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A cosmopolitan ideal

Neutel, Karin Berber

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RIJKSUNIVERSITEIT GRONINGEN

A Cosmopolitan Ideal

**Paul's Declaration 'neither Jew nor Greek, neither Slave nor Free,
nor Male and Female' in the Context of First-Century Thought**

Proefschrift

ter verkrijging van het doctoraat in de
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Karin Berber Neutel

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Promotores: Prof. dr. G.H. van Kooten
Prof. dr. J.M.G. Barclay
Prof. dr. O.M. van Nijf

Beoordelingscommissie: Prof. dr. J.A. Kelhoffer
Prof. dr. R. Roukema
Prof. dr. J.T.A.G.M. van Ruiten

Antiquity changes as the present changes

Page duBois

(Slavery: Antiquity & Its Legacy (London: I.B.Taurus 2010), 143)

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Introduction

The New-Testament author Paul is often seen as a key figure at a crucial time. He is considered to be the founder of Christianity, or, at the very least, one of the most influential thinkers of this new religion. It is clear from his letters that Paul himself also believed he was playing a vital role at a significant moment in history, albeit in a very different way. Paul was convinced that the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ marked the end of the world as it had been, and the beginning of a new era. In this new era, which was already present for those who lived 'in Christ', God would no longer distinguish between Jew and gentile. Paul was thus not concerned to found a new religion, but rather to make people aware of the imminent end, and the consequences that this end would have for them.

This study will examine Paul's declaration that 'there is neither Jew nor Greek, neither slave nor free, nor male and female' (Galatians 3:28) as an expression of his eschatological expectations; an expression which reflects the importance of cosmopolitanism in first-century social ideals. Recent research into Paul is increasingly focussed on understanding his hopes and expectations in the context of wider contemporary thought, both Jewish and non-Jewish. Such a contextual approach has been undertaken with regard to many aspects of Paul's thought and writings. His ideas about issues such as marriage and sexuality, for example, his epistolary style and the type of argumentation he uses, have all been examined in the context of contemporary thought and convention.¹ Yet the phrase 'there is neither Jew nor Greek, neither slave nor free, nor male and female' has escaped a thoroughly first-century reading; this statement is instead often decontextualised, as if it speaks directly to a modern way of thinking. The declaration has been called a 'lovely lonely alien', unhappily trapped in a Pauline letter, but with great appeal for scholars and other readers of Paul.²

Paul's brief statement about unity in Christ has been read, interpreted and employed in both religious and academic contexts. It is a statement that is seen as a central creed of early Christianity, but there appears to be little consensus on the background, meaning, or implications of what Paul is saying. According to Ben Witherington, this particular statement of Paul illustrates the fact that 'all too often the meaning is in the eye of the beholder and that without proper care and attention to the context, text becomes pretext'.³ Even though a great deal of study has been devoted to it, surprisingly little attempt has been made to place this text in its broader historical context and to ask some very basic questions: What would it mean in a first-century context to put these three pairs together? What can we

¹ See, e.g., Will Deming, *Paul on Marriage and Celibacy: The Hellenistic Background of 1 Corinthians 7* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1995); Kathy L. Gaca, *The Making of Fornication: Eros, Ethics, and Political Reform in Greek Philosophy and Early Christianity* (Berkeley: University of California Press 2003); Stanley E. Porter and Sean A. Adams, *Paul and the Ancient Letter Form* (Leiden: Brill 2010); Moisés Mayordomo, *Argumentiert Paulus logisch? Eine Analyse vor dem Hintergrund antiker Logik* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck 2005).

² Brigitte Kahl ascribes the view of this text as alien to Paul's wider thought to 'feminist and liberation oriented readings' (Brigitte Kahl, 'No Longer Male: Masculinity Struggles Behind Galatians 3.28?', *Journal for the Study of the New Testament* 79 (2000), 37-49, 37).

³ Ben Witherington III, 'Rite and Rights for Women: Galatians 3. 28', *New Testament Studies* 27 (1981), 593-604, 593. Witherington reads Paul's text predominantly against the background of rabbinic statements about men and women.

learn about Paul's thought on Jew and Greek, slave and free, and male and female, if we understand this saying as part of the cultural conversation about these pairs in Paul's own time? These are the questions that will concern us in this study. Before setting out my methodological approach in more detail, we will first turn to the current scholarly debate.

Identity and Difference: Current Interpretations

It is clear that Paul's statement about unity in Christ causes a great deal of disagreement. This difference of opinion is exacerbated by the fact that often, the focus is on only one of the three pairs mentioned by Paul, only on Jew-Greek, only on slave-free, or only on male-female. And depending on whether they examine the head, rump or tail of this statement, scholars come to very different conclusions about what kind of animal it is. In this section, I will discuss scholarship on each of these pairs in turn, before focussing, in the next section, on those perspectives that interpret the phrase as a whole.

Recent scholarship on Paul has a strong interest in ethnicity and ethnic identity and thus focusses especially on the first pair of the statement. Various forms of identity theory are used as an interpretative framework. In his recent study of Paul's statement about unity in Christ, Bruce Hansen discusses what he calls Paul's 'social vision'. According to Hansen, the Pauline community 'embraces the presence of various identities', and within that plurality, Paul's statement makes a 'vigorous case against the dominance of any particular alternate cultural identity'.⁴ Paul is seen to create a unified social identity, which does not exclude other social identities, as long as these fit within it. In Hansen's view, the identity that is most problematic to fit within the new unity as Paul imagines it, to the extent that it even threatens the cohesion of the community, is that of Torah observance.

A similar approach based on identity, but with a diametrically different outcome, is taken by Caroline Johnson Hodge. According to Johnson Hodge, Paul's statement engages in 'ethnic discourse'; he 'encourages the gentiles in Galatia to rank their "in-Christness" higher than their other available identities'.⁵ Being 'in Christ' can be superimposed over other identities, without necessarily changing those identities. The identity singled out as problematic in this approach is not Torah observance, but rather a non-Jewish identity. For gentiles, according to Johnson Hodge, being in Christ represents a radical change, because they now belong to Abraham; they are descendants of the founding ancestor of the Jews. Consequently, far from being ethnically neutral, being 'in Christ' is grounded in Jewish identity. In contrast to Hansen, Johnson Hodge emphasises that being 'in Christ' does not require Jews to appropriate any Greek or gentile traits; it is already a Jewish identity.⁶

In his recent commentary on Galatians, Martin de Boer also takes identity as the relevant category for interpreting Paul's statement. According to De Boer, the citation of the

⁴ Bruce Hansen, *All of You Are One: The Social Vision of Galatians 3.28, 1 Corinthians 12.13 and Colossians 3.11* (London: T&T Clark 2010), 195. Hansen takes a social-scientific approach to Paul, applying ethnic theory and a model of 'dynamic social identity construction'. Other recent studies that focus on identity include Atsuhiko Asano, *Community-Identity Construction in Galatians: Exegetical, Social-Anthropological and Socio-Historical Studies* (London: T&T Clark 2005); Miroslav Kocúr, *National and Religious Identity: A Study in Galatians 3, 23-29 and Romans 10, 12-21* (Frankfurt am Main: P. Lang 2003).

⁵ Caroline Johnson Hodge, *If Sons, Then Heirs: A Study of Kinship and Ethnicity in the Letters of Paul* (Oxford: Oxford University Press 2007), 129. She argues that Paul himself has done the same, 'reprioritising' his identity in Christ over his Jewish identity.

⁶ Johnson Hodge *If Sons, Then Heirs*, 131, 152.

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formula serves to remind the Galatians of their new identity in Christ, and therefore, the Galatian believers are no longer to think of themselves as Jews or as gentiles but as 'sons-heirs-of God'.⁷ In contrast to the previous two approaches, the new identity in Christ is not seen by De Boer as an additional or superimposed identity, but as one that replaces the old identities of both Jews and gentiles. While identity is thus a category that is widely used, especially in relation to the pair Jew-Greek, it is one that yields very different and even contradictory outcomes.

In contrast, those scholars who take an interest in the second and third pairs, namely slave-free and male-female, rarely see Paul's statement in terms of identity. Here, the debate centres more on the implications for social practices. Some scholars argue that in Paul's statement, the principle forms of social dominance in Roman society are 'transcended in an alternative society'.⁸ Recent scholarship on Paul and slavery, however, appears to be dominated by the idea that he was a social conservative, who confirmed the inferior position of slaves in society. According to Jennifer Glancy, Paul's denial of the division between slave and free (in Galatians 3:28) is 'only a cover up'.⁹ Paul's real attitude towards slaves shines through in this conventional talk about slaves as inferior. If Paul claims that the distinction between slave and free was erased, this can only be an attempt to conceal his true attitude.

Although there are differing opinions among those who focus on the third pair, 'male-female', it is here that we encounter the strongest advocates for an egalitarian reading of the statement. Philip Payne, for example, argues that Paul 'affirms the equal standing (...) of women and men'.¹⁰ Yet there is also a perceived tension between the supposed equality declared in the Galatian statement and Paul's remarks about women in other letters. Daniel Boyarin speaks for many scholars when observing that on the issue of gender, 'Paul seems to have produced a discourse which is so contradictory as to be almost incoherent'.¹¹

The interpretations generated by the scholarly focus on each of the individual pairs are thus not easy to reconcile, and there seems to be little fruitful discussion between them. Yet it is difficult to accept that Paul would combine such wide-ranging meanings intentionally in one single statement; that he would be concerned with redefining ethnic identity, while covering up his social conservatism, for example.

Equally problematic are the different assessments of this statement in relation to Paul's thought as a whole. Studies on ethnicity are likely to see the declaration as expressing the essence of Paul's message. The claim that 'there is neither Jew nor Greek' is central to his mission as apostle to the gentiles, and one of the core elements of his message. The critical approach that dominates Paul's view on slavery, however, can describe 'neither slave

⁷ Martinus C. De Boer, *Galatians: A Commentary* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press 2011), 245.

⁸ Richard A. Horsley, 'Paul and Slavery: A Critical Alternative to Recent Readings' in *Slavery in Text and Interpretation*, David Kenneth Jobling, Allen Dwight Callahan, Richard A. Horsley and Abraham Smith (eds.), (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature 1998), 153-200.

⁹ Jennifer A. Glancy, *Slavery in Early Christianity* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press 2006), 34-35.

¹⁰ Philip Payne, *Man and Woman, One in Christ* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan 2009), 461. Similarly, Schüssler Fiorenza believes that 'Paul's interpretation and adaptation of the baptismal formula unequivocally affirm equality and charismatic giftedness of men and women in Christian community.' (*In Memory of Her: A Feminist Theological Reconstruction of Christian Origins* (New York: The Crossroad Publishing Company 1984), 235).

¹¹ Daniel Boyarin, *A Radical Jew: Paul and the Politics of Identity* (Berkeley: University of California Press 1994), 183.

nor free' as rhetorical window dressing at best. Or alternatively, among scholars who do not see Paul as a 'conservative', the phrase is taken as setting a standard of equality that Paul himself fails to live up to in his other statements about women and slaves. There is thus little agreement not only on the meaning of this phrase, but also on its place in Paul's thought.

These different and conflicting interpretations and evaluations amount to something of a scholarly chaos; one that is exacerbated by the fact that each of these three pairs, Jew-Greek, slave-free, male-female, carries its own political charge. Ethnicity, slavery and gender all incur strong feelings and scholars sometimes take position according to their personal and political views on these issues.¹² How Paul should be seen in relation to Judaism, whether he supported slavery and encouraged subordination of women - these are tense questions that are rarely approached from a purely historical perspective. The politicised nature of the scholarly discussion makes a contextual reading of Paul more difficult, and yet, more necessary.

The various viewpoints outlined here will concern us again in Chapters II-IV, chapters that discuss each of the pairs. What this summary makes clear is that for understanding Paul's statement, much would be gained by looking at all three pairs together, and seeing how the three pairs might be connected.

One in Christ: Inclusion or Equality?

Apart from the fragmented analyses based on the individual pairs, there is also a discussion of the meaning of Paul's statement as a whole. In this debate, the two main positions can be summed up as 'inclusion' and 'equality'. The first position assumes that in listing the three pairs that are 'one in Christ', Paul is talking about the inclusion of different groups into a single community, without affecting the differences between the members of the groups. The second position interprets the denial of difference to mean that the formula declares the equality of the different members of the community. According to John Elliott, an outspoken proponent of the former position, the latter interpretation constitutes 'a decided minority', since most scholars agree that the issue concerns 'the inclusiveness of the believing community and oneness and unity of persons who are "in Christ", not their equality'.¹³ Even if this assessment is correct, the group of scholars advocating an 'equality' reading has been influential, also with regard to popular perceptions, to the point that, as John Kloppenborg observes, 'it has now become something of a truism that the earliest churches — the Pauline churches, at least, and perhaps some sectors of the Jesus movement in Galilee — were egalitarian'.¹⁴ Both perspectives, then, deserve to be heard, and I will give a brief overview of each of these two important interpretations.

¹² See the debate on slavery in Chapter III. Jennifer Glancy identifies herself and others as 'social progressives who find a conservative Paul' (Jennifer A. Glancy, 'Slavery, Historiography, and Theology', *Biblical Interpretation* 15 (2007), 200-211, 202).

¹³ John H. Elliott, 'The Jesus Movement Was Not Egalitarian but Family-oriented', *Biblical interpretation* 11/2 (2003), 178.

¹⁴ John S. Kloppenborg, 'Egalitarianism in the Myth and Rhetoric of Pauline Churches', in *Reimagining Christian Origins: A Colloquium Honoring Burton L. Mack*, Elizabeth A. Castelli and Hal Taussig (eds.), (Valley Forge: Trinity Press International 1996), 247-263, 248.

All Are One: Inclusion

The view that Paul proclaims inclusion, and does not declare all those in Christ to be equal, is perhaps summed up best by James Dunn in his influential study on Paul. According to Dunn, Paul's claim is 'that these distinctions have been relativized, not removed'.¹⁵ Jewish believers were still Jews, slaves were still slaves and wives were still wives within the Pauline community. Even though racial, social, and gender differentiations no longer had significance before God, in Dunn's words, 'the social realities conditioned the practice of the principle'.¹⁶

John Kloppenborg and John Elliott also both argue explicitly against the notion of equality and in favour of inclusion as the correct interpretation of unity in Christ. Kloppenborg claims that equality was not a concern for Paul, but rather is of special interest only to modern interpreters.¹⁷ Paul, according to Kloppenborg, was not interested in equality among believers, but rather in reducing conflict and status display among members of the groups. Such concerns were prominent in other contemporary organisations as well. The instructions Paul gives, such as not to bring another member before a court (1 Corinthians 6: 1-9), occur also in the regulations of these groups. Based on a comparison with contemporary voluntary associations, Kloppenborg concludes that 'Pauline churches, along with many other voluntary associations in antiquity, were "egalitarian" in the sense that they admitted members of varying social ranks, women alongside men, and both slaves and free'. Yet membership does not mean that 'social difference is effaced merely because persons of a variety of positions ate together, nor, more importantly, did it create a presumption that all members were on the same plane of moral achievement'.¹⁸

The only aspect which may have set the Pauline communities apart, in Kloppenborg's view, was the terminology used in the rhetoric of fraternity. Brotherhood language is rarely found among other associations, and even rarer is it applied to slaves. Kloppenborg calls this 'perhaps the most striking innovation of Pauline associations'. It may even explain some of the appeal of the Pauline churches, since it caused the 'fictive dissolution of the relentless vertical character of Greco-Roman social life through the creation of a "family" that transcended such boundaries'.¹⁹

Like Kloppenborg, John Elliott also locates the concern for equality and egalitarianism firmly in modern thought. Equality, defined by Elliott with the help of a modern dictionary as, among other things, 'parity in social status, rights, responsibilities, or economic opportunities', was absent from ancient thought. Not only was there no egalitarian early Jesus movement, there were, according to Elliott, no ancient egalitarian communities at all.²⁰ Paul's statement about unity in Christ thus cannot function as a proof text for such a community, since such communities did not exist. Moreover, any Greek terms denoting equality are absent from Paul's statement in Galatians, and the term that is present, 'one', denotes unity, Elliott claims, not equality. Instead of equality, the household should be seen as the basis and focus of the Jesus movement, both in its earliest form and in the time of Paul. These house churches were stratified, according to Elliott, not egalitarian,

¹⁵ James D.G. Dunn, *The Theology of Paul the Apostle* (Edinburgh: Clark 1998), 593.

¹⁶ Dunn, *The Theology of Paul*, 593.

¹⁷ John S. Kloppenborg, 'Egalitarianism', 260.

¹⁸ Kloppenborg, 'Egalitarianism', 258-259.

¹⁹ Kloppenborg, 'Egalitarianism', 258-259.

²⁰ Elliott, 'Jesus Movement', 175.

and were 'marked by economic, social, legal, and cultural disparities, along with differences of age, gender, class, ethnicity'.²¹ These differences no longer determined who belonged to God, but they did continue to determine status, roles and relations within the Jesus movement. The purpose, according to Elliott, was to get as many people as possible in the same choir, not to make them all organists or directors.²²

Neither This nor That: Equality

The claim that early Christian groups were egalitarian has a long history in scholarship.²³ According to this view, Paul's statement in Galatians can be seen an important expression of a wider tradition. Jesus' call to discipleship, to abandon family, property, possessions and occupation is considered to be an expression of the egalitarian nature of early Christianity.²⁴ Paul's statement is then read in this context and is seen as a clear articulation of the equality of all members of the Christian community. As noted above, a strong impetus for this type of interpretation comes from the perspective of gender studies and feminist scholarship, in particular from the work of Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza. Schüssler Fiorenza believes that Paul's statement denies all male religious prerogatives, because it 'not only advocates the abolition of religious-cultural divisions, and the domination and exploitation wrought by institutional slavery but also of domination based on sexual divisions'. The formula should not be seen as a statement about individuals, but rather about communal self-definition. Within the Christian community, 'all distinctions of religion, race, class, nationality, and gender are insignificant', and all the baptized are equal.²⁵

Along with Schüssler Fiorenza, the commentary on Galatians by Hans Dieter Betz exerted great influence on subsequent views, both scholarly and popular. Betz, contrary to Schüssler Fiorenza, focusses not on gender aspects, but rather sees the formula in light of ancient social ideals. According to Betz 'there can be no doubt that Paul's statements have social and political implications of even a revolutionary dimension'. The abolition of religious and social distinctions proclaimed by Paul constitutes the realisation of 'very old and decisive ideals'.²⁶ Yet Betz is also careful to point out that other passages in Paul's letters appear to stand in tension with this revolutionary claim, especially with regard to the abolition of slavery and of sex distinction. The explanation for this tension, Betz suggest, may be the formula's pre-Pauline origin. Paul's own response, then, was an effort to contain the social problems arising from the declaration's radical potential.

In recent years, two of the most outspoken defenders of Paul's message as one of equality have been John Dominic Crossan and Mary Ann Beavis. Crossan sums up Paul's message as 'equality now' and calls his vision one of 'equality-as-justice, or justice-as-equality'.²⁷ Central to Crossan's understanding of Paul's program of radical egalitarianism is his eschatological view. According to Crossan, 'apocalypse begun meant equality now — at

²¹ Elliott, 'Jesus Movement', 204.

²² Elliott, 'Jesus Movement', 205.

²³ For an overview of this history see Kloppenborg, 'Egalitarianism', 248; also Mary Ann Beavis, 'Christian Origins, Egalitarianism, and Utopia', *Journal of Feminist Studies in Religion* 23/2 (2007), 27-49.

²⁴ Beavis, 'Christian Origins', 46-48.

²⁵ Schüssler Fiorenza, *In Memory of Her*, 213.

²⁶ Hans Dieter Betz, *A Commentary on Paul's Letter to the Churches in Galatia* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press 1979), 190.

²⁷ John Dominic Crossan, *God and Empire: Jesus against Rome, Then and Now* (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco 2007), 159-160.

least *in Christ*'.²⁸ The implications of Paul's message should be seen on the largest scale, according to Crossan. Even though Paul speaks about 'all Christians' only, since he wanted all people to become Christians, the implication is in fact that all people are equal with one another.²⁹

Mary Ann Beavis argues, from a slightly different perspective, for a similar understanding of the egalitarian nature of early Christianity. She places the early Jesus-movement against the background of ancient utopias.³⁰ According to Beavis, the '*basileia* movement' held egalitarian ideals, including gender egalitarianism, similar to those of other ancient utopian writings and movements. Paul's statement therefore declares 'baptismal unity irrespective of nationality, class, or gender', and can be interpreted as an expression of 'the near-inexpressible reality of an "egalitarian movement"'.³¹

Although both perspectives, inclusion and equality, claim to argue their positions based on an analysis of ancient thought and practice, the debate often seems to reflect rather more current concerns. For one, it is doubtful whether framing the meaning of Paul's statement as either 'inclusion' or 'equality' conforms to a first-century understanding. It rather appears to gain its relevance from a present-day debate about equality, especially in connection with the position of women in church and society. While several of the ancient sources put forward in this debate are pertinent to Paul, as will be argued in this study, they are not allowed their full explanatory capacity when they are forced to speak to this pre-determined opposition.³²

Many questions in relation to Paul's claim that 'there is neither Jew nor Greek, neither slave nor free, nor male and female' thus remain open. Much can be gained by taking all three pairs into consideration, and by paying careful attention to the historical context in which Paul makes his statement. While the importance of such a contextual reading is often acknowledged, it has so far not been attempted.

Methodological Considerations

This study will therefore be an effort in contextualisation: to place Paul's statement about Jew and Greek, slave and free, and male and female, in its ancient context. The importance of a contextual reading of philosophical and other texts is argued by historian and philosopher Quentin Skinner. According to Skinner, 'any statement is inescapably the embodiment of a particular intention on a particular occasion, addressed to the solution of a particular problem, and is thus specific to its context'.³³ Skinner criticises the reading of classical texts of political philosophy in particular, but by implication other texts as well, in order to find 'dateless wisdom' in them, or uncover their contribution to issues that are

²⁸ Crossan, *God and Empire*, 159-160.

²⁹ Crossan and Reed, *In Search of Paul*, 234.

³⁰ Mary Ann Beavis, *Jesus & Utopia: Looking for the Kingdom of God in the Roman World* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2006).

³¹ Beavis, 'Christian Origins', 36.

³² Several of the 'utopian' sources discussed by Crossan, Beavis and Betz, such as Sibylline Oracles 2. 319-329, and Philo and Josephus' descriptions of the Essenes, will feature in this study, but their meaning in relation to Paul will be evaluated differently (see Chapter I, section 3.2.3 and 3.3.1).

³³ Quentin Skinner, *Visions of Politics: Volume I: Regarding Method* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 2002), 88.

seen as perennial, or universal. Such a reading is always vulnerable to anachronism and to the danger of falsely recognising elements in the text as familiar.³⁴

Much of the criticism Skinner levels against this type of political history appear to me to apply to the interpretation of Paul as well. With the possible relevance of Paul's views for contemporary questions in mind, scholars are bound to find applicable insights in his writings, whether Paul actually addresses these contemporary questions or not.

Rather than look for universal questions, we should turn to the 'argumentative context' of specific utterances, to determine 'how exactly they connect with, or relate to, other utterances concerned with the same subject matter'. Only if we manage to identify this context with sufficient accuracy, can we 'eventually hope to read off what it was that the writer or speaker in whom we are interested was doing in saying what he or she said'.³⁵ We should not let ourselves be determined by our own argumentative context, but rather as much as possible by that of the author. This means placing the text within whatever intertextual context that turns out to make the best sense of it.³⁶

The political historian Janet Coleman describes this task as an effort to find the author's contemporary world:

We must go back and look at the argument as a historical phenomenon, as a local utterance, and try to place it in terms of the circumstances in which it emerged and to reconstruct plausible reasons for which it was enunciated in a particular language. We must examine a text within the context of an author's contemporary world of meaning and distinguish, where we can, its differentness from ours, in order to show, at least minimally, what an author might have meant as well as what he could not possibly have meant.³⁷

In this study, I will be taking Paul's statement as a first-century phenomenon, emerging in a particular world of meaning; a world which may well be different from ours. It constitutes a 'local utterance', determined by contemporary circumstances and language. Skinner describes this historical aspect of any statement as an 'intervention in a pre-existing conversation'.³⁸ I do not understand this conversation to be one that necessarily actually took place; it can be a reconstructed and in that sense fictional conversation, between various sources in a particular culture discussing a similar subject. Nor will I take the term 'pre-existing' in a narrow sense that would mean excluding all sources dating after Paul. I will not argue that Paul responded directly to any of the sources and texts put forward in this study. Rather, I attempt to establish the broad patterns of thought prevalent in contemporary culture that will have been familiar to him. For this, late first or early second century, or in some cases even later, sources can also be pertinent.

Contextualisation, however, is not without its methodological problems. If a text can only be understood within its context, then the same is obviously true for the texts presented as context. In principle, contextualisation is an infinite process. Nor is the context

³⁴ Skinner, *Visions of Politics*, 57-79.

³⁵ Skinner, *Visions of Politics*, 116.

³⁶ Skinner, 'Lectures Part Two: Is It Still Possible to Interpret Texts?', *International Journal of Psychoanalysis* 89/3 (2008), 647-654, 652.

³⁷ Janet Coleman, *A History of Political Thought: From Ancient Greece to Early Christianity* (Oxford: Blackwell 2000), 17.

³⁸ Quentin Skinner, 'Lectures', 651.

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of any given text a self-evident entity; establishing the context of a particular text is already an interpretative act.³⁹ Yet these objections should not keep us from placing Paul's statement in a context which we can argue to be relevant. Moreover, in the case of Paul, or any other ancient author, a surplus of context is not our main worry. Instead, we have to make do with the sources that are available to us. Since we have only one side of the conversation Paul was engaged in, and little way of knowing what the points of view of his immediate audience were, we are rather confronted by a frustrating lack of context. We inevitably have to place Paul in a broad setting contemporary thinking and look for texts that deal with issues similar to the ones he is addressing.

Reading Paul in the context of contemporary thought is of course nothing new.⁴⁰ Already in the mid-eighteenth century, Jacob Wettstein formulated a rule that is useful and 'easily comprehended':

If you wish to get a thorough and complete understanding of the books of the New Testament, put yourself in the place of those to whom they were first delivered by the apostles as a legacy. Transfer yourself in thought to that time and that area where they were first read. Endeavour, so far as possible, to acquaint yourself with the customs, practices, habits, opinions, accepted ways of thought, proverbs, symbolic language, and everyday expressions of these men, and with the ways and means by which they attempt to persuade others or to furnish a foundation for faith. Above all, keep in mind, when you turn to a passage, that you can make no progress by means of any modern system, whether of theology or logic, or by means of opinions current today.⁴¹

The opinions current in Paul's time should thus be kept in mind when trying to understand Paul's contribution to contemporary debates. The methodological approach outlined here means focussing, in a broad sense, on authorial intent; a perspective which has long been dominant in the study of early-Christian writings, but which has also been questioned.⁴² This

³⁹ For a fundamental critique of contextualisation see, Preston King, *Thinking Past a Problem: Essays on the History of Ideas* (London: Frank Cass 2000), 214.

⁴⁰ For a description of this history, see Abraham J. Malherbe, *Paul and the Popular Philosophers* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press 1989), 1-5.

⁴¹ Jacob Wettstein, *Novum Testamentum Graecum editionis receptae cum lectionibus variantibus codicum MSS.*, Vol II, (Amsterdam: Ex Officina Dommeriana 1751/1752), 878, translation S. McLean Gilmour and Howard C. Kee, in *The New Testament: The History of the Investigation of Its Problems*, Werner Georg Kümmel (Nashville: Abingdon Press 1972), 50.

⁴² In the context of New-Testament scholarship, such critique comes on the one hand from scholars influenced by the idea of the 'death of the author', sparked particularly by the seminal essays of Roland Barthes ('The Death of the Author', *Aspen Magazine* 5/6 (1967)) and Michel Foucault ('Qu'est-ce qu'un Auteur?', *Bulletin de la Société Française de Philosophie* 63/3 (1969), 73-104). On the other, it comes from those who wish to preserve a space for interpretation of the Biblical text in a church context. For the former, see, for example, the critical stance towards 'authorial intent' that can be found in the work of April D. DeConick, who has developed an approach called 'network criticism'. In this approach, authorial meaning is not privileged, but the text, or 'production' is placed instead in the personal cognitive network of the author, or 'architect' and situated within relevant domains of knowledge and socio-cultural matrices (April D. DeConick, 'Network Criticism: An Embodied Historical Approach', 2011, a programmatic essay accessed at <http://www.aprildeconick.com/networkcriticism.html>). The latter view can be found in more systematically oriented interpretations, such as, for example, Angus Paddison, *Theological Hermeneutics and 1 Thessalonians* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 2005); Joel B. Green and Max Turner (eds.), *Between Two Horizons: Spanning New Testament Studies and Systematic Theology* (Grand Rapids: W.B. Eerdmans 2000), but is also

focus does not mean that we will attempt to recover the inner thoughts and feelings of the author, but rather that the cultural and historical position of the author is taken into account in the analysis of the text. When dealing with actual letters, which are the result of a deliberate action on the part of the author, asking after intentions seems entirely legitimate.⁴³ As the overview of the scholarly discussion above shows, the question of which ideas Paul wanted to convey is an important question in the debate. In the approach of this study, therefore, it is important to keep the idea of an author very much alive, and to include in our analysis only what we can confidently assume to be the writings of this specific author.

There are some who feel that the distinction that is frequently made between genuine Pauline letters and later pseudo-Pauline letters is of little relevance; that this is merely an arbitrary modern concern, since these writings all had authority among early Christians.⁴⁴ The reason that I do value the distinction, and that this study is limited to the letters which can be taken as the work of Paul, is simple. Paul's is one of the few ancient voices we can still hear today, and one of the even fewer Jewish voices. We should be careful to pick out this one distinctive voice, and hear what it says. Blurring the lines between his ideas and those of others means giving up our access to a unique voice.

Of course, Paul's voice is most often heard as Christian; his letters are the earliest Christian texts we have. Yet labelling Paul, his writings or his views as 'Christian' does not offer any explanatory value.⁴⁵ Even though Paul may be seen as the beginning of Christianity, what happened after him, including most of Christian and Pauline tradition, does not help us to understand his writings and ideas. The knowledge that the world continued for another two thousand years and that Paul had a significant impact on religious thought during that period may even hinder our access to him. Describing Paul or the members of his congregations as Christian thus rather obscures them, since the distinctive notion of what Christian means was not defined in Paul's time, as it is for modern readers. One of the main elements of this modern definition, namely that Christianity is a religion distinct from Judaism, is even pertinently untrue for the first century. Paul and his audience operate within the sphere of Judaism, and do not convert to a separate, Christian, religion. Since the aim of this study is to see how Paul's thought can be understood in its mid first-century context, a context in which Christianity does not yet exist, I will avoid using the terms Christian or Christianity, while not denying that these terms can be meaningful in other contexts.

As will become clear in this study, Paul's voice is one that is still worth listening to today. It is the voice of someone living on the eschatological edge; someone for whom the things that may once have been important, and that others around him still think are important, have suddenly lost meaning, because the world is no longer what it once was.

criticised by others with an explicitly Christian focus (see, e.g., Francis Watson, *Text and Truth: Redefining Biblical Theology* (Edinburgh: Clark 1997) and Ben Witherington III, *The Indelible Image: The Theological and Ethical Thought World of the New Testament* (Downers Grove: IVP Academic 2009-2010)).

⁴³ In a discussion of authorial intention, James Dunn calls Paul's letters 'the most obvious examples in the NT of intentional texts' (*Jesus Remembered* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans 2003), 118, nt. 66).

⁴⁴ So for example Bruce Hansen, who sees Colossians 3:11 along with Galatians 3:28 and 1 Corinthians 12:13 as evidence of one social vision on the grounds that this text 'clearly reflects the same tradition, is in some sense Pauline, and thus bears on an inquiry into how the saying functioned in the Pauline epistles and churches' (Hansen, *All of You Are One*, 2).

⁴⁵ The earliest occurrences of the term are in the book of Acts, 11:26; 26:28; and 1 Peter 4:16.

The hopes that were pinned on the ultimate future would finally be realised. As an expression of a social ideal, Paul's statement about unity in Christ also reveals something about the specific historical situation in which it is formed and for which it presents an alternative. It reflects one man's view of what truly matters in the end, and thereby throws his own time, and possibly even ours, into relief.

Composition of This Study

In the following chapters, the phrase 'there is neither Jew nor Greek, neither slave nor free, nor male and female, because you are all one in Christ Jesus' (Galatians 3:28) will be examined in two different contexts: that of Paul's letters and that of wider first-century thought. Chapter I, *One in Christ: The Reality of an Ideal Community*, introduces the phrase as it occurs in the letter to the Galatians and discusses its connection to Paul's thought on baptism, community and eschatology. The chapter then turns to the three pairs as they were found in the contemporary cultural conversation. The three pairs and the social distinctions they reflect featured in contemporary discussions of family and society, both in their actual, as well as in their ideal form. The first chapter traces these two very different views on society and focusses on conceptions of ideal communities in first-century thought, especially among Jewish authors and in eschatological imaginings. Since ideal societies were envisaged as times and places where there would be no boundaries between countries or peoples, where there would be no slaves and no marriage, Paul's phrase about unity in Christ appears to be intended as a statement about such an ideal community and time.

Chapter II, *Neither Jew nor Greek: Eschatological Gentiles and Jewish Cosmopolitanism*, focusses on the first pair. It places Paul's ideas about Jew and non-Jew within the contemporary Jewish eschatological tradition that imagined gentiles as participating in end-time salvation. Paul's statements on Jew and non-Jew in his letters are discussed around four topics: Paul's self-descriptions that refer to his Jewishness, his thought on circumcision, his redefinition of the children of Abraham and his statements on the law. His ideas on each of these topics are understood from an eschatological perspective. We then turn to wider contemporary thought, especially contemporary cosmopolitanism, which emphasised the connection between all people. Ideas about ethnic unity and a world without boundaries, which were prevalent at the time, occur again in connection with ideal places and times.

Chapter III, *Neither Slave nor Free: Brothers in the Lord*, discusses the few statements that Paul makes in his letters about actual slaves and shows how Paul in each case challenges the conventional distinction between slave and free. In the exploration of contemporary thought on slavery, it will become evident that the absence of slavery was part of the way an ideal society could be imagined, especially among Jews, whether this ideal was situated in the past, the present, or the future.

Chapter IV *Nor Male and Female: Marriage at the End of the World*, will make the case that the third pair of Paul's statement should not be understood as a declaration about gender, but rather as one about marriage. Since contemporary interpretations of the first chapters of Genesis, and especially of the verse quoted by Paul in the formula, see it as referring to marriage and the union between man and woman with the aim of procreation, it is likely that Paul understood the pair in a similar way. Paul's own discussion of marriage as no longer necessary or desirable fits within this understanding, which is confirmed by wider notions of marriage being absent in the end-time or in ideal communities.

A Cosmopolitan Ideal

The Conclusion will discuss Paul's statement about unity in Christ as a contribution to the first-century conversation about ideal ways to live and to organise society. By describing unity in Christ in terms of these three pairs, Paul made a claim for his specific vision that addressed several contemporary concerns and spoke to a first-century ideal of social harmony. This study will thus allow us to see Paul's statement as an expression of a particular concern at a particular time.

Chapter I

One in Christ: The Reality of an Ideal Community

Introduction

Out of everything the New-Testament author Paul wrote in his letters, the words ‘there is neither Jew nor Greek, neither slave nor free, nor male and female, because you are all one in Christ Jesus’ (Galatians 3:28) are quite possibly those that speak most to the modern imagination. In the verse, Paul mentions several important social distinctions, and the formulaic nature of his words suggests that we are hearing a major pronouncement. At the same time, the phrase is open and unspecific enough to allow for a wide range of interpretations and uses. The verse has indeed been used over time to support a number of causes, sometimes even by both sides competing over the same issue.¹

The appeal that this statement has for readers also shows in the numerous pairs that have been added to the three mentioned originally, a process that already began shortly after Paul, as is evident in the letter to the Colossians.² ‘Neither gay nor straight’, ‘neither healthy nor disabled’, ‘neither uptown nor downtown’; depending on the cause or the context, the formula has been adapted to suit many agendas and concerns.³ While such creative rewritings of this formula serve to make it speak to new situations, they can also be seen to highlight something about the original: these three pairs must have been as urgent in the cultural conversation of the first century as the additional categories are today, even if the formula as a whole no doubt functioned differently. Yet we still lack an adequate understanding of the concerns that the original pairs addressed. The choice for these particular three is often taken to be self-evident and has rarely been examined in detail. As outlined in the introduction, many current scholarly interpretations of this verse tend to be driven by contemporary questions, or at least by modern notions such as inclusion, equality or identity. Few attempts have been made to place the formula and the three pairs into their original first-century context and to understand how they were relevant there.⁴

¹ This occurred, e.g., in debates about slavery, where the phrase was used in both abolitionist and pro-slavery theology in the nineteenth-century. For this debate see J. Albert Harrill, *Slaves in the New Testament literary, social, and moral dimensions* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press 2005), 165-192; also John M. G. Barclay, ‘Am I not a Man and a Brother’, *The Expository Times* 119/1 (2007), 3-13.

² In Colossians 3:11, the first two pairs of the formula in Galatians recur, and the categories ‘circumcised and uncircumcised’, ‘barbarian’ and ‘Scythian’ are added (οὐκ ἔστι Ἕλλην καὶ Ἰουδαῖος, περιτομῆ καὶ ἀκροβυστία, βάρβαρος, Σκύθης, δοῦλος, ἐλεύθερος, ἀλλὰ [τὰ] πάντα καὶ ἐν πᾶσιν Χριστός). For an analysis of the formula in Colossians see David Goldenberg, ‘Scythian-Barbarian: The Permutations of a Classical Topos in Jewish and Christian Texts of Late Antiquity’, *Journal of Jewish Studies* 49/1 (1998), 87-102; Hansen, *All of You*, 158-190.

³ There are many examples of such additions, especially in non-scholarly contexts, see, e.g., Peter Rollins, ‘The Worldly Theology of Emerging Christianity’ in *Church in the Present Tense: A Candid Look at What's Emerging*, Scot McKnight, Kevin Corcoran, Jason Clark (eds.), (Grand Rapids: Brazos Press 2011), 23-38, 24; Paul Veliyathil, *God Is Plural: Sermons for an Emerging Church* (Bloomington: iUniverse 2010), 134.

⁴ Some commentators see the pairs as an attempt to counter Jewish prayers, as we will discuss below. J. Louis Martyn suggests that the phrase could be a development of ‘Stoic and Neoplatonic tradition’ about freedom from distinctions, or of the proto-gnostic idea that humanity was originally androgynous, or was influenced by apocalyptic thought about the end of marriage (J. Louis Martyn, *Galatians: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* (New York: Doubleday 1998), 379-380).

A Cosmopolitan Ideal

Scholars tend to assume that the three pairs of opposites mentioned here by Paul, Jew-Greek, slave-free and male-female, together add up to *all* social differences. The pairs are seen as a reference to the most important distinctions in society, understood as either ancient society, or even human society in general, and are simply read as shorthand for ‘everyone’.⁵ According to Peter Lampe, for example, Paul states in the formula ‘that whatever the worldly differences among the Galatians may be, they are abolished’.⁶ The three pairs are thus not taken as references to specific social groups and distinctions, but instead the phrase as a whole is seen as more than the sum of its parts.

Although the statement, and its negation of difference, is often seen as exceptional, the pairs themselves appear to raise few questions.⁷ The implicit assumption behind this type of interpretation seems to be that Paul is doing nothing new in putting these three pairs together; he is picking up on a basic understanding of humanity or society, or is perhaps simply following convention. The problem with this accepted reading of the phrase is that there is no indication that there was any such ancient convention. These three categories were certainly important in ancient thought, but there is no indication that they were a fixed set, that pointed beyond itself to humanity in general. Some ancient authors indeed mention three pairs of opposites, as does Paul, and some mention one or more of the three pairs that Paul lists. Paul’s Jewish contemporary Philo of Alexandria, for example, also mentions three pairs as the components of humankind, and while there is some overlap, these are not entirely the same as Paul’s:

And if ever you give thanks for people and their fortunes, do not do so only for the race taken generally (μὴ μόνον περὶ τοῦ γένους), but you shall give thanks also for its species and most important parts, such as men and women, Greeks and barbarians, people on the continent, and those who have their habitation in the islands (ἀνδρῶν, γυναικῶν, Ἑλλήνων, βαρβάρων, τῶν ἐν ἡπείροις, τῶν τὰς νήσους εἰληχότων). (Philo, *On the Special Laws* 1.211)

Two pairs mentioned by Philo appear similar to Paul’s: men and women, and an ethnic pair, although here this is not Jews and Greeks, but rather its Greek equivalent: Greeks and

⁵ James Dunn, for example, observes that, ‘Paul’s words seem deliberately chosen to cover the full range of the most profound distinctions within human society-racial/cultural, social/economic, and sexual/gender.’ (Dunn, *The Theology of Paul the Apostle*, 593). According to Richard Longenecker, ‘These three couplets (...) cover in embryonic fashion all the essential relationships of humanity’ (Richard N. Longenecker, *Galatians* (Dallas: Word Books 1990), 157). Daniel Boyarin calls Galatians 3:28 ‘the baptismal declaration of the new humanity of no difference’ (Boyarin, *A Radical Jew*, 5). Brigitte Kahl relates the three categories more specifically to an ancient context, ‘Paul “sees” that the binary oppositions and hierarchies (male-female, master-slave, Greek-Barbarian) which the Greeks thought to be the basic cosmic structures on which the world rested, are no longer valid’ (Brigitte Kahl, ‘Gender Trouble in Galatia? Paul and the Rethinking of Difference’, in *Is there a Future for Feminist Theology?*, D. Sawyer and D. Collier (eds.), (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press 1999), 57-73, 68). Pauline Nigh Hogan believes Paul refers to ‘the major indicators of social position in the ancient world: race, legal status and gender’ (Pauline Nigh Hogan, *“No Longer Male and Female”: Interpreting Galatians 3.28 in Early Christianity* (London: T&T Clark 2008), 21).

⁶ Peter Lampe, ‘The Language of Equality in Early Christian House Churches’, in *Early Christian Families in Context: An Interdisciplinary Dialogue*, David Balch and Caroline Osiek (eds.), (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans 2003), 73-83, 77.

⁷ Richard Longenecker is one of the few to ask the question, but believes there is no answer: ‘Just why these three couplets, and not others, were incorporated into the confession of early Christians is impossible to say’ (Longenecker, *Galatians*, 157)

barbarians.⁸ The third, however, people who live on the continent and those who live on the islands, is very different. This is a pair that occurs more often in Philo and that reflects his understanding of the world and its inhabitants.⁹ While it is certainly possible that Paul, like Philo, intended to sum up all humanity, we cannot assume an ancient understanding about these three pairs together as referring to all human beings. It may seem obvious to many scholars today that these three pairs describe the most important human or social differences, but it apparently was not obvious in Paul's time. It is therefore important to ask why Paul mentions these three particular pairs. If others do not put quite these three elements together, then why does he? We will attempt to answer this question by looking at the way these pairs, and the three social distinctions they reflect, were discussed in his time.

This study will look at Paul's baptismal formula as an historical phenomenon and see it as 'an intervention in a pre-existing conversation', following the methodological approach outlined in the introduction.¹⁰ This means that we will try to reconstruct the context in which Paul's statement should be understood, by looking at contemporary understandings of these categories, and by looking at the way these pairs occur in Paul's own writings. The subsequent three chapters of this study will each focus on one of the pairs and on the contemporary conversation about each particular pair. As we will see, each of the three pairs represents a topic that was of interest to many of Paul's contemporaries, and we can position his thought within the context of each of these contemporary discussions.

In this chapter, we will look at the three pairs together and at those areas where the conversations about each of these topics overlap. As this chapter will show, the three pairs cluster in the contemporary conversation exactly on those issues that seem relevant to Paul in the formula, which, as we will see, are community and eschatology. The distinctions mentioned by Paul frequently appear in contemporary discussions of how to behave within the family and how to organise society. They also feature in a type of thought that was concerned with ideal or utopian communities, that were often located outside conventional society, whether outside in space or time, or in the realm of the ideal. As I will argue in this chapter, by characterising unity in Christ in these specific terms, Paul made a contribution to the contemporary conversation about ideal and existing ways of life. This contemporary cultural conversation has to a large extent been overlooked by previous research into the meaning of Paul's saying.

This chapter will begin with a closer look at Paul's formula as it occurs in the letter to the Galatians, and the particular argument in which this statement appears as something of

⁸ Paul's ethnic terminology, including the division Jew-Greek as a Jewish appropriation of the standard Greek distinction between themselves and barbarians, is discussed in Chapter 2, section 2.1.

⁹ The pair occurs in several other places, to indicate the whole world, or its inhabitants, see, e.g., *De mutatione nominum* 1:35, 'What islands, or what continents, must he visit? Must he dwell among the Greeks or among the barbarians?'; *De vita Mosis* 2:20 'But this is not the case with our laws which Moses has given to us; for they lead after them and influence all nations, barbarians, and Greeks, the inhabitants of continents and islands, the eastern nations and the western, Europe and Asia; in short, the whole habitable world from one extremity to the other.'; *On the Special Laws* 3,25 'And, moreover, why should one be willing to limit the associations and connections with other men, and to confine a most honorable thing within the narrow space of the walls of a single house, which ought rather to be extended and diffused over all continents, and islands, and the whole inhabited world?'

¹⁰ Quentin Skinner, 'Lectures', 651. See the introduction to this study for a further elaboration of this contextual approach.

a punch line (1.1). After a discussion of the origin of the formula (1.2), Paul's wider thought on baptism, community and eschatology, which forms the background for the statement, will be examined (1.3).

It has often been recognised with regards to Paul, that only one side of the direct conversation in which he was involved is available to us; we only hear his side of the various issues that come up. This is also true in the case of Galatians; apart from what we can glean from the letter, the points of view of Paul's audience in Galatia remain largely unknown to us.¹¹ In order to reconstruct how the formula addressed contemporary concerns, we have to focus on the broader cultural conversation. As just noted, the distinctions mentioned by Paul featured in contemporary discussions of family and society, both in their actual, as well as in their ideal form. In the first century, there were different ways of imagining unity and harmony in society. On the one hand, harmony was seen as the result of a well ordered society that was based on families in which everyone knew their appropriate role. This type of thought will be the subject of section 2 'Defining Difference'. The categories used by Paul, and the ethnic and other social distinctions to which they refer, functioned as important markers in this type of thought, while several other categories appear in it as well. The section discusses two subsets of this type of thought: the *topos* of household management (2.1) and prayers of thanksgiving (2.2). The authors discussed in these sections emphasise difference within pairs: they oppose Jew to non-Jew or Greek to barbarian, slave to free, and male to female. According to them, there is difference, and defining this difference matters.

Section 3, 'The Ideal of Unity', will deal with the second approach to social harmony, one that is found in ideal or utopian thought. This type of thought often denies social difference and emphasises unity, and does so by referring to various social categories, including those mentioned by Paul. As we will see, ancient utopian thought imagined an ideal society as one where the major sources of social strife as these were conceived in ancient thought, namely wealth and property, and marriage and family, were absent.¹² In these depictions of the ideal, the conventional social distinctions no longer existed. We will see how this type of thought began in Plato, and developed a particular form in first-century thought, especially among Jewish authors and in eschatological imaginings (sections 3.1-3.3).

In the final section (section 4), 'A Common Ideal', we will see how this pre-existing conversation can help us to understand Paul's words and suggest a direction for

¹¹ Several recent studies attempt to understand the letter by reconstructing the concerns of Paul's Galatian audience, from very different angles. Brigitte Kahl examines the discussion in Galatians from the perspective of Roman imperial ideology (Brigitte Kahl, *Galatians Re-Imagined: Reading with the Eyes of the Vanquished* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press 2010)). Susan Elliott looks at the Anatolian cultic context of the Galatians (Susan Elliott, *Cutting Too Close for Comfort: Paul's Letter to the Galatians in its Anatolian Cultic Context* (London: T&T Clark International 2003)), while Justin Hardin focusses on the Imperial cult in Galatia (Justin Hardin, *Galatians and the Imperial Cult: A Critical Analysis of the First-century Social Context of Paul's Letter* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck 2008)). Such efforts to explain the content of Paul's letter from a reconstructed audience inevitably suffer from the problem that Paul was probably addressing only a handful of people, about whose specific situation, as non-Jews attracted to Judaism, we only know through his letter. None of these studies is particularly focused on Galatians 3:28, or offers a specific reading, although Elliott does see potential for a new interpretation based on her findings and plans to work this out later (Elliott, *Cutting too Close for Comfort*, 346).

¹² See Moses Finley, *The Use and Abuse of History* (London: Chatto and Windus 1975), 181. Finley's idea of the causes of strife will be discussed further in connection with ideal societies in section 3, below.

understanding the individual pairs. If contemporary thought about ideal societies envisaged such societies as times and places where there would be no boundaries between countries or peoples, where there would be no slaves and no marriage, then Paul's phrase about unity in Christ may well be intended as a statement about such an ideal community or time.

1 Baptism and Participation in Christ: Community and Eschatology

1.1 Paul's Baptismal Formula

Before turning to first-century thought about the three pairs, we will first examine Paul's formula in the context of the letter in which it occurs. The declaration about being 'one in Christ' comes at the end of the third chapter of Paul's letter to the Galatians. In this letter, Paul's main objective is to convince his non-Jewish audience in Galatia that they do not need to follow the Jewish law in order to belong to God.¹³ Paul focusses especially on circumcision as the crucial issue in this debate about the law. Paul apparently saw it as a very real possibility that the Galatians to whom he writes might accept a different idea about the grounds on which they, as gentiles, could belong to God.

In the third chapter of the letter, as part of this argument against gentile circumcision, Paul brings up Abraham. He gives his definition of those who count as Abraham's children and heirs, and in doing so most likely challenges the narrative about Abraham that his opponents told.¹⁴ Although contemporary Jewish sources can portray Abraham's ancestry in a number of ways, he is predominantly described as the patriarch of the Jews. Observance of the Jewish law is seen as the defining characteristic of those who belong to the people of Abraham.¹⁵ Paul here puts forward a different definition of Abraham's descendants and argues that Abraham is not only the father of Jews, but also of gentiles, not through law observance, but through Christ. Both Paul's treatment of circumcision, and his view on the role of Abraham in relation to Jews and gentiles, will be examined in more detail in the next chapter. Here it is enough to understand the contours of the debate in which Paul is involved, in order to see how he uses the statement about

¹³ This is the view shared by most interpreters, see, e.g., G. Walter Hansen, *Abraham in Galatians: Epistolary and Rhetorical Contexts* (Sheffield: JSOT Press 1989), 97-101; J. Louis Martyn, *Galatians*, 13-34; James D.G. Dunn, *The Epistle to the Galatians* (Peabody: Hendrickson 1993), 14-20; John M.G. Barclay, *Obeying the Truth* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark 1988), 75-105; Philip F. Esler, 'Paul's Contestation of Israel's (Ethnic) Memory of Abraham in Galatians 3', *Biblical Theology Bulletin* 36 (2006), 23-34; Ben Witherington (III), *Grace in Galatia: A Commentary on St. Paul's Letter to the Galatians* (Edinburgh: Clark 1998), 278.

¹⁴ See, e.g., Philip Esler, who imagines Paul to have thought, just before writing Galatians 3: 'You regard descent from Abraham as a desirable thing? ... Then let me tell you what it means and how to get it!' (Philip F. Esler, 'Paul's Contestation', 25), also De Boer, *Galatians*, 185; Martyn, *Galatians*, 302-306.

¹⁵ For example in 4 Maccabees: 'Oh Israelite children, offspring of the seed of Abraham, obey his law' (4 Maccabees 18:1). For a discussion of this connection between Abraham and the law, see Birgit E.A.L. van der Lans, 'Belonging to Abraham's Kin: Genealogical Appeals to Abraham as a Possible Background for Paul's Abrahamic Argument' in *Abraham, the Nations and the Hagarites: Jewish, Christian, and Islamic Perspectives on Kinship with Abraham* (Martin Goodman, George H. van Kooten and Jacques T.A.G.M. van Ruiten (eds.), (Leiden: Brill 2010), 307-318.

unity in Christ, which is of central interest here, to drive home his point about gentiles, Abraham and the law.

Paul's sweeping statement about all being 'one in Christ' allows him to affirm that when it comes to their ancestry and their relation to God, the distinction between Jew and Greek, or Jew and non-Jew, is not relevant.¹⁶ Both are in Christ and therefore both are Abraham's seed and his heirs:

You are all sons of God through faith, in Christ Jesus, because all of you who were baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, neither slave nor free, nor male and female, because you are all one in Christ Jesus (οὐκ ἔστι Ἰουδαῖος οὐδὲ Ἕλληγ, οὐκ ἔστι δοῦλος οὐδὲ ἐλεύθερος, οὐκ ἔστι ἄρσεν καὶ θήλυ). If you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise (*Galatians 3:26-29*)

Through their link with Christ, who is identified by Paul earlier in the chapter as the seed of Abraham (*Galatians 3:16*), all those who are 'in Christ' also become Abraham's seed (*Galatians 3:29*).¹⁷ Since the passage deals primarily with the question of who counts as a descendant of Abraham, it is evident that the first pair, Jew-Greek is central to the immediate discussion. The two other pairs, slave-free and male-female, do not play an immediate role in it; they are not directly relevant to the point Paul is making here.¹⁸ Yet it is important to note that Paul does not refer to his negation of the Jew-Greek distinction directly. He does not say, gentiles are also children of Abraham, because there is neither Jew nor Greek. The logic of Paul's argument goes via Christ; it is because all, including Jew and Greek, are in Christ, that they are children of Abraham, since Christ is the seed to whom the promise was given.

We will come back to this discussion about Abraham in greater detail in the next chapter. What our exploration here allows us to see is that since the argument and the passage in *Galatians* deal with Abraham's heirs, there is no obvious connection between the pairs slave-free and male-female and the argument in which it occurs. This fact, combined with the formulaic nature of the verse that makes it stand out from its direct surrounding,

¹⁶ A closer examination of Paul's ethnic terminology will be given in the next chapter. Here it is sufficient to note that Paul can use the terms 'Greek' (Ἕλληγ), 'the nations' (τὰ ἔθνη) and 'the foreskin' (ἡ ἀκροβυστία) roughly as equivalents to indicate non-Jews. So for example in *Romans 3:29-30* Or is God the God of Jews only? Is he not the God of the nations too? Yes, of the nations too, 30 since there is one God, who will justify the circumcised by faith and the uncircumcised through faith (ἢ Ἰουδαίων ὁ θεὸς μόνον; οὐχὶ καὶ ἔθνῶν; καὶ καὶ ἔθνῶν, 30 εἴπερ εἷς ὁ θεὸς ὃς δικαιοῶσει περιτομῆν ἐκ πίστεως καὶ ἀκροβυστίαν διὰ τῆς πίστεως.). Also in *1 Corinthians 1:22-23* Jews demand miraculous signs and Greeks look for wisdom, but we preach Christ crucified: a stumbling block to Jews and foolishness to the nations (ἐπειδὴ καὶ Ἰουδαῖοι σημεῖα αἰτοῦσιν καὶ Ἕλληγες σοφίαν ζητοῦσιν, ἡμεῖς δὲ κηρύσσομεν Χριστὸν ἐσταυρωμένον, Ἰουδαίοις μὲν σκάνδαλον, ἔθνεσιν δὲ μωρίαν). Paul seems to prefer different terms in different rhetorical contexts, but there is no suggestion that the terms refer to different groups.

¹⁷ The language of descent, of being 'in' an ancestor, is discussed in more detail in chapter 2 (section 2.1).

¹⁸ For an alternative view see Troy Martin, who argues that all three pairs are directly relevant because the differences between baptism and circumcision had repercussions for all three. However, Paul is not concerned here to oppose baptism to circumcision in any general sense, but rather to define who belongs to Abraham. This was an issue that was only connected to Jew and Greek, not to the other two pairs ('The Covenant of Circumcision (*Gen 17:9-14*) and the Situational Antitheses in *Galatians 3:28*', *Journal of Biblical Literature* 122/1 (2003), 111-125).

suggests that it is something of a foreign element. The same can be said of the similar phrase that occurs in Paul's first letter to the Corinthians.

In 1 Corinthians, two of the groups mentioned in the Galatian formula occur, and here as well, they do not directly fit the larger argument:

Because in one spirit we all were baptized into one body, whether Jews or Greeks, slaves or free (εἴτε Ἰουδαῖοι εἴτε Ἕλληνες εἴτε δοῦλοι εἴτε ἐλεύθεροι) and were all given one spirit to drink (1 Corinthians 12:13).

Paul is concerned in the context of this passage with differences within the community. The divisions that are discussed in connection to the community, however, do not correspond to the two pairs mentioned in the formula. There is no indication that the schisms breaking up the Corinthian community were along the lines of Jews and Greeks, or of slaves and free.¹⁹ Both of these two passages thus refer to contrasting pairs of social groups, they both refer to unity in Christ, and they both refer to baptism. Scholars generally agree on the basis of these arguments that these two passages, as well as the parallel formulation that occurs in the Pseudo-Pauline letter to the Colossians (Colossians 3:11) cite a formula that pre-dates these letters and most likely originated in the context of baptism.²⁰

In both cases, Paul seems to use a pre-existing phrase to bolster a particular argument. He appeals to a motif that is most likely already familiar to his audience, a general statement about unity in Christ, to strengthen his argument about being in Christ as Abraham's seed, in Galatians, or about the need for unity in the metaphorical body of Christ, in 1 Corinthians. As noted above, in neither passage where the formula is used are any of the pairs the primary focus. In both cases, Paul wants to make a statement about Christ, rather than about any of the pairs, although in Galatians, the first pair has particular relevance in relation to Christ. This seems to be an important point for understanding how the formula functioned for Paul: it primarily illustrates something about Christ, rather than about the pairs that are mentioned. The obverse is also true, but rarely noted. In no instance where Paul discusses one of the pairs, with the exception of Galatians 3, does he bring the formula as such in as an argument. There are many occasions where he could have done so. When discussing circumcision, for example, or in connection with issues about food and meals, he could have used the argument that there is neither Jew nor Greek in Christ.²¹ Or he could have reminded the slave owner Philemon, to whom Paul writes about his slave Onesimus, that there is 'neither slave nor free, because all are one in Christ'.

¹⁹ The divisions in Corinth are usually seen in terms of status conflicts, which were not directly related to either Jew-Greek, or slave-free divisions, see, e.g., Dale B. Martin, *The Corinthian Body* (New Haven: Yale University Press 1995), 56. For a criticism of social class as the decisive factor for understanding the conflicts in Corinth, see John M.G. Barclay, *Pauline Churches and Diaspora Jews* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck 2011), 198-199.

²⁰ In his recent study of Galatians 3:28 and its equivalents in the Pauline corpus, Bruce Hansen details the similarities between all three passages (Hansen, *All of You*, 5). See also Martyn, *Galatians*, 378-379; Wayne A. Meeks, 'The Image of the Androgyne: Some Uses of a Symbol in Earliest Christianity', *History of Religions* 13/ 3 (1974), 165-208.

²¹ Of course Paul does use similar sounding arguments, such as 'Neither circumcision nor uncircumcision means anything; what counts is a new creation' (οὔτε γὰρ περιτομή τί ἐστίν οὔτε ἀκροβυστία ἀλλὰ καινή κτίσις) (*Galatians* 6:15). The closest echo of the formula probably occurs later in the letter to the Galatians 'For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision has any value, but only faith expressing itself through love' (ἐν γὰρ Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ οὔτε περιτομή τι ἰσχύει οὔτε ἀκροβυστία ἀλλὰ πίστις δι' ἀγάπης ἐνεργουμένη) (*Galatians* 5:6). Both passages are discussed in Chapter 2 (section 2.3).

Although we find echoes, and many similarities in thought throughout the letters, as the subsequent chapters will show, Paul uses the formula sparingly.²²

As noted above, it is generally agreed that the most likely context for the origin of the formula is that of baptism, since Paul explicitly makes this connection in both passages. Since we are looking at the way the phrase functions Paul's thought, the connection with baptism is an important feature. Before turning to a discussion of Paul's ideas about baptism, however, it is important first to address an assumption that is frequently made about the origin of the formula, which distances it from Paul.

1.2 Pre-Galatians or Pre-Paul?

Scholars generally agree on good grounds that Paul's formula about unity in Christ predates both letters in which it occurs. The difficulty is, however, that many scholars then make the unsubstantiated assumption that if the formula predates both these letters, it must also predate Paul.²³ In part, this tendency may be the result of a too-narrow equation in scholarship of Paul with his letters. Since we now have access to Paul almost exclusively via his written messages, we tend to forget that the weight of his activities, and certainly by far the largest part of his interaction with the communities to which he wrote, took place when he actually lived among them. This is when Paul conveyed the core of his message and no doubt introduced the language and concepts to which he can then refer in his letters. Just because we do not have direct access to this phase of Paul's activity does not mean that we can neglect its importance.

In thinking about the history of the baptismal formula, David Horrell does recognise that there was such a phase, but concludes from the fact that the formula predates the letter to the Galatians that it is 'if not strictly *pre*-Pauline then at least a product of the congregation's shared convictions rather than exclusively of Paul's.'²⁴ Unfortunately, Horrell does not explain what could have formed the basis of this congregation's original, independent convictions. If not on Paul, on whom or what could these non-Jews have based their convictions, including, one would have to assume, the conviction that there is 'neither Jew nor Greek'? For Horrell, as for others, the 'firm indications' that the formula is pre-Galatians are apparently enough to dissociate it from Paul, and assume a pre-Pauline origin. Yet it seems both unnecessary and rather strained to assume that the inclusion of the formula into Paul's letters is a result of the Galatian congregation's influence on Paul, rather

²² Bruce Hansen notes that 'no other tradition, whether scriptural or from the earliest churches, occurs in the Pauline corpus so frequently and so widely as this thrice-repeated affirmation of reconciliation in Christ'. In his count, Hansen not only includes Colossians, but also verses where just one pair is mentioned, such as Romans 3:9; 10:12 and 1 Corinthians 1:22, 24, although he does not include references to the pair circumcision-uncircumcision, such as in Galatians 5:6 and 6:15 (Hansen, *All of You Are One*, 1-2).

