no basis for denying *a priori* that Jews in Asia Minor sometimes integrated elements of pagan religious tradition into their own practice.[159] We see this clearly in the *Sibylline Oracles* 1 and 2 and something similar may be happening in the synchronisation of pagan and Jewish festivals in the *Martyrdom of Pionius*.[160] But there is no evidence to suggest that the Galatians were regressing from Pauline Christianity to a well-developed syncretistic cult blending acceptance of Jewish festivals and dietary restrictions – and particularly circumcision – with the pluralistic norms of paganism.

[157] 'Ob der Theos Hypsistos in den hunderten von Weihinschriften der griechischen Welt der Kaiserzeit tatsächlich der Gott einer einzigen, kohärenten Kultgemeinschaft war, lässt sich nicht mit Sicherheit bejahen' (Marek, 2018, 144).
[158] '…präsentieren sie doch in Sprache und Bild sozusagen Anleihen aus dem heidnischen Milieu, die manchen modernen Interpreten irritiert haben' (Marek, 2018, 142). On the weakness of the assumption that Θεὸς ὕψιστος inscriptions can be neatly attributed to pagan or Jewish contexts, see Mitchell, 1999a, 100, 112-4.
[159] For an assertion of this common exclusion, see Kraabel, 1992e, 254-5.
[160] §2.1.1, 3.

Neil Martin, Keble College

3.6 Conversion

If integration failed to eliminate every obstacle associated with Jewish distinctiveness – and it clearly did – proximity could always be achieved through conversion. If a Jew and a Gentile wished to marry, the Gentile could convert.[161] If a Jew wished to bring a Gentile into his household as a slave, the Gentile could convert (or be forced to convert).[162] If a Gentile businessman wished to gain privileged access to trading relationships among Jews, the Gentile could convert.[163] But pragmatic reasons alone cannot fully account for this phenomenon – as Josephus' account of the conversions of Helena and Izates, the king of Adiabene, amply demonstrates (*Ant.* 20.17-96).[164] In first-century Asia Minor in particular, mystery cults and mainstream religious expressions alike operated in an environment in which the religious convictions and aspirations of the individual were an increasingly important factor in the assembly of personal portfolios of devotion.[165]

How were converts perceived by their former and newfound co-religionists? At the superficial level, conversion to Judaism made a Gentile a Jew. There was no such thing as a 'circumcised Gentile' in Nanos' opinion – such a person was a Jew and

[161] The conversion of Aseneth, the daughter of an Egyptian priest, before her marriage to Joseph constitutes the paradigmatic example (Goodman, 1994, 78).
[162] Goodman, 1994, 78.
[163] Feldman, 1993, 333.
[164] Feldman, 1993, 328-31. Goodman rightly notes that the reduction of 'religious behaviour and convictions to purely utilitarian terms so that the decision to join one cult or another may seem to have had no more significance than a choice of club,' is one of the principal dangers affecting the scholarly discussion of conversion (Goodman, 1994, 7).
[165] Parker, 2011, 246-50.

entitled to all the rights and privileges associated with Judaism.[166] But it is hard to imagine that circumcision and withdrawal from pagan worship – both highly problematic realities in the pagan discourse of the period – would have received such a universally warm reception with the pagan family-members and neighbours of the converts in question.[167] True, Epictetus seems willing to accept Jewish converts as Jews (*Disc.* 2.9.19-21) but, as noted above, this tells us more about his larger passion for religious consistency than it does about the wider social acceptability of their behaviour. Neither is it by any means obvious that proselytes were welcomed as equals in Jewish synagogues. Although Justin is willing to assume that circumcision allowed a Gentile to be 'incorporated into the body of [the Jewish] people like a native-born' (*Dial.* 123.1) his dialogue partner, Trypho, is less confident (*Dial.* 8.3). Cohen carefully exposes several areas where converts remained disadvantaged in comparison to born-Jews.[168] For all his praise of proselytes, Philo still has to urge his fellow Jews to treat them as equals (*Spec.* 1.51-3).[169] Christian attitudes to Gentile Jewish converts in Asia Minor were also hostile as far as we can tell from our sources – thus the references to '[Synagogues] of Satan'

[166] Nanos, 2002, 80.
[167] Feldman, 1993, 288; Malherbe, 1983, 51. Recall the pervasive and censorious nature of the engagement with Jewish proselytism that characterises Latin commentators on Judaism (§2.1.2). Gerhard Delling helpfully notes the negative response to Aseneth's conversion in *Jos. Asen.* 11.4-6 (Delling, 1987, 17-18).
[168] Converts are excluded from Deuteronomic declarations which mention '(the land) which God has sworn to our fathers to give us,' they may not say 'The God of our fathers' in their prayers, and neither converts nor their daughters may marry into priestly families (Cohen, 1999, 308-9 f.). See also Schürer, 2014, vol 3i, 174-5; Feldman, 1993, 339-41; Goodman, 1994, 63. 'Numerous passages in Philo and in rabbinic literature praise the proselyte and enjoin upon Jews the equitable treatment of those who have entered their midst… But none of these passages demonstrates that the proselyte achieved real equality with the native born' (Cohen, 1999, 161).
[169] Schürer, 2014, vol 3i, 160.

in the letters of Revelation (Rev 2.9; 3.9) and the disparaging comments about hearing 'Judaism from a man uncircumcised' in Ignatius (*Phild*. 6.1).

4. Galatians in the Jewish Religious Context of Asia Minor

Having already touched briefly on several points of connection between the Jewish religious context of Asia Minor and the interpretative problems surrounding Paul's regression language in Galatians, we now come to focus in detail on two connected solutions that rely heavily on particular construals of the Jewish background.

4.1 Is Paul Talking About Regression to Godfearer Status?

The injunction not to 'submit *again* to a yoke of slavery' in Gal 5.1 clearly indicates that, in Paul's mind at least, the Galatians were drifting towards a form of behaviour with which they had *previous experience*. Might this not be readily explained by the observation that many of them enjoyed the status of sympathisers in Jewish synagogues before their exposure to the Christian gospel?[170]

This certainly accords very naturally with the demographic insights yielded by our survey of primary sources. If the synagogues Paul visited in Asia Minor were attended by a similar mix of individuals to those represented in the Aphrodisias

[170] In support, see Munck, 1959, 131-3. In dissent see John, 2016, 188-91.

inscription, there would have been no shortage of pre-socialised, potential converts for him to work with.[171]

The proposal that Paul's readers had a substantial background in Judaism might also help to explain the strangely Jewish focus of Paul's argument in the letter. Why was he able to assume detailed understanding of the Abrahamic narrative and its modulation in the light of the Mosaic law if he was writing to Gentiles who had next-to-no exposure to these ideas before he met them, especially if the letter is early? Many scholars attribute this familiarity with Jewish themes to the ministry of the Influencers in Galatia – perhaps they were even an important part of the intended readership?[172] Others attribute it to the earlier contribution of Paul and Barnabas.[173] But, either way, the case for the legibility of Paul's argument is only strengthened by the suggestion that his audience had substantial exposure to the Jewish scriptures before he even arrived.

Characterising the Galatian readership as former Godfearers might also go some way to addressing the complex fusion of Jewish and pagan language that Paul uses to describe their regression in Galatians 4. How can we make sense of his assertion that embracing Jewish legal observances involved turning back to the 'not-gods' in Gal 4.8, and that it was incompatible with '[knowing] God' in Gal 4.9? If regression

[171] Van der Horst, 1990, 170; Van der Horst, 2014, 150; Wilson, 1995, 26. Mitchell develops Epiphanius' reference to the conversion of Lydia in Acts 16.13-15 (*Pan.* 80.1.5) as part of his argument that Paul deliberately targeted Godfearers in his evangelistic endeavours (Mitchell, 1999a, 93, 115).
[172] e.g. Dunn, 1993a, 9-11. See also Chapter 2, §4.2.
[173] Nanos, 2002, 76-7.

involved a return to Godfearer status – with the flexibility to participate in Jewish worship on the Sabbath and continue to play an active part in the pagan life of the wider community for the rest of the week – perhaps this begins to make sense?[174]

Natural though this explanation might seem in the light of our sources, however, it is problematic in practice.

First, we note that Paul addresses the allegation of regression to his readership *as a whole*. For while Dunn is surely correct to observe that the earlier we position ourselves in the story of active Gentile outreach, the more likely it is that former Godfearers make up a significant proportion of the Christian communities in question, we still have to ask ourselves whether Paul could assume a Godfearing background in the Galatian churches so generally that he could charge *his entire readership* with regression on this basis.[175]

Second, and more seriously, we have to ask whether regression to Godfearer status is compatible with the situation sketched in the letter even if it is conceivable within the larger Jewish context. Although, as we saw in Chapter 2, reliable information about the Influencers in Galatia is scant, we can at least conclude with some confidence that they were Jewish *Christians*, not simply Jews. Can we be sure that they would have acknowledged Godfearer status as a valid option for Gentiles as

[174] Barclay suggests that something like sympathisation may be taking place in the Christian community in Corinth (Barclay, 2011, 191, 200).
[175] 'A high proportion of the earliest converts, perhaps all of them in the early days, would have been proselytes and God fearers' (Dunn, 2006*a*, 165-6).

Jews did? In the absence of any positive evidence to support even the existence of Godfearing groups in early Jewish Christian churches, an interpretation of Galatians that depends on Gentile Christians being actively recruited into such groups is precarious at best.[176] We also note the absence of any indication in Galatians that the Influencers' goal was anything less than the full conversion of Paul's readers. The Influencers urged the Galatians to keep the Jewish feasts and food laws and get circumcised – the classic hallmarks of proselyte conversion as we see them laid out by Justin and other authors.[177] Regression to Godfearer status, however, would have entailed a move in *the opposite direction* – away from the social angularity of exclusive Christian commitment and back toward the familiar pluralistic behaviour of their past. Circumcision entailed and symbolised an *increase* in social angularity. If this was a realistic prospect for the Galatians, a return to Godfearer status was not what they had in mind.

4.2 Is Paul Talking About Regression Construed More Broadly?

If the suggestion that many of Paul's readers were former Godfearers and that they were being encouraged to resume an analogous position in local Jewish Christian communities fails to account for the actual trajectory of the Influencers' ministry among them, perhaps the meaning of Paul's regression language can still be illuminated by thinking about Godfearing backgrounds in a different, more flexible,

[176] Donaldson, 2010, 123.
[177] e.g. *Dial*. 23.3; see also *Diog*. 4.1-4.

way? If the Galatian Christians had history in the synagogue, perhaps Paul's allegation of regression merely *gestured* in that direction. Perhaps it was a means to indicate the similarity of their present and their past in broad strokes – a means to condemn what they saw as an upgrade as a relapse, without asserting a return to Judaism in the precise form they had embraced it in the past.

This approach, of course, has the tremendous advantage that it respects the direction in which the Influencers were actually asking the Galatians to move. 'Become more Jewish' was the heart of their message – 'embrace the distinctives that have characterised the people of God through the centuries.' Regression language for Paul would simply be his way of countering this Judaeo-centric momentum: 'You – or many of you at least – embraced Judaism as Godfearers in the past, and now you're embracing Judaism again. I'm *not* accusing you of doing exactly what you did before, but I am accusing you of moving back into the same sphere of influence.'

But there are problems with this looser version of the former-Godfearer hypothesis just as there are with the tighter one.

First, we now have to wrestle with the fact that, for Paul, regression in Galatia was not just regression (Gal 5.1) but regression *to paganism* (4.8-11). At least in the tighter version of the former-Godfearer hypothesis, the pluralistic combination of Jewish observances and pagan worship that was typical of sympathisation in Asia Minor provides an explanation for this striking feature of Paul's argument. But in the looser version, we have to defend the proposal that, for Paul, the life of law-

observant Jewish Christians was *equivalent to paganism* – a shockingly anti-legal sentiment even on the traditional reading of the letter and surely untenable if Paul was willing to live as a law-observant Jewish Christian himself – at least when he was in Jewish company and, if advocates of the 'Paul within Judaism' school are correct, all the time.[178]

Second, we have to ask ourselves what benefits would have accrued *to the Galatians* from conversion to Jewish Christianity. In Chapter 3 §4.1.2 we explored the oft-repeated suggestion that, in addition to any sense of personal religious fulfilment Gentiles might have gained from embracing *Jewish* Christianity, proselyte status would have represented an enhancement for them in the area of social stability.[179] Even when our focus was restricted to the contemporary pagan context this thesis was found wanting – but now, with the Jewish context also before us, further problems emerge. If the pagan literary sources surveyed above are given due weight, far from representing a step toward normalisation of status in the social landscape of the period, circumcision positioned those who submitted to it in the bullseye of contemporary anti-Jewish polemic.[180] Winter and Kahl's confidence that

[178] If Paul equates law-observant Judaism and paganism in Gal 4.8-11, then, as Peter Pilhofer notes, we have reached a unprecedented climax of negativity with respect to the Jewish Law, not only in Galatians but in the entire Pauline corpus 'Eine schärfere Kritik am Gesetz, am Judentum findet sich an keiner Stelle in unserm breif – von andern Texten des Paulus ganz zu schweigen' (Pilhofer, 2010, 293). On Paul as a Torah-observant Jew, see Chapter 6 §2. On the extent of Paul's ongoing submission to the law, see also Dunn, 2008, 51-5.

[179] Winter, 2015, 240-9; Winter, 1994, 133; Kahl, 2009, 218-27; Nanos, 2002, 80-1; Hardin, 2008, 109-10; Barclay, 2011, 19. 'Not requiring complete, or ethnic, affiliation with Judaism via circumcision, insisting that native cults nonetheless be completely renounced, the early apostles walked these Christ-fearing pagans into a social and religious no-man's land' (Fredriksen, 2017, 91).

[180] Fredriksen, 2017, 68; Kahl, 2009, 213. The potential to embrace Jewish practice as a means to avoid state persecution, which Robin Lane-Fox detects in *The Martyrdom of Pionius*, might be

the Jewish privileges and exemptions catalogued by Josephus would automatically apply to Gentile converts is groundless.[181] It assumes a state register of proselytes or some equivalently invasive investment in imperial infrastructure, despite the fact that the sole contemporary record of internal Jewish questions coming before a Roman judge in our possession reveals only his profound disinterest (Acts 18.12-17).[182] As we saw in the foregoing analysis of conversion, there was no guarantee that proselytes to Judaism would be accepted as equals in the synagogue. Proselytes to Jewish *Christianity* would have been even less certain of their status. For real security in the Jewish community, renunciation of Christ as God would have been just as important as circumcision, if not more so.[183] But this seems to have played no part in the Influencers' campaign.[184]

And who is to say that life as a Gentile in a Pauline Church in the early decades of the Christian movement was so precarious as to necessitate such risks? Life in the

advanced as a counter-example here (Lane Fox, 2005, 478-82). The political situation in third-century Smyrna, however – if only in terms of the official visibility of Christianity and the maturity of the division between Christianity and Judaism – is utterly alien to that encountered by Paul in first-century Galatia.

[181] Barclay, 2011, 102 n.31. To her credit, Kahl herself expresses reservations about the stability of this point: 'Although circumcision and a complete proselyte conversion would not immediately silence the hard questions being asked by outsiders, these actions would mark a return to some acceptability in terms of law' (Kahl, 2009, 225).

[182] Winter, 2015, 192-5. On the question of whether Gentile converts would be considered eligible for historic Jewish exemptions, see also Feldman, 1993, 288, 345.

[183] Lane Fox, 2005, 482.

[184] On Jewish rejection of the deity of Christ, see Justin *Dial.* 8.3, 49.1, 55.1. On exclusive monotheism as a condition of legitimate conversion, see Cohen, 1999, 156-7. Cilliers Breytenbach notes the important distinction between the high probability that Paul's correspondents would have been accepted in local synagogues as converts to *Judaism* and the low probability that they would have been accepted as circumcised *Christians*. 'In Wahrheit aber rühren ihre Bemühungen um die Heidenchristen von einer Gesinnung her, nach der die Heidenchristen als beschnittene Juden zwar akzeptiert, als Christen aber ausgeschlossen würden' (Breytenbach, 1996, 133-4.)

Christian community at least involved the prospect of acceptance irrespective of one's social or ethnic background. In the second-century, texts like *The Martyrdom of Polycarp,* support the idea that Christians were readily distinguishable from Jews in the eyes of their pagan contemporaries but do we have similar evidence for the middle of the first-century? The sources available attest only to the abundance of different Jewish sects, among which we can only assume Christian churches were, at least initially, categorised. If Abraham Malherbe is right in his judgement that early Christian churches continued to meet in private households even as they became communities with broader constituencies, there is no reason at all to imagine that members of the early church in Galatia stood out as members of illicit collegia.[185]

Say a Christian *was* being persecuted for abandoning their civic duty to the gods – converting to Judaism would not necessarily improve things. And even if it would, there is no evidence to suggest anything more than outward and obvious observance of the demands of the law would be required to secure the benefit – no one was checking to see if circumcision had actually been performed.[186] Abandoning the Christian community would also bring social instabilities of its own. Relationships of trust with other believers would be fractured – family ties, friendships and business

[185] Malherbe, 1983, 69. Uta Poplutz notes the protections consequent on the strong association between early churches and the households where they met: '…vor allem aber fand der Christusglaube durch die Verortung in Privathäusern Eingang in die alltägliche Lebenswelt und genoss durch die Macht des Hausherrn einen gewissen Schutz' (Poplutz, 2016, 146). On the prohibition of illicit collegia, see Winter, 2015, 193-4.