²³ Most recently De Boer, *Galatians*, 243; also Betz, *A Commentary*, 200; Schüssler Fiorenza, *In Memory of Her*, 220; Dennis Ronald MacDonald, *There is No Male and Female: The Fate of a Dominical Saying in Paul and Gnosticism* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press 1987); David G. Horrell, "'No Longer Jew or Greek": Paul's Corporate Christology and the Construction of Christian Community' in *Christology, Controversy and Community: New Testament Essays in Honour of David R. Catchpole*, David G. Horrell and Christopher M. Tuckett (eds.), (Leiden: Brill 2000), 321-344, 330. While Wayne Meeks' reconstruction of the pre-Pauline origin of the formula has been highly influential, he is one of the few scholars to suggest that it may have been Paul himself who introduced the statement (Meeks, 'The Image of the Androgyne', 182).

²⁴ Horrell, *No Longer Jew or Greek*, 330, emphasis in the original.

than the reverse. Since Paul tries to convince both the Galatians and the Corinthians by referring to the phrase, and since questions about Jews and non-Jews are of great concern to him, it is much more likely that its message originates with him.

An even more speculative reconstruction of the origin of the baptismal saying, which has nevertheless gained much influence, was introduced by Wayne Meeks in his article 'The Image of the Androgyne' and further developed by Dennis Ronald MacDonald and Daniel Boyarin.²⁵ In this view, the baptismal saying in this initial form was limited to the third pair, 'no male and female'. This pair echoes the creation story in Genesis; the Septuagint here reads 'male and female he created them' (ἄρσεν καὶ θῆλυ ἐποίησεν αὐτούς, Genesis 1:27), reflecting, according to Meeks, the myth of the creation of the first androgynous human. While he is careful not to make any definite pronouncements on its origin, Meeks does suggest that the phrase 'no male and female' may have been in use among early Christian groups whose members thought of themselves as 'a new genus of mankind, or as the restored original mankind'.²⁶ Dennis Ronald MacDonald and Daniel Boyarin attempt a more detailed reconstruction of the origin of the formula, arguing that it referred to a complete erasure of sexual difference in some forms of earliest Christianity.²⁷ In their reading, the phrase presented a challenge to the gender order and thereby to the social order in general. This original baptismal saying was then taken over by Paul, who changed its radical meaning and added the other two pairs, Jew-Greek and slave-free.²⁸

We will return to this androgyne-reading in more detail in chapter IV, which focusses on the third pair 'male and female'. We can already object here that this reconstruction of the origin of the saying requires a number of detailed assumptions about early Christianity which do not find confirmation in any of the sources. In order for MacDonald and Boyarin's scenario to work, we would have to assume that in the two decades between Christ's death and Paul's writings, groups promoting sexual equality sprang up and flourished, to the extent that it was attractive for Paul to take over their liturgy—but not their ideology—which he transforms into his own. We would also need to accept that these groups then disappeared, leaving no trace, and that the androgyne myth went underground, only to resurface in later Gnosticism, yet without the social agenda which originally accompanied it.²⁹ This all seems rather problematic.

²⁵ See Meeks, 'The Image of the Androgyne', 165-208; MacDonald, *There is No Male and Female*; Boyarin, *A Radical Jew*, 180-200. Meeks' idea has influenced many scholars. In his commentary, Hanz Dieter Betz allows for the possibility that the androgyne myth forms the background of Paul's thought: 'we may assume that Gal 3:28 lets us take a glimpse into the otherwise hidden beginnings of Christianity in Galatia. These beginnings may have been connected with teachings which later appear only in Gnostic circles.' (Betz, *A Commentary*, 200). This interpretation has also come under criticism. In a detailed analysis of the Gnostic sources mentioned by Meeks, Johannes Vorster has recently challenged Meeks' suggestion that the fusion of two sexes into one body is seen as symbolising humankind's yearning for unity, harmony and equality. According to Vorster, 'the imagery of androgyny represents not a harmonious utopian future, but rather a discordant, chaotic present'. (Johannes N. Vorster, 'Androgyny and Early Christianity', *Religion & Theology* 15 (2008), 97–132, 97). For further criticism, see Ben Witherington (Ben Witherington (III), *Grace in Galatia*, 271) and James Dunn (Dunn, *The Epistle to the Galatians*, 206).

²⁶ Meeks, 'The Image of the Androgyne', 166.

²⁷ Boyarin, *A Radical Jew*, 187.

²⁸ MacDonald, *There is No Male and Female*, 127-132, Boyarin, *A Radical Jew*, 187.

²⁹ For a criticism of Meeks' and Boyarin's interpretation of these Gnostic sources, see Vorster, whose ideas will be discussed in Chapter IV ('Androgyny and Early Christianity', 97–132).

A clearer idea of the origin and use of the formula would of course be very helpful in understanding its aims and meaning. However, since any attempt to reconstruct a pre-Pauline origin amounts to no more than speculation, our best option is to see the formula as part of Paul's thought. There is, indeed, much that connects it to Paul, apart from the obvious fact that he is our only source for it. There can be no doubt that being 'in Christ' is one of the dominant themes in Paul's letters, as we will discuss below, and that the relationship between Jew and Greek 'in Christ' is of great importance to him. Parts of the formula are reflected in a number of passages (e.g., Romans 10:12; 1 Corinthians 11:11; Galatians 5.6, 6.15), as well as in later Pauline tradition (Colossians 3:11, Ephesians 6:8). Paul brings together all three pairs in his discussion of marriage (1 Corinthians 7), where he supports his guidelines on marriage (and thus the pair male-female), by appealing to the examples of circumcised and uncircumcised and slave and free (1 Corinthians 7:18-23).³⁰ That the quotation from Genesis 'male and female' refers primarily to marriage and not to gender will be argued extensively in chapter IV, on the basis of the contemporary understanding of this text as witnessed in other sources that refer to it.

There is thus every indication that the baptismal formula was an integral part of Paul's thought and that it was Paul who introduced it to the communities he founded. While he may on one occasion rhetorically portray himself as not involved in the actual rite of baptism, the fact that all believers were baptized in the name of Christ was evidently of great importance to him (1 Corinthians 1:14-17, cf. Romans 6:3) and the words with which this was done were no doubt important to him as well.³¹

I will therefore take the formula as it appears in Paul's letters as indicative of his thought and will not speculate on a possible non-Pauline origin or original function. The most extensive form, as it occurs in Galatians, is our central text, and it is this wording that will be referred to as Paul's baptismal formula. Paul expected this formula to have meaning as he used it in the letter, and this is what we will focus on. We will now turn to baptism as the context for the formula, as indicated at the end of section 1.1. I will not here examine the historical or ritual aspects of baptism, but focus on Paul's thought on baptism and see how this connects to the idea that 'there is neither Jew nor Greek, neither slave nor free, nor male and female'.

1.3 Baptism, Community and Cosmos

We can now ask how the baptismal context, in which Paul places the formula both in Galatians and 1 Corinthians, can help our understanding of the phrase. In order to answer this question, Paul's ideas about baptism need to be examined more closely. In Galatians, baptism is identified as the point of entry into unity with Christ: 'As many of you as were baptized into Christ have clothed yourself with Christ' (Galatians 3:27). The connection to baptism is even more explicit in 1 Corinthians, where Paul tries to counteract the divisions

³⁰ This is noted, e.g., by S. Scott Bartchy, *Mallon Chresai: First Century Slavery and the Interpretation of 1 Corinthians 7:22*, (Cambridge: Society of Biblical Literature 1973), 162ff, Robin Scroggs, 'Paul and the Eschatological Woman', *Journal of the American Academy of Religion*, Vol. 40, No. 3 (1972), 283-303, David G. Horrell, *The social Ethos of the Corinthians Correspondence: Interests and Ideology from 1 Corinthians to 1 Clement* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark 1996), 85.

³¹ For Paul's rhetorical strategy in this passage see Johan S. Vos, *Die Kunst der Argumentation bei Paulus: Studien zur antiken Rhetorik* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck 2002), 29-40.

One in Christ

within the community in Corinth by pointing to the way believers are connected to each other through their baptism:

For just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ. Because in one spirit we all were baptized into one body (εἰς ἓν σῶμα ἐβαπτίσθημεν), whether Jews or Greeks, slaves or free (εἴτε Ἰουδαῖοι εἴτε Ἕλληνες εἴτε δοῦλοι εἴτε ἐλεύθεροι) and were all given one spirit to drink. (1 Corinthians 12:12-13)

Both passages clearly link the notion of unity to baptism. In Galatians, all believers are said to be one in Christ, while in 1 Corinthians, they receive one spirit and form one body. There seem to be two dimensions to this idea of unity: that of believers uniting with Christ and a unity of believers with each other.³² The image of the body in which believers are joined to each other, reflects these two aspects. After Paul has argued that the members of the body are mutually dependent and need to appreciate each other, he explains the metaphor: 'Now you are the body of Christ and members of it' (1 Corinthians 12:27). This corporeal image illustrates the community-forming dimension of baptism. For Paul, baptism is where the link between believers is created. Participation in Christ and participation in the community of believers appear to be fundamentally interconnected.

Throughout his letters, and particularly when talking about baptism, Paul uses the 'with Christ' and 'in Christ' motifs, that are also found in these passages. The clauses 'with Christ' and 'in Christ' or 'in the Lord' appear to express for him the fundamental way that believers and Christ are connected. The meaning of the expression 'in Christ' cannot be discussed in full here, if it can be fully determined at all.³³ However, it is possible to describe several aspects that are relevant for understanding baptism and unity.

The many 'with' compounds (e.g., συνετάφημεν, buried with him, συνεσταυρώθη, crucified with him, συζήσομεν, live with him, Romans 6:3-5) that Paul uses in the context of baptism in the letter to the Romans, suggest both believers sharing in Christ's death and life, and believers sharing this experience with each other.³⁴ In the letter to the Romans, we find the only other occasion where Paul speaks of 'baptism into Christ' (ἐβαπτίσθημεν εἰς Χριστόν Romans 6:3), as he does in relation to the formula in Galatians. Tellingly, this passage about baptism in Romans is part of Paul's discussion of Christ's eschatological role. In the chapter preceding this passage, Christ is described as the second Adam (Romans 5); just as the sin of the first Adam brought condemnation and death over humankind, so the obedience of the second Adam, who is Christ, will bring righteousness and life. Both Adam and Christ are seen to represent an epoch and to have determined the state of this epoch with their actions. Paul's focus then turns, in the subsequent chapter, to the power of sin and death over believers (Romans 6). Christ's death has ended the power of sin (6:10) that

³² On the fundamental importance of these two aspects of unity, see Daniel G. Powers, *Salvation through Participation: An Examination of the Notion of the Believers' Corporate Unity with Christ in Early Christian Soteriology* (Leuven: Peeters 2001).

³³ Richard Longenecker discusses the major interpretative approaches and notes that 'endless debate will probably continue to gather around Paul's expression "in Christ"'. In contrast to the corporate aspects of unity in Christ emphasised here, for Longenecker, the essence of the expression appears to be a personal relationship (*Introducing Romans: Critical Issues in Paul's Most Famous Letter* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans 2011) 313; 307-317)

³⁴ Dunn, *The Theology of Paul*, 402. On Paul's 'corporate Christology' see also Horrell, "'No Longer Jew or Greek'", 321-344.

ruled since Adam, and by taking part in Christ's death through baptism, believers can come out from under the rule of sin over their lives:

Or don't you know that all of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus (ἐβαπτίσθημεν εἰς Χριστὸν Ἰησοῦν) were baptized into his death? We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the father, we too may live a new life. Because if we have grown together with the likeness of his death, we will also be so with the likeness of his resurrection. (*Romans 6:3-5*)

Through baptism, believers are said to die and be buried with Christ. The result of taking part in Christ's death is described by Paul with an organic image, 'having become grown together' (σύνφυτοι γεγόναμεν). Believers have become grown together with the likeness of Christ's death (τῷ ὁμοιώματι τοῦ θανάτου αὐτοῦ).³⁵ Though this fusion with the likeness of Christ's death is a complex concept, its effects are clear, in Paul's description. Through it, believers have 'died to sin'; they have become free from its reign and can live in Christ (6:11). By being a part of the likeness of Christ's death through baptism, believers share in the cosmic effects of his death: freedom from the power of sin and death.

We thus understand two aspects in the unity with Christ that Paul sees resulting from baptism. The first is the participation in a community that can be called 'the body of Christ'. The second is the participation in an eschatological reality, in the cosmic change that was set in motion through Christ's death and resurrection. Baptism does not simply inaugurate a believer into the local community in Galatia or Corinth. Being 'in Christ' is something altogether bigger, which transcends this world and this age and has a clear eschatological dimension. Paul can express this succinctly: 'so if anyone is in Christ, there is new creation (εἴ τις ἐν Χριστῷ καινὴ κτίσις), the old has passed away; see, everything has become new!' (2 Corinthians 5:17).

These different levels of meaning that are connected for Paul to unity 'in Christ' should be kept in mind when looking to understand the role of the three pairs in the formula. Baptism is not primarily about an individual believer undergoing a rite to confirm a change in religious orientation. Rather, it is the communal, eschatological and cosmic dimensions which dominate Paul's thought on baptism. Keeping this in mind should help us to understand what Paul intends to say in relation to the three pairs.

2 Defining Difference: Jew-Greek-Barbarian, Slave-Free, Male-Female

In this section, we will explore how Paul's contemporaries use the types of opposites mentioned by Paul and how this can help to clarify Paul's phrase, focussing on the strand of thought that uses such opposites to construct difference and hierarchy between groups.

³⁵ George H. van Kooten points out the similarity between this passage and Philippians 3:10 where Paul speaks of 'becoming of the same form with his death' (συμμορφιζόμενος τῷ θανάτῳ αὐτοῦ). The idea of 'growing together' with Christ is part of what Van Kooten calls Paul's 'morphic language', which has its roots in Greek philosophy, especially in Platonic thought (George H. van Kooten, *Paul's Anthropology in Context: The Image of God, Assimilation to God, and Tripartite Man in Ancient Judaism, Ancient Philosophy and Early Christianity* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck 2008), 206-212).

Some scholars commenting on Paul's statement have observed the importance of pairs of opposites in ancient philosophy.³⁶ The tendency to categorise all sorts of things into pairs of polar opposites, which were treated as both incompatible and exhaustive, can be seen as constitutive of Greek thought.³⁷ Such pairs feature in cosmology, in medical theories, in explanations of natural phenomena, as well as in social constructions.³⁸

In a discussion of the logic of opposition, Aristotle lists ten pairs of opposite principles considered normative by a branch of Pythagoreans. These opposite principles include odd and even, right and left, male and female, straight and crooked, at rest and in motion, good and evil.³⁹ This list illustrates what Paul Cartledge calls 'the arbitrary and variable character of Greek binary cultural classification'.⁴⁰ Ancient classifications may appear arbitrary, and do not always match our modern ones. The differentiation between the sexes, for example, was explained with reference to pairs, such as right and left, hot and cold, dry and wet, where the male was associated with right, hot and dry, and the female with left, cold and wet.⁴¹

The dichotomy Greek-barbarian is another important example of binary opposition in Greek thought, one that was fundamental to Greek self-understanding.⁴² Barbarians constituted the essential others, the 'them' who are not 'us'. Paul's opposition Jew-Greek is a Jewish appropriation of this distinction, which is attested by other Jewish authors in Paul's time as well.⁴³ In ancient thinking about society, pairs of opposites thus provided a useful tool, as we will see in this section. The types of binary distinctions mentioned by Paul in the baptismal formula play a role especially in thought that deals with the organisation of the household or family.

The *topos* of household management, which uses such pairs of opposites, and which was of interest to many in Paul's time, went back to Aristotle. In the opening chapter of his *Politics*, where he sets out the basic structure of the household, Aristotle uses the same three pairs that occur in Paul's statement. The household was for Aristotle an institution

³⁶ See, e.g., J. Louis Martyn, 'Apocalyptic Antinomies in Galatians', *New Testament Studies* 31 (1985), 410-424; also Brigitte Kahl, 'Gender Trouble in Galatia', 68.

³⁷ According to Paul Cartledge, 'The Greeks thus in various ways constructed their identities negatively, by means of a series of polarized oppositions of themselves to what they were not.' (Paul Cartledge, *The Greeks: A Portrait of Selves and Others* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), 12-13. Cartledge himself in his portrait of the Greeks uses the pairs Greeks-barbarians, men-women, citizens-aliens, free-slave, and gods-mortals. See also Vincent J. Rosivach, 'Enslaving "Barbaroi" and the Athenian Ideology of Slavery', *Historia: Zeitschrift für Alte Geschichte*, 48/2 (1999), 129-157, 142.

³⁸ Argumentation based on polarity and opposition is described by G.E.R. Lloyd as one of the most important forms of argumentation and explanation in Presocratic philosophy (*Polarity and Analogy: Two Types of Argumentation* (Bristol: Bristol Classical Press 1966), 17.

³⁹ Aristotle, *Metaphysics* A5 986a 22ff, see Lloyd, *Polarity*, 16.

⁴⁰ Cartledge, *The Greeks*, 14.

⁴¹ Lloyd, *Polarity*, 17-18, see also Peter Brown, *The Body and Society: Men, Women and Sexual Renunciation in Early Christianity* (London: Faber and Faber 1988), 9-10.

⁴² Cartledge, *The Greeks*, 11-12. For the concept of the barbarian in Greek thought, see Edith Hall, *Inventing the Barbarian: Greek Self-Definition through Tragedy* (Oxford: Clarendon Press 1989); François Hartog, *The Mirror of Herodotus: The Representation of the Other in the Writing of History* (Berkeley: University of California Press 1988). For the wider tendency in Greek thought to categorise in polar opposites, see Lloyd, *Polarity*, 15-85.

⁴³ Paul's terminology for ethnic difference is analysed in greater detail in the next chapter (section 2.1). For the distinction 'us' versus 'them' in Jewish sources, see Shaye J.D. Cohen, *The Beginnings of Jewishness: Boundaries, Varieties, Uncertainties* (Berkeley: University of California Press 1999), 1.

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made up of naturally occurring partnerships.⁴⁴ The two primary partnerships for Aristotle were those between husband and wife and between master and slave. As he explains, the female and the slave are both intended to be ruled; both lack the foresight that is required for being a lord and master. Yet they are not the same, because nature has made each for a different use:

Now the female is distinguished by nature from the slave (φύσει μὲν οὖν διώρισται τὸ θῆλυ καὶ τὸ δοῦλον). For nature makes nothing in an economizing spirit ... but one thing with a view to one thing; and each instrument would perform most finely if it served one task rather than many. The barbarians, though, have the same arrangement for female and slave (ἐν δὲ τοῖς βαρβάροις τὸ θῆλυ καὶ τὸ δοῦλον τὴν αὐτὴν ἔχει τάξιν). The reason for this is that they have no naturally ruling element: with them, the partnership [of man and woman] is that of female slave and male slave (ἡ κοινωνία αὐτῶν δούλης καὶ δούλου). This is why the poets say "it is fitting for Greeks to rule barbarians" – the assumption being that barbarian and slave are the same thing. (Aristotle, *Politics* 1.2.3-4)

Aristotle brings together the distinctions between Greek and barbarian, between slave and master and between male and female in this passage. And the three are closely connected, even if recognising their differences is what is important here.⁴⁵ According to Aristotle, both the slave and the female are inferior to the male. In spite of both being subordinate, the female and the slave are not the same, however. Nature has made the female different from the slave and, therefore, the form of control that the male exercises over them must also be different and correspond to their different natures.

The difference between Greeks and barbarians lies in knowing how to distinguish between ruler and ruled and the different purposes for each of the inferior categories. The inferiority of barbarians themselves is evident in their failure to recognise the distinction between slaves and women. Among them, according to Aristotle, the men are slaves, and slaves are indistinguishable from women, both being subordinate.⁴⁶ This failure to recognise the fundamental distinction in nature makes the barbarians themselves a class that should be ruled, as if they were slaves, or women. Natural superiority justifies the rule of the better over the worse; 'male must rule female as free rules slave and Greek rules barbarian'.⁴⁷ Both slaves and barbarians are significantly and substantially different from Greeks.⁴⁸ For Aristotle, a proper distinction of the roles of male and female, and slave and master, leads to the proper, Greek, construction of the household:

⁴⁴ D. Brendan Nagle analyses the connection between the *oikos* and the *polis* in Aristotle's *Politics* see, *The Household as the Foundation of Aristotle's Polis* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 2006); also Michael Davis, *The Politics of Philosophy: A Commentary on Aristotle's Politics* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers 1996).

⁴⁵ A similar sentiment is expressed in Euripides: 'And it is right, mother, that Hellenes should rule barbarians, but not barbarians Hellenes, those being slaves, while these are free' (*Iphigenia in Aulis*, 1400).

⁴⁶ For a discussion of the conceptual overlap between women and barbarians in ancient thought, see Sandra R. Joshel and Sheila Murnaghan, 'Introduction: Differential Equations' in *Women and Slaves in Greco-Roman Culture: Differential Equations*, Sandra R. Joshel and Sheila Murnaghan (eds.), (London: Routledge 1998), 1-21, 1.

⁴⁷ See Daniel S. Richter, *Cosmopolis: Imagining Community in Late Classical Athens and the Early Roman Empire* (New York: Oxford University Press 2011), 47.

⁴⁸ See Rosivach, 'Enslaving "Barbaroi"', 148.

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From these two partnerships [male-female, slave-free] then, the household first arose, and Hesiod's verse is rightly spoken, 'First a house, and woman and ox for ploughing', for poor persons have an ox instead of a servant ('οἶκον μὲν πρότιστα γυναῖκά τε βοῦν τ' ἀροτῆρα' ὁ γὰρ βοῦς ἀντ' οἰκέτου τοῖς πένησιν ἔστιν). (Aristotle, *Politics* 1.2.5)

The hierarchical, and for Aristotle, natural relationships between husband and wife, and between slave and master together form the building blocks that make up the household, which in turn makes up the city.⁴⁹

The influence of this first construction of the household in Aristotle is evident still in the early empire. By this time though, Stoic cosmopolitanism, which was driven by the idea that all human beings, whether Greek or barbarian, possess reason in the same way, can be seen to have influenced thought about the topic.⁵⁰ Possibly as a result of this, the category Greek-barbarian is absent in later discussions of the *topos* of the household, and there appears to be a softening of the hierarchies between husband and wife, and a somewhat different evaluation of the master-slave relation.⁵¹

Authors concerned with household management in Paul's time frequently employ pairs of opposites to set out their guidelines for appropriate behaviour. Seneca, for example, refers to instructions regarding three pairs within the family:

that department of philosophy (...) which, for instance, advises how a husband should conduct himself towards his wife, or how a father should bring up his children, or how a master should rule his slaves. (sed marito suadet quomodo se gerat adversus uxorem, patri quomodo educet liberos, domino quomodo servos regat). (Seneca, *Epistle* 94.1-2)⁵²

The proper conduct for each of the groups making up the household was a concern in a wide range of ancient sources, from Stoic to neo-Pythagorean, as well as in the New Testament.⁵³ In the letter to the Colossians, for example, the author gives his audience the following instruction:

Wives, be subject to your husbands, as is fitting in the Lord (Αἱ γυναῖκες, ὑποτάσσεσθε τοῖς ἀνδράσιν ὡς ἀνήκεν ἐν κυρίῳ). Husbands, love your wives and never treat them harshly (Οἱ ἄνδρες, ἀγαπάτε τὰς γυναῖκας καὶ μὴ πικραίνεσθε πρὸς αὐτάς). Children, obey your parents in everything, for this is your acceptable duty in the Lord. Fathers, do not provoke your children, or they may lose heart. Slaves, obey your earthly masters in everything (Οἱ δοῦλοι, ὑπακούετε κατὰ πάντα

⁴⁹ See Davis, *The Politics of Philosophy*, 15-19.

⁵⁰ Richter, *Cosmopolis*, 69-86.

⁵¹ First-century ideas about slavery, as well as marriage, in relation to the Stoic notion of cosmopolitanism will be discussed in Chapters III and IV.

⁵² For a detailed analysis of Seneca's argumentation in this letter, see John Schafer, *Ars Didactica: Seneca's 94th and 95th Letters*, (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht 2009). A more general introduction to Seneca's letters, which discusses the importance of the 94th and 95th letters, is given by Erwin Hachmann, *Die Führung des Lesers in Senecas "Epistulae morales"* (Münster: Aschendorff 1995).

⁵³ For an analysis of the household codes in the New Testament, see David L. Balch, *Let Wives be Submissive: The Domestic Code in 1 Peter*, (Atlanta: Scholars Press 1981); also Johannes Woyke, *Die neutestamentlichen Haustafeln: Ein kritischer und konstruktiver Forschungsüberblick* (Stuttgart: Katholisches Bibelwerk 2000).

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τοῖς κατὰ σάρκα κυρίοις), not only while being watched and in order to please them, but wholeheartedly, fearing the Lord. (*Colossians* 3:18-22)

In their contents, these instructions differ little from those found in many other contemporary moral codes. The author is 'propounding moral sentiments of widespread currency in his ambient culture'.⁵⁴ The pairs husband-wife, parents-children, masters-slaves that are mentioned here recur in several New-Testament passages, with some small variations (e.g., *Ephesians* 5:21-6:9; *Titus* 2:1-10; and *1 Peter* 2:18-3:7). Much has been said about their relationship to the ideas on marriage and slaves expressed in the genuine Pauline letters, a subject that has to be left aside for now.⁵⁵ Our interest here is with the way these texts illustrate how pairs of opposites could be used to encourage harmony within the household, and how by this time, instructions can be addressed to both the ruling and the subjected categories. Even though authors do not always use the same categories when discussing the household, the themes of difference and hierarchy are a constant, as is can be seen in Paul's Jewish contemporary Philo:

Wives must serve their husbands (γυναικας ἀνδράσι δουλεύειν), not under violent ill-treatment, but promoting obedience in all things. Parents must have power over their children for their preservation and benefit. (Philo, *Apology for the Jews* 7.3)

Philo is concerned in this passage to illustrate the virtuous nature of the Jewish people by referring to their laws and obedience, and this includes proper conduct within the family. For Philo, the divisions found in the household are part of the larger social structure, and reflect the hierarchy found in society. The commandment to obey one's parents therefore extends beyond the family, requiring respect from all those who are ruled for those who rule:

And the fifth commandment, that about the honour due to parents, conceals under its brief expression, many very important and necessary laws, some enacted as applicable to old and young men, some as bearing on the relations existing between rulers and subjects, others concerning benefactors and those who have received benefits, others affecting slaves and masters (τοὺς ἐπὶ δούλοις καὶ δεσπόταις); for parents belong to the superior class of all these divisions just mentioned, the class, I mean, of elders, of rulers, of benefactors, and of masters; and children are in the inferior class, in which are ranked the younger people, the subjects, those who have received benefits, and slaves. (Philo, *The Decalogue*, 165-166)

The pair master-slave appears here in connection with three others, all, according to Philo, connecting a superior to an inferior, and therefore all by analogy falling under the law pertaining to parents and children. Philo is thought to be influenced in his thought on the

⁵⁴ Barclay, *Pauline Churches*, 242. Barclay argues that while the content of the Colossian code may not be distinctively Christian, it results in domestic roles becoming 'profoundly "Christianised"' since 'within each sphere one can turn one's particular responsibilities and duties into acts of service to the heavenly Master' (*Pauline Churches*, 251).

⁵⁵ See, e.g., the discussion in relation to *Colossians* in Barclay, *Pauline Churches*, 247.

household by the first-century philosopher Arius Didymus, who reinterpreted Aristotle's view on the household in relation to the polis.⁵⁶ According to Arius:

The rule of the household belongs by nature to the husband because the power of deliberation in wives is inferior, does not yet exist in children, and is absent in slaves (τὸ γὰρ βουλευτικὸν ἐν γυναικί μὲν χεῖρον, ἐν παισὶ δ' οὐδέπω, περὶ δούλους δ' οὐδ' ὅλως). On the other hand prudent household management (which includes the rule of the house and those things pertaining to the household) is the husband's appropriate realm of action. (Stobaeus, II 149.5)

Arius elsewhere describes marriage as the single most important relationship on which the family is built and like Philo, he can discuss the composition of the family without reference to slaves. Here, however, like Seneca, he mentions three pairs, and includes the rule of master over slaves as one of the basic elements of household management. While Arius appears to come close to Aristotle's description of the household in this passage, there is a noticeable softening in his attitude to the *oikos*. In keeping with the thought of the time, Arius emphasizes marriage as a personal relationship rather than a biological necessity. When compared with Aristotle, Arius dilutes the principle of natural hierarchy.⁵⁷

We can conclude that the categories that Paul mentions in the formula were important in ordering ancient society. They serve to distinguish those who are superior to those who are inferior, especially within the family. It is in this attitude towards society and human relationships that we should place the prayers of thanksgiving to which we will turn next. These prayers have been put forward by scholars as the context for understanding Paul's statement. Richard Longenecker, for example, suggests that Paul used his statement in 'conscious contrast' to these 'chauvinistic' prayers.⁵⁸ These prayers, like the instructions for the household, confirm difference within pairs of opposites, from a Greek or Jewish perspective. They place humans above animals, Greeks above barbarians, men above women, masters above slaves, parents above children. They express the belief that to rule belongs naturally to the man and the Greek, so one might well be thankful for being one.

2.1 Prayers of Thanksgiving

The similarities between several Greek and Jewish prayers of thanksgiving, and Paul's statement in Galatians were already pointed out in the late nineteenth century, by John E. B. Mayor. In a one page article that appeared in *The Classical Review* in 1896, Mayor complains that although he had noted these parallels long before, his observation had not had the effect he had hoped for: 'I thought I had called Lightfoot's attention to the evidence some thirty years ago, but as it is not noticed in the last editions of his commentaries, I must have mistaken the will for the deed'.⁵⁹ By our time, the parallel has been noted by New-

⁵⁶ Balch, 'Let Wives', 41.

⁵⁷ See Nagle, 'Aristotle and Arius Didymus', esp. 209.

⁵⁸ Longenecker, *Galatians*, 157.

⁵⁹ John E. B. Mayor, 'Plato and St. Paul', *The Classical Review* 10/4 (1896), 191. Indeed, in the 1910 edition of J.B. Lightfoot's commentary, true to Mayor's complaint, these parallels are still not mentioned (J.B. Lightfoot, *Saint Paul's Epistle to the Galatians: A Revised Text with Introd., Notes, and Dissertations* (London: Macmillan, 1910), 149-151)

Testament scholars, and it seen as a possible foil for the baptismal formula.⁶⁰ While Mayor considers these texts to ‘speak for themselves’, there is in fact much to say about the prayers of thanksgiving.

The first of these prayers is mentioned by Plutarch in his biography of the Roman general Gaius Marius. In this passage, Plutarch contrasts Marius’ attitude on facing his death to that of Plato.⁶¹ While Marius, when his end was near, took to the bottle and lamented his fortune,

Plato, before his death, thanked the Fates that he had been born a human being rather than an animal, a Greek rather than barbarian, and that he lived in the time of Socrates (ὅτι πρῶτον μὲν ἄνθρωπος, εἶτα Ἕλληγν', οὐ βάρβαρος οὐδὲ ἄλογον τῆ φύσει θηρίον γένοιτο, πρὸς δὲ τούτοις, ὅτι τοῖς Σακράτους χρόνοις ἀπήνησεν ἡ γένεσις αὐτοῦ). (Plutarch, *Gaius Marius* 46.1)

According to Plutarch, Plato expresses gratitude for three blessings. He is grateful first of all for being a human being and not an animal, categories not found in Paul. The second pair reflects an ethnic division, being a Greek rather than a barbarian.⁶² Unlike Paul, Plato’s blessing in Plutarch does not have a third pair of opposites, but simply gratitude expressed for being born in the time of Socrates.

A fascinating version of this prayer by Plato is related by the fourth-century church father Lactantius. Lactantius also cites Plato’s expression of gratitude, but gives it in a slightly different form and has an entirely different evaluation from Plutarch’s. Rather than quote Plato with approval, Lactantius has little good to say about the prayer:

Plato said much the same, where he says ‘he thanked nature first that he was born a human and not a dumb beast, second that he was born a man and not a

⁶⁰ Richard Longenecker, e.g., suggests that the inclusion of the three pairs was perhaps ‘a conscious attempt to counter the three *bērākôt* (“blessings,” “benedictions”) that appear at the beginning of the Jewish cycle of morning prayers’ or similar Greek expressions. He suggests then that ‘in contrast to such Jewish and Greek chauvinistic statements, early Christians saw it as particularly appropriate to give praise in their baptismal confession that through Christ the old racial schisms and cultural divisions had been healed’. Longenecker sees this elimination of division ‘first of all in terms of spiritual relations’ (Longenecker, *Galatians* 157). Dunn notes that some ‘have heard an echo of the Jewish prayer in which the male Jew thanks God that he was not created, *inter alia*, a Gentile, a slave or a woman, though there is no firm evidence of the prayer’s being as early as the first century’ (Dunn, *Galatians*, 206).

⁶¹ On the importance of contrast as a method by which Plutarch highlights a person’s character, see T. F. Carney, ‘Plutarch’s Style in the Marius’, *The Journal of Hellenic Studies* 80 (1960), 24-31, 27. Plutarch’s description of Marius’ death here serves to illustrate his lack of *paideia* (S. C. R. Swain, ‘Hellenic Culture and the Roman Heroes of Plutarch’, *The Journal of Hellenic Studies* 110 (1990), 126-145, 139).

⁶² The same two pairs are found in Isocrates ‘Therefore, it behoves all men to want to have many of their youth engaged in training to become speakers, and you Athenians most of all. For you, yourselves, are pre-eminent and superior to the rest of the world, not in your application to the business of war, nor because you govern yourselves more excellently or preserve the laws handed down to you by your ancestors more faithfully than others, but in those qualities by which the nature of man rises above the other animals, and the race of the Hellenes above the barbarians, namely, in the fact that you have been educated as have been no other people in wisdom and in speech.’ (*Antidosis* 293-294). Joseph Tabory suggests that the possibility of being created as an animal instead of a human may be connected to the theory of reincarnation or metempsychosis, which would be in line with Plato’s beliefs (Joseph Tabory, ‘The Benediction of Self-Identity and the Changing Status of Women and of Orthodoxy’, in *Kenishta: Studies of the Synagogue World*, Joseph Tabory (ed.), (Ramat-Gan: Bar-Ilan University Press 2003), 107-137, 115, nt. 20 and nt. 22).

woman, <third> that he was born a Greek and not a barbarian, and lastly that he was born in Athens and in the time of Socrates' (primum, quod homo natus esset potius, quam mutum animal; deinde quod mas potius, quam foemina; quod Graecus, quam Barbaros; possermo quod Atheniensis, et quod temporibus Socratis). The degree of mental blindness, the size of error in such ignorance of the truth, is beyond expression. Let me simply say that nothing more crazy has ever been said in human history; as if being born a barbarian or a woman or a donkey would have left him the same Plato and not what he was born as. (Lactantius, *Divine Institutes* 3.19.17)

When compared to the version in Plutarch, Lactantius adds a further pair to Plato's prayer, that of male-female, thereby bringing the number of opposites to three, as in Paul. Lactantius also adds a location to the time of birth: Plato was not only born in the time of Socrates, but specifically in Athens. Lactantius' attention to this point, specifying that they lived not merely at the same time, but also in the same place, fits with his interest in the relationship between Socrates and Plato, which is discussed by him at some length.⁶³ While Lactantius' version is much later and may depend in some way on Paul, it attests to the fact that there was a well-known tradition of such prayers and to their particular form and content.

The third passage is found in Diogenes Laertius (3rd century CE), who cites a prayer quoted in the lost work 'Lives' from the philosopher Hermippus (3rd century B.C.E.):

Hermippus in his *Lives* refers to Thales the story which is told by some of Socrates, namely, that he used to say there were three blessings for which he was grateful to Fortune: "first, that I was born a human being and not a beast; next, that I was born a man and not a woman; thirdly, a Greek and not a barbarian (πρῶτον μὲν ὅτι ἄνθρωπος ἐγενόμην καὶ οὐ θηρίον, εἶτα ὅτι ἄνηρ καὶ οὐ γυνή, τρίτον ὅτι Ἕλληγ καὶ οὐ βάρβαρος)". (Diogenes Laertius, *Lives of the Philosophers* 1.33)

Either Thales or, according to some other sources known to Diogenes, Socrates, used to be thankful for three blessings.⁶⁴ Two of the three categories mentioned here overlap with Paul: man and woman and the ethnic division, Greek-barbarian. Two pairs are similar to Plutarch's version of Plato's prayer: human-beast and Greek-barbarian.

⁶³ As he writes in the next chapter: 'Let us now consider what was so great about Socrates himself that a wise man could fairly give thanks for being born in his time. I do not deny he was a little more shrewd than the others who thought the nature of things could be comprehended intellectually, but in my view they were not just mad, but also wicked, for wanting to set their prying eyes upon the secrets of heavenly providence.' (Lactantius, *Divine Institutes* Book 3.20.1-2). Yoel Kahn suggests that Lactantius conflates three texts here: Plutarch's version of Plato's prayer, the prayer attributed to Thales or Socrates in Diogenes Laertius and Dio Chrysostom's description of Socrates as counting himself fortunate for many reasons, 'not only because he was a rational being, but also because he was an Athenian' (Dio Chrysostom, *Discourses*, 61) (Yoel Kahn, *The Three Blessings: Boundaries, Censorship, and Identity in Jewish Liturgy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 10).

⁶⁴ Erich Gruen remarks on this passage in Diogenes: 'whether either of those philosophers made such a statement we cannot know. But the ascription appears in a Hellenistic text, by the biographer Hermippus of Smyrna in the third century B.C.E. And it earned an echo in rabbinic writings' (Erich S. Gruen, 'Greeks and Non-Greeks' in *The Cambridge Companion to the Hellenistic World*, Glenn R. Bugh (ed.), (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 2007), 295-314, 295).

The history of these three texts and their interconnection is difficult to establish. Joseph Tabory suggests that there was a tradition connecting a threefold blessing with Thales or Socrates, which originally included the triad human, male and Greek.⁶⁵ In order to retain the trifold structure while including a reference to Socrates, the pair male-female was dropped in the prayer attributed to Plato by Plutarch. According to Tabory, Lactantius conflated the two versions in Plutarch and Diogenes Laertius, and came up with a longer version of the prayer. Whatever the exact relationship between the prayers, it is important to note that if Paul was familiar with this tradition, it would be in the form of a threefold statement that could have different forms, but did not include the pair slave-free. The ethnic pair, in these passages 'Greek-barbarian', is the only consistent overlap with Paul, while the pair slave-free, which features in Paul's statement, is absent from all three versions of the prayers.

Although the sources we have for these prayers date several decades or even centuries after Paul, the prayers themselves are attributed to philosophers who lived much earlier, to Thales, Socrates or Plato. Diogenes claims to quote a much earlier source, Hermippus, and to know of others who also tell the same story. There is a strong possibility therefore that the tradition about these prayers was known at the time of Paul. The early attributions of the prayers also raise the possibility that these thanksgivings are something of a throwback to an earlier time, when this type of ethnic, and perhaps even male, chauvinism was more indicative of the general attitude. The cosmopolitan mood of the early Empire led to some very different ideas about human difference, as we will see in the next chapter.

2.1.1 Jewish Prayers of Thanksgiving

While slaves were absent from any of the versions of the prayer examined so far, they are mentioned in some of the later Jewish versions of such threefold prayers, namely those that appear in rabbinic sources. These benedictions do not have the form of pairs of opposites, but only retain the negative part; they express thanks for not being something, without stating the positive of what a person might be. The sources themselves all date after Paul, but it is possible that they have preserved earlier material from the first century. Given the similarities between these benedictions and the versions quoted above, it is likely that these Jewish prayers depend on the Greek tradition.⁶⁶ The earliest of these, found in the Tosefta, reads:

R. Judah says: A person is obligated to recite the [following] three benedictions every day: 'Blessed [is God] who has not made me a gentile, Blessed [is God] who has not made me a boor, Blessed [is God] who has not made me a woman.

[Who has not made me] a gentile, because Scripture says, All nations are as naught in his sight; he accounts them as less than nothing [Isaiah 40:17].

[Who has not made me] a boor, because a boor is not a fearer of sin.

⁶⁵ Tabory finds confirmation for the trifold pattern in the prayer mentioned in the gospel of Luke, where a Pharisee is quoted as praying, 'God, I thank you that I am not like other people: thieves, rogues, adulterers, or even like this tax collector' (Luke 18:11) (see Tabory, 'Benediction', 116).

⁶⁶ 'Jews modified this Greek witticism and began repeating it as a Jewish rejoinder to the competing Hellenistic slogan' (Kahn, *Three Blessings*, 10); see also Tabory, 'Benediction', 118.

[Who has not made me] a woman, because women are not obligated in the commandments. (*Tosefta Berakhot*, 6:18 38)⁶⁷

The gratitude that a Jewish man owes to God is thus explained by the fact that he, unlike a gentile, a boor or a woman, bears the full load of God's commandments.⁶⁸ The blessing thus underlines the importance of the study of Torah for a person's status.⁶⁹

In later versions of this blessing, the term 'boor' is replaced by 'slave'. In the Babylonian Talmud (*Menahot* 43b – 44a) the story is told of R. Aha bar Yaakov who heard his son reciting these blessings and objected to him thanking God for not being a boor.⁷⁰ The son then asks his father what blessing he should recite instead. The suggestion is made that gratitude for not being a boor should be replaced by gratitude for not being a slave, which leads to a discussion in the text about the difference in status between women and slaves. The objection that is raised at this point is that since both women and slaves are in a subservient position, when a man has blessed God for not being placed in such a situation once, there is no reason for him to do so again. The response that both should nevertheless be mentioned confirms, as Tabory observes, the importance that is attributed to citing exactly three blessings.⁷¹

Taken together, these sources provide a pattern that is similar to Paul, in that three pairs or aspects are mentioned. Within each pair, these prayers emphasise a clear hierarchy and opposition. A person is grateful for belonging to one half of the human race, and not the other. We have also seen that the pairs which were considered to make up a person are not constant, although the ethnic pair is mentioned in each of these texts. It has been suggested that Paul's formula in Galatians is directly dependent on these prayers and that he synthesises the Greek and Jewish texts.⁷² Yet there is little reason to assume direct dependence, especially since the term 'slave' is absent in all of the earlier versions, and only appears after Paul, as far as we can establish. While these thanksgivings provide parallels to the form of Paul's formula, they do not explain the three pairs in it. Furthermore, even if we were to accept that these types of prayers provoked a counter-slogan in Paul, that in itself is not sufficient for understanding Paul's statement. We would still need to ask what Paul was affirming, in denying these privileges.

I would rather suggest that while the prayers of thanksgiving testify to the power that a threefold slogan was considered to have at the time, we should not look for a narrow literary dependence or opposition that might have influenced Paul. We should ask instead

⁶⁷ Translation from Shaye J.D. Cohen, *Why Aren't Jewish Women Circumcised? Gender and Covenant in Judaism* (Berkeley: University of California Press 2005), 126. Slightly different versions are found in the Palestinian Talmud (*Berakhot* 9:1, 63 b) and in the Babylonian Talmud (*Menahot* 43b – 44a), see Tabory, 'Benediction', 109-110.

⁶⁸ Cohen notes that although the English word 'boor' is a homonym of Hebrew word 'boor', the root meaning of the two words is quite different, with the Hebrew referring to an 'outsider', someone outside the city or outside civilisation (*Why Aren't*, 253, nt. 53). Tabory notes that the Hebrew word בּוֹר comes from a root describing an uncultivated field ('Benediction', 112).

⁶⁹ Tabory, 'Benediction', 109.

⁷⁰ The reason for his objection is not entirely clear. Tabory suggests that he may have been objecting to his son's assumption that he was not a boor. On the other hand, he may have felt that there was no reason to give thanks for not being a boor as a boor is obligated to keep all the commandments ('Benediction', 111).

⁷¹ Tabory, 'Benediction', 112.

⁷² Kahn suggests that Paul echoes or even brings together both the Greek and the Jewish versions of the prayers (*Three Blessings*, 16).

whether there were contemporary concerns that might have formed the conceptual background for Paul's statement and which it might have addressed.

3 The Ideal of Unity

In the previous section, we saw how the pairs mentioned by Paul cluster in discussions of the household and the appropriate relationships within the family. In this section, we will focus on a type of thought that also deals with social construction, but of a very different kind. In the ideas discussed here, social distinctions such as those between Greek and barbarian, between slave and free and between husband and wife are used to portray an ideal or utopian community, one that is very different from the hierarchical family relations that make up the household. From Plato to the Stoics of Paul's time, there is a broad trend in Greco-Roman thought on utopian societies, which includes themes such as universal citizenship, the absence of slavery and a rejection of marriage.⁷³ We now turn to this utopian tradition and its constructions of the ideal community, to see how this sheds light on Paul's use of the pairs Jew-Greek, slave-free and male-female.

That this utopian thought involves pairs and categories similar to those that make up contemporary discussions of conventional society should come as no surprise. Utopian thinking can be seen as an exercise in imagining alternatives.⁷⁴ As such, any utopian or ideal social scenario is also a reflection of the circumstances under which it is formed, and reveals something about the specific historical situation, society or way of life for which it presents an alternative.⁷⁵ Ancient depictions of ideal or utopian societies are no exception to this rule; they too present something of a mirror image of conventional society and reflect those aspects of life that were experienced as less than ideal. According to Moses Finley, what connects ancient depictions of the ideal is 'the idea, explicit or implicit, that a world without evil is not even conceivable, let alone possible, so long as the two chief roots of evil are present, namely, strife over wealth and property and strife arising from sexual drives'.⁷⁶ This

⁷³ The term 'utopia' is not an ancient one, but was devised by Thomas Moore, in the sixteenth century. It denotes a 'non-place', a 'nowhere'. This need not be understood in a narrow sense, but can be broadly defined as a form of social dreaming, a fictional depiction of an ideal society, a better world. See Michael J. Griffin and Tom Moylan, 'Introduction: Exploring Utopia' in *Exploring the Utopian Impulse: Essays on Utopian Thought and Practice*, Michael J. Griffin and Tom Moylan (eds.), Bern: Peter Lang 2007, 11-18; Roland Schaer and Gregory Claey's, *Utopia: The Search for the Ideal Society in the Western World* (New York: Oxford University Press 2000); John Ferguson, *Utopias of the Classical World* (London: Thames and Hudson 1975); Doayne Dawson, *Cities of the Gods: Communist Utopias in Greek Thought* (Oxford, Oxford University Press 1992).

⁷⁴ According to Malcolm Schofield, 'Utopian thinking could be regarded as a particularly ambitious and comprehensive exercise in the imagination of alternatives: envisage how the whole structure of society might be differently and better constituted' (Schofield, *Plato*, 199).

⁷⁵ Ruth Levitas proposes that the many different classifications and definitions that complicate research into the field can be replaced by defining utopian by its constant element, which she identifies as 'desire'; a desire for a better way of being and living. She notes that 'whatever we think of particular utopias, we learn a lot about the experience of living under any set of conditions by reflecting upon the desires which those conditions generate and yet leave unfulfilled. For that is the space that utopia occupies' (Ruth Levitas, *The Concept of Utopia* (Hertfordshire: Syracuse University Press 1990) 8-9). See also Finley, *The Use and Abuse of History*, 180; Evans, 'Searching for Paradise', 304.

⁷⁶ Finley, *The Use and Abuse of History*, 181. Finley makes a clear distinction between utopia and the idea of a Golden age or a Garden of Eden: 'Utopia transcends the given social reality; it is not transcendental in a metaphysical sense. All this sets the social Utopias apart from the Garden of Eden, under which I subsume the

view is shared by Doyne Dawson who notes that a characteristic of ancient political utopia is that 'communism in property is always accompanied by communism in family'.⁷⁷ By eliminating both property and the family, the major causes of social strife are considered to have been removed. Dawson's study focusses explicitly on what he terms 'high' utopianism, which is concerned with 'a plan for an ideal city-state that was not meant to be literally enacted'.⁷⁸ While our examination here will be less narrowly defined, and will include depictions of communities that are portrayed as actual existing ideals, it will largely confirm Dawson and Finley's observations that family and property are central to utopian thought. As we will see, the ideal is of a society that is characterised by homogeneity of interest. Whereas in the instructions for household management, social difference is structured in hierarchical relationships, the ideal human community is imagined to be an undifferentiated whole: 'individuals' loyalties and affections are directed to the community as a whole and not fragmented by competing claims of differentiated affiliations'.⁷⁹

Most of the utopias or ideal societies found in Greco-Roman thought were fictional or abstract, portraying a mythical island society or a philosophical model of an ideal city. The fictional nature of these portrayals can be seen as confirmation of the power of the social *status quo* in the ancient world. Any alternative society existed primarily as a social dream or a vision of the future.⁸⁰ In our exploration of these ancient imaginings, we will focus on authors of such social dreams writing under the early empire. We will start, however, with what is generally considered to be the first construction of a utopia, that of Plato's *Republic*. His depiction of an ideal city formed the basis for many later constructions of the ideal and contains the two characteristics discussed above, namely the absence of property and family.

3.1 An Ideal City: Plato's Republic

Plato is seen as the creator of the first political utopia; the ideal city of Plato's *Republic* inspired thinking about the ideal society for centuries to come. The *Republic* envisaged a society without private property, where all goods were held in common.⁸¹ According to the *Republic*, the best condition for the unity of the city is when its inhabitants consider the same things to be their own. Not only did the male inhabitants of this city have all property in common, they also did not have individual wives and children; there was no place for the family.

Plato's ideal city consists of three classes; the lowest class of labourers and merchants, a class of auxiliaries and soldiers, and the highest stratum, which is Plato's main

various primitivistic images, whether the perfect, simple, innocent society is located in the distant past, in a Golden Age, or in a far-off place' (Finley, *The Use and Abuse of History*, 180-181).

⁷⁷ Dawson, *Cities of the Gods*, 8.

⁷⁸ Dawson, *Cities of the Gods*, 7.

⁷⁹ Richter, *Cosmopolis*, 61.

⁸⁰ See Peter Green, *Alexander to Actium: The Historical Evolution of the Hellenistic Age* (Berkeley: University of California Press 1990), 394.

⁸¹ As Malcolm Schofield writes, 'one thing everybody knows about the *Republic* is that it is the first great work of political utopianism ever written' (Schofield, *Plato: Political Philosophy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press 2006), 194). Marek Winiarczyk laments the fact that while 'jeder humanistisch gebildete Mensch' has heard of Plato's utopia, the Hellenistic utopias suffer from scholarly neglect (Marek Winiarczyk, *Die hellenistischen Utopien* (Berlin: De Gruyter 2011), VII).

concern, that of the guardians. This guardian class is made up not only of men, but of women as well. A person's sex is deemed irrelevant for his or her position as guardian; the city needs the best possible men and the best possible women. Although men and women can be said to have the same nature, and therefore should receive the same education, they perform the same tasks in the city not because they are equally capable, but rather the opposite.⁸² Socrates maintains that since there is no particular field of activity in which women as a group excel, no distinct sphere of female activity, women should be used for the same purposes and given the same tasks as men:⁸³

"You are right," he said, "that the one sex is far surpassed by the other in everything, one may say. Many women, it is true, are better than many men in many things, but broadly speaking, it is as you say." "Then there is no pursuit of the administrators of a state that belongs to a woman because she is a woman or to a man because he is a man. But the natural capacities are distributed alike among both creatures, and women naturally share in all pursuits and men in all—yet for all the woman is weaker than the man." (Plato, *Republic* 5.455d-e)

While there are some women who are better at some things than some men, as a group, women are weaker and far surpassed by men. The rationale for having both male and female guardians is thus not based on gender equality, but rather on inequality.⁸⁴ The goal is not to improve the position of women, but to ensure the welfare of the city. The same is true for the abolition of the family. In the Republic, there will be no private marriages, and no private paternity or maternity:

That these women shall all be common to all the men (τὰς γυναικάς ταύτας τῶν ἀνδρῶν τούτων πάντων πάσας εἶναι κοινὰς), and that none shall cohabit with any privately; and that the children shall be common, and that no parent shall know its own offspring nor any child its parent.' (Plato, *Republic* 5.457c-d)

The republic will in fact have a strict program of eugenics, where only the best women and men are allowed to procreate; procreation is entirely in the hands of the state (*Republic* 459a-461b). Fathers will not know who their own children are, nor will mothers, because there will be communal childcare and communal wet nursing. The whole guardian class will therefore treat one another as relatives: 'no matter whom he meets, he will feel that he is meeting a brother, a sister, a father, a mother, a son, a daughter, or the offspring or forebears of these' (463c). In addition to not having a private family, the guardians are also not to have any private property (*Republic* 416d; 464b-c). The major principle supporting all this is that of unity:

⁸² On Plato's discussion the education of men and women in the *Republic* and *Laws*, see Christine Garside Allen, 'Plato on Women', *Feminist Studies* 2/3 (1975), 131-138.

⁸³ For a discussion of Plato's argumentation, see Michael S. Kochin, *Gender and Rhetoric in Plato's Political Thought* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 2002), 60-63. Also Stella Sandford, 'Thinking Sex Politically: Rethinking "Sex" in Plato's Republic', *The South Atlantic Quarterly* 104/4 (2005), 613-630.

⁸⁴ Julia Annas criticises the idea that Plato was interested in the position of women and gender equality, as has been suggested ('Plato's "Republic" and Feminism', *Philosophy* 51/197 (1976), 307-321). Annas observes an interesting gap in Plato's argumentation, in that he only addresses the question whether there are specific female competences, but does not ask the obvious question whether there are specific male competences.

‘Well, then, can we come up with a greater evil for a city than something that tears it apart and makes it many cities instead of one? Or any greater good than what binds it together and makes it one?’ ‘No, we can’t.’ (...) ‘Does that mean that the best regulated city is one where most people apply these expressions “mine” and “not mine” to the same thing in the same way?’ ‘Much the best.’ (Plato, *Republic* 5.462a-c)

The greatest good of the city is secured when there is in it no ‘mine’ in terms of wives or children or possessions. Plato goes on to portray the city as a body, where what happens to one person, happens to all (*Republic* 5.462c-d). The abolition of the family thus does not serve the interest of individual men and women, but rather that of the city as a whole. Nor is it women who are freed from the ‘patriarchal family’, rather, the abolition of the family is portrayed as a liberation for men. They can now live in peace together, no longer burdened by the duty to make ends meet or by the petty trouble of handing their money over to their wives and slaves (*Republic* 465 b-c).⁸⁵

Plato’s original political utopia thus stresses unity as the highest good; individual families or individual property would stand in the way of the united concern of the guardians for the city. Because there are no private possessions, no houses and families, there will be no ‘law-suits and accusations against one another’ (*Republic* 464d). They will be free from ‘the dissensions that arise among men from the possession of property, children, and kin’ (*Republic* 464e).

Plato uses two metaphors here to underline the close connection between the guardians and the unity of the city. The city can be described as a body, where ‘all of it feels the pain as a whole, though it is a part that suffers’ (*Republic* 5.462d). While families may be abolished, the guardians should see each other as family members and this not in name only, ‘for it would be absurd for them merely to pronounce with their lips the names of kinship without the deeds’ (*Republic* 5.463e). They should feel that what happens to one person, happens to all. Both these metaphors express the importance of homogeneity of interest and therefore underline the essential characteristic of ancient utopia. The fact that these metaphors also occur in Paul is an indication that his thought was concerned with a similar ideal of unity.

The influence of Plato’s *Republic* can be seen in many later depictions of ideal communities and utopias, which emphasise unity, sometimes have a community of goods and often in some way challenge the conventional construction of the family. While Finley observes that it is hard to find any utopian thinking in antiquity which is not hierarchical, this is probably more true for classical antiquity and less so for later periods.⁸⁶ In Paul’s time, as we will see, people could imagine an ideal way of life as one that tended towards equality, at least between men. We will now turn to the expression of this type of thought during the early Empire.

⁸⁵ Mary Ann Beavis claims that Plato’s construction of the ideal city and particularly the roles of men and women in it can be described as criticism of the ‘patriarchal family’ and as ‘gender egalitarianism’, similar to that found in early Christianity (Beavis, ‘Christian Origins’, 44). As our analysis here shows, however, Plato’s concern in eliminating the family is not with the position of women. He rather sees the absence of the family as liberating for men. See also Annas, ‘Plato’s Republic’, 312.

⁸⁶ Finley, *The Use and Abuse of History*, 187-188. Finley appears to base this conclusion predominantly on Plato and Zeno, and excludes traditions influenced by the Golden Age or the Garden of Eden as myth (Finley, *The Use and Abuse of History*, 181-182).

3.2 Ideal Communities in the Early Empire

During late Hellenistic and early-imperial times, there is a notable interest in ideal societies, which can be attributed to the influence of Stoic cosmopolitanism. An exotic community that is organised along principles that enable a homogeneous social structure becomes appealing under a unified Empire, where all people can be seen as fundamentally similar, regardless of ethnic differences.⁸⁷ While such communities are frequently found in exotic locations, they can also be located in the past or the future. The next section will examine two eschatological examples that express a hope for an ideal future. In this section, however, we will first turn to an ideal past, in Plutarch's idealised description of the actions of Alexander the Great.

3.2.1 An Ethnic Ideal: Plutarch's Alexander

For his description of Alexander's work in unifying Greek and barbarian, Plutarch reaches back to Zeno, the founder of Stoicism, who wrote his own *Republic*, most likely in response to Plato's.⁸⁸ Concord was the key idea in Zeno's *Republic*, a city where only the wise or morally good were citizens, friends and free persons, and the bad were aliens, enemies and slaves.⁸⁹ Some aspects of Zeno's ideal city, as a place where promiscuity was accepted and men and women wore similar clothing, seem to have been something of an embarrassment for later Stoics.⁹⁰ Yet his name could still be invoked centuries later, as the creator of an inspiring vision of unity. Plutarch suggests that Zeno, like later Stoics, held the unity of the whole of humankind as an ideal.⁹¹

Moreover, the much admired *Republic* of Zeno, the founder of the Stoic sect, may be summed up in this one main principle: that all people (πάντας ἀνθρώπους) should not live differentiated by their respective rules of justice into separate cities and communities, but that we should consider them to be of one community and one polity, and that we should have a common life and in order common to us all, even as a herd that feeds together and shares the pasturage of a common field. (*On the Fortune* 329A-B)

⁸⁷ Ferguson observes of Diodorus Siculus, who has preserved the utopias of Euhemerus and Iambulus: 'the important fact is that a man of this generation is interested in ideal societies and knows that his readers will equally respond to them' (*Utopias of the Classical World*, 169).

⁸⁸ For an overview of Stoic political thought see Malcolm Schofield, *The Stoic Idea*, on the influence of Zeno's *Republic* on later Stoic thought, see esp. 94-105; For Stoic utopias, see Ferguson, *Utopias*, 111-121, and Dawson, *Cities of the Gods*, 160-222.

⁸⁹ Schofield, *The Stoic Idea*, 95-97.

⁹⁰ See Oswyn Murray, 'Zeno and the Art of Polis Maintenance', in *The Imaginary Polis: Symposium, January 7-10, 2004*, Herman Hansen Mogens (ed.), (Copenhagen: Det Kongelige Danske Videnskabernes Selskab 2005) 210, also Schofield, *The Stoic Idea*, esp. 119-127.

⁹¹ Opinions differ as to whether Plutarch represents Zeno's ideas correctly, see, e.g., John Moles, who regards Zeno's *Republic* as a work with many Cynic elements and feels this passage 'reveals numerous details of the Cynic's attitude toward other men and of Cynic cosmopolitanism in general' (John L. Moles, 'Cynic Cosmopolitanism', in *The Cynics: The Cynic Movement in Antiquity and Its Legacy*, R. Bracht Branham and Marie-Odile Goulet-Cazé (eds.), (Berkeley: University of California Press 1996), 105-120, 117-118. Malcolm Schofield, on the other hand, asks 'is there reason to judge Plutarch's information reliable? It is not hard to find grounds for a negative answer' (*The Stoic Idea*, 106).

According to Plutarch, Zeno's Republic is a place where people live in one community and are governed by one rule of justice. In the highly rhetorical piece from which this passage is taken, Plutarch discusses the successes of Alexander the Great. According to Plutarch, while there was much to be admired in Zeno's vision, Alexander surpassed Zeno, in that he made this vague ideal a reality. He achieved what the Stoics only dreamt about, that people would not live divided into several groups and cities, but would all be united into one community:

But, as he [Alexander] believed that he came as a heaven-sent (θεόθεν) governor to all, and as a mediator for the whole world, those whom he could not persuade to unite with him, he conquered by force of arms, and he brought together into one body all men everywhere, uniting and mixing in one great loving-cup, as it were, men's lives, their characters, their marriages, their very habits of life. He bade them all consider as their fatherland the whole inhabited earth (τὴν οἰκουμένην), as their stronghold and protection his camp, as akin to them all good men, and as foreigners only the wicked; they should not distinguish between Grecian and foreigner (βαρβαρικόν) by Grecian cloak and targe, or scimitar and jacket; but the distinguishing mark of the Grecian should be seen in virtue, and that of the foreigner (βαρβαρικόν) in iniquity; clothing and food, marriage and manner of life they should regard as common to all, being blended into one by ties of blood and children. (Plutarch, *On the Fortune* 329 C-D)

Plutarch's writings generally reflect the Greek oppositional thought which regards the barbarian as the other, as we saw above in his appreciation for Plato's prayer of thanksgiving. Yet he is also aware of a philosophical ideal that sees Greek and barbarian unified into one community. Since Plutarch's rhetorical aim in this work is to portray Alexander as a philosopher, connecting Alexander to this ideal of ethnic unity suits his purposes in this work.⁹²

The ideal realised by Alexander, then, is a world where the difference between Greek and barbarian is no longer a matter of cultural attributes, clothing or other customs, but a matter of virtue. A virtuous person, whether Greek or barbarian ethnically, counts as Greek, while a barbarian is someone who is immoral, no matter what their ethnicity. Even though the categories Greek-barbarian are still used, they no longer apply in the traditional sense, such as in the prayers of thanksgiving described above.

3.2.2 Ideal Exotic Communities: Diodorus Siculus and Strabo

A colourful example of a utopia that is found in an exotic location is Iambulus' account of the inhabitants of a remote group of islands, which is found in Diodorus Siculus (1st century BCE).⁹³ The island on which Iambulus lands after a string of adventures is a wonderful place, where food grows in abundance and natural springs provide hot and cold running water (Diodorus Siculus 2.57.1-3). It is inhabited by strange but handsome people who are very tall, have flexible bones, and the enviable ability to carry on two conversations

⁹² For the rhetorical nature of *On the Fortune*, see J.R. Hamilton, *Plutarch, Alexander* (London: Bristol Classical Press/Duckworth 1969) xxix-xxxiii; also Annamaria D'Angelo, *Plutarcho: La Fortuna o la virtù di Alessandro Magno: Primo Orazione. Introduzione, Edizione Critica, Traduzione e Commento* (Naples: M. D'Auria, 1998) 7-8.

⁹³ David Winston sees Iambulus' island as an example of 'Cockayne utopianism' which is a vision 'not of a new social order, but of a new natural order which necessarily entails the former. It says, in effect, that what we need is a new Heaven and a new Earth-and a new race of men' ('Iambulus' "Islands of the Sun" and Hellenistic Literary Utopias', *Science Fiction Studies* 3/3 (1976), 219-227, 225).

simultaneously (Diodorus Siculus 2.56.4-6). They also have some unusual customs when it comes to family:

The islanders do not marry but have their women in common (γυναῖκας δὲ μὴ γαμεῖν, ἀλλὰ κοινὰς ἔχειν). They raise the children born of their unions in common and cherish them equally (ἐπ' ἴσης ἀγαπᾶν). When these children are still infants, the wet nurses will exchange the children they are nursing so that not even their actual mothers can recognize their own children. Thanks to this institution no rivalry arises among them and they live their lives free of internal discord, setting the greatest value on social harmony (διόπερ μηδεμιᾶς παρ' αὐτοῖς γινομένης φιλοτιμίας ἀστασιάστους καὶ τὴν ὁμόνοιαν περὶ πλείστου ποιουμένους διατελεῖν). (Diodorus Siculus 2.58.1)

The customs of the islanders ensure that no parent knows his or her own child, and that no conventional family relations can be formed. Even though Iambulus' utopia is often seen as influenced mostly by Stoic thought, the similarities with the practices in Plato's *Republic* are inescapable, not only the notion of having wives in common, but also the specific role of the wet nurses in making sure mothers do not recognise their children.⁹⁴ As a result of these practices, all children can be loved equally. The goal, as in Plato, is social harmony and absence of internal strife. The political organisation of the islanders is portrayed as equally harmonious. They live in groups of about four hundred people, which are based on kinship, with each group being led by the oldest man, who is obeyed by all (Diodorus Siculus 2.57.1; 2.58.6). The harmonious and simple way of life of these islanders is evident in everything we are told about them, from their political organisation to their choice of foods and daily activities. Although nothing is said explicitly about slaves, the descriptions of daily life, food gathering and other activities, suggest that there are no slaves on the islands.⁹⁵

The notion that an ideal way of life did not include marriage and the conventional family can also be found in the geographer Strabo. Such a harmonious and praiseworthy lifestyle did not necessarily entail the practice of having 'women in common' as with Iambulus' Islanders, but could also take the form of a community consisting of men only, excluding women, and therefore wives, from the group. Strabo quotes Posidonius' description of a group of Thracians, who are mentioned as part of a description of exotic groups who live according to unusual but admirable customs.⁹⁶ The Thracian Ctistæ are praised for living together as men, without wives:

Posidonius relates that the Mysians religiously abstain from eating any thing that had life, and consequently, from cattle; but that they lived in a quiet way on honey, milk, and cheese; wherefore they are considered a religious people, and called Capnobatæ. He adds, that there are amongst the Thracians some who live without wives (εἶναι δὲ τινὰς τῶν Θρακῶν οἱ χωρὶς γυναικὸς ζῶσιν), and who are known by the name of Ctistæ. These are considered sacred and worthy of

⁹⁴ For an overview of the discussion about the influence of Stoic thought on Iambulus, see Ferguson, *Utopias*, 126-129, who is firmly in the Stoic camp.

⁹⁵ Winiarczyk draws a similar conclusion from the descriptions of the duties of the islanders, 'unbekannt ist Sklaventum, die Arbeit gehört zur Pflicht, und nur ältere Leute sind von ihr befreit (*Die Hellenistischen Utopien*, 185).

⁹⁶ On Strabo's Geography, see Daniela Dueck, *Strabo of Amasia: A Greek Man of Letters in Augustan Rome* (New York: Routledge 2000), 145-187.

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honour, and live in great freedom (ἀνιεπῶσθαι τε διὰ τιμῆν καὶ μετὰ ἀδείας ζῆν). (Strabo, *Geography* 7.3.3)

These men are seen by Strabo as sacred and honourable and their choice to live without women gives them great freedom (ἀδεία).⁹⁷ A similar case is that of the men of the Alexandrian museum, who appear in Strabo's description of the Alexandrian library, of which the museum was part. These men form a communal group, sharing meals as well as their possessions:

The Museum is a part of the palaces. It has a public walk and a place furnished with seats, and a large hall, in which the men of learning, who belong to the Museum, take their common meal. This community possesses also property in common (χρήματα κοινὰ); and a priest, formerly appointed by the kings, but at present by Cæsar, presides over the Museum. (Strabo, *Geography* 17.1.8)

These scholars formed an elite group, which attracted a large number of immigrants and created an intellectual community in Alexandria.⁹⁸ The practices of these groups mentioned in Strabo—dietary restrictions, communal meals, shared possessions, and a life without wives—all are similar to those ascribed to the Essenes by Philo and Josephus. Their far more extensive descriptions of these ideal communities allow us to see how such a group of male equals would be seen. Central to their descriptions of the Essenes is the fact that they neither marry nor have slaves, thereby bringing together two of pairs mentioned by Paul.

3.2.3 Ideal Jewish Communities: The Essenes and the Therapeutae

The descriptions of the Essenes and Therapeutae by Paul's Jewish contemporaries Philo of Alexandria and Flavius Josephus should be understood as part of the broad tradition of utopian groups sketched above. These two Jewish groups are portrayed as shining examples of communities of the wise, which conform in many ways to ancient ideals.⁹⁹ Both Philo and Josephus present the Essenes as a supreme example of Jewish piety and philosophy.¹⁰⁰ They

⁹⁷ On the various description in Greek authors of the Thracians, see Ugo Bianchi, 'Dualistic Aspects of Thracian Religion', *History of Religions* 10/3 (1971), 228-233.

⁹⁸ Diana Delia, 'From Romance to Rhetoric: The Alexandrian Library in Classical and Islamic Traditions', *The American Historical Review* 97/5 (1992), 1449-1467, 1452.

⁹⁹ The Essenes are known from these two authors (Philo, *That Every Good Man is Free* 75-91; *Apology for the Jews* 1-18; Josephus, *Jewish War* 1.78-80, 2.113, 119-161, 567, 3.11, 5.145; *Antiquities of the Jews* 13.171-172, 15.371-379, 18.18-22) and the account of the historian Pliny (Natural History 5.17, 4 (73)). For a collection of the sources, see Geza Vermes and Martin Goodman (eds.), *The Essenes According to the Classical Sources* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press 1989), who also address the issue of the identification of the Essenes with the groups associated with the Dead Sea Scrolls. On this issue I accept the view of Steve Mason that the main problem with seeing the Qumran community as the historical reality behind the Essenes as described in these sources is: 'why would such elite statesmen as Philo and Josephus have independently and repeatedly turned to them, a group so deeply at odds with their own amply attested values, to carry the torch of the national character?' ('The Historical Problem of the Essenes', in *Celebrating the Dead Sea Scrolls: A Canadian Collection*, P.W. Flint, J. Duhaime and K.S. Baek (eds.), (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature 2011), 201-251, 248). Even though the practice of shared property is attested in the Dead Sea Scrolls, the evidence for marriage and the presence of slaves is mixed and the assumed celibacy of the group depends largely on identification with the Essenes of Philo and Josephus. I will therefore not discuss the Dead Sea Scrolls here, but do include evidence from the scrolls in chapters III and IV, in relation to questions about slaves and marriage.

¹⁰⁰ According to Steve Mason 'all of the Essene descriptions portray a Judean group embodying values widely admired in the ancient world. Such values were connected with perennial Greek discussion about optimal

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are not, as Joan Taylor puts it in relation to Philo, interested in giving a ‘warts-and-all introduction’ to their subject, but rather hold these groups up as an illustration of the excellence within Jewish philosophy.¹⁰¹ They do so in a way that would be immediately recognisable by philosophically-educated Greek and Roman audiences:

For there are three philosophical sects among the Jews. The followers of the first of which are the Pharisees; of the second, the Sadducees; and the third sect, which pretends to a severer discipline, are called Essenes. These last are Jews by birth, and seem to have a greater affection for one another than the other sects have (γένος ὄντες φιλάλληλοι δὲ καὶ τῶν ἄλλων πλέον). These Essenes reject pleasures as an evil, but esteem continence and the conquest over our passions, to be virtue. (Josephus, *Jewish War* 2: 119-120)

It also deserves our admiration, how much they exceed all other men that give themselves over to virtue, and this in righteousness: and indeed to such a degree, that as it has never appeared among any other men, neither Greeks nor barbarians, no, not for a little time, so has it endured a long time among them. This is demonstrated by that institution of theirs, which will not allow anything to hinder them from having all things in common; so that a rich man enjoys no more of his own wealth than he who has nothing at all. (Josephus, *Jewish Antiquities* 18:20)

Both Philo and Josephus attribute values to the Essenes that were widely esteemed in contemporary thought. The Essenes are thus said to love virtue, to be pious, humble, respectful of the law and loving towards humanity. A strong focus lies on their simple life: they do not care about money or property, they are ascetic, and frugal and have a strong sense of community. The idea of shared property was a common philosophical ideal that went back to Plato’s *Republic* or perhaps even the Pythagoreans before him, and is also attributed to Zeno and later Stoics.¹⁰² For both Philo and Josephus, the fact that the Essenes shared their goods and did not have anything for themselves is one of the most important aspects of their virtue. It is central to their community spirit of equality and brotherhood:

They despise riches and their communal life is admirable. In vain would one search among them for one man with a greater fortune than another. Indeed, it is a law that those who enter the sect shall surrender their property to the order; so neither the humiliation of poverty nor the pride of wealth is to be seen anywhere

constitutions and ideal societies, a debate into which Josephus confidently enters the entire Judean polity (Steve Mason, 'The Historical Problem of the Essenes', 246). Mason argues convincingly, through a careful analysis of the vocabulary and dominant themes, that Josephus’ account should be seen as his own creation, largely independent of Philo or any other source (*Flavius Josephus: Translation and Commentary, vol. 1b, Judean War 2* (Leiden: Brill, 2008), 85–90).

¹⁰¹ Joan Taylor, ‘Philo of Alexandria on the Essenes: A Case Study on the Use of Classical Sources in Discussions of the Qumran-Essene Hypothesis’, *Studia Philonica Annual* (2007), 1-28, 8. According to Steven Mason, the Essenes, for Philo ‘carry the flag of the Judean virtues inculcated by Moses’ (‘The Historical Problem of the Essenes’, 214). For Josephus, see Steve Mason, ‘What Josephus Says about the Essenes in his *Judean War*’ online at: <http://orion.huji.ac.il/orion/programs/Mason00-1.shtml> (part 1). Doron Mendels, however, maintains that while Philo and Josephus did depict the Essenes in an ideal manner, they did not write in the genre of classical or Hellenistic utopias (Doron Mendels, ‘Hellenistic Utopia and the Essenes’, *The Harvard Theological Review*, 72/3-4 (1979), 207-222, 222).

¹⁰² For this tradition of ‘communist utopian’ throughout Greek thought, see Dawson, *Cities of the Gods*.

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among them. Since their possessions are mingled, there exists for them all, as for brothers (ὡσπερ ἀδελφοίς), one single property. (Josephus, *Jewish War* 2: 122)

Josephus compares the Essenes to brothers, who share their property. According to both authors sharing goods and living a communal life requires a rejection of slaves and marriage. Josephus makes this case on slightly different grounds in his two accounts of the Essenes:

There are about four thousand men that live in this way, and neither marry wives, nor are desirous to keep slaves (καὶ οὔτε γαμετὰς εἰσάγονται οὔτε δούλων ἐπιτηδεύουσιν κτήσιν); as thinking the latter tempts men to be unjust, and the former gives the handle to domestic quarrels; but as they live by themselves, they minister one to another (διακονίᾳ τῇ ἐπ' ἀλλήλοις ἐπιχρῶνται). (Josephus, *Jewish Antiquities* 18.21)

They neglect wedlock, but select other persons' children, while they are pliable, and fit for learning, and esteem them to be of their kindred, and form them according to their own manners. They do not absolutely deny the fitness of marriage, and the succession of mankind thereby continued; but they guard against the lascivious behaviour of women, and are persuaded that none of them preserve their fidelity to one man. (Josephus, *Jewish War* 2: 121)

In *Jewish Antiquities*, Josephus mentions slaves and women in one breath, both are a danger to the common life of the male Essenes. Their mutual service to each other would be compromised by the injustice and disagreement that are associated with slaves and women. A further rationale for excluding women and marriage is given in *Jewish War*, where Josephus sees the lack of sexual restraint in women as a danger to the male community. Josephus does mention, almost as an afterthought, a type of Essenes that do marry, since they feel that otherwise, the human race might die out (*Jewish War* 2:160).¹⁰³

Philo agrees with Josephus about the celibacy of the Essenes, although he gives a different reason for this.

Indeed, no Essaeian takes a woman because women are selfish, excessively jealous, skilful in ensnaring the morals of a spouse and in seducing him by endless charms. Women set out to flatter, and wear all sorts of masks, like actors on the stage; then, when they have bewitched the eye and captured the ear, when, that is to say, they have deceived the lower senses, they next lead the sovereign mind astray. (...) The husband, bound by his wife's spells, or anxious for his children from natural necessity, is no more the same towards the others, but unknown to himself he becomes a different man, a slave instead of a freeman. (Philo, *Apology for the Jews* 14-15, 17)

While Philo focuses on different female short-comings, the outcome is the same as for Josephus: women are portrayed as a threatening the interaction between the male Essenes. A married man changes in his dealings with others; he becomes a slave. Philo and Josephus thus each have their own ideas about the problems women would cause, but they

¹⁰³ For this group of Essenes see Steve Mason, who regards them as an invention on the part of Josephus, a view which is criticised by Joan Taylor (Steve Mason, 'What Josephus Says about the Essenes in his Judean War' online at: <http://orion.huji.ac.il/orion/programs/Mason00-1.shtml>; Joan Taylor, 'Philo of Alexandria on the Essenes', 1-28.

understand the Essene rejection of marriage and women to be for the same reason: to guard the communal life and enable the members to hold all things in common. As we have seen, in many ancient conceptions of the ideal community as holding all goods in common, marriage was rejected also. Since the household embraced both property and family, to dissolve the one implied breaking up the other. Given their sexual ethic which generally restricted sex to marriage or even procreation only, a communism where everyone freely forms relationships with each other, such as in the island communities described by Iambulus, would probably not have been praiseworthy in the eyes of Philo or Josephus. The Essene rejection of marriage and women is therefore the logical corollary to their rejection of property.

Like the Essenes, Philo's Therapeutae do not marry, although this group is not all male, but consists of both men and women.¹⁰⁴ In connection with the Therapeutae, Philo does not describe marriage as something to be avoided because of the problematic nature of women. While neither the men nor the women who belong to the group are to be bound by marriage, no explicit analysis of marriage is given by Philo. The female Therapeutae are described as virgins, by their own choice:

And the women also share in this feast, the greater part of whom, though old, are virgins in respect of their purity (not indeed through necessity, as some of the priestesses among the Greeks are, who have been compelled to preserve their chastity more than they would have done of their own accord), but out of an admiration for and love of wisdom, with which they are desirous to pass their lives, on account of which they are indifferent to the pleasures of the body, desiring not a mortal but an immortal offspring, which the soul that is attached to God is alone able to produce by itself and from itself, the Father having sown in it rays of light appreciable only by the intellect, by means of which it will be able to perceive the doctrines of wisdom. (Philo, *On the Contemplative Life* 68)

According to Philo, these women have chosen not to marry because they prefer immortal to mortal offspring. Marriage and procreation are firmly connected in Philo's thought (*Special Laws* 1.112; 3.9), as they are for Josephus (*Against Apion* 2.199). Both allow sexual intercourse even within marriage only with the intention of creating children. The female Therapeutae still produce offspring, but of a different kind, inspired by God.

The male Therapeutae seem to have a different, less virginal, background. They only join the community after having left their families and property in good hands. Philo praises them for making a gift of their wealth to others as they choose to go off to pursue philosophy (*On the Contemplative Life* 13-16). The asceticism of men and women is thus portrayed by Philo in two distinct ways. Men do not produce spiritual offspring; women do not abandon wealth and family. The group's male and female members, as far as we can tell

¹⁰⁴ There is considerable debate as to whether the Therapeutae actually existed, or were a fictional creation of Philo. For the latter view, see Troels Engberg-Pedersen, 'Philo's *De Vita Contemplativa* as a Philosopher's Dream', *Journal for the Study of Judaism* 30 (1999), 40-64, 63-64. Mary Ann Beavis challenges Engberg-Pedersen, arguing that Philo's account is idealised fact, rather than dream ('Philo's Therapeutai: Philosopher's Dream or Utopian Construction?', *Journal for the Study of the Pseudepigrapha* 14/1 (2004), 30-42). Also Joan E. Taylor, *Jewish Women Philosophers of First-Century Alexandria: Philo's 'Therapeutae' Reconsidered*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press 2003); Joan E. Taylor, and P.R. Davies, 'The So-Called Therapeutae of *De Vita Contemplativa*: Identity and Character', *Harvard Theological Review* 91.1 (1998), 3-24.

from Philo's description, lead separate lives and even when joining in worship and song, remain spatially separated (*On the Contemplative Life* 33, 69).

Apart from the question how real any of these groups were or how accurate the descriptions given, their place in first-century literature shows that asceticism and abandoning or rejecting marriage did function as a philosophical, ethical and religious ideal. Even though Philo believes that marriage is natural and good, he can still present the Therapeutae and Essenes as examples of a high standing Jewish morale, in part because of their rejection of married life.

The same dissolution of the family in relation to property can be seen as the background for not keeping slaves. According to Josephus, as we have seen, slaves bring injustice and keep the members from taking care of each other's needs. Philo gives a more fundamental reason for rejecting slavery, arguably the most moral rejection of slavery to be found in ancient literature:¹⁰⁵

Not a single slave is to be found among them, but all are free (δοῦλος τε παρ' αὐτοῖς οὐδὲ εἷς ἐστίν ἀλλ' ἐλεύθεροι πάντες), exchanging services with each other and they denounce the owners of slaves, not merely for their injustice in outraging the law of equality, but also for their impiety in annulling the statute of Nature, who, mother-like, has born and reared all men alike, and created them genuine brothers, not in mere name but in very reality (καταγινώσκουσι τε τῶν δεσποτῶν οὐ μόνον ὡς ἀδικῶν ἰσότητα λυμαινομένων ἀλλὰ καὶ ὡς ἀσεβῶν θεσμὸν φύσεως ἀναιρῶντων ἢ πάντας ὁμοίως γεννήσασα καὶ θρῆψαμένη μητρὸς δίκην ἀδελφοὺς γνησίους οὐ λεγομένους ἀλλ' ὄντας ὄντως ἀπειργάσατο), though this kinship has been put to confusion by the triumph of malignant covetousness, which has wrought estrangement instead of affinity and enmity instead of friendship. (Philo, *That Every Good Man Is Free* 79)

Philo attributes to the Essenes a radical criticism of slavery: slave owners violate the law of equality and disregard the fact that nature has created all people as brothers. This in no way reflects Philo's general thought on slavery, which is quite conventional, urging masters to treat their slaves well, but not questioning slavery as such. Again we encounter the term brother, here to denote the principle equality created by nature, which stands in contrast to the practice of slavery. Because they do not have slaves, the Essenes are free to serve each other.

Philo ascribes a criticism of slavery to the Therapeutae as well:

They do not have slaves (ἀνδραπόδων) to wait on them, as they consider that the ownership of servants is against nature (παρὰ φύσιν). For nature has borne all men to be free, but the wrongful and covetous acts of some who pursued that source of evil, inequality, have imposed their yoke, and invested the stronger with power over the weaker (ἢ μὲν γὰρ ἐλευθέρους ἅπαντας γεγέννηκεν αἱ δὲ τιῶν ἀδικίαι καὶ πλεονεξίαι ζηλωσάντων τὴν ἀρχέκακον ἀνισότητα

¹⁰⁵ A similar conviction is cited with approval of the Indians by Diodorus Siculus: 'As for the customs of the Indians which are peculiar to them, a man may consider one which was drawn up by their ancient wise men to be the most worthy of admiration; for the law has ordained that under no circumstances shall anyone among them be a slave, but that all shall be free and respect the principle of equality in all persons. For those, they think, who have learned neither to domineer over others nor to subject themselves to others will enjoy a manner of life best suited to all circumstances; since it is silly to make laws on the basis of equality for all persons, and yet to establish inequalities in social intercourse' (Diodorus Siculus, 2.39.5).

καταζεύξασαι τὸ ἐπὶ τοῖς ἀσθενεστέροις κράτος τοῖς δυνατωτέροις ἀνῆψαν).
(Philo, *On the Contemplative Life* 70)

For Philo, apparently, the ideal philosophical life implied a rejection of slavery. As we saw above, and will return to in chapter III when discussing ‘slave-free’, Philo can discuss slaves in the context of the household as belonging to an inferior class, and in need of being ruled in the right way. It is only in relation to the communities of the Therapeutae and the Essenes that Philo voices these critiques of slavery.¹⁰⁶ The practical objection seems to be for both groups that having slaves stands in the way of members sharing all things and serving each other. We can conclude that both having slaves and having wives was seen by these authors as an obstacle to the ideal relationships between members of the group. Philo and Josephus thus confirm the observation of Moses Finley quoted at the beginning of section 3, that in ancient thought, an ideal way of life required an end to property and to sexual desire, as the two main causes of strife and the major threats to harmony. Yet they also contradict the notion that ancient ideal communities would necessarily be hierarchical. Rather, for the Essenes to be able to live their life of simplicity and mutuality required a degree of equality between the members, in the descriptions of Philo and Josephus. According to them, having an all-male group that had goods in common, and did not have the hierarchical relationships between husband and wife and master and slave, provided the best starting point for such an ideal communal life.

3.3 Eschatological Ideals: The Sibylline Oracles and Diogenes of Oenoanda

The ideal of the absence of hierarchy and a unified humanity that we have seen in authors such as Plutarch, Philo and Josephus could not only be presented as something of the past, or of a distinct group in the present, but could also be imagined as a magnificent future. In this section we will look at two such eschatological prophecies, the first found in book 2 of the Sibylline Oracles and the other in the inscription put up by the Epicurean philosopher Diogenes of Oenoanda.

3.3.1 The Golden Age in Jewish Eschatology

The collection of books known as the Sibylline Oracles has a long and complicated history and contains Greek, Jewish, as well as Christian material.¹⁰⁷ Little is known of the original Greek prophetess who was known as Sibyl, but from the Roman period onwards, many references are made to Sibylline oracles as a source for understanding the will of the gods. A collection of Sibylline books was apparently stored at the temple of Jupiter in Rome, although this has not survived.¹⁰⁸

¹⁰⁶ Caroline Murphy explains this apparent contradiction in Philo’s attitude towards slavery by suggesting that his criticism is actually aimed at the sexual use of male slaves by men (*Wealth in the Dead Sea Scrolls & in the Qumran Community* (Leiden: Brill 2002), 415).

¹⁰⁷ For an explanation of the context of the Sibylline Oracles, see John J. Collins, *The Sibylline Oracles of Egyptian Judaism* (Missoula: Society of Biblical Literature, 1972) 1-19; also Lightfoot, *The Sibylline Oracles*, 3-23; Waßmuth, *Sibyllinische Orakel 1-2*, 25-35; Buitenwerf, *Book III of the Sibylline Oracles*, 92-123 .

¹⁰⁸ See Buitenwerf, *Book III of the Sibylline Oracles*, 92-123.

Of the twelve extant books of Oracles, which can be labelled Judeo-Christian, the two books that are relevant to this study are books 2 and 3.¹⁰⁹ Both books 1-2 together, and book 3 contain a description of the history of the world, told from creation to the end of time. Book 3 is generally seen as the oldest of the Sibylline books and is dated to the 1st century BCE. It contains Greek and Jewish material without Christian redaction.¹¹⁰ Books 1-2, which together constitute one work, have a more complicated history. Parts of the text are seen as dependent on the Apocalypse of Peter, which dates from the middle of the second century. Yet an older Jewish layer, the structure of which is broken up by Christian redaction, is often seen as lying behind the text.¹¹¹

In his recent commentary on books 1 and 2, Olaf Waßmuth comes to the conclusion that the eschatological vision which we will examine here is part of the oldest, pre-Christian layer, which dates from the late first or early second century CE.¹¹² The author of this base-layer ('Grundschrift') uses the Greek idea of a Golden Age as his *Leitmotiv*, which comes through at various points in the book (1.65-86; 1.283-306; 2.313-338).¹¹³ In the final vision of the end-time in book 2, the Golden Age is described in full. It will be a time of abundance, when food will grow without labour, and all will live together, sharing all goods:

The earth belongs equally to all (γάλα δ' ἴση πάντων), undivided by walls or fences (οὐ τείχεσιν οὐ περιφραγμοῖς διαμεριζομένη). It will bear abundant fruits spontaneously. Lives will be in common and wealth will have no division (κοινοί τε βίοι καὶ πλοῦτος ἄμοιρος). For there will be no poor man there, no rich, and no tyrant, no slave (οὐ γὰρ πτωχὸς ἐκεῖ, οὐ πλούσιος, οὐδὲ τύραννος, οὐ δοῦλος);

¹⁰⁹ On the Judeo-Christian nature of the books, see Lightfoot, *The Sibylline Oracles*, viii.

¹¹⁰ Rieuwerd Buitenwerf bases his conclusion that the work is most likely of Jewish origin on the importance in it of the Temple and the law of Moses (e.g., in Sibylline Oracles 3.328-329; 564-565; 248-264, see Buitenwerf, *Book III of the Sibylline Oracles*, 126-127).

¹¹¹ In his recent commentary, Olaf Waßmuth confirms the idea that the text is made up of a Jewish 'Grundschrift' that was substantially redacted. He bases this on the fact that while the sophisticated construction of the original can still be recognised, it is also evident that the structure has been disturbed to incorporate traditions about Jesus in a way that is both deliberately and clumsy ('mutwillig und plump') (Waßmuth, *Sibyllinische Orakel 1-2*, 465). He then makes a careful analysis of this Jewish layer, and assigns passages to it with varying degrees of certainty (Waßmuth, *Sibyllinische Orakel 1-2*, 471). Jane Lightfoot is much more careful in her commentary, and suggests that we should be content not to resolve the question of the composition, allowing this to illustrate the 'frequent indistinguishability of Jewish and early Christian writings' (Lightfoot, *The Sibylline Oracles*, 104). That this eschatological prophecy is relevant to Paul, in spite of its occurrence in a later work that shows signs of Christian redaction, can be argued particularly on the basis of its close affinity with the prophecies in book 3 of the Sibyllines, with which it shares the theme of the Golden Age. Given the absence of any Christian redaction in this prophecy, much less of Pauline influence, it testifies to an independent early Jewish understanding of the end time.

¹¹² Waßmuth, *Sibyllinische Orakel 1-2*, 443, 487. Paul Trebilco dates the Jewish substratum of book 2 to sometime between 30 BCE and 70 CE, but is less confident about which parts belong to this layer. He does note that in book 2 'the eschatological passages are probably substantially Jewish' (*Jewish Communities in Asia Minor* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1991), 95). Jane Lightfoot's views on the passage seem somewhat contradictory. While she states that 'the whole section from 2.194 to the end of the oracle is a unified whole—and is Christian', she observes in her commentary on these lines that 'the Sibyl's end-time scenario, though based on Apoc. Petr., has been padded out with material from other Sibyls' (Lightfoot, *The Sibylline Oracles* 103-104; 530). Lightfoot mentions books 3 and 8 as the sources for this material, yet given Waßmuth's convincing argumentation that book 8 is dependent on books 1-2 rather than the opposite, the most likely candidate for this material would be book 3. Trebilco, Lightfoot, and Waßmuth thus appear to be largely in agreement on the Jewish background of this passage (Waßmuth, *Sibyllinische Orakel 1-2*, 70-86).

¹¹³ See Waßmuth's comparison between books 1-2 and Hesiod (*Sibyllinische Orakel 1-2*, 164-169).

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no one will be either great or small anymore, there will be no kings, and no leaders: all are equal there (κοινη δ' ἅμα πάντες). (...) No spring, no summer, no winter, no autumn, no marriage, no death, no selling, no buying (οὐ γάμον, οὐ θάνατον, οὐ πράσεις, οὐδ' ἀγορασμούς), no sunset, no sunrise: because he will make one great day. (*Sibylline Oracles* 2. 319-329)¹¹⁴

After an elaborate description of the various punishments that await sinners, in the preceding chapters, attention turns in this passage to the rewards of the pious: a utopian future, a time of plenty when all things will be in common. The many different pairs mentioned here connect an end to cosmic differences, 'no sunset, no sunrise', to an end to property and social difference, 'no tyrant, no slave'.¹¹⁵ Both in this connection between the cosmic and the social, and in the choice of pairs, the eschatological ideas expressed in this passage have much in common with Paul's.¹¹⁶ The reference to 'no slave' (οὐ δοῦλος), is similar to Paul's formula in Galatians, although the opposite category is not 'free', but 'tyrant'. The pairs 'no marriage, no death, no buying no selling' are strongly reminiscent of Paul's eschatological statements in 1 Corinthians 7, even if he does not use these exact pairs. In chapter 7 of his first letter to the Corinthians, a chapter which reflects the connection between the three pairs, Paul explains the implications of the impending end:

I mean, brothers, that the appointed time has grown short; from now on, let those who have wives be as though they had none (οἱ ἔχοντες γυναῖκας ὡς μὴ ἔχοντες ὄσιν), and those who mourn as though they were not mourning, and those who rejoice as though they were not rejoicing, and those who buy as though they had no possessions (οἱ ἀγοράζοντες ὡς μὴ κατέχοντες), and those who deal with the world as though they had no dealings with it. For the present form of this world is passing away. (*1 Corinthians* 7:29-31)

That marriage is no longer of great importance is one of the main points that Paul makes in this part of the letter, as we will see in our discussion of the pair male-female in Chapter IV. Marriage is not a sin, but someone who is unmarried can devote him or herself without distraction to what really matters: the things of the Lord (1 Corinthians 7:32-34). Like Paul, this prophecy in the *Sibylline Oracles* connects marriage to property and sees both as belonging to the old world; they are not part of the new day that will come.

The pairs 'slave-free' and 'male-female' are thus part of the eschatological unity portrayed in the Sibylline Oracle. While there is no direct reference to Jew and gentile here, it is likely that the phrase 'undivided by walls or fences' is a reference to ending the boundaries and laws between different peoples, as we will see in the next chapter.

As noted above, this prophecy of the Sibyl seems to be influenced by descriptions of the Golden Age, especially in the idea of the earth bearing fruit automatically (αὐτομάτη 3.321). A similar idea seems to be present in one of the eschatological descriptions in book 3:

¹¹⁴ Translation my own, based on the translations of Waßmuth and Lightfoot.

¹¹⁵ 'Die Pointe ist auf sozialer Ebene das Ende von Besitz und Herrschaft, auf kosmischer die Aufhebung aller Zeit in "einem großen Tag"' (Waßmuth, *Sibyllinische Orakel* 1-2, 442).

¹¹⁶ John Dominic Crossan and Jonathan L. Reed describe the apocalyptic vision in this text as a 'radical egalitarianism', which helps to understand Paul's 'radical egalitarianism in Christ' (Crossan and Reed, *In Search of Paul*, 233-234; see also Crossan, *God and Empire*, 159-160).

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When this predetermined day comes to an end, the judgement of the immortal God comes upon the mortals; a great judgement and reign will come upon the people. For the earth, mother of all, will give the mortals excellent fruits in abundance, consisting of grain, wine, and olive oil. (it will give) a delicious drink of sweet honey from heaven, trees, the fruit of fruit-trees, and fat sheep, cows, lambs of sheep, and kids of goats. It will break open sweet sources of white milk. The cities and the rich fields will be full of good things. And there will be no sword and no cry of battle on earth (οὐδὲ μάχαιρα κατὰ χθονὸς οὐδὲ κυδοιμός). And the earth will no longer be shaken while groaning deeply. There will no longer be war or drought on earth, no famine, (οὐ πόλεμος οὐδ' αὐτε κατὰ χθονὸς αὐχμὸς ἔτ' ἔσται) and no hail will damage fruits. Instead, there will be great peace on the entire earth (εἰρήνη μεγάλη κατὰ γαῖαν ἅπασαν). (*Sibylline Oracles* 3.741-755)

The abundance of the earth is described in lavish terms and the suggestion seems to be that no human effort is required in the production of food.¹¹⁷ As this passage confirms, there appears to have been an interesting process of exchange in this period between eschatological prophecy, the tradition of the Golden Age and thought on utopian or ideal communities. While abundance was an important theme in the original Greek legends about the golden age or the Elysian Fields, found in Homer, Hesiod, and other poets, the notion of shared wealth, or the absence of property, which occurs in the prophecy of book 2 cited above, was not part of this tradition.¹¹⁸ According to Andrew Wallace-Hadrill, only in the reinterpretation of these Golden Age myths by Augustan poets did the absence of laws and of private property, two notions that were absent in the Greek tradition, become standard.¹¹⁹ The eschatological prophecy in book 2 of the Sibylline Oracles seems to owe much to this Roman 'communist' ideal. Along with the absence of fences and the sharing of goods, the absence of slaves was also seen as a distinctive feature of the ideal past, as we will see in our discussion of the second pair, slave-free.¹²⁰

A further innovation of these Augustan poets according to Wallace-Hadrill, one that originated with Virgil, was the idea that the Golden Age was not only in the past, but would someday return.¹²¹ For this notion of a return of the Golden Age, Virgil is thought to be dependent on influence of Jewish eschatological expectations, more specifically those found in book 3 of the Sibylline Oracles.¹²² It seems possible therefore, that there was a fascinating

¹¹⁷ For the idea of a Golden Age here, see Buitenwerf, *Book III of the Sibylline Oracles*, 285.

¹¹⁸ Harold Baldry analyses Hesiod's depiction of the golden race and the later terminological shift from golden race to golden age in Roman writing ('Who Invented the Golden Age?', *The Classical Quarterly, New Series* 2 (1952), 83-92).

¹¹⁹ Andrew Wallace-Hadrill, 'The Golden Age and Sin in Augustan Ideology', *Past & Present* 95 (1982), 19-36, 22-23.

¹²⁰ Justin, *Epitome of Pompeius Trogus*, xliii. i. 3 (dating from the late first century B.C.), quoted in Wallace-Hadrill, 'The Golden Age', 23.

¹²¹ According to Wallace-Hadrill, by employing this idea of a return of the Golden Age, the Augustan writers provided Augustus with a role that made him essential for the preservation of Roman society (Wallace-Hadrill, 'The Golden Age', 29).

¹²² According to Wallace-Hadrill, 'it should now be accepted that Virgil had indirect access to Jewish-oriental Messianic ideas through Hellenistic Jewish "Sibylline oracles"', (Wallace-Hadrill, 'The Golden Age', 21). He identifies Sibylline Oracles 3. 743-759 as the most important parallel. Hendrik Versnel similarly notes that the idea of a future Golden Age 'is clearly an invention by Vergil himself, most likely inspired by a Sibylline prophecy' (Hendrik S. Versnel, *Transition and Reversal in Myth and Ritual* (Inconsistencies in Greek and Roman Religion vol.2), (Leiden: Brill 1992) 193); so also Gatz, *Weltalter, goldene Zeit*, 90-97. Interestingly, the idea that

process of cross-fertilisation going on between the Sibylline Oracles and Roman thought, resulting in a joint expectation that there would come a time of peace and prosperity, when people would share their goods and live without divisions or laws.

The eschatological prophecies in books 2 and 3 of the Sibylline Oracles also highlight another feature that seems especially pertinent for Paul. Both texts predominantly use negations to describe the end time, something Paul also does in the formula, as well as in the passage from 1 Corinthians quoted above.¹²³ The fact that in spite of the overlap between certain subjects, there are also substantial differences in the topic that are referred to in these eschatological texts, suggests that negations were felt to be an appropriate way of expressing something about the end time, irrespective of the specific categories or the terms in which the end time was described.

3.3.2 An Epicurean Golden Age in Oenoanda

That expectations about a coming ideal age were alive in the first centuries CE is confirmed by a very different source, an Epicurean inscription from the city of Oenoanda in Asia Minor probably dating from the beginning of the second century. This unusually large inscription was set up by a man called Diogenes, who identifies himself in it as ‘almost on the verge of departure from the world on account of old age’. Because he feels that the majority of people suffer from spiritual illness, Diogenes takes it upon himself before his death to set up an inscription ‘to advertise publicly the medicines that bring salvation’.¹²⁴ Diogenes aims his message at a wide audience of ‘generations to come (for they too belong to us, though they are still unborn)’ and also ‘the foreigners who come here’.¹²⁵ His ‘medicine’ has, at least in part, a recognisably Epicurean flavour: virtue is not an end in itself, but is a means to

the Sibylline Oracles influenced Virgil is explicitly rejected in the two recent commentaries on book 1-2 and 3 of the Oracles. Olaf Waßmuth calls the idea of Jewish influence on Virgil ‘unwahrscheinlich’ and believes the idea of a return of the Golden Age could be drawn ‘ohne größere Probleme’ by combining existing notions of such an age in the past, with the that of the periods of history (Waßmuth, *Sibyllinische Orakel 1-2*, 167-168). Rieuwerd Buitenwerf sees no reason to assume that Virgil knew and used Sibylline Oracles 3, since ‘the similarities do not suffice to prove any such dependence’ (*Book III of the Sibylline Oracles*, 292, nt. 137).

¹²³ Similar negations can be found in 2 Baruch (late 1st century CE): ‘And no one shall again die untimely, Nor shall any adversity suddenly befall. And judgments, and abusive talk, and contentions, and revenges, And blood, and passions, and envy, and hatred, And whatsoever things are like these shall go into condemnation when they are removed. For it is these very things which have filled this world with evils, And on account of these the life of man has been greatly troubled. And wild beasts shall come from the forest and minister unto men and asps and dragons shall come forth from their holes to submit themselves to a little child. And women shall no longer then have pain when they bear, Nor shall they suffer torment when they yield the fruit of the womb. And it shall come to pass in those days that the reapers shall not grow weary, Nor those that build be toil-worn (2 Baruch 73:3-74:1). The Syriac text of this of this work is thought to go back to a Greek translation of a Hebrew original (see Matthias Henze, *Jewish Apocalypticism in Late First Century Israel: Reading ‘Second Baruch’ in Context* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck 2011), 25). Henze unfortunately does not discuss these negations. A negation also occurs in Zechariah, in an eschatological vision that might have influenced the prophecy in Sibylline Oracles 2: ‘It will be a unique day, without daytime or nighttime (οὐχ ἡμέρα καὶ οὐ νύξ)--a day known to the LORD. When evening comes, there will be light (Zechariah 14:7).

¹²⁴ Diskin Clay notes the similarities in language between this inscription and the New Testament, such as the use of ‘salvation’ (σωτηρία) and the description of Epicurus as a ‘herald’ (κήρυξ) and observes that ‘we do not know exactly when Christianity reached Oenoanda, but its way was well prepared by Diogenes’ (‘A Lost Epicurean Community’, *Greek, Roman and Byzantine Studies*, 30/2 (1989) 313- 335, 326).

¹²⁵ Diogenes’ self-description and his goals in putting up the inscription are explained in Fragment 3. On Diogenes’ cosmopolitanism, see Pamela Gordon, *Epicurus in Lycia: The Second-Century World of Diogenes of Oenoanda* (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press 1996) 32-33.

happiness, and pleasure is the best way of life (Fragment 32). Diogenes also proclaims a message of hope for the future and the coming of a Golden Age:

then truly the life of the gods will pass to human beings. For all things will be full of justice and mutual love, and there will be no need of fortifications or laws and all the things which we contrive on account of one another (δικαιοσύνης γὰρ ἔσται μετὰ πάντα καὶ φιλαλληλίας, καὶ οὐ γενήσεται τειχῶν ἢ νόμων χρεία καὶ πάντων ὅσα δι' ἀλλήλους σκευωρούμεθα). As for the necessities derived from agriculture, as we shall have no [slaves then], for indeed we [ourselves shall plow] and dig and tend [the plants] and [divert] rivers (...) (περὶ δὲ τῶν ἀπὸ γεωργίας ἀνανκαίων, ὡς οὐκ ἔσομένων ἡμ[εῖν] τότε δούλων) καὶ γὰρ ἀ[ρόσομεν αὐτοῖ] καὶ σκάψο[μεν, καὶ τῶν φυ]τῶν ἐπιμελ[ησόμεθα], καὶ ποταμο[ὺς παρατρέ]ψομεν). (Diogenes of Oenoanda, Fragment 56)¹²⁶

The Golden Age envisaged by Diogenes bears a striking resemblance to those discussed above. It is a time when there will be no laws or barriers, but only justice and mutual love. For Diogenes, part of the idealised future will be the absence of slaves; 'we' will not have slaves, since everyone will work on the land together.¹²⁷ The absence of slaves is thus a common notion in several descriptions of the Golden Age from the early Empire, one which will be explored in more detail in chapter III.

Diogenes explicitly addressed his message not only to the residents of the city, but to foreigners as well:

and we contrived this in order that, even while sitting at home, we might be able to exhibit the goods of philosophy, not to all people here indeed, but to those of them who are civil-spoken; and not least we did this for those who are called "foreigners," though they are not really so (διὰ τοὺς καλουμένους μὲν ξένους οὐ μὴν γε ὄντας). For, while the various segments of the earth give different people a different country, the whole compass of this world gives all people a single country, the entire earth, and a single home, the world. (Excerpt from Diogenes of Oenoanda, Fragment 30)

Just as barbarians were not always barbarians according to Plutarch, Diogenes believes that foreigners are wrongly called foreigners. The world may seem divided, but is in fact one single home. Diogenes expresses this cosmopolitanism with the use of a familiar pair of opposites:

I say both now and always, shouting out loudly to all Greeks and non-Greeks (Ἕλλησι καὶ βαρβάρους) that pleasure is the end of the best mode of life, while the virtues, which are inopportunistly messed about by these people (being transferred from the place of the means to that of the end), are in no way an end,

¹²⁶ Translation by Pamela Gordon, *Epicurus in Lycia*, 126. For the Greek text of the inscription, see Martin Ferguson Smith, *Diogenes of Oinoanda, The Epicurean Inscription: Edited with Introduction* (Napoli: Bibliopolis 1993), 243.

¹²⁷ The reference to slaves occurs in a section of the inscription where the text is damaged and is therefore a reconstruction, see Ferguson Smith, *Diogenes of Oinoanda*, 243; for an image of the inscription, see Martin Ferguson Smith (ed.), *The Philosophical Inscription of Diogenes of Oinoanda* (Wien: Verlag der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften 1996), 131, plate 17. This reconstruction of the text appears generally accepted in the literature on the inscription.

but the means to the end. Let us therefore now state that this is true, making it our starting-point. (Excerpt from Diogenes of Oenoanda, Fragment 32)

Diogenes' Epicurean message about pleasure was intended for the whole world. He promoted an openness that was 'unprecedented in the history of Epicureanism', but which shares the cosmopolitan outlook of his contemporaries.¹²⁸ The cosmopolitan mood in the first centuries will be explored in more detail in the next chapter, when examining the pair 'Jew-Greek'.

4 A Shared Ideal: Paul's Thought in Context

We can now make some overall observations on the conversations in which the pairs mentioned by Paul occur in his time. As we have seen, social difference could be thought of in terms of pairs of opposites, including those that occur in Paul's formula. The proper hierarchy between the husband, master and father on the one hand, and the wife, slaves and children on the other was a *topos* that concerned many authors; a *topos* that was no doubt familiar to Paul and his audience. The importance of these differences could be expressed as a prayer of thanksgiving, or a perhaps as slogan, emphasising the social superiority of some over others.

The ideals of unity that we encountered in this chapter reflect a society or community that is based on the opposite of these hierarchical relationships. In the *Sibylline Oracles*, it is said that the earth will belong equally to all (γαῖα δ' ἴση πάντων), without walls or fences. A similar idea can be found in Plutarch where he describes Zeno's *Republic* as a place where all people do not live differentiated by their rules of justice in separate cities and communities, but should live as a herd that shares a common field (*On the Fortune* 329A-B). Diogenes of Oenoanda envisions a time that will be full of justice and mutual love, when there will be no need for fortifications or laws (Fragment 56). The notion of equality expressed in all these sources is one of sharing on an equal basis or of the absence of divisions between people.

The connection between harmony and equality is also made in Iambulus, who attributes the lack of discord among the islanders to the fact that they love all children equally (ἐπ' ἴσης ἀγαπᾶν). This is made possible by the fact that they do not marry, have 'women in common' and do not know about any child who its parents are. According to Plato, Philo and Josephus, having possessions, having wives, children, and family, are all factors that encourage trouble and strife and impair social harmony because they stand in the way of equal relationships.¹²⁹ Even in the case of Philo, who uses the terms equality and inequality in relation to slaves and slavery, the question seems not so much the status of

¹²⁸ Gordon, *Epicurus in Lycia*, 32. Gordon links the mood of the time to Roman influence. The response of Rome's Greek-speaking subjects to the Roman political empire was 'to create a Greek cultural empire' (Gordon, *Epicurus in Lycia*, 30). Michael Erler holds a similar view, noting that 'Even with Diogenes of Oenoanda, who holds especially fast to Epicurean dogma, one finds a receptivity to contemporary language and attitudes, as when, for example, he imagines an Epicurean utopia embracing the entire known world' (Michael Erler, 'Autodidact and Student: On the Relationship of Authority and Autonomy and the Epicurean Tradition' in *Epicurus and the Epicurean Tradition*, Jeffrey Fish & Kirk R. Sanders (eds.), (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 2011, 26).

¹²⁹ Plato, *Republic* 464e; Philo, *That Every Good Man Is Free* 79; Josephus, *Jewish War* 2: 122; *Jewish Antiquities* 18.21.

slaves as persons.¹³⁰ Rather, it is the relationship between ‘all men’, who are all created as brothers, not only metaphorically, but in reality. It is this kinship, this brotherhood which is disturbed by slavery, a kinship defined by Philo in terms of affinity and friendship.¹³¹

In these ancient constructions, therefore, unity and equality can be seen as a consequence of not knowing who your parents, or your children are. It can result from living together in a group of only unmarried men, or unmarried men and women living separately, having left their families behind. Only without family connections to divide them can people be described as living together as equals and having all things in common. In this sense the ancient notion of equality is clearly different from modern ones. Similarly, the unusual attitudes towards family and slavery in some of the sources cannot be taken as an indication of the equality of slaves and women to free men. There is little to indicate that the dissolution of marriage, which was essential in doing away with family, in any sense created equality between men and women, as is sometimes assumed. The focus in the sources about the ideal community, as in the prayers of thanksgiving and discussions of household management, is on the position of the free man. To live without marriage, to not have wives, was to live in freedom (μετὰ ἀδεΐας ζῆν, Strabo 7.3.3). It is an ideal that can be summed up as ‘women and goods in common’, ‘only free men’ or ‘free men and aged virgins’ in the case of the Therapeutae. Even in Plato’s *Republic*, where men and women receive the same education and perform the same tasks, their equality in this respect is based on the fundamental inferiority of women, as we saw above.

Nor is the absence of slaves or even the rejection of slavery to do with their equality as human beings. The ancient ideal community was not imagined to be a place where there would be slaves in abundance to do all the work, but one where there was no need for slaves, and all could live a simple life together. There is no sense in any of the sources that to achieve this situation, slaves will be freed, or that their lives will improve somehow; there is only the notion that an ideal community would not require slavery. The ancient ideal community was thus focussed on homogeneity of interest, and an absence of the causes of strife. This could be achieved is by dissolving hierarchical family connections.

As we have seen, the tradition about utopian or ideal communities existed in various forms over centuries, but the theme ‘no slaves, no marriage’ finds its strongest expression in Jewish sources of the first or early second century: in Philo, Josephus and the *Sibylline Oracles* 2. It is unlikely that Paul knew these sources; we have no indication that Paul was familiar with the writings of Philo, and Josephus, and possibly the prophecy from the *Sibylline Oracles* 2 as well, dates after his lifetime. What I would suggest is that these independent sources testify to an ideal that was present in contemporary Jewish thought; an ideal of an alternative way of living, different from society as it was commonly organised. In the *Sibylline Oracles*, this way of living is connected to the end time and will become a reality only then, and only for those who deserve to be part of it.

4.1 When the Ideal Meets the Real

This chapter has shown that there was a broad tradition about an ideal way of life, which could be expressed in different ways, with different emphases, but certain common

¹³⁰ Philo uses the term ἰσότητα, *That Every Good Man Is Free* 79; ἀνισότητα, *On the Contemplative Life* 70.

¹³¹ οἰκειότης, *φιλία*, Philo, *That Every Good Man Is Free* 79.

characteristics. As the prophecy of book 2 of the *Sibylline Oracles* shows, some Jewish eschatological expectations fit within this tradition; they expressed hope for an end time that had much in common with other Jewish and non-Jewish ideals about society. The end of time could be envisioned as an end to differences; differences between the seasons, between day and night, and differences between people as well. According to the Sibyl, there will be no rich and poor, no slave and tyrant, and all will be equal. No more new generations will be formed, because there will be no marriage and no death. The end time is portrayed as an age that will end not only cosmic opposites, but social opposites as well.

Nor is this type of eschatological expectation limited to Jewish sources. The inscription of Diogenes of Oenoanda expects a time when ‘the life of the gods will pass to human beings’, when there will be justice and love. No barriers will divide people and there will be no slaves, because the work on the land will be shared. The same connection between the eschatological and the social can be seen in Paul’s different statements about Christ. Believers participate in Christ’s death through baptism, and become part of the new creation; they escape from the present age of sin and death. Through baptism they also come to be part of the body of Christ, which connects different believers to each other.

Like the sources on ideal communities, Paul’s letters are focussed on harmony and preventing conflict, and emphasise the importance of reciprocal relationships. The same concern for unity, egalitarian relationships, and the same emphasis on brotherhood and mutuality that are evident in Philo and Josephus and in a way also in Plato, can be seen in Paul. He encourages the members of the community to ‘be slaves of each other’ (Galatians 5,13) and to ‘be devoted to one another in brotherly love’ (Romans 12,10, see also Romans 14,9; 15,7; Galatians 6,2; Philippians 2,3; 1 Thessalonians 4,9; 5,15). The notion of shared goods is not reflected in Paul’s letters, even though it is taken up in the descriptions of other early Christian groups (Acts 5:1-11).¹³² Paul does suggest that difference in wealth should not create difference within the community, when he instructs the wealthier members of the community not to despise ‘those who have not’, and that having possessions is something that belongs to the old world, not the new creation (1 Corinthians 11,18-22; 1 Corinthians 7,30).

If Paul shared the ancient ideal of mutual service and a community of brothers who do not place themselves over each other, then it seems possible that for him too, family, slavery and marriage presented obstacles to this ethic of mutuality. The three pairs connected by Paul in his statement in Galatians suggest that he sees the community in Christ within this framework of the ancient ideal community. By linking ‘neither Jew nor Greek’, to ‘neither slave nor free, nor male and female’ Paul calls up an image of ethnic unity connected to the ideal of unity in a community that rejects the family. Both, as we have seen, were present in contemporary thought.

Looking at Paul’s statement in the context of ancient ideals gives a clearer picture of what he is trying to do. In declaring that ‘in Christ’ there is neither Jew nor Greek, neither slave nor free, nor male and female, Paul describes the end time, and the end-time

¹³² For utopian ideas in relation to the community in Acts, see Roger W. Gehring, *House Church and Mission* (Peabody: Hendrickson 2004) 77. Brain Capper notes the scholarly suspicion about the account of community of goods in Acts, but argues based on the model of ‘virtuoso religion’, of which Jesus’ disciples as well as the Essenes can be seen as examples, for its historicity (‘Jesus, Virtuoso Religion and the Community of Goods’, in *Engaging Economics: New Testament Scenarios and Early Christian Reception*, Bruce W. Longenecker & Kelly D. Liebigood (eds.), (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans 2009), 60-80).

communities created by him, in terms that would make sense to his contemporaries. The ideal way of life, in which there are no divisions between people, no divided loyalties, and thus none of the conflict that results from such divisions, has arrived for those who accept his message.

It is not my intention to suggest here that when Paul set out on the road to Galatia, or Ephesus, or Corinth, he was setting out to create a utopia in those cities. His primary goal was not to design or realise an ideal society. But when he was thinking through the shape of the end time as he experienced it, and was faced with the task of creating communities, he drew on the types of ideals that were current in contemporary thought, both Jewish and Greco-Roman. What sets Paul apart is that he was not engaged in a rhetorical depiction of such a community, but was actively trying to create it. Paul's vision of the community can be seen as a form of utopianism; one which does not confine itself to a description of an ideal, but that tries to establish that ideal in the real world. According to a recent definition, utopianism 'is best understood as a process of social dreaming that unleashes and informs efforts to make the world a better place, not to the letter of a plan but to the spirit of an open-ended process.'¹³³

While the authors of this definition may not have been aware that they were borrowing the evocative contrast of letter and spirit from Paul, they were right to establish a connection between his thought and the creation of an ideal. Paul does not have an exact blueprint of the utopian community, but has to work his way through a series of problems that arise when he tries to implement his ideas about eschatological unity. Paul has to deal with the reality of the ancient city as it is, as a place in which his audience continues to live. There is not the absolute and abstract construction of an ideal that we see in other sources. Compared to the communities that are described in the sources above, the groups that come out in Paul's letters seem somewhat less ideal, and more untidy.

Paul's statement was thus an expression of an ideal of eschatological unity that had much in common with contemporary conceptions of ideal communities. In the subsequent chapters of this study, we will see what happens when we apply this idea to each of the three pairs; whether we can indeed understand his ideas about 'Jew-Greek', 'slave-free' and 'male-female' to be part of the contemporary conversation on what would be an ideal way of life.

¹³³ Griffin and Moylan, 'Introduction: Exploring Utopia', 11.

Chapter II

Neither Jew nor Greek: Eschatological Gentiles and Jewish Cosmopolitanism

Introduction

Of the three pairs in the Galatian formula, the first, Jew and Greek, features most prominently in Paul's letters; the position of Jews and non-Jews is an important theme that comes up again and again. Paul argues passionately that non-Jews can become children of Abraham, can be fully accepted by the 'living and true God', and worship this God in one community with Jews, without following the Jewish law or becoming Jews themselves.

As is evident in several of his letters, Paul is embroiled in a number of debates about the terms on which non-Jews can belong to God and about related issues such as circumcision, and the law. He fights these battles with great fervour, using a range of arguments, sometimes calling in proof from scripture, other times hitting below the belt. Yet Paul's numerous statements on Jews and gentiles do not allow for any simple reconstruction as to how he sees these matters. His thought on these issues continues to be highly debated and is still the focus of much scholarly interest.¹

In this chapter, we will examine passages in Paul's letters that discuss Jew and gentile, and place these against the background of the 'pre-existing conversation' on this issue, both in Jewish sources that consider the position of gentiles and Jews, as well as in other Greco-Roman texts that deal with Greek and barbarian, and a unified human community. In doing so, we will build on the insights of chapter I. As we have seen, the three pairs mentioned by Paul in his statement about unity in Christ, together suggest that the phrase should be understood as an expression of eschatological unity; a unity that has much in common with existing ideas about ideal communities and utopias. In Paul's vision of the end time, as in other mythical or philosophical ideal places, times and societies, people will belong to one homogeneous community.

As the previous chapter has shown, such unity could be imagined in numerous ways. Ethnic unity is one of the motifs that occur; several contemporary sources emphasise harmony among all peoples as part of an ideal community.² In this chapter, we will see that the fundamental connectedness of all people was an important aspect of first-century thought in a more general sense.

¹ There have been a number of recent studies on these issues, most importantly: Paula Fredriksen, 'Judaizing the Nations: The Ritual Demands of Paul's Gospel' *New Testament Studies* 56 (2010), 232-252; Pamela Eisenbaum, *Paul was not a Christian: The Original Message of a Misunderstood Apostle* (New York: HarperCollins 2009); 'A Remedy for Having Been Born of Woman: Jesus, Gentiles, and Genealogy in Romans', *Journal of Biblical Literature* 123/4 (2004), 671-702; Love L. Sechrest, *A Former Jew: Paul and the Dialectics of Race* (London: T&T Clark 2009); Johnson Hodge, *If Sons, Then Heirs*; 'Apostle to the Gentiles: Constructions of Paul's Identity', *Biblical Interpretation* 13/3 (2005), 270-288; Denise Kimber Buell and Caroline Johnson Hodge, 'The Politics of Interpretation: The Rhetoric of Race and Ethnicity in Paul', *Journal of Biblical Literature* 123/2 (2004), 235-251.

² I use the term 'ethnic' loosely here, to denote texts that use the distinction Jew-Greek or Greek-barbarian. For an evaluation of Paul's vocabulary in talking about Jews and non-Jews, and a discussion of ethnicity and ethnic identity, see section 2.1.

Several Jewish end-time prophecies can be included among such depictions of ‘ethnic unity’. Eschatological traditions in Jewish sources show a range of expectations with regard to the fate of the non-Jewish nations in the end time. While some predict the annihilation of gentiles, others expect a more positive fate. These latter traditions foresee a fundamental change on the part of gentiles, who will leave their traditional gods behind and turn to the God of Israel, to worship him. This will lead to their redemption and to God’s rule over all peoples.³ It is this type of eschatological expectation that can plausibly be seen to form the background for Paul’s ideas about Jews and gentiles.⁴ Since the contextual approach in our examination of the baptismal formula as a whole in the first chapter resulted in a recognition of its eschatological background and its connection to contemporary ideals of unity, it seems likely that this type of end-time tradition is relevant for understanding Paul.

Of course, it has long been acknowledged that Paul should be seen as an apocalyptic thinker. He expected the return of Christ, a cosmic judgement and the definitive end of the present age, and expected all of these things to take place during his lifetime. The importance of eschatology for Paul’s ideas about Jew and non-Jew however, is not always recognised. Yet it is probable that there is a direct link between Paul’s conviction that the end time has arrived and his notion that non-Jews can now belong to God, together with Jews. As he writes to the Thessalonians, ‘you turned to God from idols, to serve a living and true God (ἐπεστρέψατε πρὸς τὸν θεὸν ἀπὸ τῶν εἰδώλων δουλεύειν θεῷ ζῶντι καὶ ἀληθινῷ), and to wait for his son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead—Jesus, who rescues us from the wrath that is coming (1 Thessalonians 1:9-10).

As we will see in this chapter, when set alongside existing traditions, however, Paul brings certain novel elements to the idea of gentile inclusion. He reconfigures not only the position of gentiles, but that of Jews as well. Unlike any other source discussing eschatological ethnic unity, Paul seems to deny the difference between Jews and non-Jews; phrases such as ‘there is neither Jew nor Greek’ (Galatians 3:28), ‘there is no difference between Jew and Gentile—the same Lord is Lord of all’ (Romans 10:12) have no parallel in other sources that deal with the end-time inclusion of the nations. We will explore whether Paul’s view of gentile inclusion, and his denials of ethnic difference, can be further clarified by looking at the wider contemporary conversation on ethnic difference and unity. In this exploration, we will see how Paul’s ideas concur with the tradition of gentile eschatological inclusion, and how they differ from it as well. It is important to realise that a

³ For an analysis of these traditions, see Terence L. Donaldson, ‘“Proselytes or ‘Righteous Gentiles’? The Status of Gentiles in Eschatological Pilgrimage Patterns of Thought’, *Journal for the Study of the Pseudepigrapha* 4 (1990), 3-27, and Paula Fredriksen, ‘Judaism, the Circumcision of Gentiles, and Apocalyptic Hope: Another Look at Galatians 1 and 2’, *Journal of Theological Studies* 42 (1991), 532-564. Terence Donaldson compiled a collection of those Jewish sources which, in whatever form, have a positive view on gentiles, in his recent study *Judaism and the Gentiles: Jewish Patterns of Universalism (to 135 CE)* (Waco: Baylor University Press 2007). He discerns four patterns of ‘universalism’, of which ‘gentile eschatological inclusion’ is ‘perhaps the earliest and most fundamental pattern of Jewish universalism’ (Donaldson, *Judaism and the Gentiles*, 499).