[186] Cohen, 1999, 49, 59-60. Suetonius records just such an inspection of an elderly Jew during the latter part of the reign of Domitian, but as an outrage, not an example of accepted practice (Suetonius *Dom.* 12.2).

connections would be threatened. It is far from clear, therefore, that conversion to Judaism would have yielded any net practical benefit at all.[187]

Third and most important, however, the looser version of the former-Godfearer hypothesis splinters against one of the main interpretative questions raised by the letter as a whole, viz. Why did Paul think becoming a Jewish Christian was a bad idea for Gentile Christian converts at all?[188] As we have just recalled, Paul himself was a Jewish Christian. His gospel message demonstrates massive dependence on, and respect for, his Jewish heritage. What was it, then, about being a Gentile that made the appropriation of these blessings through formal conversion to Judaism so dangerous? Why did Paul see it as an indication that he may have wasted his efforts on his readers and not, in fact, as a rather promising sign of their commitment (Gal 4.11)? Barclay's answer to this question is more pragmatic than theological – Paul did not want his Gentile converts to 'enter the ambit of the synagogue.'[189] The

[187] Behind our question about the benefits of circumcision for Paul's Galatian converts lies a more speculative question about the benefits it might have yielded *for the Influencers*. If they were Jews only and not Jewish Christ-followers, such a positive demand for proselyte conversion is improbable (Wyschogrod, 2004, 192-3). Murphy O'Connor argues that it was against the interests of Jewish communities at this time to equivocate on the key question of who was and who was not a Jew, (Murphy-O'Connor, 2012, 138-41). If, as seems probable, however, the Influencers were Jewish *Christians*, we can imagine the case for the circumcision of Gentile converts being made, as Muddiman argues, in response to pressure from the mainstream Jewish community (Muddiman, 1994, 261), or in response to pagan peer pressure (although in this latter case we are forced to assume popular acceptance of circumcision as a legitimate basis for withdrawal from civic pagan obligations which, as we have seen, is far from certain). Noting the extent to which exegesis of the letter can and should be separated from such questions, however, and focused instead on *the Galatians' response* to the Influencers' message is a central part of the contribution I envisage for this study.

[188] The same question lurks behind several other early Christian texts. Why, for example, does Barnabas equate Gentile engagement with Jewish law to being 'dashed against [the rocks]' (*Barn* 3.6)? Why would Ignatius rather hear Christianity from a Jew than Judaism from a Gentile (*Phild.* 6.1)?

[189] And so to be lost, we presume, from the 'ambit' of the church (Barclay, 2011, 56).

profoundly theological and angst-ridden nature of Paul's argument, however, invites us to take his diagnosis more seriously.

5. Conclusion

The natural answer to the final question posed in the foregoing section – why did Paul think becoming a Jewish Christian was a bad idea for Gentile Christian converts? – is not that he perceived underlying problems with Judaism. Clearly, he *did* perceive problems with Judaism, as we see in his account of his own enslavement to the στοιχεῖα in Gal 4.3 and his concern for the enslavement of the present Jerusalem in Gal 4.25. But if these problems did not necessitate withdrawal from Judaism for Christian Jews, their existence cannot adequately explain Paul's disquiet about proselyte conversion for Christian Gentiles. The natural answer is that he perceived some problem relating to Gentiles as Gentiles which made Judaism dangerous *for them*. What was this problem?

In the foregoing sections of this chapter, we noted several situations in which pagan religious behaviours were appropriated and adapted by Jews. The grave inscriptions of Aurelius Aristeas and Publius Aelius Glykon testified to the Jewish assimilation of the Roman *rosalia* tradition, in the latter case specifying the decoration of the tomb with flowers on the festivals of Passover and Pentecost.[190] Vow-making was by no means restricted to pagan religious expressions in our period, but the Jewish

[190] IJO, no.s 171, 196.

adaptation of local votive archetypes to include an attribution to 'the gifts of providence' in Sardis, represents another striking indication of accommodation and reimagination of pagan religious norms.[191] Indeed, the very existence of Jewish votive stelae in Anatolia is noteworthy, given the absence of comparable examples from Palestine.[192]

Jewish grave curses tell a similar story. The imprecations themselves are drawn from the Hebrew Bible and it is possible to interpret them without positing thoroughgoing syncretism; yet it remains striking that nothing of the kind is found on Jewish graves in Palestine.[193] Assimilation of local pagan practice is also evident in the realm of euergetism – with Julia Severa's gift of a synagogue to the Jewish community in Acmonia and the community's reciprocating commemoration of it representing the classic example, although there are several others.[194] There is no need to assume acceptance of the larger euergetistic paradigm the part of local Jews or any influence of it on their conception of their relationship with the ultimate divine benefactor to make sense of these interactions, but it remains striking that Jewish synagogues were open to the appropriation and adaptation of this aspect of pagan practice.[195]

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[191] Of the twenty-two inscriptions from the region I was able to locate including the word προνοίας, nine use it to attribute a votive offering to 'the gifts of providence,' but only one of these is from a pagan text. The remaining eight come from the Sardis synagogue inscriptions.
[192] Cartledge, 1992, 68. Schwartz notes a first-century B.C./first-century A.D. inscription commemorating a donation to the Jerusalem temple by a Rhodian named Paris son of Akeson as the only 'conceptually similar' text (Schwartz, 2010, 91-2; for the text, see Isaac, 1998, 21-8).
[193] On the redundancy of syncretism as an explanation for Jewish grave curses, see Trebilco, 1991, 65-9. On the absence of grave curses in Palestine see, Ameling, 2009, 207; Schwartz, 2010, 89-91.
[194] IJO, no. 168.
[195] Schwartz notes how even the highly-Romanised Josephus distances himself from the emphasis on public display that is observable in the Graeco-Roman euergetistic paradigm (Schwartz, 2010, 105-9).

We also saw several examples of the reverse phenomenon, where Jewish practices and narratives were appropriated and adapted by pagans.[196] Whatever we make of the Θεὸς ὕψιστος inscriptions re-analysed by Mitchell, it is striking that the habits of their dedicants, as summarised by Gregory of Nazianzus, included a mixture of both Hellenic and Jewish influences: '[they] worship fire and lamplight; they revere the sabbath and are scrupulous not to touch certain foods, but have nothing to do with circumcision' (Gregory of Nazianzus, *Or*. 18.5, translation Mitchell).[197] The Noah coins of Apamea testify to the appropriation of Jewish traditions as part of the evolving self-perception of a major Hellenistic city. As well as articulating Jewish willingness to assimilate a distinctively pagan religious practice, Deuteronomic grave curses indicate familiarity with, and reverence for, the God of Israel both inside and outside the Jewish community.[198]

Magical texts with Jewish content represent extreme manifestations of the same trend. Recognised components of Jewish tradition – the powerful and unutterable name of God; the obscure backwards Hebrew script; the names of Moses, Abraham, Solomon and various angels; the menorah and various other Jewish symbols – were all appropriated for use in spells and incantations. Whether or not born-Jews embraced the permeability of the barrier between their own religious world and that of their pagan neighbours at these points we cannot say, but our sources attest at

[196] Fredriksen argues that 'cultic aniconism' made Judaism strangely appropriable and reinterpretable from the pagan philosophical perspective (Fredriksen, 2017, 41).
[197] Mitchell, 1999a, 95.
[198] IJO, no.s 172-4, 213.

least to pagan willingness to reimagine elements of Judaism according to the established grammar of divine-human interactions as they perceived it.

The evidence of appropriation and adaptation between Jews and Gentiles, however, also serves to highlight the extent of the *commonalities* that existed between them at the level of the basic components of religious practice that seem to have so exercised Paul. The Jewish appropriation and adaptation of pagan votive practices is easier to understand once we grasp the fact that vow-making was an established part of Jewish, as well as Gentile, religious culture.[199] The pagan appropriation and adaptation of Jewish heroes and foundation stories makes sense when we appreciate the central place accorded to heroes and foundation stories in Gentile, as well as Jewish, life.[200] Connections like these were perhaps one very probable component of the Galatians' attraction to Jewish forms of Christianity.

Paul explicitly highlights the proximity of pagan and Jewish religious practice in the arena of sacred days and religious calendars in Gal 4.8-11.[201] Whether through imperial cult festivals, or through the raising of stelae on high and holy days, or through the dedication of offerings synchronised with the various stages of the agricultural year, Paul's audience had developed patterns of thought and practice

[199] Chapter 3 §2.2.1; Cartledge, 1992, 28.
[200] Echoes of ancient Old Testament tradition are central to the argument of Galatians – notably in the foregrounding of the Abraham story (Gal 3.6-9, 15-18), the reference to 'the book of the law' (3.10) and to the giving of the law (3.17), and the famous Hagar and Sarah allegory (4.21-31). If indeed the Influencers were closely associated with Jerusalem, the Galatians' attraction to their message might be partly attributable to their habitual practice of associating cult with the physical places in which the gods were known to have acted in the past (Parker, 2011, 26-7).
[201] De Boer, 2011, 253-4.

capable of naturally accommodating the Sabbaths and annual festivals of law-observant Jewish Christianity.[202] The practice of ritual separation from sacred spaces and occasions on account of various forms of pollution attested in the confession texts would have created similarly natural points of contact with Judaism.[203]

The reality with such habitual patterns of thought and action, however, is that they not only provide the hooks on which new religious ideas can hang; they also have the power to conform them to their own underlying ethos. Following Paul's logic, it is not enough simply to note that the Galatians' past experience with pagan religious practice would have lent a sense of plausibility to the Influencers' advocacy of traditional Jewish feasts and food laws. We must also note the persistence of pagan assumptions about what such observances accomplished, and allow that these assumptions may have significantly altered the function of the observances in the process of transmission from the Influencers to Paul's readers.

What did *the Influencers* think festivals and food laws would accomplish in Galatia? We cannot be completely certain, although Paul's brief assessment of their motives in Gal 4.17 and 6.12-13 is far from complimentary. What *Paul* thought they were accomplishing on the ground, however, is much clearer. In Paul's milieu, festivals and food laws in the pagan context were manifestations of idolatry – overturning the

[202] On the imperial cult calendar, see Clauss, 1999, 316-9. On the synchronisation of pagan dedications with established cult calendars, see Chaniotis, 2009, 115-53. On vows and prayers indicating seasonal agricultural concerns, see Hosios kai Dikaios, no. 37; *Phrygian Votive Steles*, no. 425; I.Pisid.Cen., no. 159.
[203] *Beichtinschriften*, no.s 19, 33, 36, 43, 72, 107, 110, 112, 115, 123.

foundational distinction between the creator and the creature, according priority to human agents and placing the gods under obligation to respond. It is ours to decide the extent to which this perception accurately mirrored the reality in the light of the contextual envelope defined in Chapter 3, and we will consider this question in detail in the next chapter.[204] What may already be proposed, however, is that, *in Paul's mind*, Jewish festivals and food laws were sufficiently similar *in form* to their pagan predecessors, that embracing the one was triggering the reanimation of the assumptions that went with the other. The 'pagan predecessors' were not as deceased as they seemed. His fear was not the observance of Jewish festivals and food laws *per se*, but the observance of Jewish festivals and food laws *as they were being (mis)appropriated by the Galatians* – with the same goals and the same expectations that had characterised their observance of pagan festivals and food laws in the past. Whatever the intentions of the Influencers in originally recommending them is beside the point. *Slippage* between the original proclamation of Jewish law and the lived experience of the recipients as Paul conceived it is the factor we now have to consider if we would understand his argument.

[204] While I do not find Susan Elliott's attempt to explain the appeal of the Influencers' programme in Galatia in terms of his readers' former devotion to the Cybele cult persuasive, she mounts a compelling case for Paul's alertness to the larger religious environment, especially in her treatment of the Hagar and Sarah allegory (Elliott, 1999, 661-83). Clinton Arnold makes a similarly convincing case for Pauline awareness of magical practice in the religious background of his readers (Arnold, 2005, 429-49). Paul's allusion to the 'evil eye' in Gal 3.1 has also been proposed as a point of connection to Anatolian religious culture (Neyrey, 1988, 72-100; Longenecker, 1998, 150-57; Eastman, 2001, 69-87).

Might this proposal also explain the Galatians' attraction to circumcision as a core component of the Influencers' message? The reasons for this attraction certainly remain thoroughly opaque despite the attempts to connect the Galatian crisis to the pagan religious background of Paul's readers examined above. As we saw in Chapter 3, Felix John is sceptical about hypothetical parallels between circumcision and ritual castration in the Cybele cult (§4.2.2.2) and notes the absence of any reference to equivalent body-altering procedures in other sources (§4.2.2.1). He gloomily concludes that 'an internal correlation between the Galatian crisis and the living contextual circumstances of the Galatian communities has not been found and probably cannot be found.'[205]

Armed with a sense of the persistence of the Galatians' religious assumptions in Paul's mind, however, and with an awareness of the capacity for *slippage* between the Influencers' intentions and the Galatians' reception of their recommendations, we are perhaps now able to offer a stronger proposal.

Throughout our Graeco-Roman background data, we noted the prevalence and importance of tangible and enduring religious offerings. Whatever cult or cults shaped the past experience of Paul's Galatian audience, their familiarity with such expressions of personal commitment – maintaining the memory of their dedicants' devotion before the divine and the human audience in perpetuity – can be assumed

[205] 'Ein innerer Bezug zwischen galatischer Krise und den lebensweltlichen Gegebenheiten der galatischen Gemeinden ist nicht zu finden und wird vermutlich auch nicht zu finden sein' (John, 2016, 193).

with a high degree of probability. We saw cases in which individuals attempted to enlist the gods as interested parties in their affairs by granting them ownership of their property. The ubiquitous anatomical votives of the region were analysed as examples of reification, symbolising the surrender of the actual body parts depicted to the gods. Some offerings express intense personal intimacy – a craftsman dedicates his tools to the gods, a soldier his weapons, a mother an image of her child's injured limb.[206] Some were deposited as close to the god as possible – in temples, and behind statues – to ensure the matter did not slip their mind. With behaviours like these in the background, might not circumcision have found a ready reception among the Galatians for reasons forged in their past far more than for any envisaged by the Influencers in their present?

The Galatians may not have accepted circumcision for negative reasons alone. We need not conclude, with Arnold, that the Pauline message of 'freedom from cultic requirements' was simply 'too good to be true,' and that the Galatians should be pictured as disillusioned believers, trudging back, by means of Jewish legal observances, to the only religious logic they had ever known.[207] The Galatians were habituated to the positive potential of physical, lasting demonstrations of religious commitment as a central part of the reciprocal interaction between human beings and the gods. What better way to vocalise these assumptions as believers in the God of Abraham than by circumcision? Jewish legal observances provided a wealth of

[206] Hosios kai Dikaios, no.s 8, 9; cf. Burkert, 1987a, 69-70.
[207] Arnold, 2005, 445.

ready attachment points for these pre-existent patterns of thought, and their reactivation among the Galatians through acceptance of the Influencers' message offers a new and compelling explanation of Paul's warnings about regression.

6. Postscript – Regression and Pauline Christianity

The foregoing interpretation of Paul's regression language in Galatians as a warning against the reanimation of his readers' past pagan religions assumptions triggered by immersion in the superficially similar practices of Judaism answers many of the key exegetical questions posed by the text. But it also poses a pressing question of its own: Why would Paul associate this danger with the proclamation of a distinctively *Jewish* Christianity but seemingly not with his own vision of Christian discipleship?[208]

If the heart of the problem lies in the extent of the overlap between the στοιχεῖα intrinsic to Jewish and pagan worship, should we not also note the importance of similar στοιχεῖα in Pauline Christianity? Jews and pagans alike were committed to the celebration of special days and to the regular commemoration of significant events in their respective religious histories; but so was Paul if, as he did in other churches, he encouraged the Galatians to make regular remembrance of Christ's

[208] The difficulty is well stated by Origen who vigorously rejects Celsus' opinion that Christians should take part in pagan sacrifices – citing Paul's warnings about the observation of 'special days, and months, and seasons, and years' in Gal 4.10 along the way – but who is then obliged to face the obvious rejoinder that Christians themselves observe special days in the form of 'the Lord's Day…, the Preparation [day], …the Passover, or Pentecost' (*Cels.* 8.22).

death in the celebration of the Lord's Supper, and perhaps also to observe a Christian Sabbath.[209] Jews and pagans alike perceived the value of tangible and enduring memorialisations of religious devotion; but so did Paul, as the explicit recollection of the Galatians' baptism in Gal 3.26-7 makes clear. Jews and pagans alike submitted themselves to prescriptive codes of ethics – we think of the Ten Commandments in Judaism, and the codes of conduct attested for pagan groups like the private cult in Philadelphia discussed in Chapter 3.[210] But so did Paul, indeed he includes a custom-built code of ethics in Gal 5.19-26, whose similarity to pagan prototypes is often noted.[211] Can we claim with any integrity that Paul perceived a danger in *Jewish* Christianity for Gentile converts that was not equally applicable to his own form of gospel proclamation?