⁴ This has been suggested most recently by Pamela Eisenbaum, in her study *Paul was not a Christian*, and by Matthew Novenson, (Matthew V. Novenson, ‘The Jewish Messiahs, the Pauline Christ, and the Gentile Question’, *Journal of Biblical Literature* 128/2 (2009), 357-373, while it was proposed earlier by Paula Fredriksen (Fredriksen, ‘Judaizing the Nations’; ‘Judaism, the Circumcision of Gentiles’). For other scholars who take up this theme in some form, see Terence Donaldson, who himself ultimately rejects the ‘eschatological pilgrimage tradition’ as a framework for Paul’s thought on gentiles, in favour of seeing it as proselytising (Terence L. Donaldson, *Paul and the Gentiles: Remapping the Apostle’s Convictional World* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1997), 348, nt.4).

certain degree of difference is to be expected, given Paul's specific situation. Other Jews who describe the position of gentiles in the end time are portraying a, more or less distant, utopian future. Eschatological gentiles, those of the nations who would be accepted by God in the end, were a theoretical category; none of the authors of these texts had ever met an eschatological gentile. For Paul, however, this utopian ideal of gentiles accepting Israel's God is a daily reality. Eschatological gentiles are people with whom he eats and worships. The details of their status in relation to God and to Jews are thus relevant for him to an unprecedented degree.

We should not assume that the eschatological expectations prevalent in Paul's time presented him with a clear blue print, providing all the details he may have needed. The tradition of gentile eschatological inclusion was at the same time more diverse and less specific than is sometimes acknowledged.⁵ We should thus allow for a reasonable measure of creativity on the part of Paul. The process of seeing as a reality what up until then had only been a longed for vision of the future, required him to come up with answers to questions that had not been asked before. In this issue, as in others, Paul's thought shows both ingenuity and flexibility with regard to tradition. In arguing that there was no difference between Jews and gentiles, in claiming that gentiles can be children of Abraham and in seeing gentiles and Jews both as the cause for each other's salvation, Paul displays the creativity that enabled him to turn the eschatological ideal of gentile salvation into the reality of the Pauline community.

This chapter starts with a brief overview of recent scholarly views on Paul's attitude towards Jews and gentiles. The notion that Paul reacted to something he felt to be 'wrong with Judaism', however this was defined, has long dominated research into this question (1.1). Recently, however, this view has been challenged in a fundamental way. In the so-called 'radical new perspective', Paul's message is seen as only aimed at gentiles, not at Jews (1.2). It is considered to be motivated not by anything that was wrong with Judaism, but rather by the very Jewish concern to be a light to the nations. Some scholars in this perspective see gentile eschatological inclusion as the vision driving Paul in his mission to the nations. This tradition of gentile end-time salvation is examined in more detail in relation to Paul in the following section (1.3) to see how it can be connected to his thought on Jew and gentile. In section 2, after a discussion of Paul's terminology of Jew and non-Jew and the concept of ethnicity and identity in recent scholarship (2.1), four important aspects of his thought on Jews and non-Jews will be examined: we will begin with Paul's references to his own Jewishness (2.2), then turn to the issues of circumcision (2.3), kinship with Abraham (2.4) and finally Paul's attitude to the law (2.5). All of these aspects will be related to expectations about gentile inclusion. In the third and final section, Greco-Roman ideas about cosmopolitanism and the connection between all humans and the divine is examined, to further fill out contemporary thought on ethnic difference and unity. This will allow us to see how Paul's statements on Jew and Greek contributed to the cultural conversation of his time.

⁵ Paula Fredriksen, for example, whose views we will discuss in more detail below, assumes that the tradition of gentile inclusion would only allow for an absolute opposition to gentile circumcision. Paul's anti-circumcision stance in his letter to the Galatians therefore makes perfect sense in her view, while that of his opponents is deeply puzzling. We return to this issue below, when focussing on circumcision (see, 'Judaism, the Circumcision of Gentiles', 532-564).

1 'What Was Wrong with Judaism?'

I borrow the question 'What was wrong with Judaism' from Daniel Boyarin, who uses it as the heading for a summary of scholarship in his study *A Radical Jew*.⁶ The question serves well to illustrate the major change in scholarship since 1994, when Boyarin's work was published. As we will see below, some scholars have recently argued that Paul would answer this question with an unequivocal 'absolutely nothing'.

For Boyarin himself, the problem facing Paul, and 'many Jews of late antiquity' was 'to account for the gentiles in God's plan'. What motivated Paul, according to Boyarin, was a concern for the one-ness of humanity. Paul was critical of what Boyarin calls the 'ethnocentrism' of contemporary Jewish culture. The tension within this culture, characterised by this 'narrow ethnocentrism' on the one hand, and 'universal monotheism' on the other, motivated Paul to become a cultural critic.⁷ In Galatians, therefore, Paul argues against the notion that one particular people could ever be the children of God, to the exclusion of other peoples.⁸ To underline his claim of unity, according to Boyarin, Paul cites 'the baptismal declaration of the new humanity of no difference'.⁹

1.1 The New Perspective: Jewish Nationalism

Boyarin's analysis of the problems Paul had with contemporary Jewish culture was developed to a large extent from that of the so-called 'new perspective'. Like many previous interpretations, the 'new perspective' holds the view that there was indeed something wrong with Judaism in Paul's eyes, but had a different view on what this was. Building on the insights of Krister Stendahl and the reconstruction of early Judaism by E.P. Sanders, the 'new perspective' on Paul challenged the negative view of Judaism that had been dominant in Pauline scholarship.¹⁰ According to its main proponent, James Dunn, who coined the term 'new perspective', Paul's Jewish contemporaries did not believe that they could earn their righteousness before God by doing the works of the law, as had been previously thought.¹¹ Dunn takes up Sanders' characterisation of the Judaism of Paul's time as 'covenantal nomism', in which the law functioned as an identity marker, not as a way of achieving self-righteousness.¹² Paul's criticism of 'works of the law' is thus not a criticism of Judaism as such, but rather of a too narrow view of covenant works as Jewish observances, and covenant righteousness as national righteousness. Paul objected to circumcision and food laws, and Sabbath observance, because these practices served as boundary markers,

⁶ Boyarin, *A Radical Jew*, 42-56.

⁷ Boyarin, *A Radical Jew*, 51-52.

⁸ Boyarin, *A Radical Jew*, 22.

⁹ Boyarin, *A Radical Jew*, 5.

¹⁰ Krister Stendahl, 'The Apostle Paul and the Introspective Conscience of the West', *The Harvard theological review* 56/3 (1963), 199-215; *Paul among Jews and Gentiles, and other Essays* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1976). E.P. Sanders, *Paul and Palestinian Judaism: A Comparison of Patterns of Religion* (London: SCM Press, 1977); *Paul, the Law, and the Jewish People* (London: SCM press, 1985).

¹¹ James D.G. Dunn, 'The New Perspective on Paul', *Bulletin of the John Rylands University Library of Manchester* 65/2 (1983), 95-122; *The New Perspective on Paul: Collected Essays* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck 2005). For a recent critical evaluation, see Ivana Bendik, *Paulus in neuer Sicht? Eine kritische Einführung in die "New Perspective on Paul"* (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer 2010).

¹² Sanders, *Paul and Palestinian Judaism*, 474-511.

keeping non-Jews outside God's covenant.¹³ According to Dunn, Paul's criticism of the law is directed especially against Jewish interpretations of the law as 'requiring Israel's set-apartness from the Gentiles'.¹⁴ Paul's message is not about gentiles getting in to the covenant people, but about breaking down the walls that separated Jew from gentile.

1.2 The 'Radical New Perspective': Nothing Wrong with Judaism

The newly emerging 'radical new perspective' criticises the 'new perspective' for still— even with its more nuanced view of Judaism — seeing Paul as separate from it, rather than as remaining within Jewish tradition throughout his life. This perspective, whose proponents include Pamela Eisenbaum and Caroline Johnson Hodge, is built on the central notion that Paul was concerned only with the situation of non-Jews, not with Jews or Judaism.¹⁵ As apostle to the nations, it is argued, Paul did not address Jews, or their position with respect to God or the law. Even though Paul may occasionally mention Jews, he always wrote to gentiles, about gentile problems.¹⁶ The key gentile problem for Paul is identified in the 'radical new perspective' as gentile alienation from the God of Israel. Gentiles are estranged from God because they did not accept the knowledge of God that was available to them, but collectively rejected God. This is a distinctively gentile problem; only they need to be made right with the God of Israel through Christ. The situation of Jews is not an issue for Paul, because, according to the 'radical' view, they are Abraham's descendants already, and already God's people. According to this two-covenant hypothesis, as it has been called, Paul's gospel only involved the covenant of the gentiles.¹⁷ While claiming to place Paul within a Jewish frame work, the 'radical new perspective' thus attributes to Paul a view of the messiah that is unique within contemporary Judaism, i.e. a messiah who only has implications for gentiles and their standing before God, and not for Jews.

The idea that Paul is concerned with gentiles only thus determines the reading of Paul in this perspective. According to Caroline Johnson Hodge, Paul does not implicitly or explicitly criticise Israel or the law. Therefore, 'instead of viewing Paul as a critic of Judaism and the

¹³ Dunn, 'New Perspective', 114, also the *Theology of Paul*, 354-366.

¹⁴ Dunn, 'In Search of Common Ground', 314.

¹⁵ Magnus Zetterholm uses the term 'the radical new perspective' in his recent overview of scholarship on Paul (*Approaches to Paul: A Student's Guide to Recent Scholarship* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press 2009), 161), for critics of the new perspective on Paul, such as Lloyd Gaston and Paul Gager, Mark Nanos, Stanley Stowers and Caroline Johnson Hodge. Johnson Hodge and Pamela Eisenbaum also apply the term to themselves (Johnson Hodge, *If Sons, Then Heirs*, 9, 153; Eisenbaum, *Paul Was Not a Christian*, 250.

¹⁶ Johnson Hodge states that 'there is perhaps no more pivotal issue for determining one's reading of Paul than audience. Whom did Paul address in his letters? For whom does he construct his arguments?' (Johnson Hodge *If Sons, Then Heirs*, 9).

¹⁷ The two-covenant hypothesis was put forward by Lloyd Gaston and John Gager (Lloyd Gaston, *Paul and the Torah* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press 1987); John Gager, *Reinventing Paul* (Oxford: Oxford University Press 2000). For a critical evaluation of Lloyd Gaston's idea that Paul is only concerned with gentiles, see: Mark A. Seifrid, *Justification by Faith: The Origin and Development of a Central Pauline Theme* (Leiden: Brill 1992), 65-66. Claudia Setzer asks some pertinent questions of 'radical perspective' ('Does Paul Need to be Saved?' *Biblical Interpretation* 13/3 (2005), 289-297. The two-covenant hypothesis was recently taken up by Pamela Eisenbaum in her study, where she uses the term 'two-ways salvation'. Eisenbaum claims that there only appear to be two ways, for those who are stuck in an approach to Paul that focusses on individual, rather than collective, salvation (*Paul was not a Christian*, 251). For an evaluation of Eisenbaum's treatment of the concept see: Yung Suk Kim, 'review of Pamela Eisenbaum, *Paul Was Not a Christian: The Original Message of a Misunderstood Apostle*', *Review of Biblical Literature* [<http://www.bookreviews.org>] (2010).

Law, we can see Paul as engaged in working out how *gentiles* can be made right with the God of Israel in the context of the coming end-time'.¹⁸ It is important to note that Johnson Hodge seems to exclude the possibility that Paul's ideas about gentiles and the God of Israel could imply a criticism of contemporary Jewish views of gentiles and the law or be seen by his contemporaries to do so. She suggests that Paul can work out his solution to the problem of gentiles without direct consequences for his attitude towards 'Judaism'. Reading Paul as a first-century Jew, in this view, 'opens the possibility that he had no critique of Judaism but remained fully faithful to the God of Israel and this God's plan for the salvation of all peoples'.¹⁹ Being a Jew and criticising 'Judaism' are thus seen as mutually incompatible.

1.3 What Would Be Right in the End: Eschatological Unity

While I have several objections to the 'radical new perspective' as will become clear below, I believe it makes a contribution to our understanding of Paul in highlighting the importance of Jewish eschatology. This ties in with the finding of this study, that Paul's baptismal statement, including the pair Jew-Greek, can be understood in the context of eschatological and ideal imaginings. In this chapter, I will propose a thoroughly eschatological reading of Paul's thought on Jew and gentile, one that makes sense of his thought within the end-time ideas that were prevalent in his day. In this section we will look closer at the eschatological expectations current in Paul's time and see how they help us understand his ideas. As we will see, the traditions about gentile eschatological inclusion offer an important clue to one of the most fundamental aspects of Paul's apostleship: his mission to gentiles.

None of the views summarised above doubts that Paul saw himself as someone with a mission to spread the gospel among the nations. But why did Paul believe that he should preach to gentiles? Why did he see himself as the apostle to the nations? From his own letters the answer is obvious: because of Christ. As Paul puts it in the opening of his letter to the Galatians, God 'was pleased to reveal his Son in me so that I might preach him among the gentiles' (Galatians 1:15-16). In Romans Paul says about Jesus Christ: 'through him and for his name's sake, we received grace and apostleship to call people from among all the gentiles' (Romans 1:4-5). The next question that suggests itself is then: why would there be such a direct link between Christ and the nations? This seems to be an important question, but it is one that is rarely asked. Pamela Eisenbaum calls this a scholarly blind spot: the unquestioned idea that there is an obvious or natural connection between Jesus' death and resurrection and the position of gentiles.²⁰ Paul has simply been very successful in his efforts

¹⁸ Johnson Hodge *If Sons, Then Heirs*, 11 (emphasis in the original). Johnson Hodge sees this as a general characteristic of the radical new perspective: 'in this view, there is no implicit or explicit critique of Israel (except that many *Ioudaioi* do not realise Christ's role for Gentiles) or the Law (except when Gentiles try to keep it)' (Johnson Hodge, *If Sons, Then Heirs*, 9).

¹⁹ Johnson Hodge *If Sons, Then Heirs*, 153.

²⁰ Eisenbaum focuses on the role of Christ's death in this article and asks the question why for Paul it has to be seen as a sacrificial death, in order for the gentiles to be included in God's promises: 'But, even if one accepts—as I do—that that the tradition of the eschatological pilgrimage was a major influence on Paul's thought and mission, it explains only the connection between Jesus' resurrection and the outreach to Gentiles; it does not account for the significance of his death' (Eisenbaum, 'A Remedy for Having Been Born of Woman', 672). We have to ask, though, whether even the connection between Jesus' resurrection and the inclusion of gentiles is as straightforward as Eisenbaum assumes.

to bring the two together, so successful that the question why they should be connected is hardly ever raised.²¹

Yet the conceptual link between the messiah and the inclusion of the nations was not as obvious as we might assume from Paul.²² Both the messiah and the conversion of the nations are connected to the end time, but they are not usually directly linked to each other. During the second-temple period, one of the possible ways to describe the end of days included the coming of the messiah.²³ In light of this belief, it makes sense that Jesus as Christ is seen by Paul as the one who marks the coming of the eschatological age: 'But when the fullness of time had come, God sent his Son' (Galatians 4:4; also 1 Corinthians 15:20-25; Romans 5:12-21). However, the role that the messiah plays in relation to gentiles in these sources is predominantly one of condemnation, not of inclusion.²⁴ In the Psalms of Solomon (1st century BCE), for example, a Davidic messiah destroys the nations, so that no foreigner will live beside God's holy people:

See, Lord, and raise up for them their king, the son of David, to rule over Israel, your servant, in the time which you chose, o God, Undergird him with the strength to destroy the unrighteous rulers, to cleanse Jerusalem from gentiles who trample her to destruction (ὑπόζωσον αὐτὸν ἰσχὺν τοῦ θραῦσαι ἄρχοντας ἀδίκους καθαρῖσαι Ἱερουσαλημ ἀπο ἐθνῶν καταπατούτων ἐν ἀπωλείᾳ); to drive out in wisdom and in righteousness the sinners from the inheritance; to crash the arrogance of sinners like a potter's jar; to smash all their substance with an iron rod; to destroy the lawless nations with the word of his mouth; to make the nations flee from his presence at his threat and to put sinners to shame by the

²¹ Several important studies of messianism fail to note that this is one of the extraordinary features of Paul's messiah. John Collins, e.g., lists several exceptional aspects of the messianic claims about Jesus, such as his resurrection and his divinity, but does not mention his role with regards to gentiles (John J. Collins, *The Scepter and the Star: The Messiahs of the Dead Sea scrolls and Other Ancient Literature* (New York: Doubleday 1995), 229-237). Andrew Chester gives a very clear overview of various aspects of Paul's view of Christ, but again does not mention gentiles ('The Christ of Paul' in *Redemption and Resistance: The Messianic Hopes of Jews and Christians in Antiquity*, Markus Bockmuehl & James Carleton Paget (eds.), (London: T&T Clark 2007), 109-121). Albert Hogeterp notes that compared to other early Jewish texts that quote Isaiah 11:1, the verse 'is interpreted in an entirely different setting by Paul', who applies it 'in a setting of gospel mission that extends to Gentiles', but does not extend this analysis any further (Albert L.A. Hogeterp, *Expectations of the End: A Comparative Traditio-historical Study of Eschatological, Apocalyptic and Messianic Ideas in the Dead Sea Scrolls and the New Testament* (Leiden: Brill 2009), 459-460. An exception is Matthew Novenson, who observes 'Perhaps, then, Pauline interpreters have ventured too far afield in search of the rationale for Paul's mission to the Gentiles. If Paul makes more mention of a χριστός than does any other ancient Jewish author, as he in fact does, and if he zealously labors to bring pagans into this χριστός movement and to train them in its ways, as he in fact does, then perhaps the former phenomenon itself explains the latter.' (Novenson, 'The Jewish Messiahs', 357-373).

²² Although it is sometimes disputed that Paul saw Jesus as a messiah, several passages in his letters indicate that he did so, even apart from his use of the term Christ (e.g., Romans 9:5; 15:12). For a discussion of this 'implausible position', see Andrew Chester, 'The Christ of Paul', 110. See also Matthew Novenson, who calls Paul 'an accessory to a messiah' ('The Jewish Messiahs', 373).

²³ Collins, *The Scepter and the Star*, 109.

²⁴ So, e.g., Psalms of Solomon 7:30, 4 Ezra 13. A possible exception is the priestly messiah in the Testament of Levi (18:2-9), under whose priesthood 'the nations will be illuminated by the grace of the Lord' and 'Israel will be diminished by her ignorance'. However, this text could well be dependent on earlier Christian interpretations of the messiah. Terence Donaldson includes the text as an example of Jewish universalism, but believes one has to be open to it being the product of 'a more thoroughgoing Christian reworking' (*Judaism and the Gentiles*, 127-129).

A Cosmopolitan Ideal

word of their heart; And he will bring together a holy people whom he will lead in righteousness. And he will judge the tribes of the people that have been made holy by the Lord their God. He will not permit unrighteousness to pause among them any longer, and any man who knows wickedness will not live with them. For he will know them that they are all children of their God. He will distribute them in their tribes upon the land; the sojourner and the foreigner will no longer dwell beside them. He will judge peoples and nations in the wisdom of his righteousness. Pause. And he will have gentile nations serving him under his yoke and he will glorify the Lord in a place visible from the whole earth. And he will cleanse Jerusalem to reach a sanctification as she has from the beginning so that nations will come from the ends of the earth to see his glory (τὸ ἀπ' ἀρχῆς ἔρχεται ἔθνη ἀπ' ἄκρου τῆς γῆς ἰδεῖν τὴν δόξαν αὐτοῦ), bringing as gifts her children who had become quite weak, and to see the glory of the Lord with which God has glorified her. And he will be a righteous king over them, taught by God. There will be no unrighteousness among them in his days, for all will be holy, and their king will be the Lord Messiah (πάντες ἅγιοι καὶ βασιλεὺς αὐτῶν χριστὸς κυρίου). (*Psalms of Solomon* 17.21-32)

This warlike messiah will destroy the 'lawless nations' and make them flee.²⁵ Yet the attitude towards the nations in this passage is not uniformly negative. After Jerusalem has been cleansed, the nations are said to come 'from the ends of the earth' (τὸ ἀπ' ἀρχῆς ἔρχεται ἔθνη, 17.30-31) to see the glory of the messiah, who will be their king.²⁶ Paul supports his view of Christ as the messiah with the same prophecy from Isaiah (Isaiah 11:10) on which the *Psalms of Solomon* here builds, 'and again Isaiah says, "The root of Jesse shall come, the one who rises to rule the Gentiles; in him the Gentiles shall hope"' (Romans 15:12).²⁷ Yet both authors draw very different conclusions from this prophecy as to the role that the messiah will play towards gentiles.

As the passage from the *Psalms of Solomon* shows, eschatological traditions in Jewish thought include a range of expectations with regard to the place of gentiles in the end time, sometimes within one text. Some authors foresee a judgement on all gentiles, and the destruction of their gods and temples. Others, however, in addition to or apart from this judgement, expect a fundamental change on the part of some or all gentiles, which will lead to their redemption and to God's rule over all peoples. Yet traditions that expect gentiles to be a welcome part of God's people in the end do not generally include the messiah in this scenario.²⁸ An example is the case in a prophecy from the third book of the Sibylline Oracles (1st century BCE), where the salvation of the nations is portrayed as the direct result of God's actions:

²⁵ John Collins sees the hope for a Davidic king, formulated with the use of the prophecies in Isaiah 11 and Psalm 2, arise especially at the time of the disintegration of Hasmonean rule (*The Scepter and the Star: Messianism in the Light of the Dead Sea Scrolls* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2010), 57-60.

²⁶ Prophecies that non-Jews will be destroyed and predictions foretelling that they will acknowledge God's power and submit to him are sometimes combined in Jewish literature, see Buitenwerf, *Book III of the Sibylline Oracles*, 281, who mentions Isa 2:1-4; Zech 14 along with this passage *Psalms of Solomon*, in relation to Sibylline Oracles 3. 669-714. Here the nations are first destroyed, but then later it is said that all islands and cities will acknowledge the power of God.

²⁷ See Hogeterp, *Expectations of the End*, 459-460.

²⁸ An example is 4 Ezra, which mentions eschatological redemption for the 'earth's inhabitants' (4 Ezra 6:26), while also describing a messiah who condemns the nations (Donaldson, *Judaism and the Gentiles*, 182-183).

But quicken your thoughts in your breasts; evade unlawful cults; worship the Living One. Beware of adultery and homosexual intercourse with men. Raise your offspring and do not kill it. For the Immortal will be furious at anyone who commits these sins. And then he will raise a kingdom forever among all people (βασιλῆιον εἰς αἰῶνας πάντας ἐπ' ἀνθρώπους), he who once gave a holy law to the pious ones (ἅγιον νόμον ὅς ποτ' ἔδωκεν εὐσεβέσιν). To them all, he has promised to open the earth, the world, and the gates of the blessed. (He promised them) all sorts of joy, immortal understanding and eternal happiness. From every country, incense and gifts will be brought to the temple of the great God. There will be no other temple among the people, even among future generations, that will be heard of, save the one that God gave to trustful men to honour. (*Sibylline Oracles* 3.762-775)²⁹

Although an earlier section of this third book of the Sibylline Oracles does mention a king who is expected to come and judge 'each man in blood and beams of fire' (*Sibylline Oracles* 3.286-287), the end-time vision in this passage does not include a messiah. Here, it is God, 'the Living One', 'the Immortal' (ὁ ζῶντος, ἀθάνατος, *Sibylline Oracles* 3.764, 766), who will create a kingdom for all peoples. The expectation that non-Jews will be part of an end time that is characterised by peace and abundance occurs several times in book 3 of the Oracles.³⁰ In his commentary on this work, Riewerd Buitenwerf notes that in the various passages about gentiles in the end time, the suggestion is that after God's judgement, all surviving people will adopt the Jewish religious and ethical practices. The Jewish people, however 'will rule in a righteous way at this time, thereby, bring "great joy" to all other human beings' (μέγα χάριμα βροτοῖς πάντεσσι φέροντες, *Sibylline Oracles* 3.583).³¹ The two themes that are so closely connected in Paul, of gentiles turning to God and the coming of a messiah, were thus not firmly linked in Jewish end-time expectations. What the two strands have in common is their eschatological nature; the end time is the moment when the messiah comes and when gentiles will turn to God. These two expectations about the end time seem to have existed as more or less separate traditions, yet in Paul's thought we see them closely connected, the one leading naturally from the other. Different expectations about the end time seem to have merged here. While a messiah with a positive role with regard to gentiles may be a novelty that is first encountered in Paul, it is one that can be understood as a creative reworking of several existing traditions that came to be attached to the figure of Christ.³²

²⁹ Translation Buitenwerf, *Book III of the Sibylline Oracles*, 244.

³⁰ For example in 3. 619-622 'And then, God will give great joy to mankind. For the earth, the trees, and the countless flocks of sheep will give their true fruits to the people, consisting of sweet wine, sweet honey, white milk, and grain, the best there is of everything for mortals.' The same theme occurs in 3. 741-759, as will be discussed below. For the motif of abundance of delicious food current in Jewish apocalyptic-eschatological tradition see Buitenwerf, *Book III of the Sibylline Oracles*, 285.

³¹ See Buitenwerf, *Book III of the Sibylline Oracles*, 260.

³² A similar unfamiliar association of two largely unrelated end-time expectations is made with regard to the resurrection of the messiah. While some eschatological expectations include both a messiah, as well as a resurrection of the dead (e.g., in 4 Ezra 7:29-30; 2 Baruch 30:1), the idea of a risen messiah is uniquely developed in Christian thought. The expectation of the general resurrection in the end time is also found in Dan 12:1-3 and is a feature of late first-century apocalypses. Collins calls the resurrection 'the anomaly in the messianic claims about Jesus of Nazareth' (Collins, *The Scepter and the Star*, 68, 229).

A Cosmopolitan Ideal

A further novelty in Paul is the notion that human effort would be involved in encouraging gentiles to abandon their idols and turn to God. There is little to suggest that the gentile turn towards God was thought to be the consequence of human actions.³³ Rather, as the sources quoted above indicate, it is the divine restoration of Israel that unequivocally reveals to gentiles who God is. God is generally portrayed as the sole agent, whose actions in restoring his people to their rightful place brings about a change on the part of other peoples. Their acceptance of the God of Israel is in a sense an inevitable response to this divine self-revelation. Another example from book 3 of the Sibylline Oracles illustrates this:

And then all the islands and the cities will say how much the Immortal loves those men [the sons of God]. For everything succours and helps them, heavens, divinely driven sun, and moon. And the earth, mother of all, will be shaken in those days. They will produce sweet language from their mouths in the form of hymns: 'Come, let us all fall on the ground and pray to the immortal King (δεῦτε, πεσόντες ἅπαντες ἐπὶ χθονὶ λισσώμεσθα ἀθάνατον βασιλῆα), the great and eternal God. Let us send (gifts) to the temple, for he is the sole Ruler! Let us all consider the law of the highest God, for it is the most righteous of all laws on earth (νόμον ὑψίστοιου θεοῦ φραζώμεθα πάντες ὅστε δικαιοτάτος πέλεται πάντων κατὰ γαῖαν). We have strayed from the path of the Immortal, and, with ill-advised mind, revered things made by human hands, images and statues of deceased people.' The souls of the faithful men will exclaim the following: 'Come, let us prostrate ourselves before the people of God, the Begetter, with hymns in (his) house'. (*Sibylline Oracles* 3. 710-725)

Gentiles acknowledge that he is indeed the ruler and king, after God reveals himself and they see how he supports his own people. This is a recurring theme in end-time expectations that foresee a positive development for gentiles, one that is often referred to as 'eschatological pilgrimage'. After seeing Israel restored to its glory, the gentiles go up to Jerusalem to honour God.³⁴ Yet it was a theme that did not materialise for Paul, since there was no unequivocal revelation of God's majesty. Paul rather believes that he and others are called to bring the news about God's redemptive act in sending and raising Christ to the rest of the world. Although the end time had started in Christ, and the reception of God's spirit on the part of gentiles confirmed their new eschatological status in Paul's eyes, much of the world still looked the same, or at least did not conform to end-time prophecy. God had not yet vindicated Israel; the powers of the old era had not yet been dethroned; death was not

³³ An exception is the book of Tobit, which includes an encouragement on the part of Jews to testify about God: 'Acknowledge him before the nations, O children of Israel; for he has scattered you among them. He has shown you his greatness even there. Exalt him in the presence of every living being, because he is our Lord and he is our God; he is our Father and he is God forever. He will afflict you for your iniquities, but he will again show mercy on all of you. He will gather you from all the nations among whom you have been scattered. If you turn to him with all your heart and with all your soul, to do what is true before him, then he will turn to you and will no longer hide his face from you. So now see what he has done for you; acknowledge him at the top of your voice. Bless the Lord of righteousness, and exalt the King of the ages. In the land of my exile I acknowledge him, and show his power and majesty to a nation of sinners: "Turn back, you sinners, and do what is right before him; perhaps he may look with favor upon you and show you mercy"' (Tobit 13:3-5). In the end, though, it is the glorious restoration of Jerusalem which leads to the conversion of gentiles (Tobit 14:5-7).

³⁴ For example in Tobit 14:5-7; 1 Enoch 90.33. For an overview of these sources see Donaldson, *Paul and the Gentiles*, 69-74.

yet completely overthrown, although for Paul the resurrection of the messiah was the beginning of this process. The coming of Christ signalled the end of the present era, but he was only the beginning of the end.³⁵ Paul lived in an in-between time, after the coming of the messianic age, before the return of Christ.³⁶ In this time, it had become important to bring as many people as possible together 'in Christ', since it would be those 'in Christ', both Jew and Greek, who would be saved in the judgement that was still to come.

In the letter to the Romans Paul gives us the clearest insight into how he viewed the course of events leading up to this in-between time, and what he expected to happen next. He describes a rather more complicated series of events than that found in the eschatological pilgrimage tradition and he appears to show how gentile and Jewish salvation are predicated on each other:

Again I ask: Did they [Israel] stumble so as to fall beyond recovery (μη ἔπταισαν ἵνα πέσωσιν)? Not at all! Rather, because of their transgression, salvation has come to the gentiles to make Israel envious (τῷ αὐτῶν παραπτώματι ἡ σωτηρία τοῖς ἔθνεσιν εἰς τὸ παραζηλώσαι αὐτούς.). But if their transgression means riches for the world, and their loss means riches for the gentiles, how much greater riches will their fullness bring! I am talking to you gentiles. Inasmuch as I am the apostle to the gentiles (εἰμι ἐγὼ ἐθνῶν ἀπόστολος), I make much of my ministry in the hope that I may somehow arouse my own people to envy and save some of them (εἴ πως παραζηλώσω μου τὴν σάρκα καὶ σώσω τινὰς ἐξ αὐτῶν). For if their rejection is the reconciliation of the world (ἡ ἀποβολὴ αὐτῶν καταλλαγὴ κόσμου), what will their acceptance be but life from the dead? (*Romans 11:11-15*)

At first glance, Paul may simply seem to reverse the course of salvation history: it is gentile salvation that will lead to Jewish salvation in the end. Paul hopes that his success as apostle to the gentiles will spark the envy of Jews and lead to their salvation as well. But gentile salvation in turn depends on Israel's transgression and their rejection by God.³⁷ Ultimately, therefore, the salvation of the nations is made possible by Israel: their initial rejection opened up the possibility for gentiles to be accepted, and their final salvation, Paul suggests, will bring even more good to the world. The salvation of gentiles thus takes a middle position; it is both dependent on Israel and has as its goal their envy and restoration. Paul portrays his gentile mission here not as an end in itself, but as intended for the good of Israel and the whole world.

Paul elaborates the idea that the possibility for gentiles to be saved depends on God's initial rejection of a part of Israel in his metaphor of the olive tree. Some of the natural branches of this tree were broken off, and this allows wild shoots to be grafted in:

³⁵ Texts like 4 Ezra and 2 Baruch also differed in their expectations regarding the duration and end of the messianic age, see Liv Ingeborg Lied, *The Other Lands: Imaginations of the Land in 2 Baruch* (Leiden: Brill 2008), 195-196.

³⁶ The notion of an in-between time or 'eschatological tension' is a well known concept in Pauline scholarship. For an analysis of the topics usually associated with it see James Dunn, *The Theology of Paul the Apostle*, 461-498.

³⁷ Paul does not specify the exact nature of the transgression here, but it most likely refers to a rejection of the gospel about Christ, as is indicated by the term unbelief (ἀπιστία *Romans 11:23*) in the next passage. See Robert Jewett, *Romans: A Commentary* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2007), 673. Also James D.G. Dunn, *Romans: B Romans 9-16* (Dallas: Word Books 1988), 668.

A Cosmopolitan Ideal

If some of the branches have been broken off, and you, being a wild olive shoot (σὺ δὲ ἀγριέλαιος ὢν), have been grafted in among the others and now share in the nourishing sap from the olive root, do not boast over the branches. If you do, consider this: You do not support the root, but the root supports you. You will say then, "Branches were broken off so that I could be grafted in." Granted. But they were broken off because of unbelief, and you stand by faith (τῇ ἀπιστίᾳ ἐξεκλάσθησαν, σὺ δὲ τῇ πίστει ἕστηκας). Do not be arrogant, but be afraid. For if God did not spare the natural branches (τῶν κατὰ φύσιν κλάδων), he will not spare you either. Consider therefore the kindness and severity of God: severity to those who fell, but kindness to you, provided that you continue in his kindness. Otherwise, you also will be cut off. And if they do not persist in unbelief, they will be grafted in, for God is able to graft them in again. After all, if you were cut out of an olive tree that is wild by nature, and contrary to nature were grafted into a cultivated olive tree (ἐκ τῆς κατὰ φύσιν ἐξεκόπης ἀγριελαίου καὶ παρὰ φύσιν ἐνεκεντρίσθης εἰς καλλιέλαιον), how much more readily will these, the natural branches, be grafted into their own olive tree! (*Romans 11:17-24*)

Paul here warns the gentile believers, symbolised by the wild branches, not to feel superior over the other branches. They might argue that some branches were broken off so they could be grafted in, but this should not cause them to be arrogant. Paul reminds them that they are supported by the root, not the other way around (11:18). The natural branches (οἱ κατὰ φύσιν κλάδοι) belong in the tree and can be put back, while the wild branches (ἀγριελαίος) are a part of it *contrary to nature* (παρὰ φύσιν).³⁸ The intermediate position of gentiles comes out in the metaphor in the wild branches that were grafted onto a tree in place of natural ones, which have been cut off.

The idea that Jews would be alienated from God for a period of time, before being restored to their rightful position, is not unique to Paul. In the beginning of the third book of the Sibylline Oracles, a similar scenario is described:

Yes, you will flee (σὺ...φεύξῃ), leaving behind the beautiful temple, since it is your fate to leave the holy ground. (...) The entire earth and the entire sea will be full of you. Everybody will take offence at your customs. Your whole land will be empty of you (γαῖα δ' ἔρημος ἅπασα σέθειν). The fortified altar, the temple of the great God, and all long walls will fall to the ground because in your heart you did not turn towards the holy law of the immortal God. You were led astray and served shameful idols, and you did not revere the immortal Begetter of the gods and of all people. You were not willing to honour him, but you served idols of mortals instead. Therefore, your fruit-bearing land and the wonders of the

³⁸ For Boyarin, this passage offers a falsification of the idea that Israel as a whole has been superseded, 'the grafted Israel—including both Jewish and gentile believers in Christ—is now the true, living Israel, and the rejected branches are at best vestiges, at worst simply dead' (Boyarin, *A Radical Jew*, 204). At the same time, the passages falsifies the idea that Paul's message did not have implications for Jews or that Jews as a whole were already right with God in Paul's eyes, as claimed by the 'radical new perspective'. Johnson Hodge is correct to note that Paul's agricultural imagery places Jews in a superior position; it is a metaphorical expression of the theme 'first the Jew and then the Greek'. Gentiles become the adopted branches of a cultivated Jewish tree. The cutting out of Jewish branches is only temporary, since as Paul states in 11.26 'all Israel will be saved'. Yet while Johnson Hodge observes that 'Christ would serve as the point at which gentiles are grafted on to the olive tree', she neglects to conclude that he also serves as the point at which some of the natural, Jewish branches would be lopped off and that the Jewish branches that remain can only be understood in Paul's view to remain because they are 'in Christ' (Johnson Hodge, *If Sons, then Heirs*, 141-148).

Neither Jew nor Greek

temple will be entirely empty of you for seven decades. But a good outcome and the greatest glory await you; the immortal God will bring it to pass for you. But you, go on relying on the holy laws of the great god, when you will raise yourself towards the light, tired from stretching your knee. And then god will send a king from heaven, and he will judge each man in blood and beams of fire. There is a certain royal tribe, whose race will never stumble (ἔστι δέ τις φυλή βασιλῆιος, ἧς γένος ἔσται ἄπταιστον). And as the years roll by, this will reign and begin to erect a new temple for God. (*Sibylline Oracles* 3. 266-290)

As a result of their religious misconduct, the Jews will be forced into exile. Although the misconduct in question is obviously different from the unbelief that Paul is thinking of, the image of 'fruit-bearing land' that will be empty of them is interesting when compared with Paul's choice of a cultivated olive tree as a metaphor for Jews. Also, the notion of stumbling (πταίω, *Sibylline Oracles* 3. 289, cf. Romans 11:11) occurs in both. In Romans 11, Paul claims that although Israel stumbled, they did not fall.³⁹ In the Oracles, although the people lived in exile for seventy years, the 'royal tribe' (φυλή βασιλῆιος) will not stumble in the end (ἄπταιστος), but will reign and rebuild the temple. As Buitenwerf notes, 'eventually, things will turn out well for the Jews if they will hold fast to God. He will appoint a king who will conquer the world and let the exiles return.'⁴⁰ While there is no mention of gentiles in connection with the ultimate restoration of God's people here, the passage does show that Paul's ideas about a temporary rejection were not unparalleled.

It is important to Paul that his gentile audience in Rome understands their intermediate position in salvation history:

So that you may not claim to be wiser than you are, brothers and sisters, I want you to understand this mystery: a hardening has come upon part of Israel, until the full number of the gentiles has come in (ὅτι πάρωσις ἀπὸ μέρους τῶ Ἰσραὴλ γέγονεν ἄχρις οὗ τὸ πλήρωμα τῶν ἐθνῶν εἰσέλθῃ). And so all Israel will be saved (πᾶς Ἰσραὴλ σωθήσεται); (...) Just as you were once disobedient to God but have now received mercy because of their disobedience, so they have now been disobedient in order that, by the mercy shown to you, they too may now receive mercy. (*Romans* 11:25-26, 30-31)

The success of Paul's mission to the gentiles was for him thus central to the salvation of Jews. Eventually, all Israel, all Jews, will be saved. Just as the mercy for gentiles was dependant on the actions of Jews, so the mercy that all Jews will receive depends on gentiles, namely on the mercy shown to them by God.

According to Terence Donaldson, the scenario that Paul sketches here is so different from the traditional expectations about gentile salvation, that this ultimately necessitates rejecting it as the background for Paul's thought on gentiles. In this tradition as understood by Donaldson, 'salvation of Gentiles follows restoration of Israel as a matter not simply of sequence, but of consequence: it is because they see the redemption of Israel and the glorification of Zion that the Gentiles abandon their idols and turn to worship the God of Israel. The inversion of the sequence represents not a simple modification of the tradition,

³⁹ According to Dunn, their stumble is not as serious as it may first sound, 'it is not a complete fall, as, for example, the sprawling on one's face which puts a runner completely out of the race.' The intention is that they will recover (Dunn, *The Theology of Paul*, 522–523).

⁴⁰ Buitenwerf, *Book III of the Sibylline Oracles*, 206.

but its evisceration.⁴¹ Donaldson further observes that if Paul had wanted to link his work to the idea of the gentiles as eschatological pilgrims, there were many texts that he could have cited, but did not.⁴²

Donaldson is certainly correct in noting that Paul's description of the events leading to the ultimate salvation of all peoples is different from the scenarios found among the traditions about gentile inclusion; a departure that would potentially be offensive or difficult for his contemporaries. Yet this does not mean that the tradition of gentile eschatological salvation should be rejected as a possible background for Paul's thought. The first reason for connecting Paul to this tradition is that while many sources indeed link gentile inclusion in end-time salvation to a restoration of Israel, this occurs by no means in all such descriptions. In book 3 of the Sibylline Oracles, three of the four predictions about God's future intervention describe the inclusion of all peoples under God without portraying this as the result of Jewish restoration.⁴³ The first prophecy, for example, puts the conversion of gentiles entirely down to divine intervention:

Then they [the gentiles] will go down on their white knees before the great God, the immortal King, on the all-nourishing ground. The works made by human hands will all be ruined in a flame of fire. And then, God will give great joy to mankind (χάρην μεγάλην θεὸς ἀνδράσι δώσει). For the earth, the trees, and the countless flocks of sheep will give their true fruits to the people, consisting of sweet wine, sweet honey, white milk, and grain, the best there is of everything for mortals. (*Sibylline Oracles* 3. 616-623)

The tradition was thus not so uniform as to allow only one possible scenario. Not all sources saw a restoration of Israel as the prime cause of gentile inclusion, nor did all of these sources include the theme of eschatological pilgrimage, which Donaldson correctly observes is largely absent in Paul. Other sources could equally imagine different ways in which the end time would play out, while still resulting in all people eventually worshipping God.

The second and most important point to make in seeing Paul as part of the tradition in spite of his unique presentation of gentile inclusion, is that Paul simply had to deal with the reality of what he saw happening around him. He may have initially expected that within a short space of time, most Jews would accept that the end time had arrived in Christ. But when this did not happen, he had to fit that somehow into his understanding of the course of salvation history.

Donaldson maintains that 'for an eschatological pilgrimage interpretation of Paul's Gentile mission to be convincing, it would need to demonstrate in one way or another that Paul perceived Christ as having accomplished the restoration of Israel (appropriately defined), thus precipitating or making possible the overflow of eschatological blessings to the Gentiles'.⁴⁴ This seems to me to be a too narrow understanding of the tradition of

⁴¹ Donaldson, *Paul and the Gentiles*, 188.

⁴² Donaldson mentions Isa 2:2-4/Mic 4:1-4; Isa 25:6-10; 56:6-8; 66:18-23; Zech 8:20-23, see *Paul and the Gentiles*, 349, nt.23.

⁴³ These four prophecies occur in Sibylline Oracles 3. 545-623; 624-731; 732-761; 762-808. Only the second prophecy, quoted above, fits the pattern of gentiles responding to Jewish restoration.

⁴⁴ Donaldson *Paul and the Gentiles*, 189. Donaldson suggests that there are two possible solutions to this problem: '(1) by seeing Christ himself as Israel personified; (2) by identifying it with the existence of a Jewish-

gentile inclusion. As indicated above, the restoration of Israel was one way of describing God's revelation at the end of time. In Paul's thought, the sending of Christ, and his death and resurrection, and the sending of the spirit to be received by gentiles, together seem to function in a similar way to demonstrate God's power and glory. This is the sign that gentiles are expected to accept as the revelation of divine power. There simply was no divine restoration of Israel to cause gentiles to turn to God, as anticipated in other eschatological prophecy. If Paul had previously assumed that there would be, then he would have had to adjust his expectations accordingly. He does so by reorganising Jewish and gentile salvation, as just seen, and by making himself into an instrument of revelation. If gentiles could now turn to God and be accepted by him through his messiah, he knew that somebody was going to have to go and tell them.

2 There is No Distinction: Paul's Ideas on Jew and Non-Jew

We now turn to a closer examination of four specific aspects of Paul's attitude towards Jew and non-Jew, keeping in mind what we have seen in the previous section about Paul's view of the end-time inclusion of gentiles. Given that the position of non-Jews in relation to God is a central concern for Paul, it is not possible within the scope of this chapter to discuss all of his statements on the issue. Since our aim is to understand Paul's claim that there is 'neither Jew nor Greek', similar denials of difference will be of special interest. The focus will therefore be on four themes, which together cover the most important aspects of his ideas. We will start with Paul's descriptions of his own Jewishness, and examine two different passages which are central in the recent debate about this issue. In the first, Paul states that 'we are Jews, not gentile sinners' (Galatians 2:15) thereby appearing to confirm, rather than deny the difference between Jew and non-Jew. In the second, Paul again talks about himself, but here he discusses several aspects of his Jewish heritage in very negative terms (Philippians 3:2-9). The second aspect of Paul's thought on Jew and gentile that we will examine is circumcision, and Paul's declaration that 'neither circumcision nor uncircumcision means anything' (Galatians 6:15). In several letters, Paul is in debate about the question whether non-Jews should circumcise. Although he argues strongly against gentile circumcision, he also makes reference to those who are circumcised, or to circumcision as such, saying that it 'is nothing' (1 Corinthians 7:19) or equating it to mutilation (Galatians 5:12; Philippians 3:2). The third and related issue is Paul's description of Abraham as the father of both the Jews and the nations. Both the circumcised and the uncircumcised can belong to Abraham, who was himself both uncircumcised and circumcised. The fourth is the broader question of Paul and the law, focussing on the role of the law for Jews and gentiles. Together, Paul's Jewishness, circumcision, Abraham, and the law will provide the background for understanding Paul's statement that there is 'neither Jew nor Greek'. However, before looking at these four different themes, we will first analyse Paul's use of the terms Jew-Greek and related ethnic terminology and the way ethnicity and identity are seen in recent scholarship on Paul.

Christian remnant.' He then goes on to argue that neither of these can be made to work (*Paul and the Gentiles*, 189-197.

2.1 A Closer Look at Terminology: Jew and Greek, Ethnicity and Identity

Before we turn to Paul's statements on Jews and non-Jews, we first need to look at the terminology used by Paul in speaking of ethnicity. In Galatians 3:28, Paul divides his audience, the 'you' who are in Christ, into Jew and Greek. These two terms, 'Jew' and 'Greek', are not the only ones, however, that Paul uses to divide and describe people along ethnic lines. Other terms with related meanings are used by Paul as well, which divide people into two groups: on the one hand, Ἰουδαῖοι, Jews, (ἡ) περιτομή, (the) circumcision, Ἰσραήλ, Israel, Ἰσραηλῖται, Israelites, and on the other, Ἕλληνες, Greeks, τὰ ἔθνη, the nations, or gentiles, (ἡ) ἀκροβυστία, (the) uncircumcised (lit. the foreskin). These terms are not only related in meaning, they are used by Paul in certain passages in a way that suggests that they overlap or even, are interchangeable. For example in the letter to the Romans:

Or is God the God of Jews only? Is he not the God of the nations too (ἡ Ἰουδαίων ὁ θεὸς μόνον; οὐχὶ καὶ ἐθνῶν)? Yes, of the nations too, since there is one God, who will justify the circumcised by faith and the uncircumcised through faith. (καὶ καὶ ἐθνῶν, εἴπερ εἷς ὁ θεὸς ὃς δικαιοῦσιν περιτομὴν ἐκ πίστεως καὶ ἀκροβυστίαν διὰ τῆς πίστεως). (*Romans* 3:29-30)

The term 'circumcised' (lit. 'circumcision'), in the second line, corresponds to 'Jews' in the first and 'uncircumcised' (lit. 'foreskin') in the second to 'nations' in the first. The second verse in this passage supports the answer given in the previous verse: yes, God is also the God of the nations, or the gentiles, not just of Jews.⁴⁵ The argument can only be convincing

⁴⁵ One issue where the full complexity of ancient and modern Jewish identity is evident is in the discussions on the translation of the Greek term of Ἰουδαῖος. While some scholars suggest that 'Judean' best renders the sense of the term, on a par with other ethnica such as 'Greek' and 'Egyptian', others feel that the term Jew is still the best option, both for reasons of ancient usage as well as modern understandings of that term (the first view is argued by Steve Mason, among others, see 'Jews, Judaeans, Judaizing, Judaism: Problems of Categorization in Ancient History', *Journal for the Study of Judaism* 38 (2007), 457-512. An argument against Mason's view is and in favour of 'Jew' is made by Daniel Schwartz, see "'Judean' or 'Jew'? How Should We Translate Ioudaios in Josephus," in *Jewish Identity in the Greco-Roman World*, Jörg Frey, Daniel Schwartz, and Stephanie Gripentrog (Leiden: Brill 2007), 3-27). Still others prefer to leave the matter open and opt for transliteration (Caroline Johnson Hodge, *If Sons, Then Heirs*, 11-15). While I recognise that many important questions have been raised in this discussion, I still choose to translate Ἰουδαῖος with the word 'Jew'. In Paul, the opposition between those who are Ἰουδαῖοι and those who are not, is seen primarily in terms of religious orientation and associated ethical standards and behaviour. A typical example is Paul's warning against sexual immorality, which is common among 'the nations who do not know God' (1Thessalonians 4:5). Because Paul's use of the terms has a strong emphasis on religion, I believe the term 'Jew' best renders his use of Ἰουδαῖος. I have chosen to use both 'the nations' and 'gentiles' as a translation for τὰ ἔθνη, even though the latter can be seen as a term with derogatory connotations. Since the term is used by Paul from a Jewish perspective, and primarily defines what one is not, I do not feel that a somewhat derogatory sense would be completely against Paul's use of the term (cf. the negative connotation of the term, e.g., in 1 Corinthians 5:1 and 12:2). 'Gentile' also has the advantage over 'the nations' of having a form for the singular. Not using the term gentile would force one to use the description 'a person from the nations', which is rather long and inelegant. Similarly, because the category of 'the other' is constructed from Paul's Jewish viewpoint as an aggregative group, characterised only by what it is not, I have chosen not to capitalise the term 'the nations', or 'gentile'. Paul's androcentric viewpoint is evident in describing Jews and non-Jews collectively as 'the circumcision' and 'the foreskin'. Although these terms refer to male genitalia, they are sometimes employed by Paul in a way that

when the groups distinguished in both verses are the same two groups. Here Paul uses 'circumcision' as a synonym for 'Jews' and 'uncircumcision' as a synonym for 'nations'. The same overlap of 'nation' and 'uncircumcised' can be found when Paul compares his mission to that of Peter (Gal 2:7-8). In the first letter to the Corinthians, Paul uses the terms 'Greeks' and 'nations' as synonyms:

Jews demand miraculous signs and Greeks look for wisdom, but we preach Christ crucified: a stumbling block to Jews and foolishness to the nations (ἐπειδὴ καὶ Ἰουδαῖοι σημεῖα αἰτοῦσιν καὶ Ἕλληνες σοφίαν ζητοῦσιν, ἡμεῖς δὲ κηρύσσομεν Χριστὸν ἐσταυρωμένον, Ἰουδαίοις μὲν σκάνδαλον, ἔθνεσιν δὲ μωρίαν). (1 Corinthians 1:22-23)

Again, Paul distinguishes two sets of two groups, Jews and Greeks in the first verse and Jews and the nations in the second. Since the second verse is placed in opposition to the first (ὁἷ), the effectiveness of the reasoning depends upon the similarity of the groups in both verses. Rather than the signs they demand, Jews are given a stumbling block, and rather than the wisdom they look for, Greeks/gentiles are presented with foolishness. The term Greeks is not used here in a narrow sense of ethnic Greeks but in the sense of the nations, all non-Jews.⁴⁶

The same interchangeable nature of the terms can be observed in larger bodies of text, such as chapter 3 of the letter to the Galatians. There, Paul substantiates his argument that the nations are children of Abraham with the formula 'neither Jew nor Greek'.⁴⁷ Based on these passages, we will assume that when Paul divides mankind into two groups using these terms, he divides them into Jews and non-Jews.⁴⁸

In using the opposition Jew-Greek, Paul mirrors the distinction that had already been characteristic of Greek culture for centuries, that between Greek and barbarian. In the third section of this chapter, this Greek perspective will be further discussed. Paul appropriates the Greek view and turns it upside down: now the Greeks have become the others, synonymous with the ἔθνη. Jewish contemporaries of Paul use similar terms; according to

implicitly includes women. My translations of Paul's language about issues of ethnicity and circumcision echo Paul's male-centred views.

⁴⁶ So also Bruce Winter, 'the term Ἕλληνες should be translated consistently in 1 Corinthians as "Gentiles", for that is to whom he was referring.' 'The term Ἕλληνες was a common synonym for "Gentiles". In using it, Paul indicates neither the ethnic origin nor the citizenship of those early Christians living in Rome or Corinth, but he was repeating an all embracing term.' (*After Paul Left Corinth: The Influence of Secular Ethics and Social Change* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans 2001), 23-24).

⁴⁷ A different view on this chapter is proposed by Christopher Stanley who argues, on the basis of reports of conflicts between Jewish and Greek communities that 'Greek' in Galatians and other instances in Paul's writing, means only 'ethnic' Greeks. He claims that Paul was familiar with 'interethnic conflict', which would have 'shaped the way he addresses his ethnically mixed congregations'. However valid the external evidence of inter-group conflict may be, Stanley's reading is contradicted by Paul's own reasoning. The term Greek in the pair Jew-Greek in verse 28 has to correspond with the references to the nations (τὰ ἔθνη) earlier in the chapter (in verse 8 and 14) or Paul's argument simply does not work (Christopher D. Stanley, "'Neither Jew nor Greek': Ethnic Conflict in Graeco-Roman Society', *Journal for the Study of the New Testament* 64 (1996), 101-124, 123-124).

⁴⁸ Romans 1:14 could be seen as an exception to this rule, but here it is gentiles that Paul divides into Greek and barbarian.

Shaye Cohen, the view of Jews versus gentiles, of 'us' versus 'them' was well attested in Greco-Roman antiquity.⁴⁹

In Paul's statements about himself and his self-identification as a Jew, to which we turn below, this opposition plays an important role. Paul's Jewish identity has become a source of recent debate involving the 'radical new perspective' (outlined above), and a challenge to this perspective, by Love Sechrest, who believes Paul sees himself as no longer a Jew, but as 'a former Jew'.⁵⁰

Before turning to the specific passages central to this debate, it will be helpful first to take a look at ethnicity and the way it is construed in these approaches. In research on the subject in recent decades, it has come to be accepted that ethnicity should be seen as a socially constructed entity. Ethnicity is not a given, determined at birth, but is ascribed and subjectively perceived. In the words of Gerd Baumann, ethnicity is not like blood, but rather, like wine.⁵¹ That is to say, it is not about a natural, given state, but it is a cultural product. Ethnic categories such as 'Jew' and 'Greek' are constructed categories, and belonging to either group is a cultural process. Behind this conception of ethnicity lies a 'processual' view of culture which sees it not a thing that one has, but rather as process that is continually shaped.⁵²

The notion that ethnicity should be seen as a social construct is increasingly recognised in New Testament scholarship, and by scholars working on Paul. Caroline Johnson Hodge, whose ideas we will examine in more detail below in relation to Paul's self-description in Philippians, holds the view that ethnic identity is multi-faceted and flexible to a high degree.⁵³ She builds on anthropological research, which shows that people in certain poly-ethnic contexts can maintain several different ethnic identities at the same time.⁵⁴ Ethnic identity can thus be divided up into parts or segments, so that several identities, although distinct, fit within one encompassing identity. Depending on the circumstances, people can emphasise particular parts of these 'nested identities'.⁵⁵

In applying this perspective to Paul, Johnson Hodge concludes that he presents a new identity, namely being '*in Christ*', that requires a reordering of existing identities on the part of himself and his audience. Contrary, however, to what has often been claimed, this reordering of ethnic identities does not imply a rejection of ethnic identity as such by Paul, nor the creation of an ethnicity-free Christianity. Johnson Hodge sees being '*in Christ*' as simply the encompassing identity that is ranked above being either Jew or Greek, without changing the status of either.

⁴⁹ Shaye Cohen sees this perspective not as a consequence of, but rather as contrary to a Hellenistic worldview: 'even Greek-speaking Jews, who might be thought to have been more "Hellenized" than their rabbinic brethren, hence more integrated into the culture and society of the larger world, shared this perspective'. Cohen would have expected Philo and Josephus, who are quoted as the Greek speaking Jews in question, not to use this distinction as a consequence of their Hellenization (Cohen, *The Beginnings of Jewishness*, 1).

⁵⁰ Sechrest, *A Former Jew*.

⁵¹ Gerd Baumann, *The Multicultural Riddle: Rethinking National, Ethnic, and Religious Identities* (New York: Routledge 1999), 59. See also Jonathan M. Hall, *Ethnic Identity in Greek Antiquity*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1997).

⁵² Baumann, *The Multicultural Riddle*, 83.

⁵³ Johnson Hodge, *If Sons, Then Heirs*, 15-17, 117-135 et passim.

⁵⁴ Johnson Hodge 2007, 119; 'Apostle to the Gentiles', 274-275. Kimber Buell and Johnson Hodge, 'The Politics of Interpretation', 248.

⁵⁵ Johnson Hodge, *If Sons, then Heirs*, 117-135.

In rightly challenging existing essentialist readings of Paul as being Christian and therefore not Jewish, Johnson Hodge unfortunately seems to deny Paul his own essentialism. Discourse on ethnicity may be recognised from the outside as flexible, and the mechanism of identity construction as an ongoing process, but such discourse often takes the form of essentialist claims, of which 'there is neither Jew nor Greek' seems to be a prime example. Baumann calls this dual nature of ethnic discourse 'dual discursive competence': a rhetoric that is often essential, in an activity that is always processual.⁵⁶ While Johnson Hodge acknowledges the dual character of ethnic discourse, she seems to miss much of the essentialism in Paul. The fact that ethnicity should be seen as plural, flexible, and situational, does not mean that Paul presents it as such.

Furthermore, we need to ask here whether Johnson Hodge's theoretical perspective does not obscure the reality of first-century ethnic identity constructions. Would Paul's vision of a common, all-encompassing identity for Jew and Greek not inevitably change and question the old identities, when these were based in part precisely on not being a barbarian, or not being a gentile?

The notion of ethnic identity as flexible and malleable seems to have been misconstrued to some extent by Johnson Hodge. The observation that people can combine different identities seems to lead inevitably to the suggestion that people can adopt any new identity without consequences to the individual identities they already possess. If we accept that ethnicity is constructed, it does not necessarily follow that any construction or combination of ethnic identities is possible in a given context. Paul's letters clearly show that his processual shaping of ethnic identity does not take place in a vacuum, but in a concrete environment where other perceptions of ethnicity stake similar essentialist claims. As the passage from Philippians discussed below indicates, Paul's view on ethnic identity clashed with that of others around him and forced him to argue his position.

The second author whose reading of Paul's autobiography we will be examining is Pamela Eisenbaum. While Eisenbaum and Johnson Hodge have much in common in their perspectives on Paul, they have very different approaches to ethnic identity. In her study of Paul's Jewish identity, Pamela Eisenbaum takes ethnic identity not as something constructed from within, but as something that can be established from without. Certain characteristics, such as his monotheism, provide evidence for Paul's identity as a Jew.⁵⁷ Rather than see ethnic identity, in this case first-century Jewish identity, as a process that is constantly given shape, Eisenbaum portrays it as having certain fixed characteristics. She speaks of Paul being 'unambiguously Jewish' and argues that 'there is no evidence that Paul's Jewish identity is any less robust, or any less intact after his encounter with the risen Jesus than it was before'.⁵⁸

This wonderful image of a robust identity should alert us, I think, to the question of perspective. In whose eyes, and by whose definition was Paul's identity robust? Eisenbaum seems to assume that we know beforehand what Jewish identity consists of and that once we have established that Paul was a Jew, we know other things about him that follow from this Jewish identity. Her readings at times come dangerously close to confining Paul to what

⁵⁶ Baumann, *The Multicultural Riddle*, 91-92.

⁵⁷ Eisenbaum, *Paul was not a Christian*, 177.

⁵⁸ Eisenbaum, *Paul was not a Christian*, 9, 142.

we know from other Jewish sources, rather than letting him speak for himself.⁵⁹ Moreover, such a view denies the complicated relationship Paul evidently had at times with some of his contemporaries, as is evident in the punishment he received from synagogue authorities (2 Corinthians 11.24).

In recent scholarship, Paul's position with regard to his own Jewish identity has thus (again) become a heated topic. While Pamela Eisenbaum notes that the claim that Paul was Jewish is 'an entirely pedestrian observation' in some circles, she feels it is necessary to restate this point and therefore devotes her study to the claim that 'Paul lived and died a Jew'.⁶⁰ Reclaiming Paul as a Hellenistic Jew makes it possible for Eisenbaum to combat 'the long history of Pauline interpretation that bolstered Christian anti-Judaism'.⁶¹ In her work on Augustine's teachings on Jews and Judaism, Paula Fredriksen concurs that, at least in his own view, Paul was always a Jew. Even more, again in his own view, 'Paul was always an excellent Jew in both phases of his life'.⁶²

As noted above, in this 'radical new perspective', Paul's position as a Jew is central to understanding and evaluating his message. It is thought that Paul wrote only to gentiles and therefore did not reflect on the position of Jews with regard to God or the law; Paul's message of Christ addressed the specifically gentile problem of alienation from God. Since Jews are already God's people, in this view, they do not need Paul's gospel; it does not reflect on them.⁶³

The idea that Paul fully identified himself as a Jew in his letters has been questioned recently by Love Sechrest, who sees Paul as subordinating 'his birth identity to his new racial identity in Christ'.⁶⁴ According to Sechrest, Paul refrains from identifying himself as a Jew, even though he makes regular reference to his Jewish background.⁶⁵ In the various passages where Paul may seem to claim that he is a Jew or an Israelite, Sechrest feels, he in fact refers to his past, or to the newly defined Israel that includes both Jews and gentiles. In those passages where he speaks of becoming like a Jew (Galatians 1:14, 2:15, 1 Corinthians 9:19-20), she believes Paul is in fact distancing himself from identifying as a Jew.⁶⁶

Sechrest argues that Paul sets up Christian identity, and that he does this in the framework of a Jewish understanding of race. This Jewish understanding of race, briefly summed up, rest on three types of identity: the first is social identity, which is based on indicia such as circumcision, the second is religious identity, based on Jewish law, and the third type is physical identity, through biological kinship. Paul's then creates an antithesis between Christian and Jewish identity by offering alternatives for each of these types of

⁵⁹ Eisenbaum notes that when addressing the issue of sin in Romans 3, 'it cannot be the case that Paul is speaking here of Israel's accumulated sin'. She repeatedly comes close to arguing that Paul does not say something, because it is not something Jews in his time said. (Eisenbaum, *Paul was not a Christian*, 220).