In response, the focus of our study on *Paul's perception* of the problem in Galatia ought first to be reasserted. Even if there is some objective truth in the claim that Paul's concept of Christian discipleship exposed his converts to the same dangers he discerned in the ministry of the Influencers, we should not perhaps be looking to

[209] The place of Sabbath-observance within Pauline theology is disputed (e.g. Weiss, 1995, 137-53). Whichever approach we take to the identification of the weak and the strong and the discussion of 'special days' in Rom 14, however, the possibility that setting aside a particular day for rest was not a *primary* component of Pauline gospel proclamation remains a distinct possibility.
[210] Chapter 3 §3.2.
[211] For a comprehensive treatment of the relationship between vice and virtue lists in the New Testament and the Hellenistic prototypes popular in the time of Paul with a particular focus on Gal 5.19-26, see Longenecker, 1990, 249-52. The list of cardinal virtues and vices in Aristotle's *Rhetoric* (*Rhet.* 1.9.4-14) affords an early parallel but New Testament lists were more-probably influenced by Stoic models (e.g. Seneca *Brev. Vit.* 10.2-4; Epictetus *Disc.* 2.8.23; Cicero *Tusc.* 4.7-8). See also Dunn, 1993a, 302; Oakes, 2015, 175. While noting the generic form of the vice and virtue lists, Breytenbach convincingly demonstrates the unique character of examples in Galatians (Breytenbach, 1996, 138-40).

Paul himself for clarity on the topic. It takes a rare degree of self-awareness to detect the problems we see in others in ourselves, and we have no reason to assume the Apostle was immune from such typical human flaws.

In Paul's defence, however, we should also note that the question can be answered satisfactorily without limiting ourselves to a binary framework in which some religious systems are apt to reawaken entrenched pagan assumptions and others are not. As Paula Fredriksen provocatively notes in a related context, Paul himself encouraged Gentiles to Judaise (in the sense that he urged them to abandon the worship of their ancestral gods and serve the God of Israel only) – *just not in such an extreme way* as the Influencers (who urged Gentiles to observe the whole Torah in addition).[212] We are dealing here with a question of degree. Part of the reason Paul talks about the στοιχεῖα τοῦ κόσμου in Galatians and not merely about the στοιχεῖα is the implicit acknowledgement that *every* real-world manifestation of organised religion exhibits some level of dependence on a common set of fundamental religious practices.[213] The question we have to ask in validation of our

[212] '[Paul's] gentiles were to act "as if" they were Jews without, for males, receiving circumcision. By radically, exclusively affiliating to Israel's God, Paul's *ethnē* were to assume that public behaviour universally identified, by pagans and Jews alike, as uniquely Jewish. That is to say, Paul's gentiles – by the normal and contemporary definition of the term – Judaized' (Fredriksen, 2017, 112. See also 125, 157).
[213] e.g. Weiss, 1995, 139: 'It would seem to be the case that all human societies organized with some kind of established priesthood, and some kind of astrological world view, have determined that sacred days are to be distinguished from profane ones.'

thesis is not whether Pauline Christianity *eliminated* these στοιχεῖα but whether it consciously minimised exposure to their associated risks.[214]

Commentators on Galatians frequently note the apparently jarring transition between the dense biographical and theological material of chapters 1-4 and the practical paraenesis of chapters 5 and 6.[215] The general direction of movement from indicative to imperative should not, of course, surprise us.[216] But neither should a shift in focus from shoring up the Galatian's faith in the short term to preventing the same kind of problems reoccurring in the medium-long term. If our interpretation of the Galatian crisis according to the accommodation typology of 1 Cor 8.1-13 and Rom 14.1-15.13 is on target, then, in the first half of the letter, Paul responds to the weakness he perceives among his readers with stern warnings about the Jewish observances advocated by the strong. In the second half, however, his recommendations for Spirit-

[214] The contrast between Paul's negativity about circumcision in Galatians and his positivity about baptism and the Lord's Supper in 1 Cor 11 and Rom 6, for example, should be considered from this perspective. As memorialisations of devotion, each represented a potential trigger for the reanimation of assumptions associated with pagan memorialisations in the past. If these pagan memorialisations were of the kind documented in Chapter 3, however – tangible and enduring memorialisations, memorialisations involving the reification of body parts and serving as means to recruit the interests of the deity to one's own cause – clearly circumcision represented a danger *of a greater degree*. We should also remember the situational basis of the argument being made in this study. That Paul diagnosed regression as a danger *for his Galatian correspondents* in no way presupposes that he would have perceived the same danger with other individuals in other congregations.

[215] Barclay offers a comprehensive survey of this debate, dividing the participants into two broad categories: those who find Galatians 5.13-6.10 to be 'wholly or largely unrelated' to the rest of the letter, and those who 'attempt to integrate this material into the interpretation of the letter as whole' (Barclay, 1988, 9-23). The difficulty has led to the excision of Gal 5.13-6.10 as an interpolation (e.g. O'Neill, 1972, 65-71), to its assignation to a different emotional register (e.g. Dibelius, 1936, 157-60), to its relegation to the status of a clarifying appendix (e.g. Burton, 1921, 290-1), or to 'two fronts' hypotheses in which Paul is thought to have been tackling two contrasting forms of disaffection with his gospel at the same time, one leading towards Judaism and the other towards paganism (e.g. Ropes, 1929, 25-7).

[216] Betz, 1979, 255-6; Dunn, 1993a, 285; Madsen II, 1998.

empowered growth may be aimed, at least in part, at improved spiritual resilience. This apparent movement from *symptomatic* treatment of the problem in the present (neutralising the *effects* of regression by dissuading the Galatians from compliance with the Influencer's demands) to *systemic* treatment of the problem going forward (neutralising the *causes* of regression by retraining the Galatians' spiritual reflexes) represents a promising topic for future research. Paul's vision of mature life in the Spirit seems to be one in which expectations habitually associated with religious στοιχεῖα in a believer's past are effectively deactivated, allowing them to live, as he lives, as those who have 'become all things to all people '(1 Cor 9.22).[217]

Many commentators also observe the apparent necessity for Paul's paraenesis *as a response* to the ministry of the Influencers.[218] Barclay argues that the Galatian Christians were attracted to Jewish law in part 'because of the detailed instruction it contained for the conduct of ordinary life.'[219] Paul, by contrast, had offered minimal ethical instruction, preferring 'flexible oral traditions [over] the fixity of authoritative written texts.'[220] He expected his converts to be 'led by the Spirit (Gal 5.18) and, '[i]f

[217] Note the striking resumption of στοιχ vocabulary in Gal 5.25. Summarising the aspirations for life in the Spirit articulated in 5.13-24, Paul's overarching concern is that the Galatians' religious practice be informed according to spiritual priorities: Εἰ ζῶμεν πνεύματι, πνεύματι καὶ στοιχῶμεν. Compare also 6.16.
[218] For Martyn, the ethical imperatives of Gal 5.13-6.10 are provoked by the Influencers' exposure of Paul's failure to prepare his converts for their battle with the 'Impulsive Desire of the Flesh,' leaving them like 'a group of sailors on the treacherous high seas in nothing more than a small and poorly equipped boat' (Martyn, 1997*a*, vol 33A, 305-6; see also 480-84) cf. De Boer, 2011, 330; Fung, 1988, 243).
[219] Barclay, 1988, 70. See also Betz, 1979, 8-9, 273-4, 295-6.
[220] Barclay, 1988, 70.

his experience at Corinth is anything to go by, it appears that he tended to underestimate the needs of his Gentile converts for basic moral instruction.'[221]

Betz, like Barclay, implies a certain *pastoral naïveté* on Paul's part here. 'Compared with [the Influencers] the Apostle had indeed little to offer. In his conception, the familiar means for dealing with man's transgressions were eliminated. The Galatians had been given the "Spirit" and "freedom," but they were left to that Spirit and freedom. There was no law to tell them what was right or wrong. There were no more rituals to correct transgressions. Under these circumstances, their daily life came to be a dance on a tightrope!'[222] Might we not argue equally cogently, however, that the relative suppression of religious law in Paul's ministry among newly converted Gentiles was actually a matter of *deliberate pastoral policy*? Paul may have been aware of the risks and yet may have chosen to embrace them lest, in the process of stressing ethical prescriptions, he create the context for the reanimation of his hearers' pagan religious assumptions, leading to their destruction (cf. 1 Cor 8.11). Even in an effort to counter the teaching of the Influencers which brings biblical ethics dramatically into the foreground, it is striking that Paul's emphasis lies more on spiritual transformation than it does on the reinstitution of Jewish law.[223] Familiar στοιχεῖα may not have been entirely absent from the model

[221] Barclay, 1988, 71; see also 95, 115-19, 216-20.
[222] Betz, 1979, 9.
[223] Note De Boer's helpful summary of the interpretative options for the phrase 'the law of Christ' in Gal 6.2. It is striking that none of the proposals reviewed (the law of Christ as the teachings of Jesus, the law of Christ as the love commandment, the law of Christ as 'the Mosaic code redefined, fulfilled, interpreted, lived, or taken in hand by Christ', the law of Christ as 'the "normative pattern"

of Christian practice Paul advocated in Galatia, but there are ample reasons to believe their role was considerably less prominent, and hedged about with considerably more protections against the renewal of his readers' former enslavement, than it was in the alternative offered by the Influencers.

established by Christ through his self-giving death') involves submission to the programme of Torah-observance recommended by the Influencers (De Boer, 2011, 378-81).

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CHAPTER 6
THE GALATIAN RECEPTION OF THE INFLUENCERS' MESSAGE

1. Introduction

In the foregoing chapters, our journey of exploration and exegesis has already brought us into dialogue with several significant attempts to resolve the interpretative problem generated by Paul's use of regression language in Galatians. How can his warnings about going back to the enslavement that characterised his readers' *pagan* past be squared with the obviously *Jewish* trajectory of the Influencers' ministry among them in the present? Readings against the letter's Graeco-Roman and Jewish backgrounds undermined the supposition that Paul was dealing with a substantial reversion to the emperor cult, that he was countering his readers' pre-existent 'nomistic orientation' or the allure of ritual castration, that they were retreating to the Godfearer status they may have enjoyed before their encounter with him, or that they were seeking 'social normalisation' by means of proselyte conversion.

We now proceed to engage with responses to the problem tied less-closely to specific facets of the underlying religious context. Representatives of the 'Paul within Judaism' school grapple with the insight, also emerging from this study, that Paul's

warnings about Jewish observances may have applied to Gentiles *as Gentiles* and have had no relevance at all to ethnic Jews. Other scholars interpret Paul's diagnosis of regression primarily as *a rhetorical ploy* designed to wake his readers up to the serious implications of accepting the Influencers' message.

In dialogue with each of these approaches, and through synthetic engagement with the concepts of reciprocity attested in the Galatian situation, our proposal that Paul's warnings about the adoption of Jewish practice among Gentile converts should be read within the context of his larger concern about the reanimation of the habitual religious assumptions of the weak (cf. 1 Cor 8.7) is nuanced and strengthened.

2. Paul Within Judaism

2.1 Matthew Thiessen – Proselyte Status as an Invalid Category

In his recent book *Paul and the Gentile Problem*, Matthew Thiessen proposes a bold and original alternative to both the Old and the New Perspectives on Paul. Citing Lloyd Gaston, Thiessen begins from the premise that 'Paul was not commissioned to preach among Jews, whether about Jesus Christ or the Torah or anything else,' and that he writes instead 'to gentile Christians, dealing with gentile-Christian problems.'[1] For Thiessen, failure to embrace this realisation leads to a false universalisation of Paul's comments about the law in Galatians.[2] 'One must be careful to take neither his

[1] Gaston, 1979, 55, 56.
[2] Thiessen, 2016, 162-3.

letter as a whole, nor the individual statements within it, out of the specific historical context in which they originated,' he writes. 'Paul did not reject the rite of circumcision or the law in general. He rejected their application to Gentiles.'[3]

Thiessen thus resists *both* the Old Perspective in which Judaism is positioned – as Gaston harshly caricatures it – as 'a joyless, hypocritical, nationalistic means of earning salvation by mechanically doing the works of the law' *and* the New Perspective(s) in which Judaism is positioned in more 'gracious' terms – where 'the works of the law' (Gal 2.16; 3.2, 5, 10) are presented as means of *staying in* the covenant community not as means of *getting in* (Sanders), where they are 'badges' of nationalistic pride (Wright) or 'boundary markers' distinguishing Jews from non-Jews (Dunn), not grounds or terms upon which men and women can be 'saved' (Stendahl).[4]

Thiessen finds both camps guilty of exactly the kind of universalisation he critiques. Galatians is neither addressed to Jews nor about Judaism. It is about *Gentile* attempts to keep *Jewish* laws – laws pertaining to circumcision in particular – which can only be distorted when the attempt to apply them to Gentiles is made.[5] Both camps are

[3] Thiessen, 2016, 100. Gathercole makes an analogous move in exploration of the identity of Paul's Jewish interlocutor in Romans – the text cannot be used as a foundation for normative judgements about Paul's view of Judaism if his interlocutor is not a typical Jew (Gathercole, 2002, 209).
[4] Gaston, 1979, 49; Sanders, 1977, 17; Wright, 1991, 3; Wright, 1997, 132; Dunn, 2006*b*, 352; Dunn, 2008, 8, 9, 12, 17, 23-8. 'It is in response to *their* question [the question posed by Luther himself and his introspective contemporaries, and not the questions posed by Paul's first-century audience], "How can I find a gracious God?" that Paul's words about a justification in Christ by faith, and without the works of the Law, appears as the liberating and saving answer' (Stendahl, 1963, 203).
[5] 'Both anti-legalist and anti-ethnocentric proponents have universalized Gal 4.21-31, a universalization that unavoidably leads to the conclusion that Paul has misused Genesis 16-21. Again we shall see that the key to understanding Paul's interpretation of Genesis 16-21 lies in recognizing that Paul provides a reading of this text in response to gentile judaizing – most especially, gentiles undergoing circumcision' (Thiessen, 2016, 75).

reproached for siding with the accusation levelled against Paul in the Lukan account of his final visit to Jerusalem – that he '[taught] all the Jews living among the Gentiles to forsake Moses, and… not to circumcise their children or observe the customs' (Acts 21.21).[6] Thiessen prefers a reconstruction of Pauline practice which vindicates the Apostle's side of the argument.

What then is the *actual* focus of Paul's warnings? Thiessen thinks the Influencers taught, and the Galatian Christians believed, that circumcision was a necessary part of 'getting in' to God's covenant community *for Gentiles* but that none of the actors in the drama thought circumcision was a way of getting in *for Jews*. It was the specific focus on Gentiles that Paul was determined to resist. Why? Because, according to Thiessen, Paul denied the possibility of Gentile conversion to Judaism *absolutely*. The only means by which Gentiles could be counted as descendants of Abraham for Paul was incorporation in Christ.[7]

Support for this interpretation is drawn from the book of Jubilees, which presents Judaism as 'inherent, genealogical, and impermeable to penetration by non-Jews' – a viewpoint which, for Thiessen, provides a compelling interpretative framework for Paul.[8] Citing *Jub*. 15.25-26, 30-32a; he argues that, according to this vision of the

[6] Thiessen, 2016, 164-7.
[7] Thiessen, 2016, 106-8.
[8] Thiessen, 2016, 80-82, 100. The Qumran community might be suggested as an additional reference point for Pauline hostility to the possibility of Gentile conversion (Collins, 2010, 43), but as Terence Donaldson demonstrates, despite overwhelming negativity about the fate of Gentiles as Gentiles, the scrolls demonstrate at least theoretical openness to the incorporation of Gentiles as proselytes (Donaldson, 1997, 195-215). The Temple Scroll 11QT[a] XL.5-6 affords a notable example, envisaging Gentile converts with access to the third courtyard of an idealised temple, perhaps with the possibility

world, circumcision – far from being the decisive rite that completed the transition from outsider to proselyte – was only valid when performed on infants eight-days-old, and that circumcision undertaken *at any other point* neither signified nor obtained membership of the covenant.[9] Indeed, it achieved the very opposite – rendering the circumcised person *a covenant breaker*.[10] This is how Thiessen makes sense of Paul's challenging claim in Gal 5.3 that 'every man who lets himself be circumcised… is obliged to obey *the entire law'* (emphasis mine). The law that Paul had in mind here was the law of circumcision as it is described in Genesis 17 – complete with its restrictions as to the correct timing of the rite – not the Jewish law in its entirety. In Thiessen's exegesis, Paul's appeal to the story of Abraham's sons in Gal 4.21-31 – which is read by many as *an incentive* to Gentile circumcision, and is supposed to have been used by the Influencers as such – was actually designed to

of further normalisation of status in the fourth generation if Yadin's reading of the fragmentary text at XXXIX.7 is accepted (Donaldson, 2007, 195-7, 207-9 and Yadin, 1983, vol 2, 170). Further examples include *The Damascus Document* CD VI.14-21; XII.8-11; XIV.3-6; and 4Q169 II.7-9. Donaldson interprets the apparently contradictory statement at 4Q174 I.1-7 as a reference to the exclusion of individuals from the temple on account of impurity without prejudice to their membership of the community (Donaldson, 2007, 210-15).