⁶⁰ Eisenbaum, *Paul was not a Christian*, 5. Daniel Boyarin hold a similar view: 'On my reading of the Pauline corpus, Paul lived and died convinced that he was a Jew living out Judaism.' (Boyarin, *A Radical Jew*, 2).

⁶¹ Eisenbaum, *Paul was not a Christian*, 5.

⁶² Paula Fredriksen, *Augustine and the Jews: A Christian Defense of Jews and Judaism* (New Haven: Yale University Press 2008), 63. Caroline Johnson Hodge takes a similar position in her study of Paul's use of kinship and ethnicity (Johnson Hodge, *If Sons, Then Heirs*, 153)

⁶³ Johnson Hodge, *If Sons, Then Heirs*, 9-11, Eisenbaum, *Paul was not a Christian*, 250-255.

⁶⁴ Sechrest, *A Former Jew*, 227.

⁶⁵ Sechrest, *A Former Jew*, 141.

⁶⁶ Sechrest, *A Former Jew*, 140-158.

identity.⁶⁷ These two very different perspectives on Paul's identity will be discussed in connection to two important references to Jewishness.

2.2 Paul's Jewishness

We now turn to the two passages where Paul talks about himself in relation to being a Jew. The first is the brief and, I will argue, ironic reference to Jew and gentile sinners in Galatians 2, the second Paul's biting autobiographical description in Philippians.

2.2.1 We are Jews, not Gentile Sinners

These different approaches to Paul's identity can be illustrated by looking at their respective interpretations of Paul's most emphatic appeal to ethnic difference, namely his statement that 'we are Jews by birth and not gentile sinners' (Ἡμεῖς φύσει Ἰουδαῖοι καὶ οὐκ ἐξ ἔθνῶν ἁμαρτωλοί, Galatians 2:15). Paul makes this, in my view ironic, claim when describing his conflict with Peter in Antioch, a conflict caused by Paul's anger over what he sees as Peter's hypocrisy in no longer eating with gentiles. Apparently, Jews and gentiles were accustomed to eat together in the mixed community in Antioch. At some point, however, Peter decided to keep himself, along with other Jews, separate from gentiles.

As part of his rebuke of Peter, Paul appeals to what he shared with Peter and the other Jews present as well, in saying 'we are Jews by birth', or 'by nature'. Paul distinguishes Peter and the others Jews, including himself, from gentiles, who are associated with sin: they are 'not gentile sinners'.

Within the 'radical new perspective', Paul's statement about Jews and gentile sinners is seen as a key text that reveals how he continues to identify himself as a Jew, and continues to see gentiles as the typical other: sinners par excellence. According to Johnson Hodge, Paul 'acknowledges his own distance from non-Jews' and emphasises the boundary between Jews and gentiles.⁶⁸ The passage further indicates, in her view, how gentiles, as sinners, stand in a very different relationship to God from those who are Jews by birth (φύσει Ἰουδαῖοι).

Sechrest, on the other hand places much weight on the fact that Paul does not only use the term Jews (Ἰουδαῖοι), but adds the clause 'by birth' (φύσει). This indicates, according to her, that while Peter and Paul were once Jews, Paul considers them to be so no longer.⁶⁹ They belonged to the Jewish race as a consequence of their birth, yet she believes they now belong to a new racial group as a consequence of their faith in Christ. Sechrest finds corroboration for this view in Paul's reference to his 'former life in Judaism' in the previous chapter (τὴν ἐμὴν ἀναστροφήν ποτε ἐν τῷ Ἰουδαϊσμῷ, Galatians 1:13). While he thinks of himself as someone who was born as a Jew, he no longer considers himself one.⁷⁰

While Sechrest rightly stresses the flexibility of Paul's self-identifications and the extent to which he can distance himself from Jewish identity by suggesting that he 'became as a Jew', she underestimates the degree to which he also at the same time does identify himself as a Jew. As Steve Mason shows in his analysis of ancient terminology relating to Judaism, the term 'Ioudaismos', used by Paul of his past activities (Galatians 1:13-14),

⁶⁷ Sechrest, *A Former Jew*, 145-149.

⁶⁸ Johnson Hodge, *If Sons, then Heirs*, 2007, 57. Eisenbaum, *Paul was not a Christian*, 2009.

⁶⁹ Sechrest, *A Former Jew*, 150-151.

⁷⁰ Sechrest, *A Former Jew*, 150-159.

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should not be interpreted to mean 'Judaism', as a religious or ethnic category, but rather as 'Judaizing', an activity.⁷¹ 'Ioudaismos' does not refer to a state, but to something one does; to the zeal with which Paul tried to convince other Jews to uphold the ancestral customs (cf. Philippians 3:6). It is this perspective towards customs which has changed, among other things, but not his view of himself as a Jew.

Furthermore, the logic of Paul's argument in his debate with Peter requires that he is included in the 'we' who are Jews. While this group is used to seeing itself as distinct from gentile sinners, Paul's point here is that they, as Jews, are in fact sinners too. Paul does not mean to say that he and Peter are no longer Jews, but that as Jews, they are no different from gentiles when it comes to sin. This rhetorical point is overlooked in the radical perspective, when it accepts the statement at face value, without seeing it in the context of Paul's argument. It does not recognise that Paul in fact takes up a familiar distinction between Jew and gentile, only to subvert it in an ironic way:

We ourselves are Jews by birth (φύσει Ἰουδαῖοι) and not gentile sinners (ἐξ ἔθνῶν ἁμαρτωλοί); who know that a person (ἄνθρωπος) is justified not by the works of the law but through faith in Jesus Christ. And we have come to believe in Christ Jesus, so that we might be justified by faith in Christ, and not by doing the works of the law, because no one will be justified (ὅτι ἐξ ἔργων νόμου οὐ δικαιοθήσεται πᾶσα σὰρξ) by the works of the law. But if, in our effort to be justified in Christ, we too have been found to be sinners (εὐρέθημεν καὶ αὐτοὶ ἁμαρτωλοὶ), is Christ then a servant of sin? Certainly not! (*Galatians 2:15-17*)

While Paul places himself here on the side of Jews who are not sinners by nature, he undermines the ethnic stereotype by claiming that Jews are found to be sinners too, when seeking to be justified in Christ.⁷² The distinction between Jew and gentile thus does not lie in their respective sinfulness, nor in the way they come to be justified. As Paul states here in the most general terms: a person (ἄνθρωπος) is justified through faith in Christ and no one will be justified (οὐ δικαιοθήσεται πᾶσα σὰρξ) by the works of the law. Johnson Hodge's rather strained interpretation, that Paul is discussing justification of gentiles and that 'a person' here refers to 'a gentile', can only be seen as resulting from her conviction that Paul is only concerned with gentile salvation and does not discuss Jewish attitudes towards the law.⁷³ Yet this reading is not only difficult with regards to this one term, but also in light of the thrust of the argument as a whole. Paul's punch line assumes that Jews are found to be

⁷¹ Mason, 'Jews, Judaeans, Judaizing, 469-470.

⁷² Paul can use the stereotype of gentiles as sinners in other contexts, such as when he accuses the Corinthians of sexual misconduct 'as is not even found among gentiles' (1 Corinthians 5:1). In Galatians he rather uses such a stereotype to rhetorical effect, as a way of wrong-footing his opponents. Others have argued that in using this distinction between Jews and gentiles, Paul uses the language of his opponents, so e.g. Dunn, who suggests that 'Paul was probably echoing the language used by the "individuals from James" when they spoke against the Jewish Christians' table-fellowship with the Gentile believers'. However, Dunn believes that this echo is the 'language of conciliation'. According to him, Paul was 'looking for common ground with his fellow Jewish believers' (Dunn, *Galatians*, 133).

⁷³ Johnson Hodge claims that reading 'a person' as 'a gentile', in this verse, makes sense both in Paul's 'recounting of his discussion with Peter and in the overall context of the letter'. This is not the consistent meaning of 'anthropos' in Paul, however, according to Johnson Hodge, since in most cases, she claims, the referent is unclear, whereas in two cases (Romans 2:9 and 29) he refers specifically to a Jew (Johnson Hodge, *If Sons then Heirs*, 176).

sinners too, thereby mocking the initial suggestion that they were not. For Paul, then, both Jew and gentile are in the same situation, with respect to sin as well as with respect to justification. Rather than confirm a Jew-gentile distinction, Paul ends up subverting it.⁷⁴

2.2.2 I Consider Them Garbage

Paul gives a more personal testimony about his religious identity in the letter to the Philippians. Here Paul writes something of a mini-autobiography, listing his Jewish credentials in order to redefine the relevance of these terms. Paul appears to be involved in a discussion about circumcision, and aims to show that he can beat the Jewish opponents at their own game, while making clear at the same time that the rules of the game have now changed.⁷⁵

Watch out for the dogs, watch out for the evil workers, watch out for the mutilation (Βλέπετε τοὺς κύνας, βλέπετε τοὺς κακοὺς ἐργάτας, βλέπετε τὴν κατατομήν)! For it is we who are the circumcision (ἡμεῖς γὰρ ἔσμεν ἡ περιτομή), who worship in the spirit of God and boast in Christ Jesus and have no confidence in the flesh- though I myself have reasons for such confidence. If anyone else thinks he has reasons to put confidence in the flesh, I have more: circumcised on the eighth day (περιτομῇ ὀκταήμερος), of the people of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews; in regard to the law, a Pharisee; as for zeal, persecuting the church; as for legalistic righteousness, faultless. But whatever was to my profit I now consider loss for the sake of Christ. What is more, I consider everything a loss compared to the surpassing greatness of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things. I consider them garbage, so that I may gain Christ and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ--the righteousness that comes from God and is by faith (μὴ ἔχων ἐμὴν δικαιοσύνην τὴν ἐκ νόμου ἀλλὰ τὴν διὰ πίστεως Χριστοῦ, τὴν ἐκ θεοῦ δικαιοσύνην ἐπὶ τῇ πίστει). (*Philippians* 3:2-9)

According to Eisenbaum, Paul's point in this passage is 'not terribly complicated or subtle'. It is simply that people should not be impressed by claims to privilege or status.⁷⁶ The claims made here, about circumcision, and being a Pharisee, are all things that Paul values, and

⁷⁴ According to Barclay, the repeated statements of contrast between 'faith in Christ' and 'works of the law', 'emphasize the way that justification by faith in Christ modifies the standard Jewish distinction between "Jews" and "Gentile sinners" (Barclay, *Obeying the Truth*, 78). Dunn notes that the Antioch incident 'provided one of the great defining moments in Paul's theology and indeed in Christian theology. For it provoked Paul into pronouncing what was to become his most memorable and telling principle: that no one is justified by works of the law, but only through faith in Christ' (Dunn, *The Theology of Paul the Apostle*, 359-360).

⁷⁵ Scholars differ on who these opponents were and why they would argue for circumcision. It seems reasonable to assume though, that they are Jews who to some extent share Paul's ideas about Christ as God's messiah. There is no indication that the dispute is related to these elements of Paul's message. What the dispute does centre on, similar to the discussion in Galatians, is the position of gentiles. For an overview of scholarship see Gordon Fee, *Paul's letter to the Philippians* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing 1995), 294, also Karl-Wilhelm Niebuhr, *Heidenapostel aus Israel; Die Jüdische Identität des Paulus nach ihrer Darstellung in seinen Briefen*, (Tübingen: Mohn Siebeck 1992), 88-89. Mark Nanos, in a recent analysis of the use of the word 'dogs' and its interpretation in Pauline scholarship, argues for a possible identification of the opponents through this term ('Paul's Reversal of Jews Calling Gentiles 'Dogs' (Philippians 3:2): 1600 Years of an Ideological Tale Wagging an Exegetical Dog?' *Biblical Interpretation* 17 (2009), 448-482).

⁷⁶ Eisenbaum, *Paul was not a Christian*, 140.

that he mentions to win this game of one-upmanship with other teachers. He was a member of the learned Jewish elite of his day and he still identifies himself according to these claims. But they simply pale in comparison to being a follower of Jesus. According to Eisenbaum, Paul mentions only Jewish status markers here, because those were the only ones that he and his opponents could lay claim to. If he had had any Roman status markers, if he had been a Roman citizen for example, he would have mentioned that here as well.

Sechrest on the other hand does not believe that Paul identifies himself by the claims to Jewish status at all. Rather, she argues that Paul here sets up Christian identity, and that he does this in the framework of a Jewish understanding of race. In the passage, Sechrest sees Paul creating three antitheses of Jewish and Christian identity.⁷⁷ The first is the opposition between righteousness through law versus through righteousness through faith, which in her analysis represents the religious component of racial identity. The second opposition contrasts boasting in Christ to boasting in the flesh, which corresponds to the kinship element in Jewish identity. The third is the opposition between mutilation and circumcision, which Sechrest reads as referring to two different groups.

In this passage she claims circumcision should be read as the Pauline group and mutilation as 'the mutilation faction', a polemical reference to Jewish-Christian missionaries who emphasised circumcision and law-observance. These are then distinct groups, which correspond to the social identity element in the model of race she employs. Sechrest concludes that when Paul describes the apocalyptic creation of a new people in Christ, he uses the existing construct of race which connected kinship, social distinctiveness, and beliefs about God.

Neither Eisenbaum nor Sechrest seem to me to see Paul's rhetoric for what it is worth, the latter putting too much weight on his terminology, the former underselling his polemics. Sechrest takes Paul's insults as a construction of opposites made in order to define a new race, reading 'mutilators' as the definition of an actual group. Yet this term, along with terms like 'dogs' and 'evil workers', are most likely derogatory terms for Paul's opponents, rather than indicators of specific people. Eisenbaum on the other hand completely ignores Paul's polemic appropriation of the term circumcision, and the very Jewish context in which this places his identity construction. It is no coincidence that Paul only mentions Jewish status markers; Roman citizenship would not be relevant in a debate that revolves around the question of who counts as righteous before God and on which grounds.

Paul's rhetoric only makes sense if we accept that he confirms his status as a Jew; all the markers of identity adduced by him serve to show that he is entitled to speak on behalf of the God of Israel at least as much as his opponents. He establishes his authority as someone speaking about issues such as circumcision and law, issues he knows about first hand. Paul emphasises his own success in following the law, possibly to counter any idea that he argues against following the law because he was a failure at it himself. As a Pharisee, Paul knew the law, and he was perfect in following it, but in Christ, knowledge of the law no longer matters. Paul is as much a member of God's people as are his opponents, according to their definition of the term, but Paul believes this definition no longer applies. In Christ he has come to accept a different definition of God's people, or 'the circumcision', as he can still call this people.

⁷⁷ Sechrest, *A Former Jew*, 145-149.

The passage is thus not about Paul's Jewishness as such, but about Paul's need to portray himself as well versed in his ancestral tradition, in order to be seen as a credible interpreter of this tradition for a gentile audience. Paul distances himself from his own circumcision and ancestry, something he can see as positive indicators of a special relationship with God in other contexts (e.g. in Romans 3:1-2; 11:1-2), and calls them garbage, in order to emphasise that belonging to God now happens via Christ, who is equally accessible to Jews and non-Jews. Paul can 'boast in the flesh' to bolster his standing with the Philippians, but he does not consider it relevant for his standing with God. In that sense, it is worthless to him.

2.3 Neither Circumcision nor Uncircumcision

The second theme in our examination of Paul's thought on Jew and gentile is that of circumcision. This is a subject that occurs in several of Paul's letters and on which he makes a number of seemingly contradictory statements. Some of these statements about circumcision appear to be similar to the baptismal statement, such as when Paul writes that 'neither circumcision nor uncircumcision means anything' (Galatians 6:15).

In the letter to the Galatians, Paul tries to convince his non-Jewish audience that they do not need to follow the Jewish law and become circumcised in order to belong to God.⁷⁸ He was apparently concerned that they might be persuaded to do so by certain fellow Christ-believing Jews, whom he sees as his opponents. The letter to the Philippians shows evidence of a similar debate (Philippians 3:3-5), as seen above, and in Romans and 1 Corinthians the issue comes up as well (Romans 2:25-29; 4:9-12; 1 Corinthians 7:18-19). It was thus an important part of the debates concerning the status of gentiles in which Paul was involved.

Some scholars believe that the tradition of eschatological inclusion helps to understand why Paul rejects the idea of gentile circumcision.⁷⁹ Paula Fredriksen argues that even though circumcision is not addressed explicitly in traditions about gentile inclusion, most sources seem to expect that gentiles will be accepted by God *as gentiles*. They leave behind their traditional gods and accept the God of Israel, but they do not join the Jews and become one people.⁸⁰ According to Fredriksen, the suggestion seems to be that the change gentiles make is in turning to a different divinity, not in converting in the full sense of following Jewish law and circumcising. Jews and gentiles both will be saved, as two distinct groups. An example of this is the prophecy in Tobit:

⁷⁸ De Boer states in his recent commentary that 'Paul's letter was written primarily to refute the gospel of the new preachers, to break their hold on the Galatian churches'. De Boer sums up the gospel of these new preachers as: 'you believe in Christ—fine; but you must now also observe the law, beginning with the rite of circumcision' (De Boer, *Galatians*, 50, 60); Martyn, *Galatians*, 13-34; Dunn, *The Epistle to the Galatians*, 14-20; Barclay, *Obeying the Truth*, 75-105; Esler, 'Paul's Contestation', 23-34; Witherington, *Grace in Galatia*, 278.

⁷⁹ In her recent study of circumcision in Paul and other Jewish sources such as 1, 2 and 4 Maccabees, Josephus and Philo, Nina Livesey agrees that Paul bases his view of gentile circumcision on the idea of the ingathering of the nations at the end time (Nina E. Livesey, *Circumcision as a Malleable Symbol* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck 2010), 91-92).

⁸⁰ Paula Fredriksen, 'Judaism, the Circumcision of Gentiles, and Apocalyptic Hope: Another Look at Galatians 1 and 2', *Journal of Theological Studies* 42 (1991), 532-564, 547-548.

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After this they will all return from exile and will rebuild Jerusalem in splendour; and in it the temple of God will be rebuilt, just as the prophets of Israel have said concerning it. Then the nations in the whole world will all be converted and worship God in truth (πάντα τὰ ἔθνη ἐπιστρέψουσιν ἀληθινῶς φοβείσασιν κύριον τὸν θεόν). They will abandon their idols, which deceitfully had led them into their error; and in righteousness they will praise the eternal God (καὶ κατορύξουσιν τὰ εἰδῶλα αὐτῶν καὶ εὐλογήσουσιν πάντα τὰ ἔθνη τὸν κύριον). All the Israelites who are saved in those days and are truly mindful of God will be gathered together; they will go to Jerusalem and live in safety for ever in the land of Abraham, and it will be given over to them. (*Tobit* 14:5-7)

The Israelites will return to Jerusalem and the nations of the earth will abandon their idols and worship the eternal God. They are not collapsed into one group; the gentiles do not become Jews. They are described as worshipping God while still, apparently, remaining gentiles.

However, Fredriksen appears to be misrepresenting the tradition somewhat and overstates its clarity and uniformity on this issue. The prophecies in the Sibylline Oracles 3 discussed above do mention the law in relation to gentiles. Gentiles even sing a hymn about the law: 'Let us all consider the law of the highest God, for it is the most righteous of all laws on earth' (νόμον ὑψίστοιου θεοῦ φραζώμεθα πάντες ὅστε δικαιοτάτος πέλεται πάντων κατὰ γαῖαν, Sibylline Oracles 3. 719-720). According to Buitenwerf, 'consider the law' should possibly be understood as 'comply with the law'.⁸¹ Buitenwerf, as already noted, believes that gentiles are thought to 'adopt the Jewish religious and ethical practices' in these prophecies.⁸² The least that can be said is that they are portrayed as falling under one law with Jews. A further prophecy in this book of the Sibyllines makes this explicit:

The Immortal in starry heaven will put into effect a common law for the people, valid over the entire earth (κοινόν τε νόμον κατὰ γαῖαν ἅπασαν ἀνθρώποις), applying to everything done by miserable mortals. For he is the sole God and there is no other (αὐτός γὰρ μόνος ἐστὶ θεὸς οὐκ ἔστιν ἕτ' ἄλλος) (*Sibylline Oracles* 3. 758-760).

In the final section of this chapter, we will look in more detail at this text, but we can see here that although the issue of the circumcision of gentiles is not explicitly addressed, gentiles can be portrayed as following the same law as Jews in the end time.

The same idea can be seen in Isaiah, where the nations are said to hear the way of God in order to walk in it:

And many nations shall go and say, Come, and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord (πορεύσονται ἔθνη πολλὰ καὶ ἐροῦσιν δεῦτε καὶ ἀναβῶμεν εἰς τὸ ὄρος κυρίου), and to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will tell us his way, and we will walk in it (ἀναγγελεῖ ἡμῖν τὴν ὁδὸν αὐτοῦ καὶ πορευσόμεθα): for out of Sion shall go forth the law, and the word of the Lord (ἐξελεύσεται νόμος καὶ λόγος κυρίου) out of Jerusalem. (*Isaiah* 2:3)

⁸¹ Buitenwerf, *Book III of the Sibylline Oracles*, 282.

⁸² Buitenwerf, *Book III of the Sibylline Oracles*, 260.

In this prophecy, the law is clearly expected to have meaning for gentiles. Walking in the way of God is used as a synonym for law observance in Isaiah (see e.g., Isaiah 42:24), and the passage might well be read as an instruction that gentiles should keep the law.⁸³

The exact definition of what it means when gentiles join themselves to the Lord and becoming his people is not given, but the law could be thought to play a role in making gentiles God's people. The point is not so much that these texts clearly demand law observance of gentiles, but that they are open to such an interpretation. It is therefore not necessary to assume that *any* Jew who believed the end-time had come would necessarily oppose gentile circumcision.

Paul, however, does oppose circumcision, and I believe Fredriksen is right to see this as a consequence of his particular take on the status of eschatological gentiles. His argumentation suggests that he attacks gentile circumcision in order to oppose full conversion of gentiles to become Jews. Since circumcision was considered by both Jews and non-Jews to be the distinguishing mark of Jews, accepting circumcision would have amounted to conversion and would have turned these gentiles into full proselytes; they would have joined the Jewish ethnos.⁸⁴ Paul does not want this to happen and argues that someone who becomes circumcised has to follow the entire law and thus become a proselyte. For Paul, taking this route constitutes a denial of Christ:

Mark my words! I, Paul, tell you that if you let yourselves be circumcised, Christ will be of no value to you at all (Ἴδε ἐγὼ Παῦλος λέγω ὑμῖν ὅτι ἐὰν περιτέμνησθε, Χριστὸς ὑμᾶς οὐδὲν ὠφελήσει). Again I declare to every man who lets himself be circumcised that he is obligated to obey the whole law (μαρτύρομαι δὲ πάλιν παντὶ ἀνθρώπῳ περιτεμνομένῳ ὅτι ὀφειλέτης ἐστὶν ὅλον τὸν νόμον ποιῆσαι). You who are trying to be justified by law have been alienated from Christ; you have fallen away from grace. (*Galatians* 5:2-4)

This passage shows that Paul's opinion on circumcision is related to messianic eschatology: gentile circumcision is incompatible with Christ and to circumcise is to become alienated from Christ. Because Christ is the beginning of the new age, gentiles can now be accepted by God as gentiles. That is one of the changes the new age has brought. If non-Jews decide to become circumcised, they try to take a different route towards divine acceptance, namely that of becoming a proselyte. This route had been available before and, according to Paul, apparently still is, but it is a route that denies the change that Christ has made. For Paul, if a non-Jew is circumcised, he will have to obey the whole law; he becomes a Jew. In doing so, he places himself outside of the grace provided by Christ and alienates himself from Christ. He acts as if the world was still the same old world where in order to find salvation as a gentile you needed to become a Jew.⁸⁵

⁸³ The same idea can be found in Isaiah 56.6-8; 66.21. Terence Donaldson concludes that Jewish eschatological tradition tended to anticipate the inclusion of the gentiles as gentiles, but contained latent elements that could have been developed in a proselyte direction (see Donaldson, "Proselytes or 'Righteous Gentiles', 27). According to Donaldson, Philo expects gentiles in the messianic age to become full proselytes.

⁸⁴ On the role of circumcision as a marker of Jewishness in antiquity, see Cohen, *The Beginnings of Jewishness*, 158.

⁸⁵ It is this aspect of the eschatological position of gentiles that is missing in the interpretation of this passage and of Paul's view on circumcision in general in representatives of the 'new perspective', who tend to read it in terms of the opposition between the law and faith. According to De Boer, for example, 'to want to predicate justification on circumcision and law observance now that Christ (faith) has come into the world (...) is to nullify

A Cosmopolitan Ideal

So far Paul can thus be seen to stay within the bounds of Jewish tradition, as Fredriksen maintains; opposing gentile circumcision does not imply a criticism of the practice for Jews, or as such.⁸⁶ However, the picture is slightly complicated by the way Paul argues against gentile circumcision. According to Fredriksen's view, it would have been enough for Paul to say that circumcision is simply not for gentiles, because they, unlike Jews, do not need it.⁸⁷ Yet Paul takes a very different tack, one that implies a much more radical critique. Immediately before the passage from Galatians just quoted, Paul equates the acceptance of Jewish practices by the gentile Galatians with the religious traditions they used to observe, and even with the powers that ruled them at that time:

Formerly, when you did not know God, you were slaves to those who by nature are not gods. But now that you know God--or rather are known by God--how is it that you are turning back to those weak and miserable principles (νῦν δὲ γνόντες θεόν, μᾶλλον δὲ γνωσθέντες ὑπὸ θεοῦ, πῶς ἐπιστρέφετε πάλιν ἐπὶ τὰ ἀσθεινῆ καὶ πτωχὰ στοιχεῖα οἷς πάλιν ἄνωθεν δουλεῦειν θέλετε)? Do you wish to be enslaved by them all over again? You are observing special days and months and seasons and years (ἡμέρας παρατηρεῖσθε καὶ μῆνας καὶ καιροὺς καὶ ἐνιαυτούς)! I fear for you, that somehow I have wasted my efforts on you. (*Galatians* 4:8-10)

Here Paul makes a comparison that is clearly intended to be derogatory. He sums up the former religious practices of the Galatians and their acceptance of Jewish customs as 'observing special days'. Paul compares following the Jewish law with returning to slavery, the same kind of slavery that was associated with their idolatry in the past.⁸⁸ Following the Jewish law would in a sense mean a return to idolatry; both entail enslavement to the principles (στοιχεῖα), the elements of the cosmos.⁸⁹ This slavery is precisely what Christ had freed them from:

So also, when we were children, we were in slavery under the basic principles of the world (ὑπὸ τὰ στοιχεῖα τοῦ κόσμου). But when the time had fully come, God

God's grace (...), thus to fall out of the realm of this grace and to become separated from Christ (De Boer, *Galatians*, 315). James Dunn sees the contrast here as one between 'a lifestyle characterized by circumcision and determined by the entire law' and 'faith as complete reliance on and openness to God's grace' (Dunn, *The Theology of Paul*, 637-638).

⁸⁶ Although as Daniel Boyarin points out, if following the Jewish law is no longer a requirement for being accepted by God, then the meaning of the law is redefined (Boyarin, *A Radical Jew*, 272-273, nt.9).

⁸⁷ This is the way Paula Fredriksen and Pamela Eisenbaum reconstruct his position based on the tradition of gentile eschatological inclusion. They pay little attention to Paul's polemics against circumcision or acknowledge that his argumentation against circumcision presents a complication.

⁸⁸ Not all scholars agree that Paul is referring to Jewish practices here. Troy Martin, for example, argues that the Galatians were literally returning to their former religious traditions, see Troy Martin, 'Apostasy to Paganism: The Rhetorical Stasis of the Galatian Controversy' *Journal of Biblical Literature*, 114/3 (Autumn 1995), 437-461; also 'Pagan and Judeo-Christian Time-keeping Schemes in Galatians 4:10 and Colossians 2:16', *New Testament Studies* 42 (1996), 105-119. However, since Paul warns a few verses later that 'those people are zealous to win you over' (4:17), and addresses his audience as 'you who want to be under the law', he clearly has the same problem of gentiles being urged to follow the law in view here, as in the whole of the letter. In addition, an attempt to reconstruct what practices Paul may be referring to, based on his description here, should take into account that he is not trying to accurately depict these practices, but to make an insulting statement with the intent to dissuade his audience.

⁸⁹ For the role of the cosmic principles in this context, see George H. van Kooten, *Cosmic Christology in Paul and the Pauline School* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck 2003), 64-79.

sent his Son, born of a woman, born under law, to redeem those under law, that we might receive the full rights of sons. Because you are sons, God sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, the Spirit who calls out, "Abba, Father." So you are no longer a slave, but a son; and since you are a son, God has made you also an heir. (*Galatians 4:3-7*)

The Galatians had been freed from slavery and accepted as sons through the spirit of Christ. Now, if they take up the Jewish law, they voluntarily return to this slavery; as Paul put it in the passage on circumcision quoted above, they alienate themselves from Christ and fall away from grace. That is why he warns them against it in such unusually strong terms. This rhetoric can be understood from the paradigm of gentile eschatological inclusion, but it is far more polemical with regard to Jewish law and practices than other sources. The best explanation for these polemics seems to be that they took shape in response to the opposition that Paul encountered. He was faced with people who were trying to persuade his Galatian audience of the need to follow the law and become circumcised. These people whom Paul saw as his opponents were most likely Jews who shared Paul's belief about Christ, but differed in their attitude towards the relevance of the law for gentiles.⁹⁰

Most scholars who discuss the debate between Paul and his opponents in Galatia believe that it is Paul's attitude towards circumcision which needs explaining, whereas that of his opponents represented the traditional Jewish stance. Based on her analysis of Jewish eschatological expectations, Paula Fredriksen argues the exact opposite. Since the expectations about gentile eschatological exclusion in her view uniformly hold that gentiles do not fully convert in what she calls a 'halakhic sense', any Jew who suggested that gentiles should circumcise introduced a 'startling novelty'. Fredriksen finds the explanation for Paul's opponents' unusual demand that gentiles circumcise, in the delayed coming of God's kingdom: 'time drags when you want it to end'.⁹¹ Fredriksen places the motivation of this group squarely in the spread of the gospel. Perhaps, she speculates, they feared that the prominence of gentiles in the movement had contributed to the rejection of the gospel by most Jews. Or perhaps they felt that if the spokespeople of the movement were Jews, as circumcised gentiles would be, their chances of success would be greater. Whatever their motivations, their proposal was rejected, according to Fredriksen, because a mission to gentiles to convert them to Judaism was too novel.⁹²

Several objections can be raised against Fredriksen's reconstruction. Firstly, as already concluded above, Fredriksen misjudges the supposed uniformity of the eschatological tradition about gentiles. While some sources indeed simply describe gentiles abandoning their idols and turning to God, others can be read as suggesting gentile law observance. Again there is the danger here, which is my second objection, of seeing existing tradition as a blue print, or even a straightjacket, from which one would have to break free to make 'startling novelties'. The end time as it was experienced by Paul and his opponents did not conform to any traditional expectation: it was a messianic age with a now absent

⁹⁰ Nina Livesey argues that Paul equated the practice of the law with slavery in Galatians for two possible reasons. It was either because circumcision would require association with Jews who answer to Rome and to Roman rule, or it signifies that Paul's revelation of the resurrected Jesus signals the end time and the gathering of gentiles. According to Livesey, Paul's opponents did not recognise that the end time was approaching, since they operated under a different world clock (Livesey, *Circumcision as a Malleable Symbol*, 91).

⁹¹ Fredriksen, 'Judaism, the Circumcision of Gentiles', 559.

⁹² Fredriksen, 'Judaism, the Circumcision of Gentiles', 561.

messiah. That there would be differing interpretations of what was required of gentiles under such circumstances should not surprise us. Even more so, since local communities of Jews and gentiles worshipping God together as one group, did not have any place in traditional expectations either. It might be one thing to imagine the Lord preparing a feast for all the nations in the end-time, as prophesied in Isaiah (Isaiah 25:6), but quite another to sit down for a meal together in Antioch. Such a novel situation would require a rethinking of previous expectations.

In general, for gentiles who abandoned their traditional religion and chose to worship only the God of Israel, the normal corollary would be circumcision.⁹³ In a sense, gentiles who gave up their gods but did not circumcise could be seen to enter an ethnic no man's land. As the hallmark of a Jew and a convert, circumcision would relieve the tension that this situation might be felt to create. There is thus no need to assume that all Jews who believed the end-time had come with Christ would also be convinced that gentiles should now not become circumcised. Eschatological traditions allowed for more diversity of opinion and circumstances conformed less to what might have been expected.

Paul and those whom he saw as his opponents were thus caught in unique and unexpected circumstances, to which they reacted in different ways. Their clash over gentile circumcision led to some polemical statements on the part of Paul, which in some cases amounted to a personal attack. With regard to his opponents, he associates circumcision with mutilation and castration:⁹⁴

I wish those agitators would castrate themselves (ὄφελον καὶ ἀποκόψονται οἱ ἀναστατοῦντες ὑμᾶς.). (*Galatians* 5:12)

Watch out for those dogs, watch out for those evil workers, watch out for the mutilation (Βλέπετε τοὺς κύνας, βλέπετε τοὺς κακοὺς ἐργάτας, βλέπετε τὴν κατατομήν). (*Philippians* 3:2)

Again Paul does not discredit gentile circumcision specifically, even though this is what is at stake. Instead, by equating circumcision to mutilation, he reflects negatively on the practice as such. Those who propagate gentile circumcision are vilified by Paul. In associating circumcision with castration, Paul distances himself from his own tradition and taps into the general cultural hostility towards circumcision.⁹⁵ A later decree under Antonius Pius

⁹³ Although the definitions of who counted as a Jew and who did not were far from uniform, circumcision was generally seen as *the* mark of a Jew. A complete rejection of the gods, as demanded by Paul, would generally imply a full conversion to Judaism. On the various degrees of gentile association with Judaism, see Cohen, *The Beginnings of Jewishness*, 140-198.

⁹⁴ According to Martin de Boer, Paul is alluding in Galatians 5:12 to the ritual castration that occurred in the devotion to the goddess Cybele (De Boer, *Galatians*, 325). The thesis that Paul's concern about circumcision in Galatians originates in an antipathy towards the cult of the Mother of the Gods, which was practiced in Anatolia, is central to Susan Elliott's recent study of the letter (Elliott, *Cutting too Close for Comfort*, 13). Yet this hypothesis begs the question why Paul then discusses circumcision in a similar way in letters to other locations where this specific religious context was lacking.

⁹⁵ On Paul's attitude and language in relation to contemporary understandings of circumcision on the part of non-Jews, especially in connection with ideas about masculinity, see Karin B. Neutel and Matthew R. Anderson, 'The First Cut is the Deepest: Masculinity and Circumcision in the First Century' in *Biblical Masculinities*, Peter-Ben Smit and Ovidiu Creanga (eds.), (Sheffield: Phoenix Press 2013) *forthcoming*.

determined that the penalty for unlawful circumcision would be castration, an uncomfortable echo of Paul's judgment on his opponents.⁹⁶

Unlike these opponents, Paul feels that gentiles should not become Jews, but should remain a separate group. Yet while Paul, in not allowing gentiles to become Jews, argues for a preservation of difference, he does so, rather paradoxically, by claiming that there is no difference:

For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision has any value, but only faith expressing itself through love (ἐν γὰρ Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ οὔτε περιτομή τι ἰσχύει οὔτε ἀκροβυστία ἀλλὰ πίστις δι' ἀγάπης ἐνεργουμένη). (*Galatians 5:6*)

Neither circumcision nor uncircumcision means anything; what counts is a new creation (οὔτε γὰρ περιτομή τί ἐστίν οὔτε ἀκροβυστία ἀλλὰ καινή κτίσις). (*Galatians 6:15*)

On the basis of the expectations concerning gentile eschatological salvation, we might expect Paul to say to gentiles: do not circumcise, because you are gentiles, not Jews. In effect what Paul says is, do not circumcise, because circumcision is meaningless. His position thus appears to turn into something of a critique on circumcision as such. Since circumcision no longer distinguishes those who belong to God from those who do not, the corollary seems to be that it no longer has no value or meaning. These two texts seem to echo the baptismal formula earlier in the letter, where Paul denies the distinction between Jew and Greek.⁹⁷ All three texts offer an alternative (being 'in Christ, Galatians 3:28; 'faith expressing itself through love', Galatians 5:6; 'new creation' Galatians 6:5) explains or determines the denial of the distinction.

Even though Paul can describe circumcision as meaningless, whether a person becomes circumcised or not is still not a matter of indifference to Paul. The act is not value-neutral for Paul: while there is nothing positive to gain in circumcising, for him there is much to lose in doing so. To attach meaning to circumcision in the way that gentiles would do by becoming circumcised would be to deny that the distinction has been both fulfilled and ended in Christ, as we saw above (Galatians 5:2-6). So while circumcision has no value according to Paul, it can still be important not to circumcise. What we see in both these passages is that Paul opposes circumcision to something else, in the first to faith and in the second to a new creation. A third variation on this pattern can be found in 1 Corinthians, where Paul opposes circumcision to the law:

Was a man already circumcised when he was called? He should not become uncircumcised. Was a man uncircumcised when he was called? He should not be circumcised. Circumcision is nothing and uncircumcision is nothing. Keeping God's commands is what counts (ἡ περιτομή οὐδέν ἐστίν καὶ ἡ ἀκροβυστία οὐδέν ἐστίν, ἀλλὰ τήρησις ἐντολῶν θεοῦ.). (*1 Corinthians 7:18-19*)

⁹⁶ See Andreas Blaschke, *Beschneidung: Zeugnisse der Bibel und verwandter Texte*, (Tübingen: Francke Verlag 1998), 357-359.

⁹⁷ The parallel is also noted by De Boer, who understands this in terms of a 'new identity': 'the dualities of the present world (Jew/Greek, slave/free, male/female. Circumcision/uncircumcision) have been abolished' (De Boer, *Galatians*, 402-403).

In this chapter of the letter to the Corinthians, Paul deals with the issue of marriage. He addresses various groups about how to act in marriage and whether to become or stay married. To illustrate his point that there is no need to change, Paul gives the examples of circumcision and slavery.⁹⁸ In light of the messianic age in both these cases, the rule is: stay as you are (though Paul undermines this rule with his advice to slaves, as we shall see in Chapter III). Since both circumcision and uncircumcision are nothing, there is no need to change. Paul then comes up with the unusual statement that what counts is keeping God's commandments. For many Jews, circumcision would be very much a part of God's commandments, but evidently not for Paul.⁹⁹

Paul can thus subordinate circumcision to other things, such as faith, or God's commandments. Paul can also subordinate physical circumcision to metaphorical circumcision, which then becomes the true measure of a person:

A man is not a Jew if he is only one outwardly, nor is circumcision merely outward and physical (καὶ κρινεῖ ἢ ἐκ φύσεως ἀκροβυστία τὸν νόμον τελοῦσα σὲ τὸν διὰ γράμματος καὶ περιτομῆς παραβάτην νόμου). No, a man is a Jew if he is one inwardly; and circumcision is circumcision of the heart, by the Spirit, not by the written code (ἀλλ' ὁ ἐν τῷ κρυπτῷ Ἰουδαῖος, καὶ περιτομὴ καρδίας ἐν πνεύματι οὐ γράμματι, οὗ ὁ ἔπαινος οὐκ ἐξ ἀνθρώπων ἀλλ' ἐκ τοῦ θεοῦ). Such a man's praise is not from men, but from God. (*Romans 2:28-29*)

The real meaning of circumcision apparently is its metaphorical meaning. Being circumcised and being a Jew is presented here as a desirable state, yet the meaning of circumcision is transformed from a physical to a spiritual state. John Barclay notes that while the juxtaposition of these two types of circumcision is a familiar theme in Jewish literature, Paul departs from his predecessors in the 'sharpness of the antithesis' between the two, as well as in suggesting that circumcision of the heart is the only kind that matters and is possible for gentiles and Jews both.¹⁰⁰ The same thought is found in the letter to the Philippians, immediately after Paul has attacked his opponents who do feel that physical circumcision matters:

For it is we who are the circumcision, we who worship by the Spirit of God, who glory in Christ Jesus, and who put no confidence in the flesh (ἡμεῖς γὰρ ἐσμεν ἡ περιτομή, οἱ πνεύματι θεοῦ λατρεύοντες καὶ καυχώμενοι ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ καὶ οὐκ ἐν σαρκὶ πεποιθότες). (*Philippians 3:3*)

Circumcision is still a worthwhile identity to claim, but in this passage, as discussed above, Paul transforms its meaning. It now excludes those Jewish Christians who argue for circumcision, but includes gentiles who share Paul's faith in Christ. Like Paul, Philo places

⁹⁸ It is often assumed that Paul brings in these two categories to illustrate a rule about marriage because they are associated with each other as the three pairs of the baptismal formula. See further references to this point in Chapters III and IV in the context of my discussion of slavery and marriage.

⁹⁹ As John Barclay observes, given that circumcision was normally regarded as one of the requirements of the law, Paul's argument here and in *Romans 2:26* would sound very strange (John Barclay, 'Paul and Philo on circumcision: *Romans 2.25-9* in social and cultural context', *New Testament Studies* 44/4 (1998), 536-556, 545). Paul himself confirms this view of the law in *Galatians 5:3*, as discussed above.

¹⁰⁰ Barclay, 'Paul and Philo on circumcision', 551-552. The contrast between circumcision of the heart and of the flesh is found in many sources, e.g., *Deuteronomy 10:16; 30:6; Leviticus 26:41; Jubilees 1:23*.

value on a metaphorical interpretation of circumcision. To him, circumcision stands for a curbing of passion and impiety. However, he does insist on keeping the actual practice of circumcision, and maintains that it offers several practical advantages, such as hygiene and more successful procreation.¹⁰¹ Philo's argument that literal observance of circumcision is required, in spite of its allegorical meaning, suggests that there were those who abandoned the practice of circumcision. While valuing the allegorical meaning, and apparently not repudiating Judaism, they no longer felt the need to circumcise.¹⁰² There is other evidence that some Jews neglected circumcision or underwent a procedure known as epispasm, intended to reverse the effect of circumcision.¹⁰³ Paul also knows of this practice, as we saw in the passages from 1 Corinthians, where he advises believers not to become 'uncircumcised' (ἐπισπάσμαι).

Several Jewish sources of the period condemn the practice of epispasm.¹⁰⁴ The attitudes towards circumcision in Greek culture would have made life difficult for some Jews, since the Greek and Roman aversion to circumcision put pressure on those who wanted to take part in all aspects of Greek society.¹⁰⁵ In this whole debate, Paul takes up a unique position. He prioritises metaphorical circumcision, rejects physical circumcision of gentiles, and discredits the practice of circumcision by equating it with mutilation. He still claims the term circumcision to denote closeness to God, but applies it to people who are not physically circumcised. It is little wonder that this idiosyncratic approach to circumcision gained a hostile response from some of Paul's Jewish contemporaries.¹⁰⁶

In response to this opposition, Paul does not argue about the end-time and its consequences for gentiles, but rather about faith and new creation, which have consequences for both Jew and gentile.¹⁰⁷ We cannot therefore say, with Fredriksen, that Paul's eschatology provides a complete explanation of his view on circumcision, nor that this view falls within the existing tradition of gentile eschatological exclusion. While the latter still provides the best explanation for his basic stance on gentile circumcision, the direct polemic with those who argued in favour of circumcision of gentiles should be seen as an important influence on his thought and the cause of his more extreme statements. For Paul, circumcision was not only of no value to gentiles, it had also lost certain aspects of its meaning in general, since for the first time, in the messianic age it no longer distinguishes those who belong to God's people from those who do not. Paul's language and thought shows a degree of flexibility; in spite of his negative remarks about circumcision for gentiles, he can still use circumcision as a category of privileged identity. Paul can claim to be the

¹⁰¹ Philo discusses circumcision in several works: *On the Migration of Abraham* 92, *Special Laws* 1.1-11, *Questions on Genesis* 3.48. On Philo's view of circumcision, see Livesey, *Circumcision as a malleable Symbol*, 41-76, also Barclay, 'Paul and Philo on circumcision', 538-543; Alan Mendelson, *Philo's Jewish Identity*, (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1988), 55-56.

¹⁰² John J. Collins, 'A Symbol of Otherness: Circumcision and Salvation in the First Century', in *"To See Ourselves as Others See Us", Christians, Jews, "Others" in Late Antiquity*, Judith Neusner and Ernest S. Frerichs (eds.), (Chico: Scholars Press 1985), 163-186, 172-173

¹⁰³ Robert G. Hall, 'Epispasm, Circumcision in Reverse', *Bible Review* (1992), 52-57.

¹⁰⁴ Hall, 'Epispasm', 55-56.

¹⁰⁵ Hall, 'Epispasm', 53-55.

¹⁰⁶ See also Barclay, 'Paul and Philo on Circumcision', 549-550. Livesey concludes that Paul uses the term circumcision 'freely and in innovative ways' (Livesey, *Circumcision as a Malleable Symbol*, 121).

¹⁰⁷ Cohen, *The Beginnings of Jewishness*, 566.

circumcision and intend the term as positive reference to God's people, both Jews and non-Jews.

2.4 Abraham, Father of Jew and Gentile

The same flexibility and creativity with regard to tradition is evident in Paul's redefinition of Abrahamic ancestry. As noted, in the letter to the Galatians, Paul is involved in a discussion with opponents who felt that gentiles needed to become circumcised and follow the law, in order to belong to God. Paul is clearly concerned that these opponents have been successful. He fears that his audience has been persuaded to accept their view and will decide to start following the Jewish law. Throughout the letter to the Galatians, Paul argues passionately that such a move is not necessary, and would even complicate their situation.

As part of his argument, Paul sets out his views about who counts as the descendants of Abraham. It has been suggested that it is not Paul himself who is concerned about Abraham in relation to gentiles, but that his opponents brought Abraham up in the course of their argument, therefore necessitating a reply from Paul.¹⁰⁸ As far as we can reconstruct their argument, it seems entirely possible that Paul's opponents, if they felt that only full conversion of gentiles was acceptable, would present belonging to Abraham as a desirable state to their gentile audience.¹⁰⁹ Since observance of the Jewish law was seen as the defining characteristic of those who belong to Abraham's kin, the figure of Abraham would serve their argument very well.¹¹⁰ Paul, then, replies with his own version of who counts as Abraham's heirs, and he does so with conviction.¹¹¹ He uses the claim that Abraham is the ancestor of both Jews and gentiles, to support his case that the gentile Galatians do not need the Jewish law to become his offspring.

Paul's argument about Abraham, however, takes up a tradition that was rarely referred to in other Jewish texts: the notion of the blessing of the nations in Abraham (Genesis 12:3 and 18:18):

Consider Abraham: "He believed God, and it was reckoned to him as righteousness" (καθὼς Ἀβραάμ ἐπίστευσεν τῷ θεῷ, καὶ ἐλογίσθη αὐτῷ εἰς δικαιοσύνην). Understand, then, that those from faith are children of Abraham (Γινώσκετε ἄρα ὅτι οἱ ἐκ πίστεως, οὗτοι υἱοὶ εἰσιν Ἀβραάμ). The Scripture

¹⁰⁸ So, e.g., De Boer, *Galatians*, 185; Philip F. Esler, 'Paul's Contestation', 25. Eisenbaum and Dunn, however, both see an intrinsic reason for Paul's interest in Abraham. According to Eisenbaum, Abraham was a 'particularly useful model for preaching and teaching to Gentiles'. Paul presents himself as a 'new kind of Abraham'; as apostle to the nations, he creates the descendants that were promised to Abraham (Eisenbaum, *Paul was not a Christian*, 201). In contrast, Dunn sees Genesis 15:6 as 'fundamental to Paul's theology of justification' (Dunn, *The Theology of Paul*, 375).

¹⁰⁹ See, e.g., the reconstruction in Martyn's commentary of the argument of the 'Teachers', as he calls Paul's opponents (Martyn, *Galatians*, 117-126).

¹¹⁰ The connection between belonging to Abraham's descendants and observing the law can be found, e.g., in Josephus, *Jewish Antiquities* 5.101-113; 4 Maccabees 18:1, see Birgit van der Lans, 'Belonging to Abraham's Kin', 307-318, also Edward Adams, 'Abraham's Faith and Gentile Disobedience: Textual Links between Romans 1 and 4', *Journal for the Study of the New Testament* 65 (1997), 47-66, 49.

¹¹¹ According to Philip Esler, Paul thought, just before writing Galatians 3: 'You regard descent from Abraham as a desirable thing? ... Then let me tell you what it means and how to get it!' (Esler, 'Paul's Contestation of Israel's (Ethnic) Memory of Abraham', 25). Esler also discusses the various views on the specific case made by these opponents (24-25).

Neither Jew nor Greek

foresaw that God would justify the gentiles by faith, and announced the gospel in advance to Abraham: "All nations will be blessed through you" (προϊδοῦσα δὲ ἡ γραφή ὅτι ἐκ πίστεως δικαιοῦ τὰ ἔθνη ὁ θεός, προεηγγελίσαστο τῷ Ἀβραάμ ὅτι Ἐνευλογηθήσονται ἐν σοὶ πάντα τὰ ἔθνη). So those from faith are blessed along with Abraham, the man of faith (ὥστε οἱ ἐκ πίστεως εὐλογοῦνται σὺν τῷ πιστῷ Ἀβραά). (*Galatians 3:6-9*)

The motif that Paul uses here, of Abraham as the father to many nations, is seldom reflected on in contemporary literature, but serves him well to refute the claim that Abraham was father of the Jews only, and that a gentile ought to become a Jew in order to belong to Abraham.¹¹² Both in Galatians and in Romans, where Paul also discusses Abrahamic descent, the blessing of the nations plays a central role in Paul's argument in connection to faith. It was a theme that enabled Paul to connect Abraham to gentiles, when he was generally seen as the ancestor of Jews only.

This passage thus explains that the key to gentile access to Abraham lies in faith (πίστις). Paul argues that because Abraham 'believed God (ἐπίστευσεν τῷ θεῷ) and it was reckoned to him as righteousness' (Genesis 15:6), 'those from faith' (οἱ ἐκ πίστεως), including the Galatians, count as his sons (Galatians 3:7). The clause 'those from faith' is usually translated as 'those who believe'.¹¹³ This interpretation makes sense of the contrast that Paul evokes between faith and the works of the law (ἐξ ἔργων νόμου ἢ ἐξ ἀκοῆς πίστεως) just before this passage, when he asks his audience on what basis they received the spirit (Galatians 3:1-5). As consequence of their faith, 'those who believe', and, it is implied, not those from the law, will be blessed with Abraham (Galatians 3: 8-9).

This crucial nominative phrase 'those from faith' (οἱ ἐκ πίστεως), is read very differently in the 'radical new perspective'. Both Pamela Eisenbaum and Caroline Johnson Hodge argue that faith is not considered here by Paul as a characteristic of the Galatians, but primarily as a characteristic of Abraham. Given that Paul's argument deals with kinship, Eisenbaum and Johnson Hodge believe the term 'those from faith' should be interpreted to mean 'those descended of faith' or 'those who descend from faithfulness'.¹¹⁴ The faith or faithfulness in question is not that of the Galatians, but of Abraham, and refers to his faithful response to God's promises as told in Genesis (Genesis 12:3, 15:3-6, 18:18). In this

¹¹² Birgit van der Lans suggests that it could very well be Paul who came up with the motif of the blessing of the nations, since it is rare and would not suit his opponents (Van der Lans, 'Belonging to Abraham's Kin', 314-316). Likewise, Martin Goodman assumes that this theme originated with Paul, given that Abraham was primarily seen as the embodiment of the law (Martin Goodman, 'Epilogue' in *Abraham, the Nations and the Hagarites: Jewish, Christian, and Islamic Perspectives on Kinship with Abraham*, Martin Goodman, George H. van Kooten and Jacques T.A.G.M. van Ruiten (eds.), (Leiden: Brill, 2010), 509-512).

¹¹³ As Dunn notes on the issue of objective versus subjective genitive in the clause *pistis christou* (πίστις χριστοῦ) in Galatians 2-3, 'it is difficult to see anything other than faith in Christ in view' (Dunn, *The Theology of Paul*, 381).

¹¹⁴ Eisenbaum, *Paul was not a Christian*, 206; Johnson Hodge, *If Sons then Heirs*, 85. For a more detailed discussion with Johnson Hodge's views on this passage, see Karin B. Neutel, 'Neither Jew nor Greek': Abraham as a Universal Ancestor', in *Abraham, the Nations and the Hagarites: Jewish, Christian, and Islamic Perspectives on Kinship with Abraham*, Martin Goodman, George H. van Kooten and Jacques T.A.G.M. van Ruiten (eds.), Leiden: Brill 2010, 291-306.

view, it is not their own faith that makes gentiles right with the God of Israel; they are the recipients of the promise, because of Abraham's faithfulness, not their own attitude.

Eisenbaum and Johnson Hodge's interpretation of 'faith' (πίστις) in this passage is connected with their tendency to read the clause *pistis Christou* (πίστις χριστοῦ), which is generally, also in this study, translated as 'faith in Christ', as a reference to the faithfulness of Christ.¹¹⁵ In connection with Christ, *pistis* is taken to be a quality of Christ, not of someone who has faith in him. A major objection to this interpretation, apart from the fact that it runs counter to Paul's argument in this and other passages, is that Paul does not refer to Christ's 'obedient' death and resurrection apart from this clause.¹¹⁶ He is very clear, however, about the importance of faith (πίστις) as a quality of his audience and praises them for it. Given the centrality of Christ in Paul's message, we can wonder what this faith would be about, if it were not 'faith in Christ'. Rather, an interpretation of *pistis Christou* as referring to the believers attitude towards Christ as lord and God's actions in sending and raising him, make best sense of the way Paul refers to faith throughout his letters.¹¹⁷

Because faith is not defined as a quality of the Galatians by Eisenbaum and Johnson Hodge, even though Paul talks about faith in relation to them in the opening verses of the chapter (Galatians 3:2-5), it follows that the newly defined descendants of Abraham, those who arise out of his faith, are the gentiles in general. Paul would then argue that descent occurs 'out of the faithfulness of Abraham', but would leave us none the wiser, in this perspective, as to who these descendants are, beyond the fact that they are gentiles.¹¹⁸

This leads to a rather strained reading of the chapter, since the polemical tone and argument seem to lose their impetus. Eisenbaum stresses that the purpose of Paul's mission is 'to integrate all these various non-Jewish peoples into the Abrahamic family', but she leaves unexplained what view of Abraham Paul argues against here. As we will see below,

¹¹⁵ On the clause as a subjective genitive, see Eisenbaum, *Paul was not a Christian*, 189-195; Johnson Hodge, *If Sons then Heirs*, 90-91.

¹¹⁶ Johnson Hodge describes the faithfulness of Christ as 'Christ's obedient death and resurrection, which have offered to gentiles an opportunity to be made right with the God of Israel (Johnson Hodge, *If Sons then Heirs*, 90). The suggestion that Christ's resurrection was his own obedient act rather than something done by God is a further difficult aspect of this view, which cannot be further explored here.

¹¹⁷ An exception to Paul's lack of interest in Christ's attitude towards his death is Philippians 2:5-11, where Paul does describe Christ's incarnation and crucifixion, but he does so without reference to faith. The passage ends, though, with a description of the attitude of the faithful to these events. Paul writes there that God raised Christ, so that every tongue would confess 'that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father' (Philippians 2:11). This would seem to be a description of *pistis Christou*. Matthew Easter recently summarised the objective-subjective genitive debate and concludes that 'neither can win the day on the basis of grammatical or immediate contextual arguments'. The solution should therefore come, he suggests, from interpreters coming to grips 'with the much larger hermeneutical and theological assumptions at play for both sides' (see Matthew C. Easter, 'The Pistis Christou Debate: Main Arguments and Responses in Summary', *Currents in Biblical Research* 9 (2010), 33-47, 44). There are several arguments weighing in favour of an objective genitive reading, however, in my view. Firstly, as Dunn shows, that the antithesis between works of the law and *pistis Christou*, suggest that both are actions done by the same subject, and therefore require a reading 'faith in Christ'. More importantly, there can be no doubt that Paul considered faith an essential and praiseworthy quality in his audience and in himself as well. Paul tells the Romans, e.g., that he thanks God for them, 'because your faith (πίστις ὑμῶν) is being reported all over the world' and hopes that he and they can encourage each other's faith (Romans 1:8, 12, cf. 1 Thessalonians 1:8; 3:6). Thirdly, Paul can describe the content of this faith as being, that Christ was raised: 'And if Christ has not been raised, our preaching is useless and so is your faith' (1 Corinthians 15:14).

¹¹⁸ Johnson Hodge *If Sons, Then Heirs*, 80-84.

Paul clearly opposes faith to the law in this chapter (Galatians 3:2, 10-14), and writes that the law had a function until faith came (Galatians 3:22-25), a sequence of events that cannot refer to the faith of Abraham.¹¹⁹ While the translation 'those descending from [Abraham's] faith' may thus make good sense in the context of kinship language, it makes little sense as an exclusive category in Paul's overall argument. Paul rather establishes a connection in the chapter between the faith of Abraham, of Christ and of his audience, whom he can call 'those who believe' (τοῖς πιστεύουσιν, Galatians 3:22).

Paul brings in the link between Abraham and Christ in the second part of the chapter, by interpreting the seed of Abraham, to whom the promise is given, as a reference to Christ:

The promises were spoken to Abraham and to his seed (τῷ δὲ Ἀβραάμ ἐρρέθησαν αἱ ἐπαγγελίαι καὶ τῷ σπέρματι αὐτοῦ). The Scripture does not say 'and to seeds,' meaning many people, but 'and to your seed', meaning one person, who is Christ (οὐ λέγει, Καὶ τοῖς σπέρμασιν, ὡς ἐπὶ πολλῶν, ἀλλ' ὡς ἐφ' ἑνός, Καὶ τῷ σπέρματί σου, ὅς ἐστιν Χριστός). (*Galatians* 3:16)

According to Paul, the singular form of the noun 'seed' in Greek (σπέρμα) indicates its reference to a single descendant (Galatians 3:16).¹²⁰ He appears to argue against a specific understanding of Abraham's seed here, when emphasising that 'seed' is not used in a plural form, as if it were referring to many people (ὡς ἐπὶ πολλῶν, 3:16). By identifying Christ as the singular seed of Abraham, Paul challenges the traditional interpretation that the Jewish people collectively constituted Abraham's seed.¹²¹

At the end of the chapter, Paul then explains how Christ as the seed connects his audience to Abraham. By citing the formula which is central to this study, a formula associated with baptism, Paul reminds his audience of something that they are already familiar with: 'there is neither Jew nor Greek, neither slave nor free, nor male and female, because you are all one in Christ Jesus' (Galatians 3:28). From this baptismal inclusion into Christ, using the logic of incorporation, Paul can then draw his conclusion and give his bottom line: 'if you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's seed, heirs according to the promise' (Galatians 3:29). Both Jew and gentile are 'in Christ' and therefore both are Abraham's seed and heir.

Halfway through the chapter, Paul brings in a central point, that of the law (Galatians 3:17-25). This is probably intended to cut off a possible criticism since, as already noted, Abraham and the law were closely associated in contemporary Jewish thought. Because

¹¹⁹ In order to clarify who counts as descendants, Johnson Hodge brings in Christ as a referent of faithfulness in the opening of the chapter, even though this has no direct basis in the text. Christ only appears explicitly in verse 12, but is introduced by her into verses 7-8, in order to be able to define 'those from faith' beyond Abraham, as the ancestor. The references to faith are thus not only seen to indicate the faithfulness of Abraham, and of God, but that of Christ as well. Although Christ is not mentioned in Gal 3:6-9, Johnson Hodge believes that his faithfulness is implied in these verses (particularly in Gal 3:7-8). Christ's faithful obedience to God's plan, his death and resurrection, is what enables the gentiles to belong to Abraham. Christ is the necessary link between him and the gentiles; it is only because of Christ's faithfulness that kinship can be established. 'Those from faith' are thus those who descend from the faithfulness not only of Abraham, but also of Christ (see Johnson Hodge *If Sons, Then Heirs*, 82-84, 90-91). Again this excludes any reference to the Galatian believers, which complicates the reading of the argument as a whole.

¹²⁰ On the singular versus the plural interpretation of 'seed', see De Boer, *Galatians*, 222-223.

¹²¹ See Van der Lans, 'Belonging to Abraham's Kin', 316.

Paul has singled out faith as the crucial factor for gentile inclusion into Abraham, and has opposed faith to the law (Galatians 3:10-14), he has left himself open to questions about the status of the law. In contemporary sources, Abraham was associated with law observance in general, and circumcision in particular, precisely those issues against which Paul argues. He therefore takes pains to separate Abraham from the law of Moses, a separation for which he has two justifications. He points out firstly that God's dealings with Abraham preceded those with Moses, and secondly that they were handled by God in person, while Moses functioned as a mediator and had to interact with angels (Galatians 3:17; 19-20).¹²² The law, he concludes, is therefore secondary to the promise to Abraham, and cannot change anything about it (Galatians 3:17-20). Its function was only temporary, and has ended with the coming of Christ (Galatians 3:19; 23-25). We will come back to this passage and Paul's attitude towards the law in the next section. We can note here in conclusion about Paul's discussion of Abraham in Galatians, that the polemic against the law serves to emphasise that kinship with Abraham is formed through Christ, rather than through the law. Because the promise trumps the law, because the coming of the seed ends the law, those in Christ, both Jew and Greek are the newly-understood descendants of Abraham.

In the letter to the Romans, Paul develops a similar argument with regard to Abraham, again denying law observance and circumcision as prerequisites for having him as an ancestor and again extending his ancestry to non-Jews, based on faith.¹²³

Is this blessedness, then, pronounced only on the circumcised, or also on the uncircumcised (ὁ μακαρισμὸς οὖν οὗτος ἐπὶ τὴν περιτομὴν ἢ καὶ ἐπὶ τὴν ἀκροβυστί)? We say, 'Faith was reckoned to Abraham as righteousness' (Ἐλογίσθη τῷ Ἀβραάμ ἡ πίστις εἰς δικαιοσύνην). How then was it reckoned to him? Was it before or after he had been circumcised (ἐν περιτομῇ ᾧ ἢ ἐν ἀκροβυστί; οὐκ ἐν περιτομῇ ἀλλ' ἐν ἀκροβυστί)? It was not after, but before he was circumcised. He received the sign of circumcision as a seal of the righteousness that he had by faith while he was still uncircumcised (καὶ σημεῖον ἔλαβεν περιτομῆς σφραγίδα τῆς δικαιοσύνης τῆς πίστεως τῆς ἐν τῇ ἀκροβυστί). The purpose was to make him the ancestor of all who believe without being circumcised and who thus have righteousness reckoned to them, and likewise the ancestor of the circumcised who are not only circumcised but who also follow the example of the faith that our ancestor Abraham had before he was circumcised (εἰς τὸ εἶναι αὐτὸν πατέρα πάντων τῶν πιστευόντων δι' ἀκροβυστίας, εἰς τὸ λογισθῆναι [καὶ] αὐτοῖς [τὴν] δικαιοσύνην, καὶ πατέρα περιτομῆς τοῖς οὐκ ἐκ περιτομῆς μόνον ἀλλὰ καὶ τοῖς στοιχοῦσιν τοῖς ἴχνεσιν τῆς ἐν ἀκροβυστί πίστεως τοῦ πατρὸς ἡμῶν Ἀβραάμ). (*Romans 4:9-12*)

Here, the circumcision of Abraham himself becomes important to the argument. Abraham was regarded as righteous by God when he had not yet been circumcised (Genesis 15:6); he

¹²² According to James Dunn, the contrast with Moses is clearly negative, while the reference to angels 'is much more positive than has often been assumed'. There can be no doubt, though, that Paul mentions the angels to lower the status of Moses in relation to Abraham (Dunn, *The Theology of Paul the Apostle*, 139-140).

¹²³ Edward Adams sums up this view 'because faith is the determining factor, all who share Abraham's faith and exercise it as he did, regardless of whether they are circumcised or uncircumcised, belong to his family', 'Abraham's Faith and Gentile Disobedience', 47-66. Benjamin Schließer gives an extensive overview of the history of the interpretation of this passage, see Benjamin Schließer, *Abraham's Faith in Romans 4: Paul's Concept of Faith in Light of the History of Reception of Genesis 15:6* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck 2007), 221-239.

was only later circumcised to confirm this righteousness. Abraham thus becomes a dual character, both circumcised and uncircumcised, and can be the ancestor to both groups, as long as they follow Abraham's example of faith. He is the father of the uncircumcised believers (4:11), who have righteousness reckoned to them on the basis of their faith, just as Abraham's faith was reckoned to him as righteousness while he was still uncircumcised (Genesis 15:6). He is also the father of the circumcised (4:12), when they are not only circumcised, but also have the same faith that Abraham had before he was circumcised. Paul thus shows that circumcision alone is not enough to create kinship with Abraham.¹²⁴ Just as in Galatians 3, in Romans Paul inserts faith as a necessary requirement for belonging to Abraham, thereby redefining who belongs to Abraham. He not only extends his ancestry to certain uncircumcised gentiles, but limits it to those of his circumcised descendants who follow in his messianic faith. Eisenbaum's notion that Paul merely adds a second line of descent from Abraham is not confirmed in our analysis, since Paul also opposes existing assumptions about who counts as Abraham's children. In Paul's redefinition of Abraham and of circumcision, his view of the law already comes up as an important corollary issue. We will therefore now extend our exploration of this subject and turn to the question of Paul's attitude to the law as part of his eschatological perspective.

2.5 Paul and the Law

It may seem foolish to attempt to outline here an issue as complex and divisive as Paul's thought on the law. Yet it will be helpful to reflect on some aspects of this crucial topic, a topic closely connected to Paul's ideas about Jews and gentiles. We can build on our discussion of circumcision and Abraham, which has already set up some of the important questions and passages. Having a clearer sense of Paul's attitude toward the law will enable us to understand how his ideas relate to contemporary thought on human unity and interconnectedness, to which we will turn in the second part of this chapter. Some contemporary sources describe an ideal future in terms of the absence of boundaries, with a single law governing all people. Paul's various statements on the law should therefore be included in an analysis that aims to place his thought in the context of the cultural conversation on ethnic difference and unity of his time.

Given the central importance of eschatological unity for Paul's attitude towards Jews and gentiles, the exploration of Paul's ideas about the law here will focus on those aspects that are explicitly connected to his eschatology. While the importance of eschatology for

¹²⁴ In his monograph on Romans 4, Benjamin Schließer makes a rather complex argument, although he shares the idea that Paul's aim is to show that Abraham is the father of both the circumcised and the uncircumcised. According to Schließer, verse 11 describes Abraham; the mention of the foreskin (*δι' ἀκροβυστίας*) is not a reference to the uncircumcised believers, but to the uncircumcised status of Abraham when he became father of all believers 'before their differentiation into circumcised and uncircumcised'. Verse 12 then calls Abraham the father of the circumcised in a metaphorical sense, similar to the way Paul uses it in Romans 2:25-29. The two dative constructions then describe the circumcised (*τοῖς οὐκ ἐκ περιτομῆς μόνοι*) and uncircumcised believers (*καὶ τοῖς στοιχοῦσιν τοῖς ἴχνεσιν τῆς ἐν ἀκροβυστία πίστεως τοῦ πατρὸς ἡμῶν Ἀβραάμ*) respectively, in the same order as Romans 1:16, which serves as a template here for Schließer. The uncircumcised believers are thus described as 'those who follow the example of the faith that our ancestor Abraham had before he was circumcised'. Schließer seems to place undue weight on the parallel formula 'all who believe' (*παντὶ τῷ πιστεύοντι*) in Romans 1:16 and lets his reading be determined by the fact that Paul in that verse describes these believers as 'Jew first and then Greek' (*Ἰουδαίω τε πρώτον καὶ Ἑλληνι*).

Paul's thought is generally recognised, it is striking that his attitude towards the law can still be analysed by scholars without reference to his focus on the messianic age or the end time.¹²⁵

In Eisenbaum's take on Paul, however, the end time is the decisive factor, also when it comes to the law. It is because the end time allows the acceptance of gentiles by God as gentiles, that the law no longer has relevance for them. Whatever Paul's comments about the Jewish law are, they are, according to Eisenbaum, meant to address the question of the way in which Torah relates to gentiles.¹²⁶ Christ is, in her words, 'an extrasystemic means of incorporating Gentiles into God's family'.¹²⁷ The systemic means, the Torah and covenant, remain in place for Jews and Paul 'never speaks against Jews' observance of Torah'.¹²⁸

Yet as we have seen in connection with circumcision, it cannot simply be concluded that any negative remarks Paul's makes about the law result from the fact that he was opposing its relevance for gentiles. Not only does Paul nowhere make this specific point explicit, he also criticises the law in a wider sense. This is evident in the passage from Galatians discussed earlier, where Paul contrasts the promise to Abraham to the law of Moses. This passage leads up to the central text of this study, and argues the temporality of the law which acted as a pedagogue until Christ came. Since it emphasises the place of the law in God's plan, it is a key text in understanding Paul's idea of the law in connection with the end time.

The argument that Paul makes about Abraham in Galatians 3 has already been discussed above (section 2.4). To sum up briefly, the main emphasis in this chapter is on the importance of God's promise to Abraham, and the fact that both Jews and gentiles can belong to his family as recipients of this promise. Since the overall issue of the letter is the question of gentile law-observance, particularly circumcision, Paul's redefinition of Abrahamic ancestry serves to bolster his point that gentiles do not need to accept the Jewish law. Paul then needs to address the position of the law; if there is no reason to follow the law in order to belong to Abraham, if the law does not affect the promise, then why does it exist?¹²⁹ How do these two entities, the promise and the law, relate to each other?

¹²⁵ Hermann Lichtenberger, for example, does not include texts that discuss the law in an eschatological context, in his summary of Jewish thought on the law in the time of Paul ('Das Tora-Verständnis im Judentum zur Zeit des Paulus'). Although James Dunn, in the same volume, does discuss the temporal function of the law in Paul, he accepts that Paul reacted to the function of the Torah as generally understood in second temple Judaism. This understanding is summed up in two points: that the function of the law is not to enable 'getting in' to the covenant, or to earn God's acceptance, and that obedience to the Torah is a requirement for continuing membership of the covenant. Dunn assumes that Paul reacts to one of these aspects, although he acknowledges that other elements gleaned from his own writings could play a role as well (Dunn, 'In Search of Common Ground', 312). Eschatological thought is also absent in Niko Huttunen's study, *Epictetus and Paul on Law: A Comparison* (London: T&T Clark International 2009), as well as in Andrew Das, *Paul, the Law, and the Covenant* (Peabody: Hendrickson 2001).

¹²⁶ Eisenbaum, *Paul was not a Christian*, 219.

¹²⁷ Eisenbaum, *Paul was not a Christian*, 224.

¹²⁸ Eisenbaum, *Paul was not a Christian*, 224.

¹²⁹ As Martyn observes, 'compelled by his own argument to ask why the Law should have come into the picture at all, Paul devotes a subsection to the genesis of the Law, to the linked advents of faith and Christ, and to the resulting antinomy between the Law and the faith of Christ' (Martyn, *Galatians*, 295).

My point is this: the law, which came four hundred and thirty years later, does not annul a covenant previously ratified by God, so as to nullify the promise. For if the inheritance comes from the law, it no longer comes from the promise; but God granted it to Abraham through the promise. Why then the law (Τί οὖν ὁ νόμος)? It was added because of transgressions, until the offspring would come to whom the promise had been made; and it was ordained through angels in the hands of a mediator (μεσίτου). Now a mediator involves more than one party; but God is one. Is the law then opposed to the promises of God? Certainly not! For if a law had been given that could make alive, then righteousness would indeed come through the law (ὅπως ἐκ νόμου ἂν ᾦν ἡ δικαιοσύνη). But the scripture imprisoned (συνέκλεισεν) all things under the power of sin, so that what was promised through faith in Jesus Christ might be given to those who believe. Now before faith came, we were guarded and imprisoned under the law (ὑπὸ νόμον ἐφρουρούμεθα συγκλειόμενοι) until faith would be revealed. Therefore the law was our disciplinarian (παιδαγωγός) until Christ came, so that we might be justified by faith. But now that faith has come, we are no longer subject to a disciplinarian (Galatians 3:17-25)

Paul explains the relationship between God's promise to Abraham and the law of Moses by saying that the latter served an interim function: it came several hundred years after the promise, and functioned until the fulfilment of the promise came. The temporary character of the law is emphasised here: the law came 'four hundred and thirty years later' (ὁ μετὰ τετρακόσια καὶ τριάκοντα ἔτη γεγονώς νόμος 3:17) and was added 'until the offspring would come' (ἄχρις οὗ ἔλθῃ τὸ σπέρμα 3:19). It functioned 'before faith came' (πρὸ τοῦ δὲ ἐλθεῖν τὴν πίστιν) and 'until faith would be revealed' (εἰς τὴν μέλλουσαν πίστιν ἀποκαλυφθῆναι 3:23). The law is thus portrayed as secondary to the promise and as only temporary, after Abraham and until Christ.

Three further characteristics indicate that Paul paints a rather negative picture of the law here. The law was added 'because of transgressions' (τῶν παραβάσεων χάριν προσετέθη, 3:19).¹³⁰ Furthermore, it did not come directly from God, as the promise did, but via angels and through a mediator (μεσίτης, 3:19,20).¹³¹ And finally, it served to guard and imprison (ὑπὸ νόμον ἐφρουρούμεθα συγκλειόμενοι, 3:23), as a pedagogue (παιδαγωγός, 3:23-24).¹³²

¹³⁰ It is debated whether Paul intends to say here that the transgressions were the cause of the addition of the law, or rather its goal. Since Paul states in Romans, also in a discussion about the temporary aspects of the law, that 'the law was added so that the trespass might increase (νόμος δὲ παρεισήληθεν, ἵνα πλεονάσῃ τὸ παράπτωμα, Romans 5:20)', it seems plausible that the idea here as well is that the law causes transgression (so Martyn, *Galatians*, 354-355). For an overview of the scholarly discussion, see De Boer, *Galatians*, 230-231.

¹³¹ According to Martyn, 'God was absent at the Genesis of the Sinaitic law' (Martyn, *Galatians*, 366). De Boer agrees with Martyn that 'no life-giving law was given by God' and even describes the angels as 'tampering with' God's covenant with Abraham (De Boer, *Galatians*, 228, 230). Dunn, however, sees the metaphor in a more positive light, see above, note 122.

¹³² There is much debate on the question whether the pedagogue is essentially a positive or a negative metaphor for Paul here. De Boer gives an overview of the debate and sees the primary function of the metaphor as 'underscoring the temporary nature of its [the law's] control over humanity' (De Boer, *Galatians*, 241). For a discussion of the role of the pedagogue and his position in contemporary culture, see David J. Lull, "'The Law Was Our Pedagogue": A Study in Galatians 3:19-25', *Journal of Biblical Literature* 105/3 (1986), 481-498. Lull concludes that 'as a "pedagogue", the Law was limited to the task of curbing "the desires of the flesh" of those who were kept in its custody' (Lull, "'The Law Was Our Pedagogue'", 497). Michael J. Smith sums up Paul's metaphor of the pedagogue as that of a 'temporary restrictive wall', (Michael J. Smith 'The Role of the Pedagogue in Galatians', *Bibliotheca Sacra* 163 (2006), 197-214, 214).

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While the exact nature of each of these characteristic is debated, especially the extent to which they should be seen as expressing a negative view of the law, in the context of the chapter and the letter as a whole, their tone should be clear. Up until this passage, Paul has consistently denied a positive role to the law, saying that through the law he 'died to the law' (Galatians 2:19) and that the law brings a curse (3:10-12).¹³³ His explanation of the secondary and temporary nature of the law of Moses fits with the antagonistic attitude he displays in these chapters.¹³⁴

There is a limit, however, to Paul's prioritising of the promise at the expense of the law. He still wants to maintain that both are part of the same plan: the law is not opposed to God's promises.¹³⁵ Yet rather than attribute this plan to God, Paul brings in scripture as the agent who 'imprisoned (συνέκλεισεν) all things under the power of sin' (Galatians 3:22). Scripture functions as a kind of intermediary between God and the law, allowing Paul to fit the law, in spite of the negative way he has characterised it, into the ultimate fulfilment of God's plan of the promise to Abraham through faith.¹³⁶

It can be asked what Paul actually explains about the law in this passage, since it is still unclear why the law was necessary to bridge the period between the promise to Abraham and its fulfilment in Christ. What is clear is that the negative terms that are connected with the law here, such as transgressions, sin, and confinement, suit the purpose of the letter, which is to dissuade Paul's Galatian audience from accepting the law and seeing it as a positive factor that will allow them to become part of God's people.¹³⁷

With hindsight, Paul can clearly see the shortcomings of the law. There is an element here, I would suggest, of Paul arguing 'from solution to plight': the law could not work, because it did not work, and we know that it did not work because Christ came.¹³⁸ This comes to the fore in a statement such as 'if a law had been given that could make alive, then righteousness would indeed come through the law' (Galatians 3:21, cf. Romans 8:3). Yet whatever the obscurities in Paul's argument, he evidently aims to undermine the idea of gentile law observance by showing the temporary and limited function of the law of Moses. He does so by arguing about the law as such, and does not specify its relation to gentiles.

It is difficult to maintain, therefore, that Paul's answer to the question 'why then the law', is that the promise is for gentiles and the law for Jews, as the 'radical new perspective' suggests. This would have been a clear solution to the problem that Paul created by redefining the children of Abraham as being apart from the law, but it is not the one that he

¹³³ On the various interpretations of Paul's difficult logic in these verses see Stanton, 'The Law of Moses and the Law of Christ', 112-114.

¹³⁴ In the subsequent chapters, Paul use the term law with a much more positive connotation, see Stanton, 'The Law of Moses and the Law of Christ', 114-16.

¹³⁵ According to Martyn, Paul here draws back from 'the abyss that would be constituted by totally separating the word "Law" from God', although he does compel the Galatians to gaze for a moment into this abyss 'of a Law that is for them godless, the Law of Sinai' (Martyn, *Galatians*, 368-370).

¹³⁶ I would agree with De Boer that the personification of scripture here is rhetorically motivated and should not be pressed, as if Paul is making a statement about scripture as such (De Boer, *Galatians*, 234).

¹³⁷ According to De Boer, Paul's 'primary rhetorical concern' in this part of the letter is 'to undermine the seemingly convincing way the new preachers in Galatia have caused the Galatians to contemplate becoming fully law observant' (De Boer, *Galatians*, 239-240).

¹³⁸ The idea that Paul was not motivated by any plight, or anything that he saw as being wrong with Judaism (other than that it was not Christianity), led E.P. Sanders to coin this famous phrase (E.P. Sanders, *Paul and Palestinian Judaism: A Comparison of Patterns of Religion* (London: SCM Press 1977), 443).

provides.¹³⁹ The answer Paul comes up with is rather less clear cut, since it involves distancing the law from God, while still maintaining that it does not go against God's promise.

On the other hand, the 'new perspective' appears hesitant to draw the full conclusions from its own reading. There is no indication that it is only certain functions or aspects of the law, such as those that serve to distinguish Jews from gentiles, that are at stake here, as the Dunn claims.¹⁴⁰ Paul appears to be discussing the law as a whole, not merely the law 'taken over too completely by Israel', or a misunderstanding of the law in 'a misplaced emphasis on boundary-marking ritual', as Dunn maintains.¹⁴¹ Paul describes the law of Moses as having a function until Christ, the seed of Abraham came. Now that Christ has come, those who are in Christ, both Jew and Greek, are God's sons, and therefore Abraham's children and heirs (Galatians 3:28-29). We will come back to the question of the law in both the 'new' and the 'radical new' perspective below, but will first turn to the law in Paul's letter to the Romans.

The fact that Paul's view of the temporary nature of the law is closely bound up with his message about Jews and gentiles is confirmed in Romans. Two passages will serve to illustrate this. The first is the end of Romans 3, where Paul argues that the circumcised and the uncircumcised are all justified through faith. Paul develops a theme here that was already set out in the first two chapters of Romans, about Jew and Greek being in the same position before God. As he famously writes of his message in the opening section of Romans, 'For I am not ashamed of the gospel; it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who has faith, to the Jew first and also to the Greek (δύναμις γὰρ θεοῦ ἐστὶν εἰς σωτηρίαν παντὶ τῷ πιστεύοντι, Ἰουδαίῳ τε πρῶτον καὶ Ἑλληνι, Romans 1:16). This theme of 'Jew first and also Greek' recurs in the next chapter, in connection with God's judgement:

There will be anguish and distress for everyone who does evil, the Jew first and also the Greek (Ἰουδαίου τε πρῶτον καὶ Ἑλληνοσ), but glory and honour and peace for everyone who does good, the Jew first and also the Greek (Ἰουδαίῳ τε πρῶτον καὶ Ἑλληνι). For God shows no partiality (οὐ γὰρ ἐστὶν προσωποληψία παρὰ τῷ θεῷ). (Romans 2:9-11)

As a concept, God's impartial judgement can be widely found in contemporary Jewish thought; it is seen as an 'axiomatic attribute of God'.¹⁴² Paul's specific understanding of this impartiality, however, as not distinguishing between Jew and gentile is not found elsewhere. This particular interpretation of the theme of divine impartiality is of essential

¹³⁹ This point is made also by N.T. Wright in response to earlier scholars, such as Lloyd Gaston, on whom the 'radical new perspective' builds: 'the argument of Galatians 3 actually hinges on the divine purpose to create not two families (...), but one (N.T. Wright, *The Climax of the Covenant*, 172).

¹⁴⁰ According to Dunn, it is the 'social function' of the law, in protecting and disciplining Israel, which gave Paul 'the criterion by which to discriminate between commandments of the law, allowing him to devalue or discard some while affirming the others' (Dunn, *The Theology of Paul*, 719-720).

¹⁴¹ To quote Dunn in full: 'I will be arguing that an important hermeneutical key to such crucial passages as 3:27-31, 7:14-25, and 9:30-10:4 is precisely the recognition that Paul's negative thrust against the law is against the law taken over too completely by Israel, the law misunderstood by a misplaced emphasis on boundary-marking ritual, the law become a tool of sin in its too close identification with matters of the flesh, the law sidetracked into a focus for nationalistic zeal' (Dunn, *Romans 1-8*, lxxi-lxxii). Dunn's hesitancy is evident when he writes that 'the means by which God's saving righteousness can now be received (should we add, most fully and effectively?) is by believing in Christ' (Dunn, *The Theology of Paul*, 373).

¹⁴² Bassler, *Divine Impartiality*, 43. For examples of contemporary sources, see also Jewett, *Romans*, 209.

importance in Romans and is closely related to the letter's theme of the righteousness of God.¹⁴³

The impartiality of God in connection with his judgement provides a necessary supposition for Paul's subsequent claim that 'we have already charged that all, both Jews and Greeks, are under the power of sin' (προητιασάμεθα γὰρ Ἰουδαίους τε καὶ Ἑλληνας πάντας ὑφ' ἁμαρτίαν εἶναι, Romans 3:9). While Paul has in fact not made this charge yet, but does so in a series of quotations that follows after this verse, he has made the point that God's judgement does not distinguish between Jews and Greeks. He then builds on this impartiality to argue that there is also no impartiality when it comes to grace and justification.

In the climax of this part of the letter, Paul presents his solution to the problem that all human beings are under sin:

But now (Νυνὶ δε), irrespective of the law (χωρὶς νόμου), the righteousness of God has been disclosed, and is attested by the law and the prophets (τοῦ νόμου καὶ τῶν προφητῶν), the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all who believe. For there is no distinction (οὐ γὰρ ἐστὶν διαστολή), since all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God; they are now justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, whom God put forward as a sacrifice of atonement by his blood, effective through faith. He did this to show his righteousness, because in his divine forbearance he had passed over the sins previously committed; it was to prove at the present time (ἐν τῷ νῦν καιρῷ,) that he himself is righteous and that he justifies the one who has faith in Jesus. Then what becomes of boasting? It is excluded. By what law (διὰ ποίου νόμου)? By that of works (τῶν ἔργων)? No, but by the law of faith (διὰ νόμου πίστεως). For we hold that a person is justified by faith apart from works prescribed by the law (χωρὶς ἔργων νόμου). Or is God the God of Jews only? Is he not the God of Gentiles also? Yes, of Gentiles also, since God is one; and he will justify the circumcised on the ground of faith and the uncircumcised through that same faith (ὁ θεός ὃς δικαιώσει περιτομῆν ἐκ πίστεως καὶ ἀκροβυστίαν διὰ τῆς πίστεως). Do we then overthrow the law by this faith? By no means! On the contrary, we uphold the law. (*Romans* 3:21-31)

We can by no means address all the issues that play a role in this complex passage. What is important for our purposes is to see that Paul again addresses a temporal aspect of the law, 'now' the righteousness of God has been disclosed, that is apart from the law (3:21), to prove his justice 'at the present time' (ἐν τῷ νῦν καιρῷ, 3:26). Even though the story Paul tells about the law here has somewhat different emphases when compared with the passage from Galatians discussed above, Paul reaches a similar conclusion about faith in Christ and its relevance for the position of Jew and non-Jew before God. As in Galatians, the element of time is important: now (νυνὶ), righteousness from God is made known which is irrespective of, or outside of the law (χωρὶς νόμου), while still being attested by the law and the prophets (3:21).¹⁴⁴ The law thus appears to function as scripture, and it is most likely in

¹⁴³ For the connection between the two themes, see Dunn's introduction to his commentary on Romans (Dunn, *Romans*, lxi-lxiii). See also Bassler, 'Divine Impartiality', 43-58.

¹⁴⁴ While it is possible to read the clause 'outside law', or 'without law' (χωρὶς νόμου, 3:21) as referring to law in a more general sense, it seems plausible that Paul is speaking about the same law both times that he uses the word *nomos* in this sentence, and in a way that is similar to the phrase 'without works of the law' (χωρὶς

this sense that Paul can claim that he upholds the law (νόμον ἱστάνομεν, 3:31), as he goes on to discuss what is written about Abraham.¹⁴⁵ He maintains, though, that the law does not play a role in God's righteousness. The law is replaced by faith, and both the uncircumcised and the circumcised can, only 'now', be justified through faith, without distinction.¹⁴⁶

For Eisenbaum, this passage is 'arguably the most important in Paul's letters'.¹⁴⁷ Paul here describes 'the ingathering of the nations at the culmination of history'.¹⁴⁸ He assures his gentile audience that they will be part of the redemption along with the Jews, who are part of this same redemption. Eisenbaum makes her interpretation explicit by inserting some crucial additions to her translation of Paul's declaration about faith, or faithfulness: God is one, it is he who 'justifies the circumcised out of [his] faithfulness [to the covenant] and the uncircumcised through faithfulness [of Jesus]' (Romans 3:30). Her reading of the passage thus requires that the two *pistis*-clauses refer to two different types of faithfulness, with God being the subject of one and Christ of the other. Since the objects of the two types of *pistis* can then be understood as Jews and gentiles respectively, the passage can be understood as a cornerstone of the idea that Christ only saves gentiles, since Jews already have the Torah.

The interpretation of *pistis Christou* as the 'faithfulness of Christ' was already discussed above, where this translation was criticised. Apart from this clause, it is questionable whether Eisenbaum's reading makes sense of the important question Paul asks in this passage: For we hold that a person is justified by faith apart from works prescribed by the law. Or is God the God of Jews only? (3:28-29). In order for the question to lead logically from what precedes it, justification through works must be something associated with the idea that God is the God of Jews only, it must require that gentiles are excluded. Otherwise Paul's question does not follow from his previous statements. Eisenbaum, however, paraphrases Paul's argument about justification and law as:

'Were Jews ever made righteous before God merely by fulfilling the requirements of Torah? Of course not! Rather it's been through trusting God. For we know that for anyone to be righteous in God's sight, that one must be faithful above all else—must trust God's promises—and this is true whether or not the person fulfils the requirements of Torah. Or does God belong exclusively to Jews?'¹⁴⁹

ἔργων νόμου), 3:28, cf. 3:19-20) that occurs later on in this passage. Since the second reference to the law in the verse clearly refers to the law of Moses ('the law and the prophets', (τοῦ νόμου καὶ τῶν προφητῶν, 3:21), this reading confirms Paul's point that the law and prophets testify to the fact that God's righteousness is now no longer connected to the Mosaic law, but rather to faith in Christ. See also Dunn, who describes the phrase 'outside the law' here as 'outside the national and parameters set by the law, without reference to the normal Jewish hallmarks' (Dunn, *Romans 1-8*, 165). For the view that 'law' here refers to 'no form of law', see Jewett, *Romans*, 274.

¹⁴⁵ Just as Paul brings in 'scripture' in his discussion of the law in Galatians (3:22), to allow the law a place in God's plan for salvation, he argues here that righteousness is apart from the law, even though the law is witness to this righteousness, a function it has as scripture. On the law as witness in Romans, see Richard B. Hays, 'Three Dramatic Roles', 158.

¹⁴⁶ As Richard Hays notes, 'The very fact that the Mosaic Law serves to identify Israel as a distinctive people disqualifies it from serving as the basis of God's more universal setting-right (*Rechtfertigung*) of all peoples' ('Three Dramatic Roles', 154).

¹⁴⁷ Eisenbaum, *Paul was not a Christian*, 248.

¹⁴⁸ Eisenbaum, *Paul was not a Christian*, 249.

¹⁴⁹ Eisenbaum, *Paul was not a Christian*, 249.

According to Eisenbaum, Paul thus argues against the view that Jews are justified through Torah observance, and claims instead that it is faithfulness and trust that are essential. It is difficult to see, however, how such an opposition between Jewish attitudes towards Torah, could lead to the question of whether God is the God of Jews only. The logic of the argument requires that 'works of the law' forms a distinction between Jew and gentile, a distinction that can then be rectified with the assertion that God is one (3:30).¹⁵⁰ Since Eisenbaum asserts that Paul uses *pistis* in this passage to describe the correct attitude towards the Torah for Jews, it becomes very unclear how all of this relates to gentiles, which, according to Eisenbaum, is in fact Paul's only concern. Not only is the urgency of the question whether God is the God of Jews alone completely absent in this reading, it also assumes that Paul distinguishes between two types of faith, or faithfulness, when there is no indication in the passage that this is where Paul is heading. Eisenbaum's reading of this crucial passage then does not convince, since it appears to bring a pre-conceived notion of Paul's understanding of salvation to the text.

We now turn to the third and final passage that discusses the temporary nature of the law, and the consequences for Jews and gentiles, which occurs in Romans 10. Here Paul describes Christ as the *telos*, the end or goal of the law (Romans 10:4). This statement, just as the passages from Galatians 3 and Romans 3, leads up to a conclusion about Jew and Greek:

I can testify that they have a zeal for God, but it is not enlightened (ὅτι ζήλον θεοῦ ἔχουσιν ἀλλ' οὐ κατ' ἐπίγνωσιν). For, being ignorant of the righteousness that comes from God, and seeking to establish their own (τὴν ἰδίαν δικαιοσύνην ζητοῦντες στήσαι), they have not submitted to God's righteousness (τῇ δικαιοσύνῃ τοῦ θεοῦ οὐχ ὑπετάγησαν). For Christ is the end of the law so that there may be righteousness for everyone who believes (τέλος γὰρ νόμου Χριστὸς εἰς δικαιοσύνην παντὶ τῷ πιστεύοντι). (...) For one believes with the heart and so is justified, and one confesses with the mouth and so is saved. The scripture says, 'No one who believes in him will be put to shame.' For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek (οὐ γὰρ ἐστὶν διαστολὴ Ἰουδαίου τε καὶ Ἑλλήνου); the same Lord is Lord of all and is generous to all who call on him. (*Romans* 10:2-4; 10-12)

While the passage from Galatians discussed above reflects a polemic between Paul and fellow Christ-believing Jews, who have tried to persuade the Galatians of a different view of the law, the issue that Paul deals with in this passage and in this part of Romans as a whole (Romans 9-11), is most likely Jews who do not share his convictions about Christ.¹⁵¹ It is these Jews to whom Paul refers when he states that 'not all who are descended from Israel are Israel' (Romans 9:6), and whom he describes as the natural branches that have been cut off temporarily from the olive tree (Romans 11:17-24). In Romans 10, Paul explains where he believes these Jews go wrong: they are zealous for God, but they do not recognise the

¹⁵⁰ In arguing against Bultmann's view that 'works of the law' are a characteristic of all people, Räisänen states that 'works of the law are something that *separates* the Jew from the Gentile' (Räisänen, *Paul and the Law*, 171, emphasis in the original). The same point can be made against the idea that works of the law are not a characteristic of Jews, for Paul, as Eisenbaum claims.

¹⁵¹ For the role of this passage in the context of chapters 9-11 and the letter as a whole see Steven Richard Bechtler, 'Christ, Τέλος of the Law: The Goal of Romans 10:4' *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 1 (1994) 288-308, 289-291.

righteousness of God.¹⁵² They try to establish their own righteousness (τὴν ἰδίαν δικαιοσύνην), rather than accept God's (Romans 10:2-3).

Paul rounds off his explanation by stating what these Jews have missed: 'for Christ is the end of the law so that there may be righteousness for everyone who believes'. The meaning of the term *telos* (τέλος, Romans 10:4) is disputed; it can mean 'purpose' or 'goal', as well as 'end', meanings which clearly need not be seen as contrasting.¹⁵³ That Paul here uses *telos* in a temporal sense, and refers to Christ as the end of the law, is in agreement not only with his use of this term in other eschatological contexts, but also with his description of the temporary role of the law in Galatians 3.¹⁵⁴

The passage suggests that for Paul the Jews for whom he is concerned have failed to acknowledge that God's righteousness as revealed now, in the end time, is different from the way righteousness was configured before. Because it is faith which is now the critical issue, there is no distinction between Jew and Greek. As argued above, I think faith should be understood as exactly that which Paul describes as lacking in those Jews who are his concern here: they do not recognise what God has done in Christ. Faith means acknowledging that God has started the messianic age in the resurrection of Christ and that therefore all people can now be accepted by him.

2.5.1 What Was Wrong With the Law?

This final passage on the law brings us back to the question with which we started this chapter: what was wrong with Judaism for Paul? What was wrong with the Jewish law is a closely related question and we have seen the various answers provided by the different perspectives on Paul (section 1). It has become clear that the 'radical new perspective' does not provide a convincing reading of these passages, especially when it comes to Abraham and the law, but rather requires a strained interpretation, that imposes a pre-conceived idea on the text.

¹⁵² While Paul's acknowledgement of the zeal of his is sometimes seen as a negative remark, it rather seems a positive characteristic in itself. The problem Paul points out is that this zeal is misdirected through a lack of knowledge, rather than constituting a problem as such. Jewett, for example, sees Paul developing a 'critique of zeal that lacks recognition of the poisonous residue of competition' (Jewett, *Romans*, 616)

¹⁵³ There is much discussion about the translation of the term 'telos' here, especially the question whether it is meant to describe Christ as the end of the law, or rather as its goal. Badenas concludes in his monograph on the verse that 'on philological and contextual grounds, it appears that it should be understood teleologically: that Christ brings to the believer the righteousness promised in Scripture' (Badenas, *Christ the End of the Law*, 148). Badenas acknowledges, however, that Paul uses *telos* in a temporal sense in eschatological contexts, which is I would argue, how it occurs here (*Christ the End of the Law*, 79). I do not think that there is any need however, to play these two meanings off against each other, as long as the word is understood to indicate that righteousness is now connected exclusively to Christ, for Paul. According to Dunn, Paul expresses criticism of fellow Jews who want to preserve the temporary function of the law and remain in custody as minors, when the eschatological moment has come for transition to sonship (Dunn, 'In Search of Common Ground', 330).

¹⁵⁴ As Ben Witherington writes, the argument in Romans 10:4 is salvation-historical, not Christological. Witherington argues that the sense of this passage is close to 2 Corinthians 3:13-14, where Paul speaks of the *telos* of the Mosaic covenant, metaphorically described as the end of the glory on Moses face (Ben Witherington III, *Jesus, Paul and the End of the World: A Comparative Study on New-Testament Eschatology* (Downers Grove: Inter Varsity Press 1992), 119). This is also the view of Dunn, who notes that 'as in Galatians 3-4, the law in its temporary role has now reached its end with the coming of Christ for Gentile as well as Jew'. Dunn qualifies this end however, as referring only to 'the law as defended by the heroes of zeal, as protecting Jew and excluding Gentile' (Dunn, *The Theology of Paul*, 368).

The 'radical new perspective' seems driven at times by the desire to present us with an inoffensive Paul, or at least a Paul who was offensive only to gentiles, not to Jews. Yet Paul's own writings give us several indications that he was indeed hostile to views held by other Jews, and did not mince words when he came into conflict with them. The fact that the major, though certainly not the only, issue of conflict was the position of gentiles, does not make these conflicts any less Jewish. As the 'radical new perspective' itself argues, the position of gentiles in the end time was a thoroughly Jewish concern.

The claim made in this perspective that if Paul was a Jew, who indeed considered himself to remain faithful to God's plan, he could not be critical of his own tradition, or be seen by others in that tradition to be breaking its boundaries does not hold up. That Paul himself thought that he was 'an excellent Jew' does not mean that his contemporaries necessarily thought he was, or that we can proclaim him to be so.¹⁵⁵ As John Barclay notes, 'to reinstate Paul in hindsight as a "legitimate" Jew would be to impose a theological judgement over historical reality'.¹⁵⁶

While the 'new perspective' makes better sense of Paul's views as discussed here, especially in its emphasis on the similar positions of Jews and gentiles, it contains within it an inherent tension that ultimately proves problematic as well.¹⁵⁷ According to Dunn, Paul does not address the law as a whole in the passages discussed in this section, but rather certain parts or functions of the law. As Dunn concludes in connection with the notion of the end of the law, 'it was the law as preserving Israel's distinctiveness which should be regarded as at an "end"'.¹⁵⁸ While Dunn thus acknowledges the eschatological dimension to Paul's thought on the law, he assumes that Paul makes a distinction between different functions of the law:

The law had a special relationship with Israel, particularly to protect and discipline Israel in the period from Moses to Christ. But that was only a temporary role. It should not be assumed, however, that this is the only function of the law and therefore that the coming of Christ means the abolition of the law.¹⁵⁹

While Dunn's interpretation certainly constitutes an advance on previous perceptions of Paul as criticising Jewish legalism, it does present a certain inconsistency, as Niko Huttunen has also recently pointed out. Paul's references to the law and to 'works of the law' refer to the law in general, something which Dunn also acknowledges.¹⁶⁰ Dunn's argument that, in practice, Paul is concerned about certain laws only, is then rather problematic, since in Huttunen's words, Paul 'does not specify his criticism against certain commands'.¹⁶¹ When

¹⁵⁵ For the observation that Paul saw himself as an excellent Jew, see Paula Fredriksen, *Augustine and the Jews: A Christian Defense of Jews and Judaism* (New Haven: Yale University Press 2008), 63.

¹⁵⁶ John M.G. Barclay, 'Paul Among Diaspora Jews: Anomaly or Apostate?', *Journal for the Study of the New Testament* 60 (1995) 89-120, 115-119

¹⁵⁷ Heiki Räisänen comes close to capturing what is at stake for Paul when he writes that Paul attacked the law 'as the Jewish gateway to righteousness'. The problem that this interpretation of Paul presents Räisänen with, however, is that Jews did not look for righteousness in the Torah. He therefore concludes that Paul either 'gives an inaccurate picture or else bases his view on insufficient and uncharacteristic evidence' (Räisänen, *Paul and the Law*, 178-181).

¹⁵⁸ Dunn, *The Theology of Paul*, 516.

¹⁵⁹ Dunn, *The Theology of Paul*, 160.

¹⁶⁰ Dunn, *The Theology of Paul*, 358.

¹⁶¹ Huttunen, *Paul and Epictetus on Law*, 140.

speaking about 'works of the law', Paul assesses them negatively as a whole. He does not criticise only some commandments, but the entire law, and if Paul can be seen to specify a function of the law, it is its role with regard to God's righteousness.

Yet accepting Paul's criticism of the law, not as a criticism of Jewish nationalism only, but as criticism of the law in general, as Huttunen rightly does, brings up a question that is familiar to Pauline scholarship. 'What then is the origin of Paul's legalistic picture of Judaism?'¹⁶² As Dunn formulates this problem, 'the need to attain one's own righteousness was not part of traditional Jewish teaching'.¹⁶³ Huttunen wrestles with this question, but finds a partial solution in a comparison with Greco-Roman criticism on the law.¹⁶⁴

This is where, I believe, an eschatological perspective can provide a valuable angle, and offer an explanation for Paul's description of contemporary Jewish attitudes. When we see Paul's thought about Christ and the law from an eschatological perspective, it becomes evident that his major problem with contemporary Jews is that they do not share his conviction that the end time has begun. They do not see Christ's death and resurrection as the definitive acts of God, but understand God's righteousness to function as it did before, through the covenant and the Torah.

For Paul, however, God's act in the law and the covenant has now been replaced by his act in Christ, as had always been God's plan. To keep attributing value to that previous, and, for Paul, merely interim, act is to deny God's momentous deed of inaugurating the messianic age. The attitude towards the law that Paul rejects is thus not one that is characteristic of the Judaism of his time per se, but is rather one that lights up only in contrast to Paul's understanding of the end time. It only becomes visible from Paul's point of view, and his understanding of God's plan as it is unfolding. The attitude of other Jews who do not see Christ as messiah is characterised for Paul by a lack of response to what he understands as God's new salvation of all peoples, apart from the law.

There seems little point, therefore, in analysing second-temple Judaism for signs of an attitude that could be qualified as 'righteousness through the law'. 'Righteousness through the law' does not describe an understanding of the law as such, it describes an attitude that only exists in contrast to Paul's message. Because Paul is convinced that God has done something new, he can dismiss those who do not share his views as clinging to something old, and in doing so, as trying to establish their own righteousness. Again, first-century Jews who did not see Jesus as the messiah would not consider themselves to be concerned about establishing their own righteousness apart from God's grace. As Dunn observes, this is not part of traditional Jewish teaching. They only appear to do so from Paul's point of view. That Paul understands this approach to righteousness as one of 'doing' rather than as one of faith (so, e.g., Galatians 3:10-12), makes sense from his perspective. In Paul's eyes, it is wilfully ignoring God's gift, and going against it. Yet it is evident that contemporary Jews would not describe their own attitude in such terms. Looking for this understanding of righteousness in contemporary Judaism is thus in a sense looking for Paul's rhetorically-constructed adversaries.

¹⁶² Huttunen, *Paul and Epictetus on Law*, 142.

¹⁶³ Dunn makes this observation in connection with Philippians 3:8 where Paul speaks of his 'own righteousness which is from the law' (μη ἔχων ἐμὴν δικαιοσύνην τὴν ἐκ νόμου).

¹⁶⁴ Huttunen makes a comparison between Christ and Heracles as examples of moral excellence (Huttunen, *Paul and Epictetus on Law*, 142-153).

There can be no doubt that for Paul, one of the most important consequences of God's new act in Christ is the lack of distinction between Jew and Greek, nor that efforts to keep this distinction in place are the major source of Paul's criticism of 'works of the law'. If we encounter the idea of a messiah with positive role for gentiles first in Paul, and if Paul also presents the messianic age as a time when gentiles can be accepted by God apart from the law, then it makes sense that Paul would assume that the law had lost one of its essential functions, namely to distinguish between those who belong to God and those who do not. There is no need to assume that Paul was driven by a criticism of the law per se; his negative statements with regard to the law seem primarily intended to explain its temporal limitation (as noted with regard to Galatians 3:21, cf. Romans 7). The Jewish law can thus continue to serve as a moral compass for Paul (so, e.g., Romans 13:8; 1 Corinthians 7:19, 14:34; Galatians 5:14).

As we have seen in this section, Paul on the one hand opposes those fellow Christ-believers who feel that gentiles should follow the law, and part of his polemic against the law occurs in this context. He argues also against those Jews who do not see Jesus as the messiah sent by God to inaugurate the end time. In both discussions, Paul's problem with the Jewish law is not those parts of it that wrongfully exclude gentiles, as is assumed in the 'new perspective'. Nor is it, as the 'radical new perspective' assumes, that Paul objects only to those who want gentiles to follow the Jewish law. Rather, Paul takes issue with anyone who does not accept that Jew and Greek, in the end time, have access to God in the same way through Christ. By underlining that God does not distinguish between peoples, Paul picks up a theme that was present in wider contemporary Jewish and wider Greco-Roman, thought, as we will see below.

3 Ancient Cosmopolitanism: Neither Greek nor Barbarian

The contextual approach to the interpretation of the baptismal formula in Chapter I has suggested that Paul's phrase can best be understood against the background of the idea of eschatological unity. At the end time, as in other ideal places and societies, people will belong to one homogeneous community. The various sources discussed in the first chapter emphasise different aspects of social unity. One strand, among which we included Jewish eschatological expectations about gentiles, made reference to an end to boundaries and a unity of peoples. In this chapter, we have seen that although the tradition of gentile eschatological inclusion goes some way to explain Paul's belief that gentiles can belong to God without becoming Jews, there are also some notable differences between the ethnic unity expressed in Paul's letters, and that found in the sources that envisage gentiles turning to God at the end time.

In part this may be explained by a difference in what we might call urgency. Texts that foresee gentile eschatological inclusion describe a time in the more or less distant future; they intend to warn those who, in their eyes, do not acknowledge God or do not worship him in the right way, about his impending judgement, while also giving hope to others that their loyalty will be vindicated. At some point in the future, everyone will be forced to recognise the true and living God. Paul, on the other hand, writes in a situation where he believes this future has become the present. Gentiles are turning to God, and he sees their inclusion into God's people, into the children of Abraham and the true circumcision, taking place before his eyes. At the same time, there are others who dispute what Paul believes is happening, or who dispute the terms by which all this should happen.

They believe, for example, that non-Jews should be circumcised in order to belong to God. Thus the specific circumstances under which Paul makes his statements about Jew and non-Jew would seem to account to some extent, as I have argued, for his distinctive message.

Yet I think there is a further contemporary discussion which also provides a context for understanding Paul's statements. Again, as in the sources put forward in the first chapter, I do not wish to suggest a direct dependence of Paul on other sources, but rather propose that certain ideas were 'in the air'; they were widespread and available, picked up by many people at the same time. Foremost among such ideas current in the early Empire, especially, though not exclusively, among Cynic and Stoic thinkers, is cosmopolitanism.¹⁶⁵ It is summed up in what Daniel Richter calls 'the most famous thing Socrates never said', which is quoted by Epictetus, Cicero, and Plutarch: 'When anyone asks you where you are from, you should never say "I am an Athenian", or, "I am a Corinthian", but rather, "I am a Cosmian"'.¹⁶⁶ According to Martha Nussbaum, this quote, however fictive, presents a Greek male refusing the invitation 'to define himself by lineage, city, social class, free birth, and even sex. He insists on defining himself in terms of a characteristic that he shares with all other human beings, male and female, Greek and non-Greek, slave and free.'¹⁶⁷ It can thus be heard as the opposite of the identification in the terms used in the prayers of thanksgiving examined in chapter I, and as similar to Paul's baptismal formula.

The basis for making such a claim about cosmic citizenship is the thesis that there is a kinship between God and humankind, an idea that is present in various forms in Paul's time, as we shall see.¹⁶⁸ Yet the beginning of this thesis lies much earlier, and can be found already in Homer. Harold Baldry traces these ideas from their earliest written forms, through to the beginning of Christianity, in his study on *The Unity of Mankind in Greek Thought*. Homer's description of Zeus as 'father of men and gods' is a phrase 'pregnant with the two ideas, kinship with the divine and the brotherhood of man, which emerged to maturity in later centuries'.¹⁶⁹

After Homer, in the fifth century, a growth in geographical and anthropological knowledge resulted in an increase in awareness of the diversity of human life. The historian

¹⁶⁵ The importance of both Cynic and Stoic thought in relation to Paul has long been recognised, although other philosophical influences have been suggested as well. Troels Engberg-Pedersen is one of the strongest advocates for seeing Paul's thought in the context of Stoic thought, most recently in *Cosmology and Self in the Apostle Paul: The Material Spirit* (Oxford: Oxford University Press 2010), also *Paul and the Stoics* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press 2000). The Cynic background for Paul is particularly associated with Francis Downing (e.g., *Cynics, Paul and the Pauline Churches: Cynics and Christian Origins II* (London: Routledge 1998). I certainly do not wish to suggest that Paul should be seen either as a Cynic or a Stoic, but merely that since Cynic-Stoic cosmopolitan ideas were popular in the first centuries, they may have influenced Paul too. A number of authors writing on cosmopolitanism include a reference to Paul, particularly to Galatians 3:28 (e.g., Kwame Anthony Appiah, *Cosmopolitanism: Ethics in a World of Strangers* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company 2006), xiv; A.A. Long, 'The Concept of the Cosmopolitan in Greek & Roman Thought', *Daedalus: Journal of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences* 137/3 (2008), 50-58, 57; Richter, *Cosmopolis*, 66).

¹⁶⁶ Richter, *Cosmopolis*, 86. Richter notes that none of the extant Dialogues of Plato mention such a statement, even though it is found in Epictetus, *Discourses* 1.9; Plutarch, *On Exile* 600f-601a; Cicero, *Tuscan Disputations* 5.108-109.

¹⁶⁷ Martha C. Nussbaum, 'The Worth of Human Dignity: Two Tensions in Stoic Cosmopolitanism', in *Philosophy and Power in the Graeco-Roman World*, Gillian Clark and Tessa Rajak (eds.), (Oxford: Oxford University Press 2002), 31-50, 31.

¹⁶⁸ See G.R. Stanton, 'The Cosmopolitan Ideas of Epictetus and Marcus Aurelius', *Phronesis* 13 (1968), 183-195, 185.

¹⁶⁹ Harold C. Baldry, *The Unity of Mankind in Greek Thought* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1965), 2.

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Herodotus aims to preserve the ‘wonderful actions of the Greeks and the barbarians’, a phrase that not only testifies to the interest in diverse human phenomena, but also shows that the division of humanity into Greeks and barbarians had come on the scene by this time.¹⁷⁰ The term ‘barbarian’ originally had a linguistic connotation, but gradually gained a cultural reference. Under the influence of the Persian Wars, as a result of a heightening in Hellenic self-consciousness, the barbarian became the generic opponent to Greek civilisation.¹⁷¹ The oppositional categories Greek and barbarian continued to play an important role in Greek thought for centuries. Paul Cartledge sees this pair of opposites as essential in classical thought:

Beginning at the highest level of generality, the classical Greeks divided all humankind into two mutually exclusive and antithetical categories: Us and Them, or, as they put it, Greeks and barbarians. In fact, the Greek-barbarian antithesis is a strictly polar dichotomy, being not just contradictory but jointly exhaustive and mutually exclusive.¹⁷²

These two strands of thought, humankind as divided into Greek and barbarian, and a human race with common characteristics, are both present in much of Greek thought. According to Baldry, an idea of unity that is the fruit of rational abstract thought is formed along two routes: awareness of the human race as an aggregate, the sum total of all individual human beings, which can be called the geographical approach, and a biological approach, involving the conception of humans as specific beings, a distinct type with certain typical characteristics that mark them off from the gods on the one hand and from animals on the other.¹⁷³ While the seeds of cosmopolitanism were thus sown early, not only in Homer and Herodotus, but also, as Richter’s recent study shows, in Plato and Aristotle, its flowers, to borrow his terminology, only appeared late, during the beginning of the Roman Empire.¹⁷⁴ As we shall see, Paul’s Jewish contemporary Philo of Alexandria is the first author to use the

¹⁷⁰ François Hartog argues that Herodotus is not the ‘inventor’ of the barbarian, but suggests the origin of the concept lies in the Persian Wars: ‘In Homer, there are no barbarians, but, then, there are no Greeks either; subsequently, to declare some to be Greeks went hand in hand with declaring the others to be barbarians. Without Greeks there can be no barbarians, and so, to that extent, Herodotus is not the “inventor” of the barbarian. It might be supposed that it was with the Persian Wars that the two terms were constituted as a pair and passed into the shared knowledge of the Greeks.’ (François Hartog, *The Mirror of Herodotus: The Representation of the Other in the Writing of History*, (Berkeley: University of California Press 1988), 323). See also Baldry, *The Unity of Mankind*, 16-21.

¹⁷¹ Edith Hall shows how the barbarian was categorised in Greek tragedy as the negative embodiment of Athenian civic ideals. ‘The most important distinction Athenian writers draw between themselves and barbarians is (...) political. Greeks are democratic and egalitarian; the barbarians are tyrannical and hierarchical. But the economic basis of the Athenian empire was slavery, and most of the large number of slaves in fifth-century Athens were not Greek. This class division along ethnic lines provided further stimulus for the generation of arguments which supported the belief that barbarians were generically inferior, even slavish by nature.’ (*Inventing the Barbarian: Greek Self-Definition through Tragedy* (Oxford: Clarendon Press 1989), 2). Hartog observes a similar political emphasis in Herodotus, who sees royalty as the hallmark of the barbarian (Hartog, *The Mirror of Herodotus*, 324).

¹⁷² Cartledge, *The Greeks*, 11-12. For the wider tendency in Greek thought to categorise in polar opposites, see Lloyd, *Polarity and Analogy*, 15-85.

¹⁷³ Baldry, *The Unity of Mankind*, 24-25.

¹⁷⁴ Richter, *Cosmopolis*, 66.

term *kosmopolites*, citizen of the world.¹⁷⁵ It was specifically when a unified Empire was formed, that the idea of a unified humanity flourished.¹⁷⁶

The transformation of social and personal relations that such a view of unity was thought to entail becomes evident in the following passage from the second-century Stoic Hierocles. According to Hierocles, everyone is surrounded by a series of concentric rings:

For each of us, most generally, is circumscribed as though by many circles, some smaller, some larger, some surrounding others, some surrounded, according to their different and unequal relations to one another. The first and closest circle is that which each person draws around his own mind, as the center: in this circle is enclosed the body and whatever is employed for the sake of the body. For the circle is the shortest and all but touches its own center. The second after this one, standing further away from the center and enclosing the first, is that within which our parents, siblings, wife, and children are ranged. Third, after these, is that in which there are uncles and aunts, grandfathers and grandmothers, the children of one's siblings, and also cousins. After this comes the one that embraces all other relatives. Next upon this is the circle of the members of one's deme, then that of the members of one's tribe, next that of one's fellow citizens, and so, finally, that of those who border one's city and that of people of like ethnicity. The furthest out and largest one, which surrounds all the circles, is that of the entire race of human beings (ὁ τοῦ παντὸς ἀνθρώπων γένους). Once these have been thought through, accordingly, it is possible, starting with the most stretched-out one, to draw the circles—concerning the behaviour that is due to each group—together in a way, as though toward the center, and with an effort to keep transferring items out of the containing circles into the contained. (Hierocles, from *How Should One Behave towards One's Relatives* (Stobaeus, *Anthology* 4.84.23))¹⁷⁷

Hierocles' image of rings shows how the idea of a unified humanity could affect all human relationships in their various degrees of closeness. The idea that there is an ultimate circle that embraces all people makes the suggestion possible that all the concentric rings that surround each individual can and should be collapsed, so that the outer is pulled inwards and human race as a whole becomes one's own ethnicity.¹⁷⁸ The task that Hierocles imagines is to treat those of the outer circles as if they belonged to the inner circles.¹⁷⁹ Family connections and ethnic bonds are extended to include an increasing number of people, until, if we keep transferring as Hierocles suggests, all finally become part of the

¹⁷⁵ Philo uses the term for Moses (in *On the Life of Moses* 1.157) and for anyone who is obedient to the law (*On the Creation*, 3). See Long, 'The Concept of the Cosmopolitan', 51.

¹⁷⁶ This is observed by several scholars, e.g., A.A. Long, 'The Concept of the cosmopolitan in Greek & Roman thought', *Daedalus: Journal of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences*, 137/3 (2008), 50-58, 58; also Baldry, *The Unity of Mankind*, 167, 176; Richter, *Cosmopolis*, 111, 116; Nussbaum, 'The Worth of Human Dignity', 36.

¹⁷⁷ Translation from the Greek by Ilaria Ramelli, translated from the Italian by David Konstan (*Hierocles the Stoic: Elements of Ethics, Fragments, and Excerpts* (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature 2009), 91).

¹⁷⁸ 'Hierocles offered this way of reducing the conventional gaps separating close family members from other citizens, and citizens from foreigners.' (A.A. Long, 'The Concept of the Cosmopolitan', 57). Long makes a direct connection between Hierocles' idea of unity and Paul's statement in Galatians 3:28.

¹⁷⁹ See Richter, *Cosmopolis*, 80, who sees the feeling of *oikeiôsis* (an affective disposition for things to which one belongs), as the central Stoic concept which 'disposes the individual to perceive all other members of the human race as kin'.

inner circle. To cut down the distance in our relationship towards each person would result, according to Hierocles, in fairness (μετρίον).

Both this cosmopolitan view of a unified human community, and the notion that all humans are connected to the divine through reason, make up the cultural conversation in which Paul's idea that there is 'neither Jew nor Greek' was formed.¹⁸⁰ We will examine each of these two aspects in turn, first the notion of human kinship with the divine, then the idea of an undivided world. The purpose here is not to provide an extensive overview, but rather to highlight a number of salient texts that can help to understand the environment in which Paul's thought took shape.

3.1 Human Kinship with the Divine

The notion of a cosmopolitan community has its foundation in the idea that all human beings have a share in reason. This, according to Richter, is as close as we come in ancient thought to a tenet, that *anthropos* is 'a rational, mortal animal'.¹⁸¹ Dio Chrysostom clearly expresses this:

the man who has expert knowledge, when asked what *anthropos* is, replies that it is a mortal animal endowed with reason (ζῶον λογικὸν θνητόν). For that happens to be true of *anthropos* alone and nothing else. (Dio Chrysostom, *Oration* 36,19)

What is characteristic of first-century cosmopolitan expressions of this maxim is the idea that there are no classifications or divisions, and that all humans have the same reason, the same mind. In addition, their shared reason not only connects people to each other, but also forms the connection between humans and the divine.¹⁸² Dio expresses this idea of the connection between humans and God explicitly in terms of a common capacity in Greeks and barbarians. In his twelfth discourse, the so-called *Olympian Discourse*, Dio explains how the entire human race has a conception of God. Knowledge of God is formed in every creature endowed with reason, thereby making the kinship between God and human beings evident:

now concerning the nature of the gods in general, and especially that of the ruler of the universe, first and foremost an idea regarding him and a conception of him common to the whole human race (τοῦ ξύμπαντος ἀνθρωπίνου γένους), to the Greeks and the barbarians alike (ὁμοίως μὲν Ἑλληνων, ὁμοίως δὲ βαρβάρων), a conception that is inevitable and innate in every creature endowed with reason (ἀναγκαία καὶ ἔμφυτος ἐν παντὶ τῷ λογικῷ), arising in the course of nature without the aid of human teacher and free from the deceit of any expounding

¹⁸⁰ Michelle V. Lee sets out the importance of Hierocles, Cicero and other Stoics and their ideas about human unity for understanding Paul's use of the body metaphor in 1 Corinthians. 'The idea of a bodily universe was applied to a universal and bodily humanity', 'Stoic social ethics was based upon the ability to understand the nature of a unified humanity' (*Paul, the Stoics and the Body of Christ* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 2006), 59).

¹⁸¹ Richter, *Cosmopolis*, 73.

¹⁸² This distinguishes the Aristotelian view of reason from the Stoic view. The Stoic idea of human logos and the idea that all human beings possess reason in precisely the same way can be seen as an inevitable development from Stoic physics and cosmology, see Richter, *Cosmopolis*, 69-86.

priest, has made its way, and rendered manifest God's kinship with man and furnished many evidences of the truth (Dio Chrysostom, *Oration* 12. 27)

Dio's *Olympian Discourse* was held in Olympia at the time of the games (possibly 101 or 105 CE).¹⁸³ Central to this discourse is the knowledge of God, and Dio distinguishes four sources of this knowledge. The first source, which is the one referred to in the passage above, is the innate and universal acknowledgement of a divine ruler. Both barbarians and Greeks have a conception of God, in the same measure (ὁμοίως).¹⁸⁴ After digressing to discuss the way even animals and plants honour God and follow his order, and the foolishness, in comparison, of those people who believe that the universe has no ruler or master, Dio concludes:

to resume, then: man's belief in the deity and his assumption that there is a God we were maintaining that the fountainhead, as we may say, or source, was that idea which is innate in all mankind and comes into being as the results of the actual facts and the truth, and idea that was not framed confusedly nor yet at random, but has been exceedingly potent and persistent since the beginning of time, and has arisen among all nations (πᾶσι τοῖς ἔθνεσιν) and still remains, being, one may almost say, a common and general endowment of rational beings. (Dio Chrysostom, *Oration* 12, 39)

Again Dio expresses the universality of the idea of a God: it has arisen among all nations. This idea is common to rational beings (τοῦ λογικοῦ γένους), who can, we may conclude, be found among all nations. According to Dio, all peoples, Greeks and barbarians, have reason and knowledge of God. These ideas are quite similar to Philo of Alexandria's concept of the human mind as a fragment of the divine *logos*. Philo believes that humans in terms of their body, are made up of the stuff of the cosmos: of earth, water air and fire. All humans in terms of their minds, however, have the imprint of the divine *logos*:

Every human being (πᾶς ἄνθρωπος), as far as his mind is concerned (διάνοιαν), is akin to the divine Logos (ὑπεκείνεται λόγῳ θεῷ) and has come into being as a fragment or casting or effulgence of the blessed nature, but in the structure of his body, he is related to the entire cosmos (Philo, *On the Creation of the World*, 146)¹⁸⁵

In his explanation of the account of human creation that is given in the second chapter of Genesis (Genesis 2:7), Philo comes to a description of the relationship between the first created human and all subsequent humans. They have a kinship with him (συγγένεια, 145), in that they are also a fragment or casting of the divine, although the relationship between the first man and the divine is much stronger. The resemblance between the first man and

¹⁸³ H. J. Klauck and B. Bäbler (eds.), *Dion von Prusa: Olympische Rede oder Über die erste Erkenntnis Gottes* (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft 2000), 26-27, D. A. Russel (ed.), *Dio Chrysostom: Orations VII, XII and XXXVI*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1992), 16.

¹⁸⁴ ὁμοίως does not simply denote that both have it, but also says something about the equal measure in which they have it. See also Klauck, *Dion von Prusa*, 63.