[9] In his extensive survey of the whole range of Jewish perspectives on the state and fate of Gentiles in the time of Paul, Donaldson places *Jubilees* in 'the extreme position on the negative end of the spectrum' (Donaldson, 2007, 510 n.3).

[10] Thiessen, 2016, 73-82. Gaston's exegesis of Galatians is similarly dependent on the existence of divergent attitudes towards Gentile conversion within first-century Jewish thought. For him, these differences are the cause of the confusion in Galatia – leading Paul's converts to assume that legal observances were necessary conditions for inclusion in God's family (Gaston, 1979, 58). Gaston does not, however, agree with Thiessen that Paul rejected proselyte conversion outright, positioning him rather as a Shammaite who would have insisted on circumcision for legitimate conversion if it were not for the soteriological revolution introduced at the coming of Christ (Gaston, 1979, 61). On circumcision as the rite effecting the transition to proselyte status, see Cohen, 1999, 157-62.

repudiate it.[11] Isaac was included in the covenant and Ishmael was excluded because Isaac was circumcised on the eighth day and Ishmael was not.[12]

Thiessen is to be praised for naming and addressing a question whose central importance has also emerged in this study, namely: why did the Apostle think Jewish legal observances in general, and circumcision in particular, were a good thing for *Jewish* Christians but a bad thing for *Gentile* Christians?[13] Thiessen's answer also potentially explains the heat of Paul's warnings. If the Apostle believed not only that proselyte conversion involved the obligation to obey the entire law (Gal 5.3) but also that the pivotal sign of conversion (circumcision) ineluctably involved legal disobedience, his disquiet makes at least partial sense.[14]

But not even this radical re-reading tells us why Paul warned the Galatians against going back *to paganism* – on the contrary, it interprets their trajectory as resolutely *Jewish*. And neither can the challenge to the legal admissibility of proselyte conversion on which it depends be sustained. Even if Paul's allusion to 'preaching circumcision' in Gal 5.11 has nothing to do with past participation in Gentile

[11] Thiessen, 2016, 74-5. See also Longenecker, 1990, 200-6; Longenecker, 1998, 166-7; Matera, 1992, 172-5.
[12] Thiessen, 2016, 84-96.
[13] 'Paul opposed gentile judaizing because it was a misappropriation of the holy law. Indeed, he did not oppose Jews, or Jewish identity, or Jewish behavior and beliefs. He battled any attempt, on the part of Jews or gentiles, to encourage or compel gentiles to adopt the Jewish law. But what precisely did Paul find offensive about gentile observance of the Jewish law?' (Thiessen, 2016, 162).
[14] Thiessen apparently assumes both the problematic view discussed in our exegesis of Gal 3.10-14 that Torah-observance in Paul's mind was structurally impossible, and that Gentile proselyte converts in Galatia planned to renounce Christ and all hope of forgiveness in him. Paul, by contrast seems to have viewed Torah-observance as a package *including* submission to legal provisions for atonement (cf. Phil 3.6) and to have acknowledged the ministry of the Influencers as a 'gospel' (Gal 1.6, 8).

proselytism, Thiessen still fails to demonstrate Pauline adherence to the radical viewpoint attested in the book of Jubilees.[15] And he fails even to mention the circumcision of Timothy in Acts 16.3 which, if we accept his larger argument, would have rendered Timothy himself a covenant breaker.[16] On my reading of Galatians, circumcision did indeed remain obligatory for Christian Jews in Paul's mind (Gal 5.3), continuing to serve as an ethnic identifier and as a sign of connection to the promises of the Abrahamic covenant – and pointing clearly now to their decisive fulfilment in Christ. For Christian Gentiles, however, though connection to the promises was similarly predicated the Christ's achievements, union to him was now adequately expressed in baptism (3.26-7) – minimising the risk of dangerous associations with their former pagan lives.

One also wonders why Paul made no explicit mention of, or even allusion to, the stipulation that circumcision be performed on the eighth day in Galatians if it was, in fact, the cornerstone of his argument. Here and in other places, Thiessen's reading locates Paul's most important logical moves *under* or *behind* the text – in the realm

[15] On the exegesis of Gal 5.11, see Thiessen, 2016, 37-41; Donaldson, 1997, 275-84. Even at the radical end of Pharisaism, we do well to recall Josephus' portrait of Eleazar, whose 'reputation for being extremely strict about the ancestral laws' manifested itself in his insistence that Izates, the King of Adiabene, be circumcised, not in the repudiation of circumcision as a necessary step to conversion, (*Ant.* 20.43). 'Während der ersten Jahre seiner Wirksamkeit in Arabien und Zilizien war die Einstellung des Paulus zum Phänomen des Proselytismus möglicherweise noch positiv (vgl. Gal 5, 11)' (Schäfer, 2004, 479).

[16] The reading also runs aground on God's command to circumcise the second-generation Exodus Israelites as adults in Joshua 5.2-12. In the light of my larger argument, it is striking that the circumcision of Timothy in Acts is presented in the language of accommodation: λαβὼν περιέτεμεν αὐτὸν διὰ τοὺς Ἰουδαίους τοὺς ὄντας ἐν τοῖς τόποις ἐκείνοις (Acts 16.3). Timothy's obligation to submit to circumcision is *assumed* in the light of the foregoing description of the Jerusalem Council and Paul's explicit submission to it in 16.4 (cf. Chapter 5 §2.1.3). The impetus to circumcise him *at this moment*, however, is driven by the scruples of local Jews.

of things the reader is 'likely' to have assumed – but no space is given to the question of who the reader *actually was* or what that identity might tell us about their assumptions.[17]

2.2 Michael Wyschogrod – Ongoing Obligation to the Noachide Laws

Michael Wyschogrod is a Jewish scholar with substantial experience in Jewish-Christian dialogue gifted with an unusual and refreshing clarity of thought in the navigation of complex theological issues. His essay, *Paul, Jews and Gentiles*, applies that clarity to the difference, as Paul perceived it, between Jewish and Gentile beneficiaries of Christ's achievements with extensive references to the argument of Galatians.

Wyschogrod argues that the God of Israel had never been indifferent to the fate or conduct of men and women outside ethnic Israel. He bound them, rather, to observe the Noachide commandments: 'The Noachide Law is… the Torah of the gentiles. They are under obligation to obey it as the Jews are under obligation to obey all of the Torah.'[18] Provided with their own distinct pathway to the attainment of a portion in the world to come, Gentiles were therefore generally discouraged from conversion to Judaism. '[G]entiles, in the rabbinic view', he writes, 'ought not voluntarily to increase their obligations beyond the Noachide Commandments to which they were subject.'[19] Noahides enjoyed the status of 'indwelling strangers' (*Ger Toshav*) in Jewish society.

[17] As an example of this argumentative strategy, consider Thiessen's handling of the link between the promise to Abraham and the new spiritual identity of believers in Christ (Thiessen, 2016, 143-7).
[18] Wyschogrod, 2004, 190.
[19] Wyschogrod, 2004, 193.

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Though not formally incorporated within the house of Israel, relatively large numbers of *Ger Toshav* participated in synagogue communities as sympathisers in the time of Paul, as we saw in the previous chapter.[20]

The coming of Christ, however, radically altered this situation.[21] Christ's death and resurrection conveyed all the benefits of Jewish proselyte conversion to Gentile Christians *without submission to Torah*, thus adding new weight to the traditional admonitions against conversion. Conversion to Judaism was to be avoided for Gentile Christians not only because Torah-observance was *more difficult* than observance of the Noachide laws, but because it was 'in effect saying that Christ had not happened, that everything was as it had been before.'[22] This, for Wyschogrod, explains the heat of Paul's warnings about circumcision in Galatians without the need to position him as an opponent of Gentile conversion *tout court*. Gentile Christians were to continue on their characteristic path of obedience to the Noachide laws – to which Wyschogrod finds explicit reference in the Apostolic decree of Acts 15.24-9 – and Jewish Christians on the path of Torah-observance, each with confidence in God's ultimate mercy stemming from the curse-bearing death of Christ.[23]

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[20] Wyschogrod, 2004, 191.
[21] Wyschogrod, 2004, 188. Wyschogrod's thought here is reminiscent of J. Louis Martyn (cf. Martyn, 1997*a*, vol 33A, 97-105).
[22] Wyschogrod, 2004, 193. See also Kahl, 2009, 223. Commenting on Gal 2.15-21, Teresa Morgan argues that 'Paul never says, here or elsewhere, that Jews *ought* to abandon the law, even if he did not think it was necessary to keep it' (Morgan, 2015, 269). Wyschogrod agrees with Morgan's first statement but not with the second, arguing that for Paul, 'circumcision… and obedience to the law… always go together – see Gal 5.3' (Wyschogrod, 2004, 194).
[23] Wyschogrod, 2004, 192, 196-201. On the relationship between the Apostolic decree and the Noachide commandments, see also Bauckham, 1995, 459-61; Bockmuehl, 2003, 78, 164-7; Fitzmyer, 2010, 561-3.

Wyschogrod's analysis of the difference between Jews and Gentiles as beneficiaries of Christ's coming each in their distinctive ways is immediately more persuasive than Thiessen's strained exegesis of Gentile circumcision as a form of covenant disobedience. We have tools here sufficient to explain the Apostolic Council's ruling against circumcision not to mention the ambivalence of contemporary sources on the question of proactive Jewish outreach as noted in the foregoing chapters. But we still have nothing to help explain Paul's regression language, and too little, I think, even to explain the actual content of his warnings.

Wyschogrod is surely right to interpret the significance of Christ's coming for Christian Gentiles *and* Christian Jews (whether born-Jews or converts) as liberation from the threat of ultimate estrangement from God; the question of whether God will or will not incline to mercy is finally resolved at the cross in Paul's mind.[24] But if Paul's words in Gal 5.2-4 are allowed their full force, estrangement from God is exactly the fate that concerns him. 'If you let yourselves be circumcised, Christ will be of no benefit to you,' he writes. 'You who want to be justified by the law have cut yourselves off from Christ; you have fallen away from grace.' These cannot be consequences of conversion to sincere Jewish Christianity in Paul's mind, however inadvisable such a conversion might have been for his Galatian readers, or misguided as a response to the achievements of Christ. Paul is either talking about the Galatians accepting Jewish law *as Jews who no longer acknowledge Christ*

[24] 'It is therefore true that in one sense Paul sees the Law as abrogated to the Jews, if by "abrogated" we mean that it is no longer demanded of the Jews that they are obedient to it' Wyschogrod, 2004, 197.

(which simply ignores his warnings about going back to what they did before) or something more complex.

2.3 Paula Fredriksen – Gentile Circumcision as an Historical Anomaly

Though apparently unaware of Michael Wyschogrod's work, Paula Fredriksen develops many similar themes in her engaging and wide-ranging monograph, *Paul the Pagan's Apostle*. Highlighting the dangers associated with anachronistic visions of religious conversion, Fredriksen notes the intimate connection between religion and ethnicity in the ancient world.[25] Gentiles like Jews were 'born into relationship with their gods… and accordingly born into protocols for maintaining and safeguarding their gods' goodwill.'[26] Extant sources disclose a spectrum of Jewish attitudes to Gentile proselytes. Fredriksen concludes that, in most cases, such individuals were received into Jewish communities but not actively sought.[27]

Fredriksen therefore sees the widespread attraction of Gentiles into the congregations of the early church as an unexpected and unsought development, indicative, for the apostles, of the fulfilment of Jewish eschatological expectations but raising challenging questions about integration in situations where Gentiles and

[25] The unhelpful distinction between ethnicity and religion implicit in the terms 'pagan' and 'gentile' drives Frederiksen's preference for the bulky phrase 'ex-pagan pagans' to describe Pauline converts (Fredriksen, 2017, 34). Adi Ophir and Ishay Rosen-Zvi's intriguing thesis argues that the very idea of an individualised, generic Gentile, presented in a dichotomous relationship to Jews, is a Pauline innovation (Ophir and Rosen-Zvi, 2018, 140-78).
[26] Fredriksen, 2017, 35. The enduring power of repeated exposure to these 'protocols' is central to the hypothesis developed in this thesis, although Fredriksen does not expand her analysis along these lines.
[27] On the irrelevance of Torah to Gentiles, see Fredriksen, 2017, 52. On the spectrum of approaches to the admissibility/desirability of conversion to Judaism, see Fredriksen, 2017, 64-73.

Jews were required to mix.[28] This, she argues, was the normal situation in the early church. Confronting the once-dominant Tübingen hypothesis that Paul was breaking new ground with his vision of Gentile Christianity *without* Torah-observance, Fredriksen finds no early evidence for a vision of Gentile Christianity that *included* Torah-observance except in the isolated example of Galatians.[29]

Here, like Thiessen and Wyschogrod, Fredriksen omits a direct attempt to interpret Paul's problematic regression terminology. Though her focus throughout the book is on Paul the apostle to the pagans, her portrayal of the problem in Galatia revolves entirely around the attractions of *Jewish* Christianity. She is right, I think, to conclude that his polemic is *not* aimed 'against Judaism as such' but her judgement that it *is* aimed instead against the positive proposals of the Influencers omits the possibility of *slippage* that has occupied us in the preceding chapters and leads to speculation about the Influencers' motives that cannot support compelling conclusions.[30]

Like Thiessen and Wyschogrod, Fredriksen notes the problematic heat of Paul's warnings: 'Why is Paul so opposed to Gentile circumcision?' she asks. 'What was so terrible about gentile circumcision that it even undid the benefit of Christ?'[31] Her search for a solution, however, leads no further than tentative acceptance of

[28] Fredriksen, 2017, 79-80. On Gentile incorporation as the fulfilment of eschatological expectations, see Fredriksen, 2017, 73-80. On the challenge of mixed interaction between Jews and Gentiles, see Fredriksen, 2017, 94-108.
[29] Fredriksen, 2017, 97-100.
[30] Fredriksen, 2017, 99-100.
[31] Fredriksen, 2017, 106-7.

Thiessen's assertion that valid circumcision was limited to infants eight-days-old, with the associated problems discussed above.[32]

3. Regression as a Rhetorical Ploy

Though attempts to illuminate the Galatian crisis by highlighting problems with *Jewish* legal observances that are specific to *Gentiles* have proved unsatisfactory thus far, the explanatory potential of this approach has not yet been exhausted. As the foregoing chapters indicate, Gentile *mis*appropriation of Jewish law driven by habitual exposure to the protocols of pagan religion offers a compelling alternative to the models submitted by Thiessen, Wyschogrod and Fredriksen. Our articulation of this proposal will be assisted and clarified, however, by interaction with a final, quite different, approach.

In Chapter 4 §4.4, in our treatment of the pivotal but enigmatic phrase τὰ στοιχεῖα τοῦ κόσμου, we encountered interpretations of Paul's regression language based on the identification of similarities of various kinds between the Jewish-Christianity of the Influencers and the pre-Christian paganism of his readers. Martinus De Boer drew our attention to the calendrical observances that undoubtedly formed part of both religious worlds.[33] J. Louis Martyn argued for a common pagan and Jewish dependence on cosmic dualities.[34] John Barclay pointed to overlapping concepts of

[32] Fredriksen, 2017, 127-9, 158.
[33] De Boer, 2011, 252-61.
[34] Martyn, 1997*a*, vol 33A, 393-400.

worth and reciprocity.[35] In each case, the proposal was *not* that the Galatians were returning to their former religious affiliations in any substantial sense – only that their new religious affiliations *resembled* their former ones in certain respects and that Paul was shrewd enough to exploit this fact, using their disillusionment with the one as a means to undermine the appeal of the other.[36] Paul's regression language was a *rhetorical ploy* designed to steer his readers in a different direction.

Our analysis of these models identified several flaws. De Boer's concentration on calendrical observances failed to reflect the centrality of circumcision in Paul's larger argument. Martyn's assignation of Jewish and pagan dualities and the apparently similar dualities of Pauline thought to completely separate eras lacked a coherent rationale. Paul's remarks about the incompatibility of his readers' actions with *knowing God* in Gal 4.9 undermined the idea that they were merely mirroring the Jewish Christian ethos of the Influencers. His profuse deployment of regression vocabulary – especially the phrase πάλιν ἄνωθεν (also 4.9) indicating the re-execution of an action *according to a pre-established pattern* – told a similar story.

None of this obviates the existence of similarities between pagan and Jewish religious practice in Asia Minor. In Chapter 5 §5, we noted the existence of exactly

[35] Barclay, 2015, 389-91; 404-10.
[36] '[Paul] is not claiming that pagan worship and Torah-observance are substantially identical… He is simply stating… that, from his perspective, pagan religious practice and life under the rule of the Torah may be classified in the *same* category of subjection to the στοιχεῖα of the world… The rhetorical effect is the suggestion that far from moving *forwards* in adopting the Torah, they are moving *backwards* to where they began' (Barclay, 2015, 409-10). Arnold identifies a similar rationale behind the allegation that the Christians in Colossae are tempted to worship angels (Col 2.18; Arnold, 1995, 101, 190).

such similarities in the realm of calendrical observances and in several other areas besides. We have no reason to doubt that these points of proximity played a part both in the Galatians' attraction to Judaism, and in Paul's disquiet about it. *Similarity and difference* must be respected, however, if we are to get to the bottom of the regression problem.

Paul was concerned that his readers were '[cutting themselves] off from Christ' (Gal 5.4), and that '[his] work for [them] may have been wasted' (4.11). But as Thiessen, Wyschogrod and Frederiksen highlight, there is no evidence that he felt the same way about *Jewish* Christians observing Jewish laws, however similar their practices might have been to those of their pagan neighbours.[37] The regression problem cannot be explained by merely *noting* these similarities. We have to explain why they were especially dangerous *for Gentiles*.

Proceeding in dialogue with John Barclay's perceptive account of Paul's argument, our challenge now is to unite these apparently divergent perspectives, explaining how similarities of a particular kind between Jewish Christianity and paganism *did indeed* lie at the heart of the Galatian crisis, how these similarities led to risks for Gentile Christians *that were not* replicated in the experience of Jewish Christians, and how Paul's regression vocabulary constitutes a *substantial, not merely rhetorical*, response to the dangers stemming from these similarities in Paul's mind.

[37] Note the reciprocal gesture of fellowship shared between Paul and the Law-observant Jewish apostles in Jerusalem (Gal 2.9).

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3.1 Similarities Between Jewish Christianity and Paganism

John Barclay's effort to identify the similarities between paganism and Judaism underpinning Paul's argument in Galatians, and to highlight their rhetorical function, goes back to his 1988 book, *Obeying the Truth*. 'As regards [Gal] 4.10,' he writes – pioneering the argument later developed by De Boer – 'it appears that the reason why Paul highlights the Galatians' calendar observance, out of all the manifold "works of the law", is because he sees here a point of direct comparison with their former pagan worship. Both pagan and Jewish worship involve observing certain sacred "days" and Paul deliberately chooses such general terms as "days", "months" and "seasons" in order to emphasise the similarities between these two forms of religion: *hence he can score a useful polemical point by describing their new Jewish practice as a regression into their former way of life' (*emphasis mine).[38]

In his more recent book, *Paul and the Gift*, Barclay returns to the question of the similarities between paganism and Judaism, taking Martyn as his inspiration and painting on a broader canvas. Martyn's two-age scheme for the underlying theology of the letter – building on the earlier insights of Karl Barth, Rudolf Bultmann, and Ernst Käsemann – establishes a radical contrast between 'the present evil age' (Gal

[38] Barclay, 1988, 63-4. Thiessen is surely correct to perceive an allusion in Gal 4.10 to the Septuagintal rendering of the creation of the stars with its reference to the delimitation of seasons and days and years (Gen 1.14; Thiessen, 2016, 155-6). This too, however, broadly confirms Barclay's exegetical direction, given that the stars in Genesis 1 serve as signs for *all humanity* and the assignment of their role as temporal markers predates the distinction between Jew and Gentile.

1.4) and the new era that has broken into the world with the coming of Christ.[39] The pivotal question with respect to the Galatians' religious practice is where they stand on this salvation-historical timeline.[40]

For Barclay, this bifurcation of the ages offers an innovative solution to the problem of Paul's apparent alignment of paganism and Judaism. Barclay argues that Paul's comments about regression effectively assert the similarity of *all* non-Christian worldviews. He unites them under 'the old age' on the basis that they depend on 'pre-established systems of worth,' in contrast to which the gospel of 'the new age' is utterly *incongruous*.[41]

Pagan and Jewish systems, for all their differences, says Barclay, share a common concept of reciprocity. For every gracious gift they provide, the pagan gods *and* the Jewish God expect a return from their human beneficiaries to keep the cycle of gift and return turning.[42] The return, as we saw in Chapter 3, need not be conceived as the *cause* of further gifts, merely as their necessary *condition*.[43] But even this

[39] Barclay notes Karl Barth's presentation of the gospel as a divine initiative crossing a 'chasm,' on our side of which lie 'all human knowledge and history and achievement' (Barclay, 2015, 131; Barth, 1933, 335-8). Bultmann recalibrated sin in Paul as 'the rebellious idea that a human being can secure his/her own "life" on the basis of natural, creaturely resources, that is, on the basis of his/her own power and achievements' (Barclay, 2015, 137; Bultmann, 2007, 232-9). Käsemann pioneered Pauline interpretation against the background of Jewish apocalyptic and critiqued the individualistic exegeses of Barth and Bultmann (Barclay, 2015, 140-6; Käsemann, 1971, 1-31).
[40] Martyn, 1997*a*, vol 33A, 104-5.
[41] Barclay, 2015, 391. Barclay's emphasis on the utter alienness of Paul's gospel is indebted not only to Martyn's apocalyptic interpretation of Galatians but also to his interaction with the French Philosopher, Alain Badiou (Barclay, 2015, 175-9; Barclay, 2010a, 36-56; Barclay, 2010b, 171-84).
[42] In Jewish thought, '[the] most important return [for benefaction came] not from the human recipient but from *God*' (Barclay, 2015, 43).
[43] 'Those who deserve gifts are still the recipients of gifts, given voluntarily and without legal requirement. They do not *cause* the gift to be given (that is always a matter of the benefactor's will),

asymmetrical vision of reciprocity, which has multiple points of contact with the analogous systems that undergirded every facet of social and political life in the ancient world, is inappropriate to describe the actions and the expectations of Paul's God in sending Jesus.[44] Dependence on a fitting human response, even as a condition, would place this God in a position of intolerable contingency for Paul on Barclay's reading. And thus, the advent of Christ reveals a new and totally unprecedented logic, a logic that overthrows conventional concepts of eligibility for blessing.[45] Paul distinguishes his gospel from every other norm and from every other system by reorienting reality around the idea that God gives to human beings irrespective of their worth, however worth might be construed.[46] According to Barclay, therefore, regression in Galatians means moving back to *anything* which fails to observe this distinction.

Barclay's reinterpretation of Paul's argument has much to recommend it as we will see shortly. But it is not free from problems. We have already noted the failure, common to other rhetorical interpretations of Paul's regression language, to accommodate the extremity of Paul's warnings *for Gentiles*. Even if Paul considered paganism and Jewish Christianity similar in the terms proposed, it does not seem to have led him to

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but they prove themselves to be its suitable recipients and thus provide the *condition* for its proper distribution' (Barclay, 2015, 316).

[44] Barclay, 2015, 356-62.

[45] 'Since no-one is granted this gift on the grounds of their ethnic worth, no one of any ethnicity is excluded from its reach' (Barclay, 2015, 361).

[46] 'The cross of Christ shatters every ordered system of norms, however embedded in the seemingly "natural" order of "the world"… the cross of Christ breaks believers' allegiance to pre-conditioned notions of the honorable, the superior, the right' (Barclay, 2015, 394-5).

doubt the viability of law-observant Jewish Christianity *for Jews*. Why, then, did he doubt the faith of his Gentile converts when they were attracted to the Jewish Christian lifestyle? Barclay's account resorts to a portrayal of the Influencers reminiscent of the Old Perspective: 'The Galatians are being urged by the other missionaries to put their faith in Christ under the authority of the Torah, taking the Jewish way of life as their definitive framework of value (righteousness)… For Paul this would not simply turn the clock back to an era pre-Christ. It would place them outside of the trajectory of divine gift, promised and fulfilled (3.15-29). It would not fulfil but nullify their allegiance to Christ (5.4). And it would submit them to a regime wholly unable to resolve the human crisis (4.9).'[47] This solution can only be sustained, however, at the price of inconsistency with the judgement that, much though he regretted their contribution to the Galatian crisis, Paul acknowledged the Influencers as followers of Christ – a judgement which Barclay unambiguously supports.[48]

If Paul really did intend to unite paganism and Judaism under the old age conceived as a 'catch all' for *every* form of thought and practice except those distinctive to Christianity, the non-specificity of this argument – and the lack of explanatory power consequent to it – must also be acknowledged. To say that paganism and Judaism are alike only in their unlikeness to something which is unlike *everything,* is really saying nothing. But Barclay depends on this argument to support a quite specific conclusion.

[47] Barclay, 2015, 410. Martyn adopts a similar solution, explaining the heat of Paul's rhetoric not as a denunciation of Judaism itself, but only of the Judaism of the Influencers (Martyn, 1997*b*, 77-84).
[48] Barclay, 2015, 334-5.

His conclusion is that Paul's readers were attracted to the message of the Influencers *on its own terms*; they saw Jewish legal observances in the same way that Jewish Christians saw them, and found them attractive for the same reasons that Jewish Christians found them attractive. The force of Paul's comments remains *rhetorical* for Barclay. The Galatians were not returning to paganism in any *substantial* sense.[49] The broader similarity of Judaism and paganism with respect to concepts of worth is sufficient to justify Paul's regression language on its own in his view.

The underlying logic, however, cannot bear this weight. Barclay's two-age argument can certainly *accommodate* this reconstruction *as a possibility* but it offers no positive support for it as over against any other plausible reconstruction. On the same basis, we could argue that the Galatians were going back to the emperor cult – this was no less dependent on the logic of the old age than the Influencers' programme on Barclay's assumptions. We could argue that they were going back to a specific local cult practice – this too would depend on non-Christian concepts of worth. We could argue that they were going back to Middle Platonism – if there was any evidence that it existed in the region at this time.[50] We could argue, as Troy Martin has provocatively proposed, that they were completely abandoning Christianity.[51] Each of these options would entail similar dependence on the logic of

[49] According to Barclay, Paul's readers are being encouraged to 'Judaize' and thus 'assume the validity of a symbolic capital that has been shown to count for nothing before God' (Barclay, 2015, 383). The 'symbolic capital' in question here is the practice of Jewish legal observances *by Jews*. Barclay thus takes it as given that Jewish legal observances were valued by the Galatians on Jewish terms.
[50] DeMaris, vol 96, 1994; cited in Arnold, 1995, 206-7.
[51] Troy Martin argues that while Paul does indeed charge his readers with exchanging his gospel for a different gospel requiring circumcision and observance of the Jewish law in Gal 1.6-9, the charge that

the old age, and each would have dramatically different implications for our interpretation of the letter. Barclays' argument says nothing about which of these options is most likely. The assertion that the Galatians' new religious preferences and motives mirrored those of the Influencers, therefore, is mere conjecture. And it is an *unlikely* conjecture, given the complexity of the interaction that takes place whenever religious ideas pass from one person to another, receiving new colour and emphasis according to the established thought models and habits of the recipient, and especially so in the environment of first-century Asia Minor, where the process of embracing new religious ideas while simultaneously conforming them to pre-existent paradigms is, as we have seen, widely attested.

3.2 Similarities *and Differences* Between Jewish Christianity and Paganism

Despite the problems with Barclay's model, however, his focus on concepts of worth and reciprocity brings us close to the resolution of the regression problem.

Paul's estimate of the reciprocal interactions that characterised his readers' erstwhile relationship with their pagan gods is certainly one very-likely component of his concern for them. Traditional Jewish renderings of pagan religion, as we have seen, revolved around the inversion of the creator/creature distinction: idolatry accorded priority to humans in the divine-human relationship, positioning them as the makers and protectors of the gods. The contextual envelope within which the Galatians'

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they are returning to paganism in 4.8-11 is the 'primary stasis' of the letter, and should govern our reconstruction of the historical setting (Martin, 1995, 437-61).

past history has been drawn in this study also accommodates visions of reciprocity likely to have concerned Paul. Our analysis of the data using Barclay's own 'grace perfections' framework highlighted the various degrees of forcefulness with which the gods could be incentivised, the scope for initiating divine obligations from the human side, and the largely earthbound nature of the blessings sought. Paul's emphasis on the granting of divine favours irrespective of human worth found no obvious parallels in the background data.

If our reading of στοιχεῖα is correct, however, *similarities* in these areas between the Galatians' former devotion to pagan cults and the Jewish Christianity of the Influencers – similarities in the assumptions and expectations of each group about what their religious practices actually achieved – *do not seem to have been the focus of Paul's regressive logic*.

Barclay, like Martyn, attempts to broker similarity at this level. Enslavement to the στοιχεῖα becomes enslavement to the basic components of the old age and, specifically, to basic components of worth.[52] Similar attitudes to religious reciprocity in the Galatians' past and the Jewish Christianity of the Influencers form the basis of Paul's warnings about regression – and determine their rhetorical effect.[53] On our alternative reading of στοιχεῖα, however, Paul locates the similarity between paganism and Jewish Christianity *in the fundamental building blocks of religious*

[52] Barclay, 2015, 345, 391, 409.
[53] Barclay, 2015, 410.

practice that are common to both. There is no need to demonstrate that the Influencers shared attitudes with the Galatians about what these practices *achieved*. It is possible that they *did,* but attempts to reconstruct the areas of overlap are entirely speculative. Paul's logic relies rather on the overlap between the abundantly attested *basic practices* by which means these attitudes were expressed:

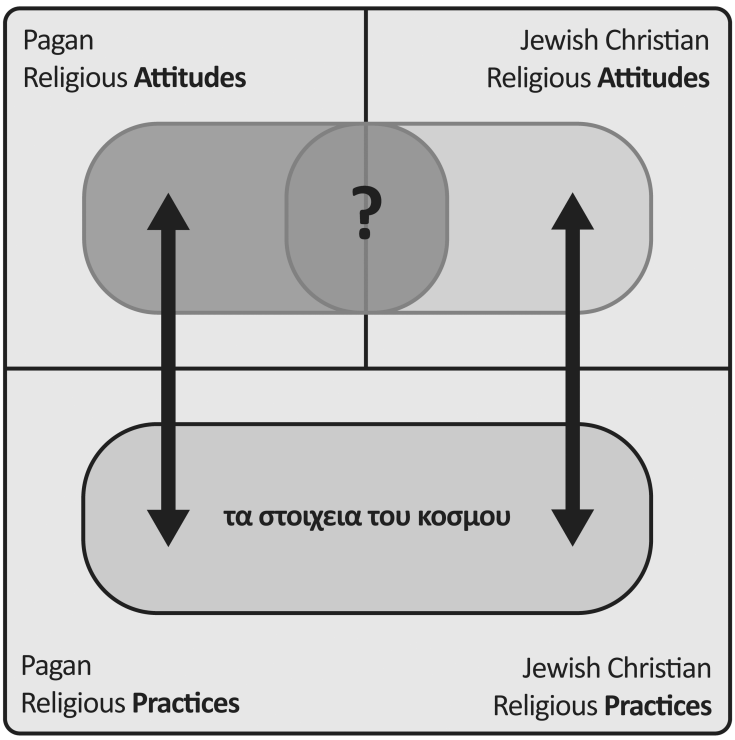

Fig. 7. The Role of the στοιχεῖα in the Galatian Crisis

Wherever we look within the envelope of possible contextual options for Paul's Galatian readers, there are points of commonality with Jewish Christianity at the level of religious practice. Interactions with the divine realm are mediated through observance of religious calendars (so De Boer), through concerns about ritual purity

and the separation of sacred and profane space, through the making of vows, through the establishment of tangible and enduring memorials of devotion. None of these observations are particularly remarkable, or particularly limited to Anatolia. But they should not, for this reason, be neglected as components of the Galatians' religious background.

Paul seems to have had no concern about these practices *in Jewish Christian contexts*. He participated in them himself; in *Jewish Christian* contexts they encoded the *Jewish Christian* assumptions that Paul himself shared. What concerned Paul was the sponsorship of these practices in *Gentile* Christian contexts – because here they encoded the habitual assumptions of his converts' pagan past. Shared elements of religious practice formed a bridge over which pagan religious assumptions could be smuggled into their Christian faith, destroying it from within.