¹⁸⁵ Translation Runia, *On the Creation*, 85.

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the rest of humanity thus lies in their minds, which in diminishing stages resemble the logos of God.¹⁸⁶

Epictetus likewise describes reason as the most important characteristic of humankind. Humans are the rational animal; their ratio is what distinguishes them from other animals:

Consider who you are. To begin with, a human (ἄνθρωπος); that is, one who has no quality more sovereign than moral choice, but keeps everything else subordinate to it, and this moral choice itself free from slavery and subjection. Consider, therefore what those things are from which you are separated by virtue of the faculty of reason. You are separated from wild beasts, you are separated from sheep. In addition to this you are a citizen of the world (πολίτης τοῦ κόσμου), and a part of it, not one of the parts destined for service, but one of primary importance; for you possess the faculty of understanding the divine administration of the world, and of reasoning upon the consequences thereof. (Epictetus, *Discourses* 2.10.1-3)

The faculty of reason in humans is closely connected to their role as citizens of the world, as this text shows. The link between the two is the divine. Human rationality is of divine origin and Epictetus' conception of God is best understood as a universal mind.¹⁸⁷ This notion of the divine origin of the human mind is fundamental to Epictetus' thought, and can be found in many of his discourses, for example:

But you are a being of primary importance; you are a fragment of God (ἀπόσπασμα εἰ τοῦ θεοῦ); you have within you a part of him. (Epictetus, *Discourses* 2.8.11)

As Long notes, for Epictetus, as for all Stoics, 'our minds are literally "offshoots" of God, parts of God that God has assigned to be the mind or self of each person'.¹⁸⁸ Yet for Epictetus, as for Philo, people are not only minds, but they are also bodies. Epictetus typically describes the body as humans' animal side. In his discourse *From the Thesis that God is the Father of Mankind, How May One Proceed to the Consequences*, Epictetus shows that just as our kinship with the divine enables us to be like the gods, our kinship with animals, through our body, inclines us to be beasts:

But since these two elements have been conjoined in our creation, the body, which we have in common with animals, and mind and reason, which we have in common with the gods, some incline to the former relationship, miserable and mortal, while a few incline toward this divine and blessed one. (Epictetus, *Discourses* 1.3.3)

For Epictetus, it is the responsibility of every person to choose the appropriate attitude and behaviour, to incline towards the human and stay away from the animal. In the discourse entitled *How from the Fact that We are Akin to God Should One Proceed to the*

¹⁸⁶ A similar idea of the unique status of humans can be found, e.g., in *On the Decalogue* 134; *On the Special Laws* 4.14. See Runia, *On the Creation*, 342; Van Kooten, *Paul's Anthropology*, 50; Worthington, *Creation in Paul and Philo*, 188-189.

¹⁸⁷ Long, *Epictetus*, 148.

¹⁸⁸ Long, *Epictetus*, 145.

Consequences, Epictetus draws implications from Cynic and Stoic cosmopolitanism, using the concept of a government of God and people.¹⁸⁹ In this passage, Epictetus argues that if people identify themselves according to the highest authority in their ancestry, they should declare themselves children of God:

If what is said by the philosophers regarding the kinship of God and man is true, what other course remains for men than to do what Socrates did, when asked to what country he belonged, never to say 'I am an Athenian' or 'I am a Corinthian' but 'I am a citizen of the universe'? (...) Well, then, anyone who has attentively studied the administration of the universe and has learned that 'the greatest and most authoritative and most comprehensive of all governments is this one which is composed of men and God, and that from him have descended seeds of being, not merely to my father to my grandfather, but all things that are begotten and that grow upon earth, and chiefly to rational beings, seeing that by nature it is theirs alone to have communion in the society of God, being intertwined with him through the reason,' - why should not such a man call himself a citizen of the universe (κόσμιον)? Why should he not call himself a son of God (υἶδν τοῦ θεοῦ)? (Epictetus, *Discourses*, 1.9.1-6)

Humans descend from God, and live in one society with him, who has the highest authority of all. Consequently, if we identify ourselves according to our origin, we should identify ourselves in terms of our relationship with him: citizen of the universe and son of God.¹⁹⁰ Epictetus clearly brings out the link between reason as a universal human and divine characteristic, and the notion of a universal community.

3.2 An Undivided World

By the first century, the Stoic idea of the universe as a city in which humans and gods live together on the basis of their shared reason has become 'a kind of universalist ideology'.¹⁹¹ This idea is adopted also by non-Stoics, such as Philo, who is, as far as we know, the first author to use the term *kosmopolites*, citizen of the world.¹⁹² He uses it twice, once for Moses (*On the Life of Moses* 1:156) and once for those who follow the law of Moses:

And his exordium, as I have already said, is most admirable; embracing the creation of the world, under the idea that the law corresponds to the world and the world to the law (ὡς καὶ τοῦ κόσμου τῷ νομῷ καὶ τοῦ νόμου τῷ κοσμῷ συνᾶδοντος), and that a man who is obedient to the law, being, by so doing, a citizen of the world (καὶ τοῦ νομίμου ἀνδρὸς εὐθὺς ὄντος κοσμοπολίτου), arranges his actions with reference to the intention of nature, in harmony with which the whole universal world is regulated. (Philo, *On the Creation*, 3)

¹⁸⁹ See Robert Dobbin's comments in *Discourses: Book 1 Translation with an Introduction and Commentary* by Robert F. Dobbin, (Oxford : Clarendon Press 1998), 123-124.

¹⁹⁰ Loeb, Epictetus vol II, 344, nt.1.

¹⁹¹ Runia, *On the Creation*, 107. Runia cites Arius Didymus (found in Eusebius, *Praep. Ev.* 15.15.4-5) as an example.

¹⁹² Long, 'The Concept of the Cosmopolitan', 51; Runia, *On the Creation*, 103.

David Runia argues that Philo is concerned here to demonstrate the superiority of the law of Moses. By describing the Jewish law simply as *nomos*, without any further clarification, Philo associates the law of Moses as closely as possible with the natural or cosmic law. Following the cosmic law, the law of nature, was generally seen as the ideal way to live.¹⁹³ While Philo does not exactly equate the Jewish law with the universal law, he sees a ‘far-reaching harmony’ between them, according to Runia.¹⁹⁴ Living in accordance with the law of Moses thus constitutes an ideal way of living, for Philo, since this law is in harmony with the way in which the universe is regulated. This is the same for everyone, since, as we have seen, Philo believed that all human beings share in God’s reason. This also explains Philo’s hope that one day, everyone would become a cosmopolitan, by accepting the Jewish law:

and then, if they make any fresh start and begin to improve, how great is the increase of their renown and glory? I think that in that case every nation, abandoning all their own individual customs (καταλιπόντας ἅν οἱμαὶ τὰ ἴδια), and utterly disregarding their national laws, would change and come over to the honor of such a people only; for their laws shining in connection with, and simultaneously with, the prosperity of the nation, will obscure all others, just as the rising sun obscures the stars. (Philo, *On the Life on Moses* 2.44)

This passage is one of the few where Philo develops something of an eschatological vision.¹⁹⁵ In praising the laws of Moses, Philo can imagine a time when the flourishing of God’s people will make their law even more widely known and respected, so that all nations will decide to abandon their own laws and customs. The ideal of a world where all people fall under one law, or conversely, do not live divided by different laws and boundaries, is one that we will examine further. The presence of such an ideal in Stoic thought is well established in scholarship.¹⁹⁶ Here, I will focus on examples of this type of thought that mention the absence of boundaries between people and the idea of a unified community in an idealised time.

The first example, already discussed in Chapter I, comes from Plutarch, who in *On the Fortune or the Virtue of Alexander* describes how Alexander the Great created a unity of peoples. As a mediator to the whole world, Alexander wanted to mix and unite people everywhere, radically changing the distinction between Greek and barbarian. Plutarch begins this passage by citing the ideal of the Stoic Zeno, that everyone should live together in one community. He considers the unity that was created by Alexander, to be a realisation of this Stoic vision:

¹⁹³ On the ideal of living ‘kata phusin’, see Richter, *Cosmopolis*.

¹⁹⁴ Runia suggests that Philo sees this perhaps more in terms of a Platonic perspective, of a model and a faithful copy (Runia, *On the Creation*, 107).

¹⁹⁵ For a discussion of Philo’s eschatological thought, see John Collins, who notes that in this passage Philo ‘envisaged the conversion of Gentiles’, but in general is ‘interested in the spiritual triumph of virtue rather than in the physical victory of a messianic king (John J. Collins, *Between Athens and Jerusalem: Jewish Identity in the Hellenistic Diaspora* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans 2000), 135). Although not put in the explicit eschatological terms used by others, Philo also seems to expect something similar to divine restoration of Israel, in emphasising that the Jewish people will prosper, to which the law is central. ‘Here the condition for the future action in the form of collective conversion is the impact made by the Laws of Moses together with the glorious and prosperous times of the Jewish people’ (Borgen, *Philo of Alexandria*, 216).

¹⁹⁶ E.g., in Schofield, *The Stoic Idea of the City*, Richter, *Cosmopolis*.

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Moreover, the much admired *Republic* of Zeno, the founder of the Stoic sect, may be summed up in this one main principle: that all people (πάντας ἀνθρώπους) should not live differentiated by their respective rules of justice into separate cities and communities, but that we should consider them to be of one community and one polity, and that we should have a common life and in order common to us all, even as a herd that feeds together and shares the pasturage of a common field. (Plutarch, *On the Fortune* 329A-B)

As noted in Chapter I, the accuracy of Plutarch's portrayal of Zeno's *Republic* is highly debated. The passage is most likely rather a reflection of the ideal of human unity as it functioned in Plutarch's time. The ideal world is a place where people live in one community and are governed by one rule of justice and are no longer divided.

According to Plutarch, while there was much to be admired in Zeno's vision, Alexander surpassed Zeno, in that he made this vague ideal a reality; he achieved what the Stoics only dreamt about, that people would not live divided into several groups and cities, but would all be united into one community. This idea is more explicitly described by Plutarch as a mixing up of customs and habits between Greek and barbarian:

He bade them all consider as their fatherland the whole inhabited earth (τὴν οἰκουμένην), as their stronghold and protection his camp, as akin to them all good men, and as foreigners only the wicked; they should not distinguish between Grecian and foreigner (βαρβαρικόν) by Grecian cloak and targe, or scimitar and jacket; but the distinguishing mark of the Grecian should be seen in virtue, and that of the foreigner (βαρβαρικόν) in iniquity; clothing and food, marriage and manner of life they should regard as common to all, being blended into one by ties of blood and children. (Plutarch, *On the Fortune* 329 C-D)

The philosophical ideal realised by Alexander is depicted by Plutarch as a time when virtue is a potentially universal characteristic, and therefore as a time when everyone is potentially a Greek. Plutarch redefines Greekness as something that is unconnected to birth or descent.

While Plutarch placed his ideal in a quite distant past, the Epicurean Diogenes, whose inscription and thought were already introduced in the previous chapter, describes a similar ideal as a longed-for future. Diogenes aims his message at all people, 'shouting out loudly to all Greeks and barbarians' (Ἑλλησι καὶ βαρβάροις), including those who may conventionally be called foreigners, even though there really is no such category:

and we contrived this in order that, even while sitting at home, we might be able to exhibit the goods of philosophy, not to all people here indeed, but to those of them who are civil-spoken; and not least we did this for those who are called "foreigners," though they are not really so (διὰ τοὺς καλουμένους μὲν ξένους οὐ μὴν γε ὄντας). For, while the various segments of the earth give different people a different country, the whole compass of this world gives all people a single country, the entire earth, and a single home, the world. (Excerpt from Diogenes of Oenoanda, Fragment 30)

While now already the world may be seen as a single home for all people, in Diogenes' message of hope for the future and the coming of a Golden Age, there will definitely be no more boundaries:

A Cosmopolitan Ideal

then truly the life of the gods will pass to human beings. For all things will be full of justice and mutual love, and there will be no need of fortifications or laws and all the things which we contrive on account of one another (δικαιοσύνης γὰρ ἔσται μεστὰ πάντα καὶ φιλαλληλίας, καὶ οὐ γενήσεται τειχῶν ἢ νόμων χρεία καὶ πάντων ὅσα δι' ἀλλήλους σκευωρούμεθα). As for the necessities derived from agriculture, as we shall have no [slaves then], for indeed we [ourselves shall plow] and dig and tend [the plants] and [divert] rivers (...) (περὶ δὲ τῶν ἀπὸ γεωργίας ἀνανκαίων, ὡς οὐκ ἔσομένων ἡμ[εῖν] τότε δούλων] καὶ γὰρ ἀ[ρόσομεν αὐτοῖ] καὶ σκάψο[μεν, καὶ τῶν φυ]τῶν ἐπιμελ[ησόμεθα], καὶ ποταμο[ὺς παρατρέ]ψομεν). (Diogenes of Oenoanda, Fragment 56)¹⁹⁷

As already noted in Chapter I, the Golden Age envisaged by Diogenes bears a resemblance to that found in the Sibylline Oracles. It is a time when there will be no laws or barriers, but only justice and mutual love. The Jewish eschatological vision in book 3 of the Sibylline Oracles describes a world of peace and plenty, where all people will live under a new divine law.

When this predetermined day comes to an end, the judgement of the immortal God comes upon the mortals; a great judgement and reign will come upon the people. For the earth, mother of all, will give the mortals excellent fruits in abundance, consisting of grain, wine, and olive oil. (it will give) a delicious drink of sweet honey from heaven, trees, the fruit of fruit-trees, and fat sheep, cows, lambs of sheep, and kids of goats. It will break open sweet sources of white milk. The cities and the rich fields will be full of good things. And there will be no sword and no cry of battle on earth. And the earth will no longer be shaken while groaning deeply. There will no longer be war or drought on earth, no famine, and no hail will damage fruits. Instead, there will be great peace on the entire earth, and kings will be friends with each other to the end of time. The Immortal in starry heaven will put into effect a common law for the people, valid over the entire earth (κοινόν τε νόμον κατὰ γαῖαν ἅπασαν ἀνθρώποις), applying to everything done by miserable mortals. For he is the sole God and there is no other (αὐτός γὰρ μόνος ἐστὶ θεὸς κοῦκ ἔστιν ἕτ' ἄλλος). (*Sibylline Oracles* 3. 741-760)

Like Philo, the Sibyl imagines a future where all people will fall under one law. While in Philo this one law is clearly the law of Moses, the Sibyl appears to suggest that God will put in place a new single law, that applies to everyone. According to Buitenwerf, 'all human beings will live according to the precepts of divine natural law'.¹⁹⁸ It is significant in light of our discussion of the law in Paul, that the connection is made here between the one law and the fact that there is one God. It suggests the underlying common idea that if all people accept the one God, there can be no law that divides them; one God implies a single law, whether the law of Moses or a new divine law.

¹⁹⁷ Translation by Pamela Gordon, *Epicurus in Lycia*, 126. For the text of the inscription see Ferguson Smith, *The Epicurean Inscription*, 243.

¹⁹⁸ Buitenwerf, *Book III of the Sibylline Oracles*, 285. Buitenwerf connects this passage to the concept of an ideal society, in which humans live together according to common moral rule (natural law) in non-Jewish Greco-Roman tradition (*Book III of the Sibylline Oracles*, 287).

The ideal of a common law could thus take various forms in end-time descriptions. A third Jewish end-time expectation has more in common with Diogenes' vision of the absence of laws and boundaries:

The earth belongs equally to all (γάλα δ' ἴση πάντων), undivided by walls or fences (οὐ τείχεσιν οὐ περιφραγμοῖς διαμεριζομένη). It will bear abundant fruits spontaneously. Lives will be in common and wealth will have no division (κοινοί τε βίοι καὶ πλοῦτος ἄμοιρος). For there will be no poor man there, no rich, and no tyrant, no slave (οὐ γὰρ πτωχὸς ἐκεῖ, οὐ πλούσιος, οὐδὲ τύραννος, οὐ δοῦλος); no one will be either great or small anymore, there will be no kings, and no leaders: all are equal there (κοινῇ δ' ἅμα πάντες). (...) No spring, no summer, no winter, no autumn, no marriage, no death, no selling, no buying (οὐ γάμον, οὐ θάνατον, οὐ πράσεις, οὐδ' ἀγορασμούς), no sunset, no sunrise: because he will make one great day. (*Sibylline Oracles* 2. 319-329)

This passage, which was discussed extensively in the previous chapter, comes closest to Paul's end-time ideal as expressed in the baptismal formula. In this prophecy, there no longer are fences or walls that divide people. The absence of laws is thus seen as part of the general absence of division between people, that is emphasised in the repeated negations of the passage. The idea of the law as a fence or wall (τείχος) is attested in other sources as well, such as in the Letter of Aristeas. Here, the fence of the law is seen as a positive measure:

When therefore our lawgiver, equipped by God for insight into all things, has surveyed each particular, he fenced us about with impregnable palisades and with walls of iron (περίφραξεν ἡμᾶς ἀδιακόποις χαράξι καὶ σιδηροῖς τείχεσιν), to end that we should mingle in no way with any nations. (*Letter of Aristeas* 139)

The idea of an undivided earth in the Sibylline Oracles 2 thus most likely refers to an eschatological situation where peoples are not separated by laws, but form one community.¹⁹⁹ An undivided world where people do not live divided by different regulations was thus a feature of first-century thought, whether this world was placed in the past, in the realm of the ideal or in a more or less distant future.

Conclusion

Scholars studying cosmopolitanism do not hesitate to include Paul among ancient cosmopolitan views.²⁰⁰ A. A. Long, for example, writing on the concept of the cosmopolitan in Greek and Roman thought, observes of Paul's baptismal statement that 'this negation of race, status and gender differences is a rhetorically charged application of the Stoics' claim

¹⁹⁹ Similarly in Proverbs, where the Septuagint reads 'so they that forsake the law praise ungodliness; but they that love the law fortify themselves with a wall (οἱ δὲ ἀγαπῶντες τὸν νόμον περιβάλλουσιν ἑαυτοῖς τεῖχος) (*Proverbs* 28:4). See Johann Cook, 'The Law of Moses as a Fence and a Fountain' in *Sense and Sensitivity: Essays on Reading the Bible in Memory of Robert Carroll*, Alastair G. Hunter & Phillip R. Davies (eds.), (London: Sheffield Academic Press 2002), 280-288.

²⁰⁰ See, e.g., Appiah, *Cosmopolitanism*, xiv; Long., 'The Concept of the Cosmopolitan', 57; Richter, *Cosmopolis*, 66.

that all human beings are the same in virtue of their basic natural attributes'.²⁰¹ Recent scholarship on Paul, however, is much more reluctant to make such claims and is concerned to read Paul within a Jewish framework. As we have seen in this chapter, there is no need to assume that the two perspectives are necessarily opposed; both views can be reconciled if we understand the potentially cosmopolitan nature of Jewish eschatological expectation.

We have seen that what drives Paul is the realisation that the messianic age has arrived; a time when all peoples will finally turn to the living God. We have also seen that Paul was thinking through what such an age would look like, while living in a cosmopolitan cultural climate that held up a unified world and the unity of all peoples as an ideal. Paul's understanding of this messianic age as we have encountered it in this chapter can be seen as a distinct Jewish eschatological expression of this common ideal. I would conclude that we should consider Paul's eschatological thought as a form of Jewish cosmopolitanism. Paul's thought is no less Jewish for being cosmopolitan, but stands in a tradition that includes such diverse texts as the Sibylline Oracles and the works of Philo. Similarly, it is no less cosmopolitan for being Jewish, but describes a unified humanity in the terms of a distinct culture, just as Greek and Roman authors do.

Paul's descriptions of himself as a Jew, his statements about circumcision, his discussion of Abraham, and his view of the law can all be understood as a working out of several concrete points of this Jewish cosmopolitan view, in the specific context of his understanding of Christ. His claims about the law as no longer determining who can be justified by God, and his notion of the end of the law, are examples of this process.

Contemporary ideas about the unity of all humanity clearly put strong emphasis on the relation of humans to the divine. What unites people, according to most of the authors discussed, is their reason, which they share with God. According to Philo, the human mind is a fragment or ray of divine reason. Dio Chrysostom states that all humans have a conception of God, both Greeks and barbarians. This conception is based on the fact that all humans share their reason with God, who is therefore related to humans. As Epictetus puts it, 'you are a fragment of God'. As we saw in the previous chapter, Paul's ideas about baptism and unity centre on community and cosmos. Paul believes that a new creation is forming in Christ, a creation where, he claims, there is no difference between Jew and Greek. It is possible that in making such claims about the consequences of this new creation for Jew and gentile, Paul drew on the widely held view that human beings are all linked to God in the same way. By saying that there is 'neither Jew nor Greek' and that God does not distinguish, Paul thus contributes to the contemporary conversation about how different peoples relate to God.

Paul's focus on the law also is shared by contemporaries thinking about human unity. In both Jewish and non-Jewish sources, laws were seen as obstacles and boundaries between people. A unified human community does not seem to coexist with laws, unless there is an explicitly uniform law.

Still, Paul's claim that there is neither Jew nor Greek does not mean that he refrains from using the categories and terminology of Jewish tradition, or from distinguishing between the positions of Jew and non-Jew in history. The salvation stories of Jews and gentiles remain distinct, up to a certain point: the salvation of gentiles is only made possible by God's partial rejection of Israel. Abrahamic ancestry and circumcision remain positive

²⁰¹ Long, 'The Concept of the Cosmopolitan', 57.

categories for Paul, even if their content is radically redefined. In a way Plutarch uses a similar strategy, when he redefines Greek as virtuous and barbarian as iniquitous. While claiming to mix up all peoples, and declaring ethnicity a non-issue, Greek is still associated with what is good and barbarian with what is bad. Paul's seemingly self-evident way of referring to non-Jews as 'the foreskin', or the idea that in Christ, such gentiles can now be seen as metaphorically circumcised, certainly required a great deal of empathy with a Jewish world-view from the average Greek man or woman.

On the other hand, Paul can be scathing about the Jewish law, and about practices such as circumcision, in ways unlike any contemporary Jewish author known to us. He seems to stand back from his own tradition and at times treat it and those who do not share his particular view of it, with vitriol and contempt.

Three very different approaches to ethnic difference and ethnic categories can be identified in Paul's letters: there is a denial of difference, there is also an affirmation of distinction and Jewish privilege, and then there is an occasional contempt for Jewish custom, in the case of circumcision. Paul still uses Jewish categories but redefines them according to what he sees as a new era. When challenged, he can attack these same categories according to their traditional definitions or simply deny their relevance. Depending on the rhetorical circumstances Paul can therefore claim to be the circumcision, declare circumcision of no importance, or compare circumcision to mutilation. And he can take any of these approaches while making one and the same point.

In the introduction to this chapter, I have argued for an understanding that allows Paul some creative freedom in working out the tradition of gentile eschatological inclusion. The most obvious creative move made by Paul is the one that is the focus of this study as a whole; it is the linking of 'neither Jew nor Greek' to 'neither slave nor free' and 'no male and female'. By connecting ethnic inclusion to wider social issues, Paul demonstrates that he does not stay within the boundaries of traditions about gentiles, but has a far wider social perspective. This wider perspective will be the subject of next two chapters.

Chapter III

Neither Slave nor Free: Brothers in the Lord

Introduction

The pervasive presence of slavery in the eastern Mediterranean of the first century is reflected in Paul's writings. Every one of his letters mentions slaves or slavery, most frequently in a metaphorical sense. Paul calls himself a slave of Christ; he encourages his audience to be slaves to each other and proclaims their freedom from the enslaving power of sin and death. In only a few passages do we get a sense of the actual slaves who were part of the audiences that he addresses, and of Paul's attitude towards them.

The proclamation in Paul's formula that there is 'neither slave nor free' in Christ is one such statement referring to actual, non-metaphorical slaves. When Paul speaks about 'all of you who were baptized into Christ' (Galatians 3:27), those who were baptized apparently included both slaves and free people. This chapter examines Paul's claim that there is 'neither slave nor free' and his further thought on slaves in the context of wider first-century ideas about slaves. As we have seen in the first chapter, the notion of an ideal society as one that does not include slavery surfaces in various forms in contemporary sources. It is one of the themes that occurs in utopian or eschatological visions, and finds its strongest extant expression among first-century Jewish authors. Since the ideal of the absence of slavery is not usually brought into the discussion about Paul's views on slaves and slavery, doing so opens up the possibility of further contextualizing his ideas and moving away from the highly politicised nature of the current debate.

For centuries, Paul's attitude towards slaves and slavery has occupied scholars and other readers of his letters. Opinion has been divided as to whether Paul was critical of slavery, or rather supportive of it. During the struggle for abolition of the slave trade and of slavery, in the 18th and 19th centuries, both defenders of slavery and abolitionists appealed to Paul's letters to substantiate their argument.¹

The notion that slavery in Antiquity was somehow more benign than in recent slave societies has persisted among classicists as well as biblical scholars until the end of the twentieth century. The incorporation of the work of Keith Bradley and Orlando Patterson in New-Testament scholarship, however, has led to an increasing awareness of its violent character. Patterson's view of slavery as a form of social death and Bradley's emphasis on the controls and incentives used to manipulate slaves, have helped to clarify the degrading nature of slavery in the ancient world, including in Paul's time.²

Awareness of the painful reality of slavery in Antiquity has led many scholars to adopt a critical stance towards Paul and towards the apparent absence of concern for the fate of slaves in his letters. John Byron, one of the leading scholars on Paul and slavery, speaks for many when he declares that 'the lack of any clear condemnation from the

¹ The role of Paul's letters in abolitionist as well as pro-slavery theology in the nineteenth-century debate is discussed by Albert Harrill (Harrill, *Slaves in the New*, 165-192; see also Barclay, 'Am I not a Man and a Brother', 3-13).

² See John Byron, *Recent Research on Paul and Slavery* (Sheffield: Phoenix Press 2008), 1-35; Orlando Patterson, *Slavery and Social Death* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press 1982); Keith R. Bradley, *Slaves and Masters in the Roman Empire: A Study in Social Control* (Oxford: Oxford University Press 1984).

apostle's pen is almost deafening'.³ The dominant view in contemporary scholarship is that Paul was a 'social conservative', whose writings confirmed the inferior position of slaves in society. This is the conclusion reached by Byron in his recent summary of research on Paul and slavery.⁴ Both Albert Harrill and Jennifer Glancy, in their respective recent monographs on slavery in early-Christian writings, consider Paul's letters to confirm the inferior position of slaves. According to Harrill, 'Paul, in the final analysis, does not present a polemical argument against slavery as an ideology or institution in the Roman world'.⁵ Glancy sees Paul not only as a conservative, but also as something of a hypocrite, since 'the apparent erasure of division between slave and free that Paul proclaims in [Galatians] 3:28 is only a cover-up, as Paul goes on to reinscribe customary and legal distinctions between slave and free'.⁶

As these quotes indicate, the current discussion about Paul and slavery is to a large extent informed by contemporary questions and categories. Measuring Paul on a scale that runs from conservative to progressive can only be motivated by a modern agenda. In an article discussing Harrill's work, Glancy identifies herself, along with Harrill as 'social progressives who find a conservative Paul' and acknowledges being 'politically motivated' to recognise 'the complicity of early Christian discourse and practice in the history of slavery'.⁷ The label 'social conservative' thus seems to reflect not simply an understanding of Paul, but rather of the role of his writing in subsequent history. Paul is not considered a 'social conservative' in contrast to other 'social progressives' of his time, he is labelled a conservative in contrast to modern values.

Using the approach set out in the introduction, this chapter makes an effort to place Paul's writings in the cultural conversation of his own day. Slavery was of interest to many in the first century, and in descriptions of ideal societies in this period, the absence of slavery features as one of the possible characteristics. The Sibylline eschatological vision of an age when there would be 'no tyrant, no slave' expresses such a view, as do Philo's depictions of the Essenes and the Therapeutae. These sources will be examined along with other references to places and times that were described as having no slaves.

This chapter will begin with the two main references to slaves in Paul's letters, in 1 Corinthians 7 (section 1.1) and the letter to Philemon (section 1.2). Both these texts have been interpreted by some as encouraging slaves to get out of slavery, and by others as instructions to stay enslaved. The elliptic formulation of Paul's advice to slaves to 'rather use (it)' in 1 Corinthians (7:21) is heard as advice to reject the opportunity of freedom, or alternatively, to take it. Similarly, Paul's letter to Philemon has been understood both as sending the run-away slave Onesimus back to his master, and as a plea to Philemon to set his slave free. How we assess Paul's attitude towards slaves and slavery depends in large part on our interpretation of these crucial texts. In addition, we will be examining a third

³ Byron, *Recent Research*, 17.

⁴ In his summary of the field, *Recent Research on Paul and Slavery*, John Byron organizes his review of scholarship into four categories. He distinguishes two views of Paul, 'The Socially Conservative Paul' and 'The Philosophical Paul', and two views of slavery, 'The Benign Institution: Legal Definitions of Slavery' and 'The Violent Institution: Social Definitions of Slavery'. Though Byron creates a separate category for this view of slavery as a violent institution, there seems to be a considerable overlap with the first category that regards Paul as a 'social conservative'.

⁵ Harrill, *Slaves in the New Testament*, 30.

⁶ Glancy, *Slavery in Early Christianity*, 35.

⁷ Glancy, 'Slavery, Historiography', 202.

passage (1 Thessalonians 4:4), which, it has recently been suggested, might include an oblique reference to slaves in relation to appropriate sexual behaviour (section 1.3).⁸ This chapter will take a fresh look at these texts and place them in the context of the first-century cultural conversation about slave and free, especially the utopian theme of a society without slaves.

The second part of the chapter will discuss three aspects of this contemporary perspective. The first is the views on slave and free that stem from a cosmopolitan perspective on humanity (section 2.1). The second aspect is the festival of the Saturnalia, where the social roles of slave and free were reversed, and the origins attributed to this festival as an imitation of a time when there were no slaves (section 2.2). In the final section, descriptions of ideal communities or an ideal future without slaves will be discussed (section 2.3). As will become clear from this contextual exploration, the proclamation that in Christ there is 'neither slave nor free' will have resonated with contemporary thought about cosmopolitanism, justice and an ideal future.

1 Paul's Message: No Longer as a Slave

Even though the question of slavery has been of great interest to many later interpreters, we do not get the impression from his letters that the position of slaves was a major issue for Paul. Compared to the numerous references to Jew and non-Jew, passages that mention slaves in a non-metaphorical sense are rare. Yet at the same time, the categories slave and free were apparently important enough to be included in the formula about unity in Christ in both instances where Paul uses it (Galatians 3:28; 1 Corinthians 12:13). As we have seen in the first chapter, Paul underlines an argument about unity and inclusion in both verses, by drawing on a pre-existing phrase. Neither passage directly addresses issues relating to slave and free; instead, they focus on the distinction Jew-Greek in Galatians 3, and on wider social difference within the community in 1 Corinthians 12.

In two other texts however, Paul does deal with the situation of slave and free, or slave and master. In these passages, the baptismal formula is not mentioned, at least not directly. In this section, we will look at two texts in Paul's letters that mention slaves, 1 Corinthians 7 and the letter to Philemon. I will also discuss a third passage (1 Thessalonians 4:4), since Jennifer Glancy has recently suggested that the term 'vessel' that occurs in Paul's discussion of appropriate sexual behaviour in 1 Thessalonians could refer to slaves. While I do not think her reading of the verse is persuasive, the issue Glancy brings up of the consequences that Paul's sexual ethic could have had for slaves, merits further attention. We will start our exploration with the only comment in Paul's letters that speaks directly to slaves.

⁸ As will be discussed in more detail below, Paul states in this verse that it is the will of God 'that you abstain from *porneia*; that each one of you know how to obtain your own *skeuos* (vessel) in holiness and honour' (1 Thessalonians 4:4). The term *skeuos* or 'vessel' is usually interpreted to refer either to a wife, or to one's body. According to Glancy, however, it 'could encompass sexual access to slaves in one's own household' (Glancy, *Slavery in Early Christianity*, 62).

1.1 Were You a Slave when You Were Called? 1 Corinthians 7:21-22

In 1 Corinthians 7, Paul directly addresses those members of the community who are slaves.⁹ The passage comes in the middle of a chapter that discusses marriage, celibacy and divorce.¹⁰ As a general guideline, Paul instructs his audience not to change their situation, but to ‘remain in the situation in which you were called’ (1 Corinthians 7:20, also 7:17; 7:24). Although he expresses a clear preference for living a celibate life and encourages his audience not to marry, this preference does not mean that he urges them to abandon existing marriages. Paul wants believers to stay as they were when they accepted God’s call, even though he also acknowledges several exceptions to this rule. To illustrate the instruction that a person should not change his or her marital status, Paul gives two examples from two other social domains, i.e., circumcision and slavery.¹¹ The choice of examples is a further indication that for Paul, these three social areas, marriage, and ethnicity and slavery, which are mentioned together in the baptismal formula, were related. We will first focus on the meaning of this controversial passage, before returning to the context of the chapter and the role of this passage in its argumentation.

Rather than simply advise slave and free to remain in their respective social positions, as he does in the case of circumcision, and as the logic of the argument of the chapter as a whole requires, Paul in fact makes an unexpected move. Instead of urging slaves to stay as they are, he encourages them not to feel bad about their situation, because ‘in the Lord’ they are freed, just as free people have become slaves:

Were you a slave when you were called, do not let it worry you (δοῦλος ἐκλήθης, μή σοι μελέτω), although if you can become free, rather use that (ἀλλ’ εἰ καὶ δύνασαι ἐλεύθερος γενέσθαι, μᾶλλον χρῆσαι), because a slave who was called in the Lord is a freedman of the Lord, just as someone who was free when called is a slave of Christ (ὁ γὰρ ἐν κυρίῳ κληθεὶς δοῦλος ἀπελεύθερος κυρίου ἐστίν, ὁμοίως ὁ ἐλεύθερος κληθεὶς δοῦλός ἐστιν Χριστοῦ). (1 Corinthians 7:21-22)

The example about slave and free staying in their respective social situations thus turns into something of a consolatory note to the slaves in the Corinthian audience. Paul tells them not to be concerned: were you a slave when joining the community, ‘do not let it worry you’. In a much discussed elliptic phrase which we will examine in more detail below, Paul advises slaves to take the opportunity to become free should it arise, and he tells them at the same time that they are already freed in Christ. Since a slave is a freedman of the Lord

⁹ John Byron gives an overview of the history of interpretation for this passage, from John Chrysostom to the present day (*Recent Research*, 92-115) and notes a shift from a tendency to see Paul as advising slaves to remain in slavery to recent consensus that he tells them to accept freedom.

¹⁰ 1 Corinthians 7 will be central to the next chapter of this study. For a detailed examination of Paul’s sexual ethic and his approach to marriage in 1 Corinthians 7, see Gaca, *The Making of Fornication*. Gaca explains Paul’s sexual ethic and his emphasis on *porneia* against the background of the Septuagint notion of ‘rebellious sexual fornication’. Also May, *The Body for the Lord*, who examines the sexual and social implication for Paul’s understanding of ‘Christian identity’.

¹¹ That circumcision and slavery serve as examples illustrating a principle is a view shared by many scholars, as is the observation that Paul here brings together the three pairs from Galatians 3:28. See e.g. Glancy, *Slavery in Early Christianity*, 69; Scott Bartchy, *Mallon Chresai*, 162ff, Scroggs, ‘Paul and the Eschatological Woman’, 283-303; Horrell, *Social Ethos*, 85; David R. Cartlidge, ‘1 Corinthians 7 as a Foundation for a Christian Sex Ethic’, *The Journal of Religion* 55/2 (1975), 220-234, 221.

and a free person a slave of Christ, slaves need not worry about their position. Paul describes a role reversal here: those who are enslaved in society are freed in the Lord and those who are free in society are slaves of Christ. Both groups are bound to Christ: the slaves are not 'free', but 'freed' (ἀπελευθέρως). While slave and free are thus both in a state of subservience, the metaphor and word play lead Paul in effect to place the slave over the free person 'in Christ', since a freedman was socially superior to a slave.¹² According to the historian Peter Garnsey, Paul here 'appears to thumb his nose at all the important social and cultural hierarchies of his world, as upheld by laws, conventions and values'.¹³

1.1.1 Rather Use (It): Manumission and Freedom

While the second verse of this passage (7:22), thus contains a remarkable image involving the reversal of slave and free, much of the scholarly interpretation has been focussed on the first verse, verse 21, particularly on the phrase 'rather use (it)'. In his overview of scholarship on this passage, Byron even limits the discussion solely to verse 21.¹⁴ The elliptical formula, μάλλον χρῆσαι, 'rather use (it)' has drawn all exegetical efforts to it, leaving the verse which follows, and which is in fact the crux of Paul's statement, relatively neglected.¹⁵ The attention has focussed on the question whether Paul advises slaves to use the chance to become free, or rather tells them to remain a slave even when manumission is possible; a question which has divided opinion on this text and on Paul's attitude towards slavery.¹⁶

However, Byron notes that a consensus seems to have been reached on the interpretation of the phrase μάλλον χρῆσαι.¹⁷ It is now generally accepted that Paul advised slaves to use the opportunity to become manumitted, should this possibility arise. Manumission, the freeing of a slave by the slaveholder, was a common practice in ancient slave management and could occur for numerous reasons.¹⁸ In his study on freedmen in the

¹² Dale B. Martin is one of the few to pay attention to this point. In his careful analysis of this passage, he concludes that Paul 'is introducing not a levelling of all Christians to one condition but an actual reversal of normal status' (*Slavery as Salvation: The Metaphor of Slavery in Pauline Christianity* (New Haven: Yale University Press 1990), 65).

¹³ Peter Garnsey, *Ideas of Slavery from Aristotle to Augustine* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 180. Garnsey unfortunately does not distinguish between the genuine, the pseudo-Pauline and the Pastoral letters and even includes 1 Peter (2:18-21) under the heading 'Paul'.

¹⁴ Byron, *Recent Research*, 92-115. Glancy quotes the verse, but does not discuss the reversal of slave and free (*Slavery in Early Christianity*, 84), while Harrill (*Slaves in the New Testament*) does not mention the verse at all. The study of S. Scott Bartchy, *Mallon Chresai*, which focusses on the clause 'rather use it', has been influential among New Testament scholars, in spite of its rather forced reading and limited understanding of ancient manumission practices.

¹⁵ An exception is Garnsey, quoted above, and Richard Horsley, who concludes that verse 22 'relativises the standing of slaves and free' (Horsley, 'Paul and Slavery', 186).

¹⁶ Bartchy offers a third option: 'if you can become free, by all means live according to god's calling' (Bartchy, *Mallon Chresai*). Bartchy has rightly been criticised by Harrill, for his outdated ideas about ancient slavery and manumission, his use of legal sources as representing social practice and his skewed reading of the passage (J. Albert Harrill, *The Manumission of Slaves in Early Christianity* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck 1995), 94-102).

¹⁷ Byron notes that since Harrill's work *The Manumission of Slaves in Early Christianity*, 'there does not seem to be anyone who opts for the "use slavery" option' (Byron, *Recent Research*, 114).

¹⁸ Two studies on manumission in antiquity have recently appeared. Rachel Zelnick-Abramovitz focusses on the Greek world, while Henrik Mouritsen deals with Roman manumission (Rachel Zelnick-Abramovitz, *Not Wholly Free: The Concept of Manumission and the Status of Manumitted Slaves in the Ancient Greek World* (Leiden: Brill 2005); Henrik Mouritsen, *The Freedman in the Roman World* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 2011). Mouritsen concludes that manumission was very common in the Roman world, 'at least in some

Roman world, Henrik Mouritsen suggests that female slaves could be freed for the purpose of marriage, dying slaves could be freed as a last favour or to avoid the cost of further maintenance, and manumission could be granted as a reward for hard work.¹⁹ Holding out the prospect of freedom to slaves was seen as a way of encouraging their diligence and loyalty. Manumission had advantages for both master and slave. A slave sometimes paid for manumission from his or her own savings.²⁰ Since the responsibilities of the slave towards the slaveholder did not end upon manumission, the master still benefited economically and socially from the former slave. A contract stipulating the obligations of the freed person to the former master could be drawn up, and failure to fulfil the terms of the contract could result in re-enslavement.²¹

According to Zelnick-Abramovitz, in her recent work on manumission in the ancient Greek world, manumitted slaves remained outsiders who did not have political rights. After manumission, a former slave was called an *apeleutheros* if still bound to a master, or an *exeleutheros* if not bound to anyone anymore. A former slave could never be seen as *eleutheros*, as fully free.²² When describing how the hierarchy between slave and free is changed 'in Christ', Paul, likewise, does not describe a slave as free, but as freed, *apeleutheros* (ἀπελεύθερος). In Paul's metaphorical language, the distinction between slave and free is levelled by bringing the free into slavery. Both slave and free are bound to Christ, they both belong to him. Those called as slaves, however, end up having the upper hand in Paul's description, as their status as freed is superior to the slave status of the free.

In the verse, Paul speaks about the possibility of becoming free (δύνασαι ἐλεύθερος γενέσθαι), indicating that a slave might have some influence over the outcome. While this may have sometimes been the case, as with self-purchase of manumission, the slave owner would always be the one who ultimately decided. Though Harrill cites evidence of a slave rejecting an offer of manumission, the offer in this particular case came not from the owner, but from a third party.²³ Given that manumission was simply an aspect of ancient slavery, which served a purpose in the management of slaves for the slaveholder, it would hardly be realistic to suggest to slaves that they should reject the possibility of manumission.

Recognition of this latter point has proved decisive for the interpretation of Paul's elliptic comment. How could slaves go against their owner's wishes and remain enslaved when their master, for whatever reason, no longer wanted them to be? For Paul to advise something so unusual and impractical would be unlikely. That he would make such an unlikely suggestion in an offhand manner, in an elliptical phrase that does not even explicitly

environments' (*The Freedman in the Roman World*, 141). Both Zelnick-Abramovitz and Mouritsen agree that manumission led to an in-between state. Since the distinction slave-free was such a basic division in society, the one state seen as the negation of the other, making the transition from one into the other posed a problem. As Mouritsen notes, 'the very possibility of such movement automatically called into question the given character of both statuses'. The process of transition therefore had to be carefully regulated (*The Freedman in the Roman World*, 11).

¹⁹ Mouritsen, *The Freedman in the Roman World*, 142

²⁰ The idea that slaves generally paid for their manumission has become widely accepted, but is criticised by Mouritsen, who maintains that 'self-purchase did occur, but the evidence suggests that it was the exception rather than the rule' (*The Freedman in the Roman World*, 180).

²¹ On the reasons for manumission and the terms on which it occurred, see Mouritsen, *The Freedman in the Roman World*, 120-205; Zelnick-Abramovitz, *Not Wholly Free*, 61-129.

²² Zelnick-Abramovitz, *Not Wholly Free*, 99-125.

²³ Harrill, *The Manumission of Slaves in Early Christianity*, 86-87.

state what was intended, makes for a highly problematic reading. Paul's brief aside can best be understood as a quick note of reassurance: 'if you can become free, it's ok to use that opportunity'. Everyone should remain in the position in which he or she was called, yet for a slave to become manumitted does not go against the principle of staying in one's calling. If a slave can become free, he or she should use that opportunity without the fear of breaking the principle given by Paul.²⁴

We can thus conclude that verse 21 must be understood to mean that Paul encourages slaves to become free, if the opportunity arises. This should not be seen as a criticism of the slave system as such, but simply as recognition that to be freed was a step up from being enslaved.²⁵ It shows that Paul valued freedom not only as a spiritual, but also as a social condition. Most slaves, however, did not have the opportunity to become free. It is their position which Paul addresses in the passage as a whole. Those who were called as slaves and remain so, do not need to be worried about their position 'in Christ'.

1.1.2 Accept Freedom and Stay As You Are

Having established that Paul tells slaves that they are free 'in the Lord' and advises them to take the opportunity to become free should it arise, we will now see how this advice fits into the broader argumentation of the chapter in which it occurs. As noted above, chapter 7 of 1 Corinthians deals with the issue of marriage, and only mentions slave and free as an illustration of the guiding principle 'remain in the situation in which you were called'. The question needs to be answered then how Paul can tell slaves to accept freedom and thus change their situation as part of his larger argument about marriage.

In the chapter, Paul advises various groups about how to act in marriage and whether to become or stay married. In the first paragraphs (7:1-16), Paul gives guidelines for specific groups, but also argues exceptions: married people should not abstain from

²⁴ The nature of ellipsis as used in other New-Testament texts further supports this reading. After examining 21 other cases in the New Testament of ellipsis in conditional sentences using $\epsilon\acute{\iota}$ (e.g. 2 Corinthians 5:16b), Stephen Llewelyn finds that in all these cases, the ellipsis should be completed by an element from the preceding clause. If Paul had meant to have this ellipsis completed by anything other than the freedom mentioned in the preceding clause, 'he would have needed to say so explicitly' (Stephen R. Llewelyn, *A Review of the Greek Inscriptions and Papyri Published in 1980-81* (New Documents Illustrating Early Christianity vol.6) (North Ryde: Macquarie University 1992), 67-69).

My own attempt to shed light on this verse by examining the meaning of the phrase $\alpha\lambda\lambda' \epsilon\acute{\iota} \kappa\alpha\iota$ proved inconclusive. The phrase is taken to mean either 'but/indeed even if', by those who favour the reading 'use slavery', and is read as 'but if indeed', by those favouring 'use freedom'. Philo's use of $\alpha\lambda\lambda' \epsilon\acute{\iota} \kappa\alpha\iota$ shows that in his writings, both meanings occur. We find an example of the first in *on the Change of Names* 222: 'Let none of them of the lowly or obscure in repute shrink through despair of the higher hope from thankful supplication to God, ($\alpha\lambda\lambda' \epsilon\acute{\iota} \kappa\alpha\iota$) but even if he no longer expects any greater boon, give thanks according to his power for the gifts which he has already received.' The second meaning of $\alpha\lambda\lambda' \epsilon\acute{\iota} \kappa\alpha\iota$ is found in *On Drunkenness* 198: 'Now for my part I do not wonder that the chaotic and promiscuous multitude who are bound in inglorious slavery to usages and customs introduced anyhow, should give credence to traditions delivered once and for all, and leaving their minds unexercised, should give vent to affirmations and negotiations without inquiry or examination. ($\alpha\lambda\lambda' \epsilon\acute{\iota} \kappa\alpha\iota$) But I do wonder that the multitude of so-called philosophers, who feign to be seeking for exact and absolute certainty in things, are divided into troops and companies and propound dogmatic conclusions widely different and often diametrically opposite not on some single chance point, but on all points great or small, which constitute the problems which they seek to solve.' The difficulty of interpreting $\alpha\lambda\lambda' \epsilon\acute{\iota} \kappa\alpha\iota$ is illustrated by the translation of *On Joseph* 24, which reads in the Loeb edition 'nay, even if', while the French translation by Amaldez et al. gives, in my opinion correctly, 'si, au contraire'.

²⁵ So also Glancy, *Slavery in Early Christianity*, 96.

sexual relations, but when both partners consent to it they can do so for a time (though not for too long or lack of self-control will give the devil his chance, 7:1-7). It is best for widowed people not to remarry, but if they do not have enough self-control they should, because it is better to marry than to burn with desire (7:8-9). Married people should not divorce, but if their non-believing spouse wants to leave, they should let them, because God wants us to live in peace (7:16).

Even though Paul gives many regulations regarding marriage, and significantly advises in several instances to change one's position, he makes the larger point that marriage is no longer of great importance. In a passage dealing with the coming end of time, one that will be discussed in greater detail in the next chapter, he gives the following explanation for this:

What I mean is this, brothers, time has been shortened (ὁ καιρὸς συνεσταλμένος ἐστίν), therefore from now on, those who have wives should be as though they did not (οἱ ἔχοντες γυναῖκας ὡς μὴ ἔχοντες ὦσιν), those who mourn should be as though they were not mourning, those who rejoice as though they were not rejoicing, those who buy as though they were not possessing, those who use the world as though they were not overusing it, because the form of this world is passing away (παράγει γὰρ τὸ σχῆμα τοῦ κόσμου τούτου). (1 Corinthians 7:29-31)

Those who have wives should live as if they do not. Marriage has only limited importance, it is a distraction; it is a part of the world that is passing away. Paul does not advise to withdraw from the world, but to take on a dispassionate attitude towards it, to live as if not (ὡς μὴ).²⁶ The coming end of the world relativizes all human actions. Paul places his guidelines with regard to marital status formulated in 1 Corinthians 7 against this background. Some Corinthian believers apparently felt the need to change their marital status because of their new faith. Paul's position is that the time is too short to be concerned with the world. Believers should not withdraw from the world, but should not be engrossed by it either.

In the paragraph which includes the passage about slaves (7:17-24), Paul gives a general principle of conduct that he claims to decree in all communities: that everyone should stay in the position in which they were called (ἐκαστον ὡς κέκληκεν ὁ θεός, οὕτως περιπατεῖτω 7:17). He formulates and reformulates this principle and, as already noted, illustrates it with two examples, circumcision and slaves. These examples reflect the divisions named in the baptismal formula. The overarching subject of marriage and celibacy deals with male and female, while the two examples deal with the division between Jew and Greek (through circumcision), and slave and free. The relative importance of these social distinctions is denied in each case.

This denial comes most explicitly in the matter of circumcision, of which Paul says that it means nothing:

²⁶ In chapter I of this study, the importance of eschatology for Paul's understanding of the cosmos and the community is examined. According to Edward Adams, Paul here 'moves, for the moment, beyond the issue on hand and speaks to the Corinthian community at large, urging the whole church to adopt a more avowedly apocalyptic outlook on life in the world' (*Constructing the World: A Study in Paul's Cosmological Language* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark 2000) 131.

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Was a man already circumcised when he was called (περιτετημένος τις ἐκλήθη)? He should not become uncircumcised (μὴ ἐπισπάσθω). Was a man uncircumcised when he was called (ἐν ἀκροβυστία κέκληται τις)? He should not be circumcised (μὴ περιτεμνέσθω). Circumcision is nothing and uncircumcision is nothing (περιτομή οὐδέν ἐστιν καὶ ἡ ἀκροβυστία οὐδέν ἐστιν). Keeping God's commands is what counts (ἀλλὰ τήρησις ἐντολῶν θεοῦ). (1 Corinthians 7:18-19)

Paul employs circumcision as a clear example illustrating that you should stay as you are. There is no need to circumcise, or to undo your circumcision, because it is simply irrelevant. So how does the situation of slaves illustrate the principle of staying as you are?

As just seen, most slaves were not in a position to change their situation. Furthermore, those slaves who could change their status were told by Paul to go ahead and do so. He thus seems to make an exception to his own principle, just as he does for several situations relating to marital status, as noted above. The manner in which he employs the example of slaves takes him from the rule 'do not change', to the consolation 'you do not need to change'. Rather than advise slaves to stay as they are, Paul encourages them by saying that 'in Christ' their position has already changed. All this suggests that it is not the aptitude of the comparison which led Paul to use the categories slave and free as an illustration of the principle, but rather that its association with marriage and circumcision, as related social categories that underwent a major change in light of the coming end time. We can conclude from Paul's message to slaves in 1 Corinthians that he apparently thought slaves might be concerned about their situation, but that he felt there was no need for this. In relation to Christ, slave and free were in a similar situation.

1.2 As a Brother: Paul's Letter to Philemon

We now turn to our second text in Paul's letters that discusses slave and free. Unlike the previous passage, this text is not addressed to slaves, but rather to a slave owner, and discusses a single slave. The letter to Philemon has played an important role in the debate about Paul's attitude towards slavery and has, like the passage from 1 Corinthians discussed above, been read both as a confirmation of slavery and as a challenge to a slave holder, in advising him to set his slave free.²⁷ In this letter, Paul writes to Philemon, a man with whom he is personally acquainted, about the latter's slave, Onesimus. Even though the message of the letter seems intended for Philemon only, and speaks to a singular 'you' almost exclusively, it is also addressed by name to two others, Apphia and Archippus, and to the community that meets in Philemon's house. The letter contains a plea by Paul on behalf of Onesimus, although what it is that Paul asks of Philemon is not immediately evident, nor is it clear what the situation is exactly between Onesimus and Philemon. Paul hints that

²⁷ The letter continues to attract a great deal of scholarly interest, with no apparent consensus in sight. To name just a few recent publications: Joseph A. Marchal, 'The Usefulness of an Onesimus: The Sexual Use of Slaves and Paul's Letter to Philemon', *Journal of Biblical Literature* 130/4 (2011), 749-770; D. Francois Tolmie and Alfred Friedl (eds.), *Philemon in Perspective: Interpreting a Pauline Letter*, (Berlin: De Gruyter 2010); Scott S. Elliott, "Thanks, but no Thanks': Tact, Persuasion, and the Negotiation of Power in Paul's Letter to Philemon", *New Testament Studies* 57 (2010), 51-64. Recent summaries of the history of interpretation of Philemon can be found in D. Francois Tolmie, 'Tendencies in the Research on the Letter to Philemon', in *Philemon in Perspective: Interpreting a Pauline Letter*, D. Francois Tolmie and Alfred Friedl (eds.), (Berlin: De Gruyter 2010), 1-28, and in Byron, *Recent Research*, 116-137.

something has happened between them, but the details remain obscure. Whatever the plea to Philemon was, the fact that the letter is addressed to a larger group of people probably means that Paul intended there to be some public scrutiny of Philemon's reaction.²⁸

Many scenarios have been offered to explain the history behind this letter. It has proven tempting to speculate about the developments that shaped the triangle formed by Paul, the slave Onesimus and his master Philemon, and we will look at several of these scholarly reconstructions below. Yet while much of this conjecture has focused on what happened between Onesimus and Philemon, the crucial event triggering the letter occurred between Onesimus and Paul. As Paul writes in verse 10: 'I appeal to you for my child, whom I have begotten while in chains, Onesimus'. Although it is unclear how Paul and Onesimus ended up in the same location, it is evident that during the time that they were together, Onesimus came to accept Paul's message of faith in Christ. It is this change in Onesimus, his joining in the faith that Paul and Philemon already shared, that motivated the letter and that colours Paul's perspective on the past, the present and the future, as expressed in it. In this section we will explore this letter, and try to see what it tells us about Paul's attitude towards slave and free.

1.2.1 The Change: No Longer as a Slave

Paul begins the letter with praise for Philemon. He gives thanks for the love and faith that Philemon has for Jesus and for all believers (πάντας τοὺς ἁγίους, 4-5). He speaks of the joy and encouragement he has had from Philemon's love, and how Philemon has refreshed the hearts of the believers (τὰ σπλάγχνα τῶν ἁγίων, 7). Several of the words Paul uses in flattering Philemon, such as love (ἀγάπη), heart (σπλάγχνα) and brother (ἀδελφός), return in the appeal to him that follows. With his opening paragraph, Paul sets the tone for the letter and with his praise for Philemon, makes it more difficult for him to refuse his request.²⁹

The introduction of Paul's request signals a change in tone: 'Therefore, even though I am bold enough in Christ to command you to do what is fitting (τὸ ἀνήκον), I rather appeal to you through love' (8-9). Even though Paul feels he is in a position to tell Philemon what to do, he rather chooses to ask him. Paul asserts his authority over Philemon, but does not overtly capitalise on it. He asks Philemon to do 'what is appropriate', 'what is fitting' (τὸ ἀνήκον). Though we do not yet know what it is that Paul asks, it is not something he presents as exceptional, or unusual, but as something the circumstances demand. In using the term τὸ ἀνήκον Paul suggests that Philemon is asked to do something that would be appropriate for anyone in his situation.

Paul then comes to his reason for writing the letter, and I will quote this part of the letter in full:

I appeal to you for my son, whom I have begotten while in chains, Onesimus, he was once useless to you but is now useful to you and me, I am sending him back

²⁸ Chris Frilingos notes that the letters' multiple recipients and the plural used in the closing request and benediction indicate that this epistle was read aloud to Philemon and the household *ekklesia*: 'The stage is set: Will Philemon publicly deny the apostolic prisoner's plea?' (Chris Frilingos, "'For My Child, Onesimus": Paul and Domestic Power in Philemon', *Journal of Biblical Literature* 119/1 (2000), 91-104, 99).

²⁹ Ernst Wendland gives a detailed analysis of the form of the letter in relation to its rhetorical purpose ('"You Will Do Even More Than I Say": On the Rhetorical Function of Stylistic Form in Philemon', in *Philemon in Perspective: Interpreting a Pauline Letter*, D. Francois Tolmie and Alfred Friedl (eds.), (Berlin: De Gruyter 2010), 79-112).

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to you, that is, my own heart. I would have liked to keep him with me, so that on your behalf he could serve me, in chains for the gospel, but I wanted to do nothing without your consent, so that your goodness might not be by compulsion but voluntary. For perhaps he was separated for a short time, so that you might have him back for ever, no longer as a slave, but as more than a slave, as a beloved brother, especially for me, how much more for you, both in the flesh and in the Lord (τάχα γὰρ διὰ τοῦτο ἐχωρίσθη πρὸς ὥραν, ἵνα αἰώνιον αὐτὸν ἀπέχης, οὐκέτι ὡς δοῦλον ἀλλὰ ὑπὲρ δοῦλον, ἀδελφὸν ἀγαπητόν, μάλιστα ἐμοί, πόσω δὲ μᾶλλον σοὶ καὶ ἐν σαρκὶ καὶ ἐν κυρίῳ.). If then you count me as a partner, receive him as you would me. And if he has wronged you or owes you anything, put that on my account. I, Paul, am writing with my own hand, I will repay; not to mention that you owe me your very self besides. Yes, brother, let me have some benefit from you in the Lord, refresh my heart in Christ. (*Philemon* 10-20)

Paul writes that Onesimus has become his son in prison. The phrase he uses, that he has 'begotten him' (ὅν ἐγέννησα), undoubtedly refers to Onesimus being converted by Paul. Paul uses the metaphor of fatherhood several times in his letters, to describe his relationship with those who have accepted his message about Christ (cf. 1 Corinthians 4:15; Philippians 2:22; 1 Thessalonians 2:11). This is the news that the letter brings to Philemon: while Onesimus was away, he has become a believer, just like Philemon himself is. Paul continues with a pun on Onesimus' name: he was once useless and now useful to both of us (11). The name Onesimus, a name frequently used for slaves, meant 'useful'. I do not think there is any need to speculate on whether Onesimus was a useless slave, as some commentators do.³⁰ What has made him useful in Paul's eyes is most likely the simple fact of his conversion, which has turned him into a member of the community. As a non-believer he was useless, his faith has made him useful to Paul.

Paul is now sending Onesimus back, presumably with this letter. The fact that Paul writes to Philemon about the future of Onesimus is in itself an acknowledgement of Philemon's authority as a slaveholder, over his slave. Yet Paul undermines this authority by suggesting that he could have kept Onesimus without Philemon's consent, but chose not to. Even though he would have liked to have kept Onesimus with him (13), to serve him on Philemon's behalf, he does not want to force this good deed on Philemon (14, κατὰ ἀνάγκην). Paul apparently wants to present his authority as a leader in the religious community as overriding Philemon's social authority as a master.

Perhaps, Paul says, Onesimus was separated for a time from Philemon, so that he might have him back forever, but now under different circumstances. Philemon is encouraged to see the loss of his slave in a positive light: he has been away, but has come

³⁰ See e.g. John M.G. Barclay, 'Paul, Philemon and the Dilemma of Christian Slave-Ownership', *New Testament Studies* 37 (1991), 161-186, 164. Tobias Nicklas believes, however, that the word is used 'ad absurdum', given the framing statements about a child-parent relationship (Tobias Nicklas, 'The Letter to Philemon: A Discussion with J. Albert Harrill', in *Paul's World*, Stanley E. Porter, (ed.), (Leiden: Brill 2008), 201-220, 218). Joseph Marchal has recently suggested that Paul refers here to the sexual usefulness of Onesimus: 'Paul's characterization of Onesimus in Philemon could have been translated as "good for intercourse" rather than simply "useful"'. According to Marchal this is a 'condescending and chilling turn of phrase' (Marchal, 'The Usefulness of an Onesimus', 761-762). The main objection to this reading, apart from the incompatibility of Paul's sexual ethic with the sexual use of slaves or with sex between men, is that it requires us to accept that Onesimus was somehow not 'good for intercourse' previously, but has become a useful sex object for both Paul and Philemon now that he has accepted Paul's message about Christ.

back as a brother. In this verse, Paul comes closest to defining the new relationship between Onesimus and Philemon and the change this required from Philemon especially: 'no longer as a slave but as more than a slave, as a beloved brother, especially to me, how much more to you, both in the flesh and in the Lord.' Onesimus comes back no longer as a slave (οὐκέτι ὡς δοῦλον), but, because of his conversion, as a brother (ἀδελφόν). Paul does not give any special reason for this change; it is simply another way of saying that Onesimus has become a believer. As Philemon has not been a witness to this event, it is Paul who has to give him this news in the letter.

This verse about Onesimus and Philemon as brothers is the crucial one for our examination of the letter in light of the baptismal formula. That Onesimus is now no longer a slave, but has become Philemon's brother in the Lord has strong similarities to Paul's claim in 1 Corinthians that slaves are freed and free people are slaves of Christ (1 Corinthians 7:22), and to the baptismal saying that there is 'neither slave nor free' in Christ. All these statements connect a change in the status of slave and free, particularly a denial of slave status, to belonging to Christ.³¹

Paul goes on to encourage Philemon to receive Onesimus as he would Paul (17 προσλαβοῦ αὐτὸν ὡς ἐμέ) if he considers Paul a κοινωνός. This is a term used for a partner or co-worker (as used of Titus in 2 Corinthians 8:23), synonymous with the word used for Philemon in the introduction (συνεργός). Paul brings Onesimus to his own social level, that of a colleague and a guest, and urges Philemon to treat him accordingly. Just as a brother, a guest stands at the opposite end of the social spectrum from a slave.³² For a slave to be treated as a guest in the house of his master would be a complete turnaround.