What role then did reciprocity play in the Galatian crisis? If calendars and vows and ritual purity and memorialisations of devotion were used to position men and women as initiators in the divine-human relationship in the Galatians' past, we can well imagine how returning to στοιχεῖα shared between that past and Jewish Christianity might have reawakened these habitual assumptions, *whatever expectations they expressed for the Influencers*. If calendars and vows and ritual purity and memorialisations of devotion were used to incentivise divine responses in the Galatians' past – perhaps to preserve the memory of past faithfulness before the divine attention, or to recruit the interests of the gods to their own service – we can

well imagine how returning to these same στοιχεῖα might have stimulated similar expectations, and how dangerous Paul would have perceived this to be. Each of these scenarios, and many more like them, are conceivable within the envelope of possible religious options we have defined for Paul's readers. And none of them, importantly, imply any definite reconstruction of the religious assumptions *of the Influencers*. The similarity I am proposing (and which I think Paul is plainly stating) exists at the level of the most basic religious practices.

Paul did not think the Galatians were in danger because they had come to think about their relationship with God in the same way the Influencers did. He thought they were in danger because of the association that existed in their minds and reflexes between the religious assumptions of their pagan past as he saw them and the *practices* the Influencers recommended.

4. Regression and Non-Circularity

Freed in this way from the obligation to equate the positive intentions of the Influencers (whatever they were) with the actual effect of their ministry in the lives of the Galatians as Paul assessed it, we are now in a position to further crystallise the points of difference and overlap between Barclay's proposal and the proposal being

developed in this thesis. Our investigation will concentrate on one specific part of Barclay's framework for understanding reciprocity in Paul – *non-circularity*.[54]

In Chapter 3 §3.5, we encountered John Barclay's powerful concept of 'grace perfections.' Designed as a response to the argumentative crux of E. P. Sanders' massively influential book, *Paul and Palestinian Judaism*, grace perfections expose the limitations of the claim that grace, in the form of 'covenantal nomism,' is ubiquitous in second temple Judaism.[55] Though 'grace,' in an under-defined sense, may indeed be 'everywhere… [it is] not everywhere the same.'[56] On the contrary, grace requires description on several interconnected axes, not all of which have to be maximised (or 'perfected') simultaneously for talk of grace to retain its value. Paul, on Barclay's model, perfects the 'incongruity' of divine grace – God gives to human beings irrespective of their worth. But where incongruity is not perfected, grace is not necessarily absent. Barclay finds that *congruous* gift-giving – gift-giving that takes the worth of the recipient into consideration – is attested in many ancient contexts without necessarily reducing the interaction to mere commercial exchange.[57]

Among the six 'perfections' of grace that Barclay identifies in his exploration of the richness and diversity that characterises gift-giving in ancient texts, non-circularity is

[54] For the definition of terms in Barclay's grace perfections model, see Barclay, 2015, 70-5.
[55] Sanders, 1977, 426-7.
[56] Barclay, 2015, 6. Barclay's critique of Sanders very effectively highlights his dependence on divine *priority* as the hallmark of gracious interactions with humanity, together with the false assumption that priority always carries other commonly recognised components of grace (especially incongruity) along with it (Barclay, 2015, 151-8).
[57] Barclay, 2015, 17-35.

the particular characteristic of gifts that are given without any expectation of return. Non-circular gifts '[escape] reciprocity, the system of exchange, or *quid pro quo* that characterises sale, reward, or loan.'[58] Philo is the author who comes closest to 'perfecting' non-circularity in Barclay's analysis, especially in his scathing remarks about benefactors who 'sell' gifts in exchange for honours.[59] In other places, however, Philo defends the legitimacy of the expectation that God's creatures respond to his gifts with gratitude and praise (e.g. *Heir* 102-4) – highlighting the fact that, even in this subset of Barclay's framework, there is richness and diversity under the surface.[60]

4.1 Different Forms of Non-Circularity

Let us assume that divine-human interactions begin with an initial act of grace on the part of the divine agent. There is, of course, no reason to suppose that divine initiative is the *only* way that such cycles can start, especially in the pagan context, but these scenarios shade more naturally into the discussion of *priority* as a grace perfection.[61] So we assume an initial act of divine grace, followed by a response from a human agent. And, if a truly reciprocal cycle of gift and exchange is to be

[58] Barclay, 2015, 74-5.
[59] Philo *Cher.* 122-24; Harrison, 2003, 130-33. In dissent, one might argue that Philo merely voices a wider Jewish distaste for the Graeco-Roman benefaction system (a distaste also evident in Luke 22.25).
[60] Barclay, 2015, 75.
[61] Ultimately, even the ubiquitous perfection of divine *priority* observed by Sanders in Jewish texts may have little explanatory power beyond clarifying the fact that certain 'grace perfections' are inherent to polytheistic and monotheistic systems. Unlike polytheism, monotheism lacks the tools required to accommodate a vision of the world in which divine grace is not prior.

established, the divine agent then responds with a follow-up gift, triggering a follow-up response, and so on *ad infinitum*.

The importance of the human response in this cycle is universally acknowledged in the sources considered by Barclay as it is in the sources we examined in Chapters 3 and 5.[62] Just as in the realm of human-human interaction, where failure to respond appropriately to the generous gifts of others is considered a cardinal social sin, failure to respond to divine generosity is consistently viewed as condemnable in the pagan and Jewish milieu of first-century Asia Minor.[63]

The necessity (or otherwise) of the divine follow-up gift, however, is less clear. In human-human models of gift exchange, multiple examples exist where obligation is *clearly* the motive that drives the interaction forward on both sides. Indeed, one of the principal traits of relationships based on reciprocity was their tendency to degenerate into benefaction 'arms races' where each party felt obliged to outdo the other with each turn of the cycle.[64] But in highly-asymmetric relationships – between a patron and their clients for example, between a civic office-holder and their city, between an emperor and their subjects, and especially between a deity and their devotees – it becomes appropriate to think about responses to benefaction that do not necessarily bind the benefactor to give again.[65] As Barclay stresses, these

[62] Barclay, 2015, 194-328.
[63] Dio Chrysostom *Disc.* 40.3 and *Beichtinschriften*, no.s 45, 61, 113. See also Harrison, 2003, 61, 77, 175, 217, 348.
[64] Harrison, 2003, 43, 82.
[65] The challenge of maintaining reciprocity in highly-asymmetric relationships is frequently illustrated in Pliny's interactions with his friend, the emperor Trajan (e.g. *Let.* 10.51).

responses are necessary *conditions* for future gifts, but they are not to be viewed as the *cause* of those gifts if they come.[66]

Noting that a response *need not* necessarily *oblige* a follow-up gift, of course, is not the same thing as saying that it *never* obliges a follow-up gift, especially in the popular conceptions of divine-human interaction preserved in our sources. We recall Strabo's anecdote about the inhabitants of the region of Laodicea who not only expected their god, Maeander, to respond to their devotion with respect for their historic property boundaries, but who successfully prosecuted him when he failed to do so (Strabo, *Geog*. 12.8.19). James Harrison's comprehensive analysis of benefaction terminology in its Graeco-Roman context points to a substantial body of magical texts illustrating the same point.[67] He concludes that the gods 'honour the ethos of reciprocity, and subject themselves to the legitimate counter-claims of the ritually pious.'[68] Even in philosophical discourse, Harrison notes the tension between the assumption that human beings 'should exhibit total humility in the face of the gods' unsolicited beneficence,' and the balancing conviction that 'even as inferiors,' our counter-claims against the gods are 'entirely legitimate.'[69]

Noting that a response *need not* necessarily oblige a follow-up gift, however, should *also* be distinguished from the idea that follow-up gifts *always* depend on prior

[66] Barclay, 2015, 316.
[67] Harrison, 2003, 90-94.
[68] Harrison, 2003, 191.
[69] Harrison, 2003, 210.

responses. Just because it is possible to configure the response to a gift as a condition for a follow-up gift and to preserve the benefactor's freedom to respond at the same time, there is no reason to assert that such conditions are *required* for the benefactor to act with freedom. That the benefactor can give *in the absence* of expected conditions is arguably the quintessence of freedom – a freedom which Sanders and subsequent advocates of the New Perspective seek to preserve in their portrayals of God in first-century Judaism.[70]

In passing, we note an important tendency to *polarisation* in the interpretation of the relevant data here. On the one hand, seeking to correct historic misunderstandings of Judaism portraying it as an attempt to earn salvation through the performance of cultic obligations, proponents of the New Perspective typically minimise the extent to which human responses to divine gifts (particularly *Jewish* responses) are presented as the *cause* of divine follow-up gifts, and maximise the importance of instances in which these gifts are *entirely unrelated* to those responses.[71] On the other hand, seeking to defend traditional reconstructions of the ancient religious mentality, Harrison and others minimise the extent to which human responses to divine gifts (particularly *Jewish* responses) are presented as *unrelated* to divine follow-up gifts, and maximise the importance of instances in which these responses

[70] Barclay highlights examples of incongruous giving in the Qumran *Hodayot* (Barclay, 2015, 239-65).
[71] E.P. Sanders' tendency to downplay the existence of causal relationships between human actions and divine responses in Jewish texts forms a central part of Simon Gathercole's very effective critique of *Paul and Palestinian Judaism* (e.g. Gathercole, 2002, 136-94).

function as their cause.[72] Even Barclay handles the sources in exclusive terms: minimising the extent to which human responses are presented as *either* causally related, *or* completely unrelated, to divine follow-up gifts, and maximising the importance of examples where the response is related to the gift *as a condition*.[73]

A more-balanced view respects *all* of these possibilities as living realities in the data and asks to what extent each one, and any viable mediating options, might affect the situation under analysis. The human response to an initial divine gift is best described neither as a *cause* of, nor as a *condition* of, nor as *unrelated* to, the divine follow-up gift *a priori*, but rather as a *motive* for that gift which can have *varying degrees of efficacy*.

In summary, divine-human interactions in the ancient world exhibit *various types* of circularity and non-circularity. And this range of options must be considered in our characterisation of the assumptions of the various actors in the letter to the Galatians.

[72] 'The unilateral understanding of God's grace in early Christianity – where God was not obligated to anyone by way of gratitude or favour (Rom 11.25; 1 Cor 4.7) – must have fallen on many uncomprehending ears in view of the prevailing ethos of reciprocity' (Harrison, 2003, 56-7). Harrison's treatment of inscriptions describing divine-human relationships based on χάρις not only lacks the nuance subsequently made possible by Barclay's 'grace perfections' model, it also fails to reflect the breadth of perspectives on divine initiative reflected in our Anatolian data set.
[73] e.g. Barclay's critique of Harrison (Barclay, 2015, 180-2).

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4.2 Non-Circularity and the Actors in Galatians

4.2.1 Paul's Audience

The potential for diverse conceptions of non-circularity in divine-human interactions is well-represented in the envelope of options defined for Paul's Galatian audience in Chapter 3. As in relationships between human benefactors and clients, there is monotonous consensus on the question of whether divine gifts oblige human responses. On the question of whether, and to what extent, human responses oblige divine follow-up gifts, however, a spectrum of assumptions is evident.

In magical texts, coercion, or something close to it, is frequently attested. The data, as noted in Chapter 3, is difficult to associate with our region with confidence, but the Jewish spells discussed in Chapter 5 do at least suggest that attempts to bind the gods belong within our envelope of religious expectations, albeit at an extreme edge. Inscriptions like the example from Maionia where the dedicant devoted several 'golden objects' that had been stolen from her to the divine mother in the hope that this action would recruit the goddess's interest to her cause and induce her to exact vengeance (see Chapter 3 §3.5.1) represent something less than coercion, but still indicate a forceful attempt to exert influence.[74] Justine Potts argues that the ubiquitous anatomical votives of the region represent similar attempts at reification.[75] The physical form of votive tablets, with tenons designed to secure

[74] SEG 28, no. 1568.
[75] Potts, 2017, 25-6.

them in prominent positions in cult sanctuaries in the sightline of the gods to which they were devoted, articulated the expectation that the gods could at least be dissuaded from overlooking the past faithfulness of their worshippers, forestalling potentially adverse consequences (see Chapter 3 §3.6). Tangible and lasting memorials of devotion maintained the legitimacy of their dedicants' expectations for appropriate follow-up gifts constantly before the divine mind (see Chapter 3 §2.2.1).[76] Several inscriptions express thanks to the gods with no apparent expectation of return (see Chapter 3 §3.4).[77]

It is a premise of this study that the point, or points, on this spectrum where the religious assumptions of Paul's readers were actually located cannot be decisively determined. How did *the Galatians themselves* construe the potential for incentivising responses from the divine realm in their former lives of pagan worship? Without an account of *their half* of the conversation with Paul, we simply cannot know. Our exegesis *can* consider, however, the spread and concentration of the data as we weigh the merits of competing reconstructions. And we can also know with *some* certainty where *Paul* positioned his readers. Despite his confidence that *Jews* like Peter grasped the principle that 'a person is justified not by the works of the law' (Gal 2.15-16), this was not a confidence he felt he could extend to *Gentiles*.

[76] Roller, 1999, 98, 339.
[77] *New Religious Texts from Lydia*, no.s 6, 19, 38, 39, 108; Hosios kai Dikaios, no. 1.

4.2.2 Paul Himself

Paul's personal perspective on the potential for incentivising responses from God is clear from the argument of Galatians. He agreed that divine gifts obliged responses from God's people (Gal 4.15, 6.6) – from all people, in fact, if we follow his argument in Romans 2. But he did not agree that human responses obliged divine counter gifts.[78] God could oblige *himself* to respond to various forms of human action – this is the logic of the covenant promise that animates Pauls' discussion in Galatians 3. But he could not be coerced, or subjected to the claims of reification. He did not need to be reminded of human acts of devotion because he paid out exactly what human deeds deserve (Gal 6.7). To the extent that these convictions distinguished Paul from his readers in the realm of circularity and non-circularity, they represent a subset of his larger determination to distance himself from idolatry.

4.2.3 The Influencers

Ambivalence about the positioning of the Influencers on this spectrum is also a premise of our study. As in the case of the Galatians, however, disclaiming positive knowledge about their concept of circularity and non-circularity, need not, and must

[78] Commenting on Gal 1.1-5, Barclay writes: 'A singular gift here embraces both Jews (Paul) and non-Jews (the Galatians), redeeming them from the grip of "the present evil age" (cf. 6.14). By what rationale? Why should the Christ-gift be directed to these hapless beneficiaries? Paul's pessimism regarding "the present evil age" is parallel to that of *4 Ezra*… and might have left room for a tiny minority of righteous individuals… but this opening statement of Paul's "good news" does not signal any such selection of the righteous, and *nothing in the rest of the letter* will indicate that the recipients of the Christ-gift were qualified to receive it' (Barclay, 2015, 353; emphasis mine).

not, involve disclaiming the responsibility to highlight problematic reconstructions. Barclay explains the regression of the Galatian Christians on the basis that the ministry of the Influencers was characterised by the same kind of 'old-age' religious assumptions that characterised their pagan affiliations before they heard about the 'new-age' and about Christ. Did this 'old-age' thinking involve a distinctive approach to circularity and non-circularity? Traditional portrayals of these Jewish Christian teachers say, 'yes,' – they advocated Jewish legal observances *as a means* to ensure God's acceptance.[79] New Perspective(s) on Paul say, 'no,' – they advocated Jewish legal observances *as signs* of inclusion within the covenant people of God and these are the boundaries within which the concept of justification must be drawn.[80] Barclay argues that the Galatians and the Influencers shared a common concept of circularity in which human responses constituted necessary conditions for divine follow-up gifts.[81] Before we submit to the obligation of choosing between any of these options, however, we should ask ourselves if there is any basis for characterising their thinking as 'old-age' in the first place.

Paul, as we have seen, gives every indication that the Influencers were Christians. He may not agree with their goals or their approach in Galatia; in fact, he may see it

[79] So, Schreiner: 'The Judaizers believed they could be right in God's sight via the law, and this is the heart and soul of legalism' (Schreiner, 2010, 206).
[80] So, Dunn: 'If our earlier exposition is on the correct lines, "those who are from works of the law" were precisely those who saw obedience to the law in terms of the obligation to maintain Israel's distinctiveness as alone the people chosen by God for himself and thus separate from the (other) nations' (Dunn, 1993b, 84). See also Boyarin, 1997, 53.
[81] 'What Paul here denies is that Torah-observance makes a person a fitting beneficiary of divine gift [sic.], since no one is (or will be) considered "righteous" on that basis… To be "considered righteous by faith in Christ" is thus the result of the Christ-gift, not the condition for it' (Barclay, 2015, 378).

as reckless in the extreme, tantamount to the preaching of 'another gospel' (Gal 1.6, 8). But that should not be thought to entail the view that these are people who deny Christ or who undermine the significance of his work by making circumcision 'a necessary condition for its receipt or continuing effect.'[82] Paul's critique of the Influencers, as we have seen, is well-explained by his parallel rebuke to the 'strong' in Corinth and in Rome but there is no need to brand those individuals 'old age' thinkers to explain the danger of their actions. Paula Fredriksen's response to the perplexing question of the Influencers' identity is surely on firmer ground here: 'Given Paul's strident opening emphasis on his "zeal for the tradition of my fathers," his conjuring his own past persecutions of the ekklesia, and his insistence on his own excellence in *Ioudaïsmos,* I suspect that these opponents, like the ones mentioned in Philippians 3.2 and in 2 Corinthians 11, were virtually clones of himself: Jewish apostles of the Christ movement who were taking the gospel of the crucified and returning messiah to pagans.'[83]

4.3 Regression and Non-Circularity

How then ought we to think about regression in the light of this analysis in the Galatian context? It is assumed across our dataset that divine gifts impose an unavoidable obligation on their human recipients to respond appropriately. The extent to which human responses are thought effectively to incentivise divine

[82] Barclay, 2015, 392.
[83] Fredriksen, 2017, 81. See also Boyarin, 1997, 116.

follow-up gifts, however, varies greatly. In some of our sources, human responses appear to oblige divine follow-up gifts; in some, they function merely as incentives for divine follow-up gifts; in some they comprise necessary conditions for divine follow-up gifts; and in some there is no obvious connection to divine follow-up gifts.

Barclay's construal of regression encourages us to identify points of similarity between these attitudes and the attitudes of the Influencers in Galatia, such that embracing the latter can be painted (at least for rhetorical purposes) as a return to the former under the rubric of 'the old age.' All options that are incompatible with the Pauline perfection of incongruity can be grouped together for these purposes as examples of old-age thinking in principle, although, as we have noted, Paul's simultaneous identification of the Influencers as old-age thinkers *and* as believers in Christ on this basis is problematic. In practice, however, Barclay's discussion of similarities focusses firmly on the middle ground – on the possibility that the Influencers and the Galatians shared a vision of circularity based on human actions serving as necessary conditions for divine responses.[84] Even here we note the substantial scope for divergent attitudes depending on whether these conditions are conceived as matters of *human initiative*, or as terms to which God freely binds *himself*. But, either way, locating a viable area of overlap between the *attitudes* of

[84] Following Martyn: 'God does not offer the *possibility* of a human decision that will establish a circular exchange between humanity and God. That is what the teachers were offering in Galatia… The "works of the law" being urged on the Galatians were for them (though not for Jews) a way to *transfer*, to gain entry into Israel, and thus a human act that is the necessary condition for God's response. But what Paul announces is the *prevenient* act of God, a liberating invasion of the cosmos *prior* to any human movement' (Barclay, 2015, 148-9).

Influencers and the *attitudes* that characterised the Galatians' religious past necessarily entails substantial speculation and selectivity within the range of possibilities attested in our sources.

If the problem in Galatia is configured, however, not as a matter of overlapping *attitudes*, but as a matter of shared religious *practices* – practices that were encouraged by the Influencers as an integral part of their Jewish Christian mission but which also had pre-established connections to the Galatians' religious past – we have a stronger model. On this basis, Paul's concern was not that the Influencers were *positively endorsing* a concept of circularity alien to his own but rather that the religious practices by means of which their concept of circularity was expressed were *already associated* with pagan concepts of circularity in the minds of his readers and that the reanimation of these concepts was destructive.

When the Galatians celebrated Jewish calendrical observances, Paul was concerned that expectations associated with similar observances in their pagan past (wherever in the envelope of options allowed by our data *these* may have lain) would *reassert* themselves. If the Galatians memorialised their devotion to their new God by means of circumcision, Paul was concerned that expectations associated with similar memorialisations of devotion in their pagan past would be reanimated. When human beings engage in physical/tangible actions that are strongly associated with specific intellectual/ethical prompts in the past, our minds and bodies start working backwards – the effect rekindles the cause that originally produced it, whatever

higher-level values the action is supposed to be associated with in the present.[85] This, I propose, was the essence of the Galatians' 'weakness' as Paul saw it. This was the weakness that the 'strong' Influencers were failing to consider.

5. Postscript: Regression in the History of Reception

Before summarising our conclusions for the exegesis of Galatians, we pause here to note some striking echoes of, and interactions with, Paul's concern about Gentile Christian exposure to Jewish Christian practice in a small number of early Christian texts. Developing our study to include examples from the wider New Testament corpus (including possible examples of the reception of Galatians itself), from extra-biblical texts that address similar circumstances to those encountered by Paul, and from early-Christian citations of, and allusions to, the relevant sections of the letter, including formal commentaries, lies outside the scope of this thesis.[86] Even the

[85] The insight was inspired, in part, by Bessel Van Der Kolk's extraordinary book, *The Body Keeps the Score* (Van der Kolk, 2014).

[86] Links to the regressive logic of Paul's argument in Galatians are readily detectable in Colossians, though here the source of the problems is less likely to have been Judaism, or Jewish Christianity, than it was syncretistic paganism making ample use of Jewish sources (Mitchell, 1993, vol 2, 46; Arnold, 1995, 228-44). Hebrews 5-6 also deals with regression, though here στοιχεῖα refers to 'the basic teaching about the Christ' (Heb 6.1) and the author has no fears about the revitalisation of a pagan religious paradigm built from the same fundamental ingredients. *The Epistle of Barnabas*, echoes Paul's treatment of the radical shift of eras attendant upon the coming of Christ, but lacks his openness to the ongoing viability of Jewish Christianity (Ehrman, 2003, vol 2, 8-9; Murray, 2003, 51-4; Wilson, 1995, 161-2). Athenagoras' *Supplication* contains the earliest explicit allusion to Paul's regression vocabulary in Galatians (*Supp.* 16.3). Here regression is interpreted not so much as a *chronological* phenomenon (going back to things as they were in the past) as it is a *qualitative* phenomenon (going back to things which are less excellent, less sophisticated, or of a lower order than those experienced hitherto). In *Against Marcion*, Tertullian suggests that Paul might have been critiquing a *misinterpretation* of Judaism in Galatians, not Judaism itself (*Marc.* 1.20). Marius Victorinus is both the earliest Latin commentator to address the regression question and, as a fluent Greek speaker and savant of late Imperial-Period paganism, arguably the best-equipped to comment (Cooper, 2005, 16-40). Like Tertullian, he attributes the problem in Galatia to a *misinterpretation* of

restricted exploration that follows, however, highlights the ongoing relevance of Paul's pastoral concerns in a changing landscape and the continued use of Galatians as a source of guidance and vocabulary.

5.1 Ignatius' *Letters*

Ignatius' interaction with judaising influences in Magnesia and Philadelphia constitutes an important early analogy to the situation Paul faced in Galatia.[87] Unlike the letters to the Ephesians, Trallians and Smyrnaeans, with their characteristic emphasis on resistance to what appears to be a proto-docetic denial of Jesus' physical existence (e.g. *Smyr.* 5.2), *Magnesians* and *Philadelphians* are preoccupied with unity, singling out the temptation to judaise as the key divisive influence to be resisted.[88]

Judaism, the essence of which lies in appropriating Jewish law 'in a *fleshly* manner' (*Com. Gal.* 4.9). Jerome's conviction that the phrase στοιχεῖα τοῦ κόσμου refers to the Law of Moses, leads to the tantalising judgement that the Galatians' willingness 'to observe the [lunar] seasons, to be circumcised, and to offer animal sacrifices [*sic.*]' involved, or enabled a return 'to *the same modes of worship* to which they had previously been enslaved in a state of idolatry' (*Com. Gal.* 5.1; emphasis mine). Augustine's clear-sighted grasp of the regression problem has already been noted: 'When [Paul] says *turn back* he is certainly not saying that they are turning back to circumcision – they had never been circumcised' (*Com. Gal.* 33.3; see also Riches, 2008, 216-7). The similarities between his attribution of the problem to the 'carnal' nature of Jewish religious observances (Com. *Gal.* 34.4) and the equivalent passage in Marius Victorinus (Victorinus, *Comm. Gal.* 4.9) support Plumer's thesis that Augustine's dependence on Victorinus 'is in the highest degree probable' (Plumer, 2006, 31). John Chrysostom touches on the regression question as a commentator and as a pastor, demonstrating on both counts the enormous transition that had taken place in Jewish-Christian relations since the time of the Apostle, such that Jewish festivals were deemed just as dangerous for Jews in his time as they were for Gentiles (e.g. *Adv. Jud.* 1.5.7-8, see also Mitchell, 2000, 228-34). Even in fourth-century Antioch, however, Chrysostom encountered a form of Judaism that was better adapted to the demands of pagan society and in which former pagans felt more naturally at home than the Christianity he sought to propagate (e.g. *Adv. Jud.* 1.3.4-5; 1.6.2-4; 3.4.7).

[87] For a summary of the debate about the dating and authenticity of the various recensions of Ignatius' *Letters*, see Foster, 2012, 3392-5.

[88] For the importance of judaising as a theme, and for the correlation with the same theme in the letters to the Revelation churches, see Murray, 2003, 73-4, 82-91.

Neil Martin, Keble College

Where was this judaising impulse coming from? In *Phld*. 6.1, Ignatius tells us he would rather 'hear Christianity from a man who is circumcised than Judaism from a man uncircumcised' – simultaneously confirming the existence and local influence not only of ethnic Jewish Christians but also of Gentile advocates of Jewish practice.[89] There is no hint that these advocates were visitors to the region, as the Influencers in Galatia seem to have been, but the situation is similar nonetheless – a similarity which was apparently not lost on Ignatius himself as we see through his repeated allusions to Paul's argument, the most striking of which brings us to the very heart of the regression question.[90] In *Phld*. 6.2, Ignatius follows up his concerns about the activities of Gentile Jewish activists with a warning to 'flee then the evil arts and plots of the ruler of this age!' – not only alluding to the two-age schema of Galatians as a whole and to the specific designation of the present age as 'evil' in Gal 1.4, but suggesting that embracing Jewish legal observances was a route back into the clutches of this evil infrastructure, in much the same way that Paul positions it in 4.8-11.[91]

[89] The Gentile advocates of Judaism in Philadelphia are either Gentile Jewish proselytes with no interest in Christianity other than encouraging Gentile Christians to join the synagogue, or Gentile Christian converts who had embraced Jewish law and who were now encouraging their Gentile Christian neighbours to follow suit (Schoedel, 1985, 202; Murray, 2003, 88).

[90] Barclay uses the letters of Ignatius as evidence for the strength and influence of *local* Jewish communities in Asia Minor (Barclay, 1996, 280). For allusions to Paul's argument in Galatians compare, for example, *Phld*. 7.2 and Gal 1.11-12. Schoedel argues that the 'injection' of circumcision into Ignatius' argument at *Phld*. 6.1 is itself an allusion to Galatians with no concrete point of reference in the Philadelphian context (Schoedel, 1985, 202-3). Chrysostom will later introduce circumcision into the debate about Christian participation in Jewish festivals in Antioch in much the same way (*Adv. Jud*. 2.1.4; 2.2.4; 8.5.5-6).

[91] Ignatius' comparable remarks associating the old age with 'magic' and 'evil' at *Eph*. 19.3 are particularly interesting.

Ignatius' remarks in *Magnesians* are dependent on the same recognisably Pauline logic. In *Mag*. 10.3, the irrationality of professing Jesus Christ and then judaizing rests on *chronological* convictions.[92] It is the Jews who have come over to Christianity since the appearance of the Messiah (following the prescient remarks of their own prophets if *Mag*. 9.2 and *Phld*. 5.2, 9.2 are to be believed), not the Christians to Judaism. To reverse the process is to defy the divinely initiated move from the old age to the new.[93] Whatever else the claim that Ignatius makes in *Mag*. 8.1 means – that believers who have lived in Judaism up till this point 'have not received grace' (perhaps Gentiles who have actually been *converted* under the influence of Gentile proponents of Jewish Christianity) – it is clear at least that there is *something* about being a Gentile convert that makes Jewish practice dangerous and indeed inimical to the appropriation of this central tenet of the gospel.

5.2 Justin's *Dialogue with Trypho*

Chapters 46 and 47 of Justin's *Dialogue with Trypho* constitute a key witness to the state of Jewish interactions with, and Jewish influence over, Gentile Christians in the middle of the second century.[94] Justin's Jewish interlocutor begins the section with a question about the viability of Jewish Christianity: Is it possible for those who 'even

[92] Schoedel, 1985, 126.
[93] 'For Ignatius the teachings and myths of Judaism are "old" (cf. *Mag*. 9.1; 10.2) – a term that he uses to describe what is opposed to God (cf. *Eph*. 19.3)' (Schoedel, 1985, 119; cf. Wyschogrod, 2004, 193).
[94] On the diversity of scholarly assessments of the provenance of the *Dialogue,* see Horner, 2001, 16-32. On the *Dialogue* as a witness to Jewish Christian interactions, see Horner, 2001, 181-5; Murray, 2003, 91-9.

now desire to live in observance of the precepts of the Mosaic Law, and yet believe the crucified Jesus is the Christ of God' to be saved?' (*Dial*. 46.1). The unequivocal 'yes' with which Paul responds to this question in Galatians (cf. Gal 2.15-16) had become an unequivocal 'no' by the time we reach John Chrysostom.[95] Here, however, Justin's answer shows evidence of transition.

Justin begins by clarifying the commandments that Trypho thinks it is still possible to keep (the list – circumcision, observance of the Sabbath and the 'months,' compliance with various purity laws – is reminiscent of the demands made by the Influencers in Galatians) and stressing the fact that, among these commandments, only circumcision was observed before the time of Moses (in a manner also reminiscent of Paul's argument in Galatians). Then he gives his verdict: 'such a man will be saved, unless he exerts every effort to influence other men (I have in mind the Gentiles whom Christ circumcised from all error) to practice the same rites himself, informing them that they cannot be saved unless they do so' (*Dial*. 47.1).[96]

This interchange clearly envisages a similar situation to the one faced by Paul's readers. In Justin's experience, Jewish Christians sometimes influenced Gentile Christians to embrace Jewish law, presenting it as *a necessary condition* for salvation and refusing fellowship to those who declined to comply (*Dial*. 47.3). Like Paul,

[95] e.g *Adv. Jud*. 1.5.7-8. Linear reconstructions of the deterioration of Jewish Christian relations in the period should, however, be resisted. *The Epistle of Barnabas* affords an early example of negativity about Jewish Christianity (e.g. *Barn*. 4.6) just as the *Dialogue with Trypho* arguably affords a late example of positivity.
[96] Justin immediately concedes that not all Christians are so generous (*Dial*. 47.2).

Justin could not tolerate this. Even if the Gentile believers in question retained their faith in Christ as God, he thought it only 'probable' that they would be saved (*Dial*. 47.3). Those who embraced Jewish Law and followed what Justin feared was the natural trajectory to outright denial of Christ could only be saved through death-bed conversion (*Dial*. 47.4).

5.3 Origen

In *Dialogue with Trypho*, Justin finds it unnecessary to tell his readers *why* he considered Jewish legal observances dangerous for Gentile Christians – he simply assumes it. The same limitation does not apply, however, to the third-century Alexandrian biblical scholar, Origen, who makes striking connections both to Paul's logic in Galatians and to his wider theology of accommodation.

In his *Homilies on Leviticus* – perhaps borrowing imagery from Melito of Sardis – Origen reflects on the destruction of the temple in Jerusalem, together with its associated ritual infrastructure, as an example of God's providential care for Gentile converts drawing on Paul's typology of the weak and the strong: 'God, watching out for our weakness and desiring his Church to be multiplied, made all these to be overthrown and taken away completely, that without any hesitation when those ceased we might believe these to be true for which the type was contained in advance in them' (*Hom. Lev*. 10.1.4).[97] From here he moves to Galatians,

[97] Origen, like Melito, likens the ordinances of the Old Testament to 'clay models' that are superseded when the actuality to which they pointed has come (*Hom. Lev*. 10.1.4; cf. *Per. Pas*. 36).

questioning how anyone perceiving this development could 'turn again to the weak and worthless elements' (*Hom. Lev*. 10.2.3).

In the *Homilies on Jeremiah*, Origen gives us a glimpse of regression as he encountered it in his own context, highlighting, as an example of failure to perceive the hidden inner meaning of the scripture, the case of 'women… [who] do not bathe the day of the Sabbath,' and who, in so doing, 'go back *to the poor and weak elementals* as if Christ had not yet appeared' (*Hom. Jer*. 12.13.1). The significance of Christ's appearing in this passage, as we saw also in Ignatius's letter to the Magnesians (*Mag*. 10.3), hints at Origen's grasp of the new age/old age distinction in Galatians – and of regression as a movement from the former to the latter.

Origen's most substantial contribution to the reception of Paul's regression language, however, comes in the course of several references to Galatians 4 and 5 in his *Homilies on Exodus*. In exposition of Moses' complaint to God in Ex 5.23, Origen highlights the fact that it is only when a person has stood up in resistance to their religious past that it begins to trouble them and to exert a contrary force on their affections. Sensing the same dynamic at work in his congregation, he urges them, like the Israelites, but using the words of Gal 5.1, to 'Stand, therefore, and do not again submit to the yoke of slavery' (*Hom. Ex*. 3.3). In Homily 7, expounding the story of the healing of the waters at Marah and God's subsequent promise to spare faithful members of the Israelite community from the diseases that he brought on the Egyptians (Ex 15.26), Origen cites Gal 4.8-10 to similar effect. The bitter waters represent the Law, and the 'tree' which Moses hurls into them, the gospel. The

diseases of the Egyptians, are not natural ailments but love of the world and the observation of 'days and months and times… [seeking] for signs [and clinging] to the courses of the stars' (*Hom. Ex.* 7.2).[98]

With these citations Origen discloses his understanding of regression in Galatians *as a quintessentially pagan phenomenon* – likening it to the Israelites' repeatedly-attested inclination to go back to Egypt. Indeed, it is possible that he sees Paul's use of regression language in Galatians in sum *as a conscious allusion to the Exodus story*. Moses warns the newly 'converted' people of Israel not to go back to where they came from, knowing this to be a particular temptation for them on account of their Egyptian upbringing and their habitual familiarity with Egyptian norms. To embrace the Jewish Law is to ask for bitter water after drinking pure water. It may have the external trappings of Jewish obedience, but the underlying motive, the underlying attraction, the underlying vacuum which these practices are intended to fill, is pagan.[99]

[98] In his homilies on Joshua, the wilderness wanderings of the Israelites are likened to the period of catechetical instruction prior to baptism designed to purge the candidates of 'the darkness of idolatry' which they have only 'recently forsaken' (*Hom. Jos.* 4.1).

[99] Origen is also open to creative interpretations of regression, blending Pauline theology with Hellenistic philosophy. In his commentary on John's Prologue, regression is reimagined as migration through a four-tier taxonomy of religious devotion (*Comm. Jo.* 2.21-33). Gentiles have fallen away in the past – from reverence for God's creation to reverence for human creations (from tier 3 to tier 4). Now, if they embrace Judaism, they are falling away *again* – from reverence for God incarnate in Christ to reverence for the Jewish Law (from tier 2 to tier 3). This reading is akin to contemporary analyses of Paul's regression language as a commentary on his readers' *general direction of travel* and has similar problems (Chapter 5 §4.2). A similar logic undergirds Origen's citation from Gal 4.10-11 in *Contra Celsum* (*Cels.* 8.21).

Neil Martin, Keble College

6. Conclusion

We began this chapter with the suggestion that Paul's warnings about Jewish observances applied to Gentiles only and not to Jews. None of the proponents of this view were able to produce a compelling explanation for the extremity of Paul's concern or to explain his characterisation of it as a return to forms of behaviour with which the Galatians had been familiar in the past. The underlying insight, however, is of pivotal importance for our understanding of the letter.

Interpretations of Paul's regression language as a rhetorical move brought us closer to an adequate explanation of the data. The Galatians, it was proposed, were not returning to paganism in any substantial sense, but accusing them of doing so on the basis of unspecified *similarities* between that past and the message/example of the Influencers was an effective way to alert them to the danger of their situation as Paul perceived it, and an effective slur against the Influencers themselves.

Differences between the Galatians' religious expectations and those of the Influencers, however, were also found to be both probable and critical to our understanding of Paul's message. Paul appealed to *fundamental building blocks of religious practice* shared by the Influencers and the Galatians in every reasonable reconstruction of their religious background. But their assumptions about what these religious practices achieved were *not* shared. As Jewish Christians, the Influencers' observance of religious calendars and purity laws, their making of vows, their memorialisations of devotion, articulated assumptions compatible with the core

affirmation of Gal 2.15-16a, as they did for Paul: 'We [who are] Jews by birth… know that a person is justified not by the works of the law but through faith in Jesus Christ.' 'Gentile sinners' like the Galatians, however, benefitted from no such habitual associations. Their similar practices articulated dissimilar religious expectations. And in Paul's mind, the result was potentially catastrophic.

Paul was concerned about *slippage* between the Jewish Christianity of the Influencers and the Jewish Christianity the Galatians received. Paul was concerned that his readers were draping the garment of Jewish Christianity over the mannequin of their pagan past. The 'weakness' of the Galatians, like the weakness of the Exodus Israelites in Origen's penetrating exegesis, consisted in their habitual exposure to pagan modes of thought about the gods. The 'strength' of the Influencers consisted in their immunity from any such assumptions. The Galatian crisis erupted from the collision of these weaknesses and strengths. Regression to pagan conceptions of the divine-human relationship – unconscious in all probability but no less antithetical to faith in Christ and life in the Spirit for that reason – was the danger that Paul feared, even as the Galatians embraced Jewish Christian practices that he himself espoused.

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CHAPTER 7
CONCLUSION

The familiar words of Gal 5.1 conceal a puzzle that goes right to the heart of the interpretation of the letter:

> For freedom Christ has set us free. Stand firm, therefore, and do not submit *again* to a yoke of slavery (emphasis mine).

Extant interpretations fit elegantly if the troublesome 'again' is omitted: Believers in Christ, be they Gentiles or Jews, have been freed from hopeless dependence on legal observances that cannot save; Gentile believers are free to enter the people of God without the badges of covenant membership that characterise their Jewish brothers and sisters. But as soon as the 'again' is included we come to an impasse. In what possible sense can Paul's Galatian readers be thought to have submitted to the 'yoke of slavery' that was being held out to them in the form of Jewish legal observances *before*?

Standing alone, the verse might perhaps be dismissed as a rhetorical flourish, as an attempt to tarnish the Influencers' offer of a respectable, historically-rooted, law-observant future by associating it with the Galatians' idolatrous past. But the verse does not stand alone. It stands at the climax of an argument that invokes regression repeatedly as Paul's prime diagnostic for the Galatian crisis. The Galatians are

rebuked for returning to the flesh having started with the Spirit (Gal 3.3). They are rebuked for turning back the salvation-historical clock, returning to the oversight of the παιδαγωγός whose ministrations characterised their life outside Christ (3.23-9). They are rebuked for upending Christ's achievements, returning to the status of heirs when they already own the whole estate (4.1-7). They are rebuked for returning to the slave woman, Hagar, after already being included among the children of the free woman, Sarah (4.21-31). Paul even finds regression at the root of the unfortunate capitulation of Peter to 'the men from James' in Antioch, although the connection to the Galatian situation is left undeveloped (2.18). And at the core of this sustained argument, Paul brings the Galatians' movement towards Jewish Christianity and the reanimation of their pagan religious sensibilities into explicit dialogue (4.8-11). To embrace the latter is to accept a religious life incompatible with knowing God, marked by entrenched and dysfunctional patterns of interaction with God, and to re-enslave oneself to στοιχεῖα that are common in some sense to both Jewish and Gentile experience (4.3, 9).

Our search for a solution to this impasse has led us on a lengthy journey.

In Chapter 2, classic contextual questions were engaged, yielding a tentative positioning for Galatians in space and time. Firm conclusions about the Influencers were restricted to their identification as Christians and to the specification of their message as an encouragement to proselyte conversion sprinkled with scepticism about the adequacy of Paul's ministry among his readers. A more specific

identification of the Influencers as Jewish Christian visitors to the region was deemed reasonable, though the possibility that they were Gentile converts does not fundamentally alter the underlying logic of our proposal.

In Chapter 3, epigraphic and literary evidence set the letter in its pagan religious context, disclosing rich and varied sources for the kind of powerful and enduring assumptions on which Paul's warnings about regression seem to hang. Boundaries between sacred and profane space were carefully guarded across the whole range of cults attested for the region. Acts of devotion attained enduring efficacy through the creation of tangible and lasting memorials. Cult festivals were repeated according to sacred calendars. New and/or unfamiliar religious expressions were absorbed and reconfigured to serve traditional expectations. Local cults were attentive to religious ethics, and driven more by the concern to keep doing what had worked in the past than by fear. Solutions to the regression problem built on distinctive features of specific cults (the emperor cult, the Cybele cult) or source types (confession texts) were found to entail forced reconstructions of the context and/or strained exegesis of Paul's argument. Secure characterisation of the Galatians' religious background requires respect for the range of different conceptions of the divine-human relationship observable in the data, noting both the breadth and density of their attestation.

In Chapter 4, Paul's assessment of his readers' past was interpreted against the larger Jewish perception of inverted creator/creature relationships in pagan religion, and against his warnings in 1 Cor 8.1-13 (and Rom 14.1-15.13) about the revivification of modes of thought associated with the religious past of pagan converts. In Galatians, a

major reassessment of Paul's στοιχεῖα vocabulary recontextualised his concern for his readers: the crisis gravitated around fundamental elements of religious practice common to both Judaism and pagan religion. In Paul's mind, ongoing commitment to religious calendars, purity laws, and tangible and lasting memorialisations of devotion expressed through Torah-observance for Jewish Christians was compatible with following Jesus (Gal 2.6-10). Renewed concentration on such practices in the form of Torah-observance for Gentile Christians, however, was not compatible with following Jesus (5.2-4). Gentile Christians lacked the protective conviction common not only to Jewish Christians but to all Jews, 'that a person is justified not by the works of the law but through faith in Jesus Christ' (2.16a).

In Chapter 5, we asked why Jewish Christianity held particular dangers for Gentile Christians in Paul's mind, and why Pauline Christianity did not. Jewish, pagan and Christian literary sources, epigraphic data, and insights from material culture combined to paint a rich picture of diaspora Jewish life in Asia Minor in the early centuries of the Christian era, highlighting the interplay of actions and reactions within and between each of these communities. Paul's warnings about regression were found to be incompatible with a return to Godfearer status – a status which constituted a practical antithesis to exclusive commitment to Judaism. Neither could they be read as an attempt to characterise exclusive commitment as movement 'in the general direction' of a Godfearing past. Paul specifically highlights the *pagan* components of law-observant Christianity *as his readers were receiving it*. Neither is it clear that exclusive commitment to Judaism would have yielded the 'social

normalisation' commonly attributed to it. Judaism in Asia Minor offered, rather, a receptive base for pagans seeking to maintain elements of their former religious commitments, based around common dependence on fundamental practices. The ethical under-specificity of Paul's initial outreach in Galatia, commonly noted by commentators on Gal 5-6, can thus be explained not so much as a matter of pastoral naïveté and more as a matter of proactive pastoral policy. Paul sought to protect his readers, as far as possible, from the reactivation of unhelpful habitual associations – unlike his inconsiderate colleagues.

Chapter 6 completed our assessment of extant solutions to the regression problem, looking at options less-closely tied to the underlying religious context. Torah-compliant portraits of Paul drew out the distinction between the apostle's tolerance of, and even positivity about, law-observance for Jewish Christians, and his dark forebodings about law-observance for Gentiles. Explanations based on the illegality of Gentile conversion, and the inappropriateness of proselyte conversion in the new age of the gospel were nonetheless found inadequate to explain the gravity of his warnings. Interpretations of regression as a rhetorical ploy encouraged flexible responses to the overlap between Judaism and paganism in Paul's logic. Similarities, however, were either limited in scope to calendrical observances – ignoring Paul's larger focus on circumcision, or defined at the level of specific religious assumptions about cosmic dualities or about worth and reciprocity – where overlap is difficult to prove given the range of assumptions attested in our data. Commonality at the level of basic religious practices was found to offer a more compelling solution, noting that

the same set of legal observances could mean one thing for the Influencers and quite another thing for Paul's readers, informed by their past experience of interaction with pagan gods through similar means. Synthetic analysis of circular and non-circular processes of gift-exchange illustrated the point, revealing the potential for similar rites to encode different reciprocal assumptions. A brief postscript highlighted the concern expressed by early Christian writers about contact between Gentile Christians and Jewish Christians advocating practices that were familiar to Gentiles but associated with very different assumptions in their pagan past.

In sum, our research finds a solution to the regression problem in Galatians in the potential for 'slippage' between the preaching of Jewish legal observances among Paul's readers and their reception of that preaching. Religious practices which *could*, in the lives of the Influencers, have articulated convictions about Christ and his achievements very similar to those held by Paul, were perceived as a threat to the faith of the Galatians because the Galatians had deployed them to articulate pagan convictions in the past. Calendrical observances, purity rituals, vow-making, and the memorialisation of past acts of devotion in various tangible and lasting ways were integral parts of Paul's own Jewish Christian practice, they were means by which he expressed his faith in Christ. But they were also integral parts of the Galatians' pagan background where, in Paul's opinion at least, they had served to express the underlying assumptions of idolatry. The strength of this habitual connection is the crux of his concern. Paul was concerned that re-exposure to these

familiar *practices* would reawaken the assumptions with which his readers had always associated them, irrespective of the Influencers' intentions.

I conclude, therefore, that the dispute between the apostle and the Influencers in Galatia was less theological than it was pastoral and missiological in its orientation. Paul's animus towards the Influencers was not focused so much on *what* they said as it was on *who they were saying it to*. It was focused on their failure to anticipate or accommodate the weaknesses that Paul perceived among his audience – weaknesses connected to the enduring magnetism and intuitive plausibility of their entrenched religious presuppositions.

These conclusions have significant consequences for our interpretation of the letter. On our reading, the Galatian crisis becomes a worked example of Paul's larger theology of accommodation – a concrete manifestation of the dire consequences that he anticipates for 'weak' Christians exposed to the inconsiderate behaviour of 'strong' Christians in 1 Cor 8.11 and Rom 14.15, 20-21. The key dichotomy between faith and works in Gal 2-3 is also radically recontextualised. The emphasis shifts from a comparison between faith as Paul saw it and works as they appeared to his Jewish contemporaries, to a comparison between faith viewed from an integrated Pauline/Jewish perspective and works viewed from the pagan perspective, or at least from the pagan perspective *as Paul conceived it*.

Our work also suggests several areas for potentially fruitful further research. The question of why Paul perceived his own form of gospel proclamation, and the

religious practices associated with it, to be less susceptible to misappropriation by former pagans, less apt to be colonised by alien religious assumptions, may be illuminated by a return to the otherwise amply-scrutinised relationship between warnings and ethics in the letter. The problem of combining Paul's concern that his readers were ready to embrace circumcision and various other Jewish legal observances – in short, that they were scrupulous to a fault – with his equally evident concern that they were susceptible to the vivid list of vices enumerated in Gal 5.19-21, with his inclusion of the similarly-impressive list of virtues in 5.22-26, and with the extensive paraenetic section in 6.1-10 is, of course, already attended by a formidable bibliography. In extreme cases the difficulty has led to the disaggregation of the letter as a coherent whole and to reconstructions in which Paul is thought to have been tackling two contrasting forms of disaffection with his gospel at the same time.[1] In the light of our proposal, however, it is possible that Paul's warnings and his ethics may both address the problem of susceptibility to habituated religious assumptions, just from two different directions – applying symptomatic *and* systemic treatments to the disease from which he perceives his readers to be suffering. If the warnings about Jewish legal observances in Gal 3-4 represent an attempt to neutralise the external triggers reawakening pagan attitudes in the Galatians' wavering hearts, the ethics and paraenesis of Gal 5-6 may be urging them to embrace spiritual transformation as a means to end the wavering. Paul's concluding chapters may be designed to foster resilience among his readers when

[1] Chapter 5, note 215.

surrounded by, and even participating in, actions strongly associated with their former religious assumptions.

The suggestion that Galatians and the Galatian crisis represent key data points in the larger study of Pauline accommodation also points in several intriguing directions. How would Romans be re-read, for example, or the classic Roman antitheses between faith and works be reconceptualised, if the same kind of vulnerability to the reanimation of pagan religious assumptions that we see in Galatia and Corinth were a feature of the Roman pastoral landscape in Paul's mind?[2]

Our study also raises intriguing possibilities in the fields of religious psychology and conversion studies. The proposal that religious *practices* rendered familiar over years of repetition functioned as a trigger for the reanimation of the *assumptions* associated with them among the Galatians, despite their association with very different assumptions in the minds of the Influencers, connects closely to cognitive psychological research on the bidirectional relationship between intellect and patterns of physical action.[3] It may also make a useful contribution to the debate about religious conversion as an instantaneous transformation, highlighting the ongoing significance of past religious experience, of separation, transition and consolidation.[4]

[2] If those, say, who 'judge all days to be alike' in Rom 14.5, were not in fact the 'strong' but weak Gentiles, vulnerable by dint of exposure to 'strong' law-observant Jews with a keen sense of the importance of the Jewish calendar.
[3] Bessel Van Der Kolk's pioneering treatment of trauma patients with Eye Movement Desensitisation and Reprocessing (EDMR) represents a classic case study within this emerging field (Van der Kolk, 2014, 248-62). See also Chapter 4, §7.
[4] Rambo, 1993, 113-8.

Neil Martin, Keble College

Wherever these proposed extensions may lead, however, this study offers a compelling new way to think about the fundamental diagnosis of the Galatian problem. The Galatians should not be read as victims of an attempt to draw them into Jewish legalism, neither should the key antitheses of the letter be interpreted on the assumption that they contrast Pauline Christianity with a form of Christianity obsessed with boundary markers and inclusion in the covenant community (although concern about such matters may well have motivated the Jewish Christian mission that triggered the crisis). I submit that the Galatians were regressing to pagan conceptions of the divine-human relationship, even as they embraced the Jewish Christian practices that Paul himself espoused. In the Apostle's mind, the Influencers were driving the Galatians forward to the past.

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