Verse 18 indicates that something had occurred before Onesimus left Philemon: 'if he has wronged you or owes you anything' (εἰ δέ τι ἠδίκησέν σε ἢ ὀφείλει). However, Paul does not dwell on what happened or whether Onesimus was at fault. Again, he places himself between them, showing his strong personal bond with Onesimus. Just as he transferred his own credit with Philemon to Onesimus in the previous verse, he now takes on all of Onesimus' debt: 'put that on my account' (τοῦτο ἐμοὶ ἐλλόγα). Paul can safely make this grand gesture since he considers Philemon to be deeply in his debt already, as he points out in a not very subtle way: 'not to mention that you owe me your very self'. Perhaps to compensate for this damage to Philemon's pride, Paul follows with a joke, 'let me have some benefit from you in the Lord' (ἐγὼ σου ὀναίμην), 'refresh my heart' (ἀνάπαυσόν μου τὰ σπλάγχνα). The first clause contains another play on Onesimus' name, this time hinting at

³¹ Unique to this passage is the notion of 'brothers in the flesh'. The exact meaning of the term 'flesh' here is difficult to establish (on the meaning and use of the term flesh in Paul, see Dunn, *Theology of Paul*, 62-70). According to Dunn, it is used here as the weaker realm, in contrast to a superior mode of being, 'not merely "in the flesh" but, more importantly, "in the Lord" (*Theology of Paul*, 64). Some scholars suggest that the use of the term is part of Paul's veiled appeal to Philemon to manumit Onesimus (So e.g. Harrill, *Slaves in the New Testament*, 14; G. Francois Wessels, 'The Letter to Philemon in the Context of Early Christianity' in *Philemon in Perspective: Interpreting a Pauline Letter*, D. Francois Tolmie and Alfred Friedl (eds.), (Berlin: De Gruyter 2010), 143-168, 164-165). Others assume that there is some form of kinship between Onesimus and Philemon, whether as brothers (Allen Dwight Callahan, *Embassy of Onesimus: The letter of Paul to Philemon* (Valley Forge: Trinity Press International, 1997, 50) or in a wider ethnic sense (Sechrest, *A Former Jew*, 132).

³² Craig S. de Vos, 'Once a slave, always a slave? Slavery, Manumission and Relational Patterns in Paul's Letter to Philemon', *Journal for the Study of the New Testament* 82 (2001) 89-105, 103. De Vos argues that in asking for this turnaround, Paul asks for a far greater change than manumission would have constituted.

the usefulness of Philemon. The second phrase uses the word heart, which can be seen as another reference to Onesimus, whom Paul has called his heart earlier in the letter (in verse 12).

Again this passage illustrates how the social realities, in this case Onesimus' debt to Philemon, and whatever took place before Onesimus left, are irrelevant for Paul in the light of their relationship through their shared faith. Philemon is reminded that, since he owes his life and his faith to Paul, he is not in a position to go against Paul's wishes and claim what may he may well see as his right as a slave owner.

Paul closes the letter with a positive assertion that his plea for Onesimus will be successful: 'confident of your obedience, knowing that you will do even more than I ask' (21 Πειποιθῶς τῇ ὑπακοῇ σου, εἰδὼς ὅτι καὶ ὑπὲρ ἃ λέγω ποιήσεις). Having started with an appeal rather than a command (8-9), he now changes his tone and ends speaking confidently of obedience.

Some commentators have suggested that by saying he is confident Philemon will do 'even more' than he asked (verse 21), Paul was in fact hinting at manumission and was asking Philemon to free Onesimus.³³ Yet manumission in itself would not necessarily have changed the relationship between Onesimus and Philemon in a fundamental way, or made them equal in any sense. As Paul's wordplay in 1 Corinthians 7 suggests, a freed slave would not be equal to a free person. Rather, slave and free approach equality when slaves become freed and the free slaves. As outlined in connection with this passage (1 Corinthians 7:21-22), a freed slave would usually continue to serve his or her master, under similar circumstances. In many cases, a contract would be drawn up, specifying the obligations of the freed slave to the former master. Former masters still had the right to control and punish their freed slave. Paul's understanding of what manumission would mean for Onesimus would have been along these lines. Craig De Vos concludes based on these considerations that Paul was not concerned with a structural and legal change, as this would not have made a difference in itself, but only with a change in the relationship between Philemon and Onesimus and their perception of each other.³⁴ This change was far greater than any legal change could have been.

However, what the passage from 1 Corinthians 7 also shows is that Paul does consider manumission an improvement for slaves, since he urges slaves to take the opportunity to become free, should it arise. One could ask whether he would have wanted less for his child, Onesimus. I do agree with De Vos that the major change in Onesimus' situation would not have come from Philemon manumitting him, but from Philemon seeing him as a brother, and a guest, rather than a slave. To get a fuller picture of the implications of the letter for Paul's attitude towards slaves, we will now turn to the various interpretations that have been offered of the letter's origin and purpose.

1.2.2 If He Owes You Anything: The History of Onesimus and Philemon

As noted at the start of this section, several hypotheses exist about the events leading up to the letter. Since Paul only gives some vague hints about what occurred, various scenarios can be put forward. This vagueness is no doubt partly due to the fact that those involved

³³ So e.g. Harrill, *Slaves in the New Testament*, 14; James D.G. Dunn, *The Epistles to the Colossians and to Philemon: A Commentary on the Greek Text* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans 1996), 345; Peter Stuhlmacher, *Der Brief an Philemon* (Zürich: Benziger Verlag 1981), 53-54.

³⁴ De Vos, 'Once a slave', 104.

already knew the relevant circumstances. Apart from that, it most likely also results from their relative unimportance for Paul. His interest throughout the letter is with the future, not the past. Paul wants Philemon to accept Onesimus as a brother, since he is now a fellow believer, and does not wish to dwell on what happened before. Yet the question whether Onesimus was a runaway slave, whether he was sent to Paul or came looking for him for some form of mediation, continues to occupy scholarship on the letter and has important consequences for establishing Paul's ideas about slaves and slavery.³⁵

The traditional view that Onesimus was a runaway slave is still supported in recent scholarship.³⁶ However, in a detailed examination of those verses in the letter most frequently cited both in favour and against the idea that Onesimus was a runaway slave, Brook Pearson concludes that the text does not give conclusive support to either interpretation. Both sides read their own presuppositions back into the text.³⁷ Pearson unfortunately does not discuss Paul's rather relaxed attitude towards keeping Onesimus with him, or sending him back to Philemon. Paul writes that even though he would have liked to keep Onesimus with him, he does not want to do anything without Philemon's consent (13-14). The fact that Paul felt that there was no urgent need to send Onesimus back, makes it unlikely that he considered him to be a runaway slave in any legal sense.

Harbouring a runaway slave was considered a serious crime, which would make Paul liable to severe punishment had he been doing so.³⁸ According to Moses Finley,

'fugitive slaves are almost an obsession in the sources. Slaveowners did not suffer such a loss of property lightly. They sought help from friends and associates, they

³⁵ In his study of slaves in the New Testament, Albert Harrill identifies a fourth reconstruction, the idea that Onesimus was not a slave but a brother of Philemon (Harrill, *Slaves in the New Testament*, 6). This hypothesis, as most recently brought forward by Callahan, has been shown to be highly speculative by Harrill himself as well as by Stanley Stowers (J. Albert Harrill, 'Book Review: Embassy of Onesimus: The Letter of Paul to Philemon', *The Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 60 (1998), 757-759, 758; Stanley K. Stowers, 'Paul and Slavery: A Response', *Semeia* 83/84 (1998), 295-311, 303). Harrill himself made the suggestion that the letter is in fact a 'journeyman apprentice' contract, in which Paul asked Philemon to let Onesimus become his apprentice for service in the gospel. As such, according to him, it demonstrates 'Paul's participation and deep implication in ancient slavery.' However, Tobias Nicklas has rightly criticised this idea. The commercial language used by Paul in most cases relates not to Onesimus, but rather to Philemon (Nicklas 'The Letter to Philemon', 201-220). Scott S. Elliott recently offered an 'intentionally playful reading', suggesting that Paul writes the letter to reject Philemon's attempt to become his patron by sending him his slave Onesimus (Elliott, 'Thanks but no Thanks', 51-64).

³⁶ Recent supporters of the traditional view include Glancy, who considers it 'somewhat more convincing than the proposal that the church or the slaveholder sent Onesimus to Paul' (Glancy, *Slavery in Early Christianity*, 91) and Markus Barth and Helmut Blanke, who start their commentary on the first page by summing up the presupposition of the letter as: 'a pagan slave called Onesimus has run away from his master, Philemon' (Markus Barth and Helmut Blanke, *The Letter to Philemon: A New Translation with Notes and Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans 2000), 1). Harrill concludes that the runaway slave hypothesis 'looks more and more to be a fiction of Pauline interpreters' (Harrill, *Slaves in the New Testament*, 7).

³⁷ Brook W.R. Pearson, 'Assumptions in the Criticism and Translation of Philemon', in *Translating the Bible: Problems and Prospects*, Stanley E. Porter and Richard S. Hess (eds.), (Sheffield : Sheffield Academic Press 1999), 253-280, 254-255. Pearson focuses on the views of John Nordling for the traditional view (John G. Nordling, 'Onesimus Fugitivus: A Defense of the Runaway Slave Hypothesis in Philemon', *Journal for the Study of the New Testament* 41 (1991), 97-119) and John Knox and Sara Winter for the alternative hypothesis (John Knox, *Philemon among the Letters of Paul* (London: Collins, 1959); Sara C. Winter, 'Paul's Letter to Philemon', *New Testament Studies* 33 (1987), 1-15).

³⁸ Patterson, *Slavery and Social Death*, 269.

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offered rewards by public advertisement, they consulted oracles, astrologers and dream interpreters, they appealed to the public authorities and they engaged professional 'slave-catchers' (fugitivarii), known in the Roman world, at any rate from the late Republic.³⁹

Paul would hardly have written so lightly that he would have liked to keep Onesimus, if this was what he faced. Nor does it seem likely that Paul would say that Onesimus 'was separated' from Philemon, using a passive tense (ἐχωρίσθη, verse 15) if Onesimus had in fact run away.

The background story that seems to make most sense of all the small clues in Paul's letter is that Paul served as a mediator for Onesimus. An analogous letter from Pliny the Younger to his friend Sabinianus is often seen as support for this hypothesis.⁴⁰ Pliny wrote the letter on behalf of Sabinianus' freedman, who had come to Pliny to find help. A few lines from this letter can illustrate the similarities as well as the differences between both cases:

Your freedman with whom you said you were angry has been with me; he threw himself at my feet and clung to me with as much submission as he could have done at yours. (...) in short, he convinced me by his whole behavior, that he sincerely repents of his fault. (...) I know you are angry with him, and I know too, it is not without reason; but mercy is never more worthy of praise than when there is the justest cause for anger. (...) Allow something to his youth, to his tears, and to your own gentle disposition: do not make him uneasy any longer, and I will add too, do not make yourself so; for a man of your kindness of heart cannot be angry without feeling great uneasiness.

I am afraid that if I add my prayers to this, I would seem to be compelling you rather than asking you to forgive him. Yet I will do it and in the strongest terms since I have rebuked him very sharply and severely, warning him that I will never intercede for him again. Although it was proper to say this to him, in order to frighten him, it was not intended for your hearing. I may possibly have the occasion to again intercede for him and obtain your forgiveness if the error is one which is suitable for my intercession and your pardon.⁴¹

There are fascinating similarities in style and rhetoric between Pliny and Paul. Pliny, for example, says that if he added his prayers, he would seem to be compelling rather than asking for forgiveness. He then goes ahead and does put full pressure on Sabinianus. Paul makes the same distinction between asking and forcing, but chooses a different tactic, saying that he could command Philemon, but rather appeals (verses 8-9). Pliny writes down

³⁹ Moses Finley, *Ancient Slavery and Modern Ideology* (London: Chatto and Windus 1980 100). In their commentary, Barth and Blanke imagine Roman agents snooping around, about to discover Onesimus' true status as a runaway and to transport him back in chains. They do not seem to feel any incongruity between the presence of such slave catchers and Paul's lack of urgency in his statements about keeping or sending Onesimus (*The Letter to Philemon*, 363).

⁴⁰ Pliny the Younger, Ep. 9.21, mediation is suggested among others, see e.g. Dunn, *The Epistle to the Colossians and to Philemon*, 334-335; Peter Arzt-Grabner, 'How to Deal with an Onesimus? Paul's Solution within the Frame of Ancient Legal and Documentary Sources', in *Philemon in Perspective: Interpreting a Pauline Letter*, D. Francois Tolmie and Alfred Friedl (eds.), (Berlin: De Gruyter 2010), 113-142, 134.

⁴¹ Translation Stanley K. Stowers, *Letter Writing in Greco-Roman Antiquity* (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press 1986), 160.

what he has said to the freedman, adding that this was not intended for Sabinianus' hearing. Paul uses a similar trick when he writes 'not to mention that you owe me your very self' (in verse 19). Both authors manipulate their addressees, saying things while pretending not to say them.

Of course we do not know to what extent what actually occurred between Sabinianus and his freedman was similar to what happened between Philemon and Onesimus. It is interesting to see that while Pliny uses the freedman's tears and repentance to soften Sabinianus' feelings, Paul does not refer to Onesimus' feelings about the incident at all. Neither does Paul tell Philemon that he has rebuked Onesimus, or warned him, as Pliny does. Paul is remarkably uninterested in Onesimus' part in the affair.

Harrill dismisses the similarities between these two letters, and with it the 'intercession' hypothesis, because of these differences in attitude. 'Why does Paul not scold and rebuke Onesimus for leaving the household without permission, why such different tone from Pliny?'⁴² I believe, however, that the difference in tone does not necessarily stem from a different situation, but rather from a different perspective on the relationship between slave, or freedman, and master. As noted in the reading of the letter above, Paul shows a consistent disregard for the social realities involved. Any debt or wrongdoing has become irrelevant since they are now all brothers in the Lord. If the letter is indeed an attempt to mediate between Philemon and Onesimus, then Paul's mediation strategy is based on Onesimus' conversion. Because he has become a believer, his relationship to Philemon has undergone a fundamental change, making any previous history indeed a thing of the past. If we can pinpoint the content of Paul's plea, it would have to be that Philemon accepts the consequences of Onesimus' faith, receives him back accordingly and lets the past rest.

Paul's lack of interest in these past events hinders the attempts of scholars to reconstruct them. More importantly, it signals the relative unimportance of these events for Paul and his focus on the future. While the suggestion that Onesimus was a runaway slave does not hold, there is no way of knowing exactly how Onesimus ended up with Paul. Nor is it very important for our purposes. What matters is what happened after Onesimus came to Paul. The way Paul describes the consequences of Onesimus' change of faith for the latter's relationship with Philemon and with Paul himself shows a remarkable similarity with his other statements about slaves. As Tobias Nicklas puts it, 'the letter to Philemon could be understood as an explication of Gal 3:26-29 into a concrete case; it could also be seen as a "translation" of the fundamental idea of the church as "Christ's body" (1 Cor 12:12-13) into everyday life'.⁴³ We could add that it also chimes with the idea expressed in 1 Corinthians 7 that slaves are freed in the Lord, while those who are free are slaves of Christ (1 Corinthians 7:21-22). Of course, the case of Onesimus is a special one, in which Paul was obviously personally involved. We do not know how much of Paul's request was specific to this situation. What does become clear from this letter, however, is that the change from slave to brother upon becoming a believer is not substantiated by Paul, it is simply a given.

⁴² Harrill, *Slaves in the New Testament*, 11.

⁴³ Nicklas 'The Letter to Philemon', 220.

1.3 Slaves and Sexual Ethics: The Boundaries of the Pauline Community

The two texts discussed so far both deal explicitly with slaves and as we have seen, show a certain affinity with the claim that in Christ there is ‘neither slave nor free’. We now turn to a third text which has recently been put forward as also having to do with slaves, even if a direct reference is lacking in the text.

In her recent work on slavery in early Christianity, Jennifer Glancy has posed some interesting questions about the position of slaves in the Pauline community, particularly when it comes to sexuality.⁴⁴ While she generally focusses on how Paul’s sexual ethic would have created an obstacle for the participation of slaves in the community, since slaves did not control their own bodies or have definitive say over their sexual behaviour, Glancy also raises the possibility that Paul, in one particular passage, not only condones the sexual use of slaves, but even prescribes it.

1.3.1 Slaves as a Neutral Vessel? The Question of 1 Thessalonians 4:4

Glancy suggests that Paul advises masters, as part of his instructions to stay away from *porneia*, to use slaves as a ‘morally neutral’ sexual outlet in 1 Thessalonians 4:4. In this notoriously difficult passage, Paul’s use of the rather vague term *skeuos* has led to a number of interpretations, to which Glancy adds the possibility that the term *skeuos*, or ‘vessel’, refers to a slave. Paul’s advice would then be to use a slave as a sexual object:

For you know what instructions we gave you through the Lord Jesus. Because this is the will of God, your sanctification: that you abstain from *porneia* (τοῦτο γάρ ἐστιν θέλημα τοῦ θεοῦ, ὁ ἀγιασμός ὑμῶν, ἀπέχεσθαι ὑμᾶς ἀπὸ τῆς πορνείας); that each one of you knows how to *obtain your skeuos* in holiness and honour (εἰδέναι ἕκαστον ὑμῶν τὸ ἑαυτοῦ σκεῦος κτᾶσθαι ἐν ἀγιασμῷ καὶ τιμῇ) not with lustful passion, like the gentiles who do not know God (μὴ ἐν πάθει ἐπιθυμίας καθάπερ καὶ τὰ ἔθνη τὰ μὴ εἰδότα τὸν θεόν). (1 Thessalonians 4: 2-5)

The basic meaning of the word *skeuos* is a ‘vessel’ or ‘implement of any kind’, a ‘utensil’ (LSJ), particularly an object that one can put something in. Given this general meaning, it does not seem impossible that *skeuos* could be used to denote a slave, though such a meaning is not attested. Two translations have generally been put forward in the context of this verse: *skeuos* is either interpreted to refer to one’s own body, or to a wife.⁴⁵ When

⁴⁴ Jennifer A. Glancy, ‘Obstacles to Slaves’ Participation in the Corinthian Church’, *Journal of Biblical Literature*, 117/3 (1998), 481-501; Glancy, *Slavery in Early Christianity*, 49-70. Glancy’s ideas have been taken up by Joseph Marchal and applied to the letter to Philemon, with rather unfortunate consequences, see above nt. 26.

⁴⁵ The interpretation ‘wife’ is preferred e.g. by Abraham Malherbe, Traugott Holtz, Matthias Konradt and Larry Yarbrough, primarily on the basis of the meaning of the verb κτᾶσθαι (Abraham J. Malherbe, *The Letters to the Thessalonians* (New York: Doubleday 2000); Traugott Holz, *Der Erste Brief an die Thessalonicher* (Zürich: Benziger Verlag 1990); Matthias Konradt, ‘εἰδέναι ἕκαστον ὑμῶν τὸ ἑαυτοῦ σκεῦος κτᾶσθαι...: Zu Paulus’ sexualethischer Weisung in 1 Thess 4,4 f.’, *Zeitschrift für die neutestamentliche Wissenschaft und die Kunde der Älteren Kirche* 92 (2001), 128-135; O. Larry Yarbrough, *Not Like the Gentiles: Marriage Rules in the Letters of Paul* (Atlanta: Scholars Press 1985), 65-76). F.F. Bruce reads ‘body’, as do e.g. Günter Haufe, Jay E. Smith and the NRSV (F.F. Bruce, *1 & 2 Thessalonians* (Waco: Word Books 1982), 83; Günter Haufe, *Der erste Brief des Paulus an die Thessalonicher* (Leipzig: Evangelischer Verlagsanstalt 1999), 70-71; Jay E. Smith, ‘1 Thessalonians

translating *skeuos* as 'body', the accompanying verb *κατασθαι* is interpreted as 'to control', whereas with the reading 'wife', the verb is taken to mean 'to obtain'. Paul is seen to either urge the Thessalonians to control their body, or to obtain a wife. Neither of these interpretations obviously was ever seen to have any relevance for the position of slaves.

Glancy raises the possibility that Paul in this passage advises masters to use their own slaves as what she calls a 'morally neutral' sexual outlet. Or at the very least, she claims, his words could easily be construed by his ancient audience as advice to maintain their honour by turning to slaves to satisfy their sexual inclinations, since 'in the first century, many who heard such counsel would understand it as consistent with reliance on slaves as morally neutral sexual outlets'.⁴⁶ By using the term vessel to refer to a sexual partner, as Glancy assumes Paul is doing here, he is treating that partner not as an end, but as a means, which would be consistent with ancient ideas about slaves, and the owners' rights to their bodies.

Glancy's main argument is that a first-century slave owner would not know that there was anything wrong with using a slave sexually.⁴⁷ The term *porneia* in itself would not convey this meaning. Since it was self-evident that a slave owner would have sexual relations with his own slaves, Paul would have to state explicitly that such a practice was not acceptable, if that was his position. While he does not do so in this letter, Glancy leaves the option open that Paul advised the Thessalonians against it previously, given that he mentions instructions that he gave before (1 Thessalonians 4:2). Yet Glancy wonders whether it would have been sufficient even if he had done so, since 'an admonition to avoid sexual contact with one's slaves would have been sufficiently countercultural that Paul would have done well to return explicitly to the matter when he urged the Thessalonian Christians to contain their sexual urges'.⁴⁸

Glancy posits her new interpretation as a possibility. It may be that Paul has instructed the Thessalonians that sex between master and slave was a form of *porneia*, in which case he obviously does not encourage it here. Yet according to Glancy, 'given the pervasive assumption in the ancient world that slaveholders had free sexual access to their human chattel, Paul's failure to iterate, or reiterate, a prohibition on such behaviour is peculiar'.⁴⁹ The fact that Paul would then state that obtaining a *skeuos* should be done in holiness and honour does not preclude the 'slave' interpretation of *skeuos* according to Glancy, because a man's sexual use of his own slaves would emphatically *not* have violated first-century notions of honour. Male slaves were considered to be without honour, and female slaves without shame.⁵⁰

4:4: Breaking the Impasse', *Bulletin for Biblical Research* 11 (2001), 65-105). Jouette Bassler offers a 'modest proposal', suggesting that *skeuos* means not 'wife' generally, but refers specifically to the category of 'virgin' (Jouette M. Bassler, 'Skeuos: A Modest Proposal for Illuminating Paul's use of Metaphor in 1 Thessalonians 4:4', in *The Social World of the First Christians: Essays in Honor of Wayne A. Meeks*, L. Michael White and O. Larry Yarbrough (eds.), (Minneapolis: Fortress Press 1995), 53-66).

⁴⁶ Glancy, *Slavery in Early Christianity*, 62.

⁴⁷ See also Finley, *Ancient Slavery and Modern Ideology*, 95-96. As we will see below Musonius Rufus is one of the few ancient voices which express criticism about the sexual use of slaves, though this is motivated not by a concern for the slave, but rather for the self-control of the master (Musonius Rufus 12, *On Sexual Indulgence*).

⁴⁸ Glancy, *Slavery in Early Christianity*, 62.

⁴⁹ Glancy, *Slavery in Early Christianity*, 62.

⁵⁰ Glancy, *Slavery in Early Christianity*, 62.

With this last observation, Glancy seems to slip from exegetical open mindedness to exegetical word play. The fact that many in the first century may have felt that there was no dishonour in the sexual use of a slave does not mean that it is likely that Paul would refer to this as something done 'in honour and holiness' (ἐν ἀγιασμῷ καὶ τιμῇ). Glancy fails to account for this crucial clause; the absence of honour and shame in slaves does not account for the positive assertion of honour and holiness in their use. Moreover, Paul contrasts the way in which the 'you' to which the letter is addressed, should obtain their *skeuos*, 'in holiness and honour', from the way in which gentiles do this. Even if we take up Glancy's suggestion for a moment and assume that Paul's instruction referred to slaves, the way in which the Thessalonians should use their slaves had to be different from the way in which gentiles do this, which is 'with lustful passion' (ἐν πάθει ἐπιθυμίας).

The suggestion that *skeuos* should be translated as 'slave' has therefore brought Glancy no nearer to solving her problem. She maintains that it would be difficult for a first-century slave owner to know what Paul expected him to do with regard to the sexual use of slaves. If Paul's sexual regulations prohibited this taken-for-granted practice, they would have to explicitly say so. But if we are to understand that Paul sanctions sexual relations between master and slave in this passage, then he apparently does so with certain provisions. The business has to be done 'in holiness and honour', not 'with lustful passion'. What would an ancient slave owner be expected to make of that?

While it seems clear that many in the ancient world accepted a master's right to have sex with their slaves, this attitude is not as universal as Glancy suggests. The Stoic philosopher Musonius Rufus disapproves of sexual relations between slave and master, and claims that everyone knows that it is morally reprehensible:

Everyone who sins reveals himself as a less honorable person, in this category belongs the man who has relations with his own slave-maid, a thing which some people consider quite without blame, since every master is held to have it in his power to use his slave as he wishes (ὅπερ νομίζουσί τινες μάλιστα πως εἶναι ἀναίτιον, ἐπεὶ καὶ δεσπότης πᾶς αὐτεξούσιος εἶναι δοκεῖ ὅ τι βούλεται χρῆσθαι δούλῳ τῷ ἑαυτοῦ). In reply to this I have just one thing to say: if it seems neither shameful nor out of place for a master to have relations with his own slave, particularly if she happens to be unmarried, let him consider how he would like it if his wife had relations with a male slave. Would it not seem completely intolerable not only if the woman who had a lawful husband had relations with a slave, but even if a woman without a husband should have? And yet surely one will not expect men to be less moral than women, nor less capable of disciplining their desires, thereby revealing the stronger in judgment inferior to the weaker, the rulers to the ruled. In fact, it behooves men to be much better if they expect to be superior to women, for surely if they appear to be less self-controlled they will also be baser characters. What need is there to say that it is an act of licentiousness and nothing less for a master to have relations with a slave? Everyone knows that. (Musonius Rufus 12, *On Sexual Indulgence*)⁵¹

⁵¹ As quoted in Susan M. Treggiari, *Roman Marriage: "Iusti Coniuges" from the Time of Cicero to the Time of Ulpian* (Oxford : Clarendon Press 1991) Appendix 3, 510-511. See also Plutarch, *Advice to the Bride and Groom* 43-44 and Seneca, *Letter* 94.26: 'You know that a man does wrong in requiring chastity of his wife while he himself is intriguing with the wives of other men; you know that, as your wife should have no dealings with a

Of course, Musonius Rufus' aversion to sex between master and slave does not stem from any concern for slaves; he simply sees it as inappropriate and a sign of lack of discipline. Since it would be intolerable if a woman had sex with a slave, a man must also not do so. A man surely cannot be less moral than a woman.

While the importance of Musonius Rufus for the reconstruction of ancient ideas about sexuality and slaves has often been recognised, the relevance of a passage from one of the Greek romances, from Chariton's novel *Chaereas and Callirhoe*, has, to my knowledge, so far not been noted. Here we find another example of the idea that sex between a master and slave was less than civilised.

In the opening of book two of the novel, one of its main characters, the widower Dionysius, wakes to find his slave Leonas by his bedside with good news. Leonas tells his master excitedly about a very beautiful woman he has just bought for him. Dionysius receives the news with mixed feelings:

Dionysius was pleased to hear of the woman's beauty -he really was fond of women- but not so pleased that she was a slave. He was the descendant of kings, excelling the whole of Ionia in dignity and sophistication, so he thought it beneath him to share a slave's bed (ἀπηξίου κοίτην θεραπαλίδος). (Chariton's novel *Chaereas and Callirhoe*, II.1)⁵²

Although Dionysius stands in the way of the reunion of the couple that forms the novel's heroes, he is portrayed throughout as a civilised man and his negative attitude towards having slaves as sexual partners is presented here as part of his aristocracy.⁵³ Of course, obstacles need to be created in the novel to prevent Dionysius from dishonouring Callirhoe, the heroine, by having sex with her before she is married. The author Chariton apparently felt that it would be credible to associate nobility with a refusal to take a slave as a concubine. This notion must therefore have been familiar to his audience, if only in the form of a little realised ideal.

Attitudes towards the sexual use of slaves were thus not as uniform as Glancy suggests. Two sources contemporary to Paul associate good moral character with a rejection of sexual relations between master and slave. Musonius Rufus argues against received opinion which did consider a master to have the power to use a slave as he wished. The author Chariton assumes his audience understands that a civilised man might not want to take a slave as a sexual partner. Furthermore, contemporary Jews such as Philo and Josephus limit sexual activity to marriage, and within marriage to procreation.⁵⁴ As we will see below, Dio also objected to the exploitation of slaves in brothels. The suggestion that a first-century slave owner could not possibly have any awareness that sex between master and slave might be frowned upon thus seems an overstatement. For Paul to demand

lover, neither should you yourself with a mistress; and yet you do not act accordingly' (translation Loeb via project Gutenberg).

⁵² Translation by Stephen M. Trzaskoma, *Two Novels from Ancient Greece: Chariton's Callirhoe and Xenophon of Ephesos' An Ephesian Story: Anthia and Habrocomes* (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing 2010).

⁵³ Jean Alvares points out the debate about how the character of Dionysius should be viewed. Both sides seem to agree on his *paideia*, however (Jean Alvares, 'Love, Loss, and Learning in Chariton's "Chaereas and Callirhoe"', *The Classical World* 59 (2002), 107-115, 115).

⁵⁴ For a discussion of the advocates of 'procreationism' such as Philo, Musonius and Seneca, see Gaca, *The Making of Fornication*, 115, 292-296.

abstaining from such relations was thus, though not conventional, not incomprehensible for a contemporary audience either, but in line with certain moral attitudes. Glancy's suggestion that the passage could or should be read as a reference to slaves is thus not convincing, both for internal, as well as for contextual reasons; it does not provide a plausible reading of the passage in the context of first-century attitudes towards slaves and sex, as it claims to do.⁵⁵

1.3.2 Paul's Sexual Ethic and the Exclusion of Slaves

Apart from her speculative suggestion that Paul advises the use of slaves in the one passage just discussed, Glancy generally focusses on the question to what extent Paul's notion of *porneia*, and the demands he makes with regard to the sexual behaviour of believers will have excluded slaves, given the fact that the sexual use of slaves was widespread in ancient society. A slave owner could generally expect to use the bodies of his slaves in whatever way he chose.⁵⁶ Paul, however, urges believers to flee from *porneia*, or sexual misconduct, and appears to only condone sexual relations between husband and wife. Since slaves could often not decide for themselves whether to abide by such instructions on sexual actions, these rules will probably have hampered their access to the community. Glancy suggests that according to Paul's proclamation, there may have been no distinction between slave and free within the community, but when it came to getting in, their positions were very different.⁵⁷

While Glancy clearly raises a valid and important point, her reconstruction of the nature of the obstacles for slave participation does present some problems. It is doubtful whether Paul's statements about *porneia* give us as much information about illicit sexual behaviour as Glancy claims. Paul refers to sexual behaviour in various passages (e.g. Romans 1:26-28; 1 Corinthians 5:1, 9, 6:9; 1 Thessalonians 4:3-5), but the exact parameters of what is and is not allowed remain unclear. Slaves are not explicitly mentioned in any of these passages, nor is the sexual use of slaves condemned or condoned. Paul's lack of specificity appears to stem from his assumption that everyone knows what he is talking about: 'now the works of the flesh are obvious: *porneia*, impurity, licentiousness' (Galatians 5:19). Since Paul's sexual ethic was probably one of the main components of his message, he can refer to what he has told his audience when he was with them, as he does in 1 Thessalonians: For 'you know what instructions we gave you through the Lord Jesus' (1 Thessalonians 4:2). What exactly constitutes *porneia*, or fornication, as it is often translated, is therefore

⁵⁵ If this reading is rejected, we are still left with the two interpretations of the term *skeuos* in 1 Thessalonians 4:4 outlined above. There is no space here to address this question in full, but I would suggest that from the larger context of the verse, it makes most sense to see Paul's instructions as pertaining to a person's body. Reading *skeuos* as 'wife' means that Paul restricts *porneia* here to actions that occur within marriage, since he then opposes the holy way of having a wife with the lustful gentile way. This is difficult, both in relation to the Jewish stereotype of gentile depravity employed here by Paul, which does not generally focus on what happens between husband and wife, as well as with Paul's statements about *porneia* and sexual misconduct elsewhere and the actions mentioned in the vice lists that occur in his letters (Romans 1; 1 Corinthians 5; Galatians 5). A more sweeping contrast between exercising control over one's body and the lustful boundlessness of gentiles makes more sense as a major point of instruction on the consequences of accepting the new faith.

⁵⁶ Although there can be no doubt that women also exploited slaves sexually, I use male pronouns here, since ancient sources that accept a master's sexual use of slaves focus on men.

⁵⁷ Glancy, *Slavery in Early Christianity*, 70.

difficult to establish, but it is clearly very negative. Engaging in *porneia* is incompatible with belonging to Christ: 'the body is meant not for *porneia* but for the Lord, and the Lord for the body' (1 Corinthians 6:13).

Glancy bases her view of Paul's attitude towards sexuality on chapters 6 and 7 of 1 Corinthians. Here, Paul comes closest to an explanation of the nature of *porneia*:

Do you not know that your bodies are members of Christ? Should I therefore take the members of Christ and make them members of a whore (ἄρας οὖν τὰ μέλη τοῦ Χριστοῦ ποιήσω πόρνῆς μέλη)? Never! Do you not know that whoever is united to a whore becomes one body with her (οὐκ οἶδατε ὅτι ὁ κολλώμενος τῇ πόρνῃ ἓν σῶμά ἐστιν)? For it is said, "The two shall be one flesh." But anyone united to the Lord becomes one spirit with him. Shun *porneia* (Φεύγετε τὴν πορνείαν)! Every sin that a person commits is outside the body; but the fornicator sins against the body itself (πᾶν ἁμάρτημα ὃ ἐὰν ποιήσῃ ἄνθρωπος ἐκτὸς τοῦ σώματός ἐστιν· ὁ δὲ πορνεύων εἰς τὸ ἴδιον σῶμα ἁμαρτάνει).

(1 Corinthians 6:15-18)

Glancy reads the terms *porneia* and *porne* in this passage in the conventional Greek sense, as referring to prostitution and a female prostitute respectively.⁵⁸ If Paul rejects any man having sex with a prostitute, he must surely reject the possibility of a prostitute becoming a member of the community. Since prostitutes were often slaves, Paul's comment about *porneia* is an implicit rejection of slaves, in Glancy's view. Even though Paul claims to include slaves, he in fact excludes them for reasons outside their control.

Although this passage is often seen to represent Paul's view of prostitution specifically, this interpretation appears too limited.⁵⁹ The issue which concerns Paul here is much wider than prostitution; at stake in this section of the letter is the limit of what is permitted for a believer: 'All things are permissible for me (πάντα μοι ἔξεστιν), but I will not be dominated by anything' (οὐκ ἐγὼ ἐξουσιασθήσομαι ὑπὸ τινος, 1 Corinthians 6:12). The believer has power, *exousia*, over everything, but nothing should have *exousia* or power, over him.⁶⁰ Paul distinguishes sexual sin from other sin, on the grounds that it involves someone else having power over you. He focuses on the distinction between food and sex, and the difference between sins relating to each.

Food is trivial, and sins concerning food do not have eternal consequences. As Paul writes, 'Food is meant for the stomach and the stomach for food, and God will destroy both

⁵⁸ Glancy, *Slavery in Early Christianity*, 65-66.

⁵⁹ According to Alistair Scott May, *porne* 'is a pejorative term that includes primarily the prostitute, but also implicitly any woman who can be stereotypically denoted by sexual vice' (*The Body for the Lord*, 134); Kathy Gaca observes of the use of the terms *porneia* and *porne* that in the LXX as well as in Paul, that the determining factor is not that a woman is sexually promiscuous or employed in a brothel, but that she is 'religiously promiscuous', that she worships other gods (*The Making of Fornication*, 165). For the traditional view, see e.g. Carolyn Osiek, who claims that '1 Cor 6:15-20 is primarily about (Christian) male customers and prostitutes' (Carolyn Osiek, 'Female Slaves, *Porneia*, and the Limits of Obedience', in *Early Christian Families in Context: An Interdisciplinary Dialogue*, David L.B. Balch and Carolyn Osiek (eds.), (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans 2003), 255-274, 269. Even more problematic is the jump from prostitution to sacred prostitution, which some New-Testament scholars assume to have been prevalent in Corinth, a notion now widely rejected among historians. See Stephanie L. Budin, *The Myth of Sacred Prostitution in Antiquity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 2008); Mary Beard and John Henderson, 'With This Body I Thee Worship: Sacred Prostitution in Antiquity', *Gender & history* 9/3 (1997), 480-503.

⁶⁰ May, *The Body for the Lord*, 105.

one and the other' (1 Corinthians 6:13a). Both have only a relative and temporal importance; they have no power over the believer. Sexual sin, however, has far more fundamental consequences: 'The body is not meant for *porneia*, but for the Lord, and the Lord for the body. By his power God raised the Lord from the dead, and he will raise us also' (1 Corinthians 6:13-14). Given that the body is part of the resurrection, sexual sin, defined by Paul as being 'against the body', is incompatible with the ultimate goal of being resurrected by God. As Alistair Scott May notes in his lucid analysis of Paul's thought on sexuality, the body's membership of Christ is described in the same language as a sexual union. One is either a member of the body of Christ, or of that of a whore.⁶¹ Sexual sin thus causes the offender to break away from the body Christ, and therefore from the community (1 Corinthians 6:15-20).

The terms *porneia* and *porne* are thus used by Paul not in the conventional Greek sense of relating to prostitution, but in the Jewish Greek sense of sexual sin, associated with idolatry and the idea of 'screwing with God'.⁶² Breaking the rules on sexual behaviour, is seen as rebellion against God. The word *πορνεύων*, 'fornicator', the participle of the verb *porneuo* used here as a noun by Paul, clearly denotes a person committing sexual sin, not a male prostitute.⁶³ Becoming one with a *porne* does not mean having sex with a prostitute, but is simply a way of describing *porneia*. What a member of the body of Christ does when engaging in *porneia*, whatever form this may take, can be described as becoming one with a *porne*. This action makes him a *porneuoōn*, (*ὁ πορνεύων*), or a *pornos*, a term that appears at the top of Paul's vice lists (Galatians 5:19; 1 Corinthians 5:9-11; 1 Corinthians 6:9). Again, this is not a male prostitute, but a man engaged in *porneia*. So in fact, Paul's discussion of *porneia* as sex with a *porne* is tautological. The *porne* and the *porneuoōn* are people engaged in *porneia*. The meaning of the passage lies not in defining what constitutes *porneia*, but rather in demonstrating the nature and gravity of committing it. It is different from all other sins, especially those concerning food, because it separates the offender from the body of Christ.

Paul is thus concerned with sexual sin in general and the related sin of idolatry, which is pitted against more trivial sins like that relating to food. Rather than offering an attack on prostitution, the passage in fact defines sexual sin over against other forms of sin and illustrates the gravity of it. Since Paul does not talk about prostitution and prostitutes here, the passage does not relate in a direct way to the issue of slaves as members of the community. There is no sign that Paul is aware of any conflict between the sexual ethic he proscribes and slave existence. There is no way of knowing how he responded to the obstacles experienced by slaves. Since Paul does not distinguish between slaves and free people when discussing sexuality, the conclusion might be that he valued sexual morality over the participation of slaves.

Paul's advice about marriage in the next part of the letter (1 Corinthians 7) further restricts the possibilities for slave participation, according to Glancy. Here, Paul advises marriage as an antidote to *porneia*, for those who cannot live a celibate life. Since Glancy

⁶¹ May, *The Body for the Lord*, 111-113. The verb *αἴρω*, means to take up, to remove, therefore one is either connected to one or the other.

⁶² See May, *The Body for the Lord*, 111-113. Gaca, *The Making of Fornication*, 164-172.

⁶³ The term *porneuoōn* is rare before Paul. It appears in Deut 23:18 most likely in the sense of male prostitute and also in the Testament of the Twelve Patriarchs: For even though a man be a king and commit fornication (*πορνεύων*), he is stripped of his kingship by becoming the slave of fornication, as I myself also suffered (4, 15).

maintains that slaves could not legally contract a marriage, she believes that Paul ignores their situation in his instructions. The only option open for slaves who want to act in accordance with Paul's guidelines, she argues, is to remain celibate, assuming they have any control over their sexual behaviour.⁶⁴

Unfortunately, Glancy assumes that the issue of marriage was a bigger obstacle for slaves than it actually was. Even though slaves were excluded from official Roman marriage, which was only available to citizens, slaves could and often did form legal unions. A marriage between partners of whom at least one was enslaved, called *contubernia* in Roman law, was indeed a recognised tie. Inscriptions provide ample evidence for marriages between slaves, as well as between a slave and a freed or free person.⁶⁵ As Keith Bradley notes, 'it cannot be doubted that slave families existed in the Roman world, or that there was anything unusual about the fact'.⁶⁶ Paul, of course does not use any legal terminology, nor is there any reason to assume that he is referring to marriage between free citizens. He simply writes that it is good 'for every man to have his own wife and for every woman to have her own husband' (ἕκαστος τὴν ἑαυτοῦ γυναῖκα ἔχέτω καὶ ἕκαστη τὸν ἴδιον ἄνδρα ἔχέτω, 1 Corinthians 7:2). There is no reason to assume that his description excludes marriages between slaves, or that Paul only addresses free people when writing about marriage.

In spite of these objections, Glancy's notion that Paul's regulations about sexual behaviour excluded slaves in certain ways is well worth acknowledging. Though we have no way of knowing how the conflict between participation of slaves in the community and their sexual obligations at home was resolved in practice, it is likely that Paul's sexual ethic constituted a problem for those slaves who lived in households that were not part of the community as a whole, or whose masters did not obey Paul's instructions.

1.3.3 Sexual Regulations and Slave Participation in Comparison

In order to aid our understanding of Paul's attitude towards sexual morality and slaves, it will be helpful to compare briefly his view with that of another group which welcomed slaves, like the Pauline communities, and also had rules pertaining to sexuality. This is a cult group from Philadelphia in Asia Minor, devoted to deities such as Zeus and Hestia.⁶⁷ An inscription from this group, dating most likely from late second century BCE, details certain

⁶⁴ Glancy, *Slavery in Early Christianity*, 67-69.

⁶⁵ See e.g. Dale B. Martin, 'Slave Families and Slaves in Families', in *Early Christian Families in Context: An Interdisciplinary Dialogue*, David L.B. Balch, and Carolyn Osiek (eds.), (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing 2003), 207-230, 210-222.

⁶⁶ Bradley, *Slaves and Masters in the Roman Empire*, 48.

⁶⁷ For the text of the inscription see Franciszek Sokolowski, *Lois Sacrées de l'Asie Mineure* (Paris: De Boccard, 1955), 53-58 (LSA 20); Wilhelm, Dittenberger, *Sylloge Inscriptionum Graecorum* vol. III. (Leipzig: Hirzel 1920) 3.985. For the dating, see Otto Weinreich, *Stiftung und Kultsatzungen eines Privatheiligtums in Philadelphia in Lydien* (Heidelberg: Winters, 1919), 4, and Enzo Nardi, 'Antiche Prescrizioni Greche di Purità Cultuale in Tema d'Aborto' in *Iranion in Honorem Georgii S. Maridakis I*, Georgios Maridakis (ed.), (Athens: Klissiuni 1963), 43-85, 65. The inscription is discussed in relation to early Christianity by several scholars, e.g. Philip A. Harland, *Associations, Synagogues, and Congregations: Claiming a Place in Ancient Mediterranean Society* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press 2003), 30, 70; Harrill, *The Manumission of Slaves*, 150. For a more detailed discussion of the sexual regulations in both groups and their consequences for slaves, see Karin B. Neutel, 'Slaves Included? Sexual Regulations and Slave Participation in Two Ancient Religious Groups', in *Slaves, Cults and Religions*, Stephen Hodgkinson and Dick Geary (eds.), (Cambridge: Cambridge Scholars Publishing 2012), 133-148.

regulations with regard to sexuality. In both this inscription and in the letters of Paul, the prescribed sexual norms deviate to some extent from those held in society generally. Given the fact that the sexual use of slaves was widely accepted in ancient society, the prescription of sexual regulations in a community comprising both slave and free members created an inevitable contradiction. Regulations either differed for slave and for free, thereby differentiating between members of the group; or, if the same rules were applied to everyone, slaves who could not control their own sexual activities might be excluded from the group for involuntarily breaking these rules. The inscription from Philadelphia is frequently seen as a relevant analogy to early Christian communities, since men and women, slaves and free, are all explicitly welcomed in it (the inclusion is mentioned three times, ἀνδράσι καὶ γυναῖξιν ἐλευθέροις και οἰκέταις/δούλοις lines 5-6, 15-16 and 53-54). The relevance of this group for understanding slave participation and sexuality, however, has so far gone unnoticed.

The inscription starts with the founding of the cult: a man named Dionysius received instruction from Zeus in his sleep to open his house and establish a cult that would regularly sacrifice there to various deities (1-15). The second paragraph (15-25) forbids members to use spells or potions, especially those trying to interfere with reproduction. Then follow two passages on rules for sexual behaviour of men (26-34) and women (35-50):

Apart from his own wife, a man is not to have sexual relations with another married woman, whether free or slave, nor with a boy nor a virgin girl; nor shall he recommend it to another (ἄνδρα παρὰ [τὴν] ἑαυτοῦ γυναῖκα ἀλλοτρίαν ἢ [ἐλευθέραν ἢ] δούλην ἄνδρα ἔχουσαν μὴ φθερεῖν). Should he connive at it with someone, they shall expose such a person, both the man and the woman, and not conceal it or keep silent about it. Woman and man, whoever does any of the things written above, let him not enter this oikos. For great are the gods set up in it: they watch over these things, and will not tolerate those who transgress the ordinances. (LSA 20, 26-34)⁶⁸

A free woman is to be chaste (γυναῖκα ἐλευθέραν ἀγνήν εἶν[αι]) and shall not know bed of, nor have sexual intercourse with, another man except her own husband. But if she does have such knowledge, such a woman is not chaste, but defiled and full of endemic pollution, and unworthy to reverence this god whose holy things these are that have been set up. She is not to be present at the sacrifices, nor to strike against the purifications and cleansings, nor to see the mysteries being performed. But if she does any of these things from the time these ordinances have come on to this inscription, she shall have evil curses from the gods for disregarding these ordinances. For the god does not desire these things to happen at all, nor does he wish it, but he wants obedience. The gods 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 inflict upon them great punishments. (LSA 20, 35-50)

The next paragraph (51-58) names the goddess Agdistis as the guardian of the *oikos* and calls upon members to touch the inscription on certain occasions, if they are confident that

⁶⁸ Translation (with some modifications) Stephen C. Barton, and Greg H.R. Horsley, 'A Hellenistic Cult Group and the New Testament Churches' in *Jahrbuch für Antike und Christentum* 24 (1981), 7-41, 9-10.

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they have obeyed the ordinances given. These members are now described only as ‘men and women’, without the addition ‘slave and free’.

These ordinances were placed with Agdistis, the very holy guardian and mistress of this *oikos*. May she create good thoughts in men and women, free people and slaves (ἀνδράσι καὶ γυναιξίν [ἐλευθέροις καὶ] δούλοις), in order that they may obey the things written here. At the monthly and annual sacrifices may those men and women who have confidence in themselves touch this inscription on which the ordinances of the god have been written, in order that those who obey these ordinances and those who do not may be manifest. (LSA 20, 51-58)

Given that meetings took place in the home of Dionysius, and given the nature of the gods who were worshipped, Zeus and Hestia, it seems likely that this group was based on an extended household, just as some earliest Christian groups seem to have been.⁶⁹ Yet while other Hellenistic household cults also had slave members, we have no evidence of any other group that welcomed slaves in this explicit way.⁷⁰

We see that the problem presented above, of having both slaves and free as members and having regulations regarding sexuality is solved in this inscription by having the sexual regulations differentiate between male and female and between slave and free.⁷¹ A married man is forbidden to have sex with another married woman, a boy or a virgin girl. But relations with unmarried women who are not virgins are apparently allowed. A free woman (35 γυναικικὰ ἐλευθέραν'), however, has to be chaste (ἀγνην) and is not allowed to have sex with any man apart from her husband.

The differences between men and women are not only found in the respective rules for their behaviour, but also in the punishment on violation of the rules. The rejection of a woman who breaks these rules is far greater than that of a man. If a man acts in conflict with the regulations, both he and the woman he is involved with, are warned not to enter the house, they are not tolerated by the gods. A woman who breaks the rules is considered defiled and a source of endemic pollution (37 μεμιασμένην καὶ μύσους ἐμφυλίου πλήρη).⁷² Her pollution affects those around her, therefore she cannot be present at any rituals. The gods will punish her with evil curses. Contrary to the woman illicitly involved with a man, the man involved with a married woman is not included in any form of punishment.

As we see in line 35, it is the free woman who has to be chaste and pure. Enslaved women are explicitly excluded from these particular rules. They are not required to be chaste, their status apparently does not affect the entire community, as the impurity of free women does. The restrictions laid down for men do allow them to have sex with slaves, as long as these slaves are not married or children (26-28). Though female slaves are members,

⁶⁹ Stanley Stowers analyses the gods mentioned in the inscription in relation to the household, and concludes that ‘nothing is more typical of the religion of the Greek *oikos* than Zeus and Hestia’. (Stowers, ‘A Cult from Philadelphia’, 288).

⁷⁰ For other associations based on the household, see Harland, *Associations, Synagogues*, 30.

⁷¹ The inclusion formula has led to some far reaching conclusions by commentators: Meeks considers this inclusion as a sign that ‘in some cultic associations the ordinary social roles were disregarded’ (Meeks, ‘The Image of the Androgyne’, 169). Harrill suggests that ‘in its membership and access to religious participation, this cultic association disregarded the ordinary, hierarchical social roles of male and female, slave and free’ (Harrill, *The Manumission of Slaves*, 150).

⁷² On the unusual view here, that the pollution would be permanent, see Robert Parker, *Miasma: Pollution and Purification in Early Greek Religion* (Oxford: Oxford University Press 1983), 325.

the community as a whole is not affected by their behaviour. Even though male slaves are not explicitly excluded from the regulations, the same applies to them in many ways. The rules suppose control over one's choice in sexual partners, but a male slave could not reject a married woman if she was his master, nor was he free to choose an enslaved partner.

Perhaps it is relevant for the position of slaves within this association that when the members are called upon to touch the inscription in order to show their obedience, that only 'men and women' (56-57 ἄνδρες τε καὶ γυναῖκες) are summoned to touch the inscription at the monthly and annual sacrifices. If the ordinances on sexuality apply only to men and free married women, the fact that 'free and slave' is not added in this case may reflect something about the position of slaves within the group. Perhaps slaves did not take part in touching the inscription and could not in this way demonstrate that they were members of the group.

Even though the exact meaning of *porneia* is not always clear in Paul's letters, as noted above, a comparison with the regulations given in this inscription does bring certain characteristics to light. According to Glancy, 'we do not have sufficient evidence to determine whether the sexual obligations of slaves were an obstacle to their participation in the Christian community, or whether, like others in the first century, Paul and the churches regarded some sexual activity as morally neutral'.⁷³ The inscription from Philadelphia shows what the resulting regulations could be when conventional ideas about the status of women are accepted and sex with slaves is seen as neutral. Free women are set apart as chaste and carry the weight of the purity of the community. No such a distinction is made by Paul.

Of course, just like the Philadelphian text, Paul's regulations presuppose authority over one's own body and sexual conduct. But while the rules in Philadelphia are limited to those who have such authority, Paul apparently applies them to all members without exception. Slaves who were part of a household that belonged to a Pauline community could follow the rules as long as their owners did. For these owners Paul's ethic probably constituted quite a change. Yet slaves who lived in households that did not belong to the Pauline community may not always have been able to comply with Paul's rules.

In both the Pauline groups and the Philadelphia cult, the attitude towards slaves deviated from general culture, and, to some extent, challenged the prevailing absolute dominance of free over slave. It is clear that having both slave and free members, while at the same time having a strict sexual code, posed a contradiction. In Philadelphia, female slaves could not affect the group's purity and therefore did not have to abide by any rules regarding sexual actions. Paul did not set free women apart as pure, but applied the same rules to men and women without reference to slavery. Just like the Philadelphian text, Paul's regulations presuppose authority over one's own body and sexual conduct. This may have created difficulty for those slaves whose masters placed sexual demands on them.

In Philadelphia, female slaves did not belong to the community on the same terms as free women, because the former could not affect the purity of the group; their behaviour was irrelevant. Paul, on the other hand, actually complicated the position of slaves by including all members under the same conditions, with the same restrictions on their sexual actions. It seems that, even though Paul felt that full participation of slaves was important, it was even more important to abstain from sexual sin.

⁷³ Glancy, *Slavery in Early Christianity*, 58.

2 Paul's Attitude in Context: 'No Slave' as a Contemporary Ideal

Our exploration above of the passages dealing with slave and free has shown that there is a single idea driving these different statements. For Paul, belonging to Christ implied a change in the position of slave and free, joining them to one body, making them brothers, in joint bondage to Christ. Slave and free are not determined by their position in society alone, they have a different relationship in and with Christ. At the same time, there is no indication that this implied a change in the legal position of slaves. Paul tells slaves that they need not worry about being slaves, but can remain in slavery. What matters is their new position in Christ. Whatever the implied message to Philemon may have been, even if Paul asked for Onesimus' manumission, this does not mean that he opposed slavery as such. Paul seems to be able to reconcile the reality of slavery with a community where slave and free are brothers. The Galatian statement that there is 'neither slave nor free', should thus not be read as a condemnation of slavery or a call for abolition, but rather as a reflection of an ideal community and an ideal time, where there will be no slaves. As we will see in this section, such an ideal was present in first-century society, and is reflected in both Jewish and non-Jewish sources.

In his study of the ideas of slavery in antiquity, Peter Garnsey notes that 'the abolition of slavery was not contemplated in antiquity'.⁷⁴ Someone like Seneca, who had much to say about the importance of treating a slave well, and was in a position to instigate reform in the area of slave law, did not do so. According to Garnsey, 'to say that they were disinclined to do so would be inaccurate: more likely, the possibility never occurred to them'.⁷⁵ Slavery was a self-evident part of society; no one launched a movement for abolition in antiquity. Garnsey believes that one explanation for this lies in the fact that there was no alternative model, no rival free-labour system such as there was in ante-bellum America.⁷⁶ Yet even if there was no alternative model that could be implemented, there was an alternative that was envisioned in various utopian or ideal communities, a phenomenon that Garnsey does not discuss. The ways in which such alternative ways of living, characterised by the fact that there would be no slaves, were imagined, will be the focus of this section.

2.1 Cosmopolitan Views on Slave and Free

In the previous chapter, we already identified cosmopolitanism as a prominent philosophical idea in the early Empire, one that had its influence also on Paul. As noted there, it was especially in this time, when a unified Empire was being formed, that the idea of a unified

⁷⁴ Garnsey, *Ideas of Slavery*, 64.

⁷⁵ Garnsey, *Ideas of Slavery*, 64; see also Michael Trapp, who agrees that Seneca's famous letter 47, on slaves, does not contain any direct condemnation of slavery. 'Seneca instead accepts the institution, and seeks to modify the attitudes attaching to it, by the arguing that the lines it draws do not have the weight commonly assigned to them. The result is humane, but disappointing to the abolitionist' (Michael B. Trapp, *Philosophy in the Roman Empire: Ethics, Politics and Society*, (Aldershot: Ashgate 2007), 209).

⁷⁶ Garnsey, *Ideas of Slavery*, 237.

humanity also gained prominence.⁷⁷ While the focus in Chapter II was on its ethnic and geographical aspects, cosmopolitanism informed attitudes towards slaves as well. The main characteristic of ancient cosmopolitanism, which was popular especially among Stoics and Cynics, is the notion that all humans share in reason. Reason not only connects all people, but also connects humans to the divine, as Dio Chrysostom explains:

now concerning the nature of the gods in general, and especially that of the ruler of the universe, first and foremost an idea regarding him and a conception of him common to the whole human race (τοῦ ξύμπαντος ἀνθρωπίνου γένους), to the Greeks and the barbarians alike (ὁμοίως μὲν Ἑλληνων, ὁμοίως δὲ βαρβάρων), a conception that is inevitable and innate in every creature endowed with reason (ἀναγκαία καὶ ἔμφυτος ἐν παντὶ τῷ λογικῷ). (Dio Chrysostom, *Discourse 12*. 27)

The whole human race thus shares a conception of the divine, through their share in reason. That for Dio, slaves are included among those who have reason becomes clear in the next passage.⁷⁸ Dio here is concerned with brothel keepers, and argues strongly that their activities should be forbidden, since they 'bring individuals together in union without love and intercourse without affection, and all for the sake of filthy lucre' (*Discourse 7*, 133). He gives two particular reasons for this, one reason being that if the minor evil of prostitution is accepted, then that is likely to lead to worse, namely an assault on 'the chastity of women and boys of good family' (*Discourse 7*, 139). The other reason for banning brothels given by Dio is the fact that all humanity, including slaves involved in prostitution, deserves honour equally:

It is our duty, therefore, to give some heed to this and under no condition to bear this mistreatment of outcast and enslaved creatures with calmness and indifference (ῥαθύμως φέρουσατὴν εἰς τὰ ἄτιμα καὶ δοῦλα σώματα ὕβριν), (...) because all humanity has been held in honour and in equal honour by God, who begat it, having the same marks and tokens to show that it deserves honour, to wit, reason and the knowledge of evil and good (ἡ κοινῇ τὸ ἀνθρώπινον γένος ἅπαν ἔντιμον καὶ ὁμότιμον ὑπὸ τοῦ φύσαντος θεοῦ ταῦτα σημεῖα καὶ σύμβολα ἔχον τοῦ τιμᾶσθαι δικαίως καὶ λόγον καὶ ἐμπειρίαν καλῶν τε καὶ αἰσχρῶν γέγονεν). (Dio Chrysostom, *Discourse 7*, 138)

Dio's cosmopolitan conviction that all humans are connected in the same way to God thus has implications even for some of the lowest in society, for enslaved prostitutes. We see again, as argued above, that the sexual use of slaves, here specifically in the context of prostitution, was not universally accepted in Antiquity. Both Dio's sexual ethic and his emphasis on reason as a quality shared by all people seem to owe much to Stoic influence.⁷⁹

⁷⁷ This is observed by several scholars, e.g. Long, 'The Concept of the Cosmopolitan', 58; also Baldry, *The Unity of Mankind*, 167, 176; Richter, *Cosmopolis*, 111, 116; Nussbaum, 'The Worth of Human Dignity' 36.

⁷⁸ For Dio's view of slavery generally, see Michael Trapp, *Philosophy in the Roman Empire*, 207-210.

⁷⁹ See J. Samuel Houser, who sees influence from Musonius Rufus' sexual ethic here and notes that 'this entire passage has a Stoic ring to it.' (J. Samuel Houser, '"Eros" and "Aphrodisia" in the Works of Dio Chrysostom', *Classical Antiquity*, 17/2 (1998), 235-258, 245).

Stoics rejected the Aristotelian notion of natural slavery and believed that all human beings share in the divine spirit that permeates the universe.⁸⁰

The Stoic Epictetus also ascribes a common origin to slave and free and uses the term 'brother' to denote the relation between the two:

But when you have asked for warm water and the slave has not heard, or if he did hear has brought only tepid water, or he is not even found to be in the house, then not to be vexed or to burst with passion, is not this acceptable to the gods?—How then shall a man endure such persons as this slave? Slave yourself (ἀνδραπόδων), will you not bear with your own brother, who has Zeus for his progenitor, and is like a son from the same seeds and of the same descent from above (οὐκ ἀνέξη τοῦ ἀδελφοῦ τοῦ σαυτοῦ, ὅς ἔχει τον Δία πρόγονον, ὡσπερ υἱὸς ἐκ τῶν αὐτῶν σπερμάτων γέγονεν καὶ τῆς αὐτῆς ἄνωθεν καταβολῆς)? But if you have been put in any such higher place, will you immediately make yourself a tyrant? Will you not remember who you are, and whom you rule? that they are kinsmen, that they are brethren by nature, that they are the offspring of Zeus? (ὅτι συγγενῶν, ὅτι ἀδελφῶν φύσει, ὅτι τοῦ Διὸς ἀπογόνων). (Epictetus, *Discourses* I. 13, 2-4)

Even though a free man is placed in a position above slaves, Epictetus argues that his behaviour ought to be tempered by the fact that slave and free are brothers and children of Zeus together. Because slave and free have the same origin, it is possible to see them not only in their conventional hierarchical positions, but also in a more level relationship, for which Epictetus uses the term brother. Being brothers presumably does not change anything about the relative positions in the household; the slave is still expected to fetch water of the correct temperature. But it should, according to Epictetus, change the way a master treats a slave.⁸¹

The view expressed by Epictetus and even his choice of words has much in common with Paul's statements discussed above. Paul also uses the term brother to denote the relationship between people in the community, and particularly between slave and free in his letter to Philemon. He encourages Philemon not merely to refrain from acting like a despot, but to receive his slave Onesimus as if he were a guest. Even the wordplay used by Epictetus here has a similar ring to that used by Paul in 1 Corinthians (1 Corinthians 7:22), since Epictetus addresses his fictive interlocutor, who is a free man frustrated with his slave's behaviour, with the term *andrapodon* (ἀνδράποδον), or man-footer, a common word for a slave.⁸² Epictetus thus addresses this free man as 'slave', while calling slave and free brothers.

⁸⁰ On the Stoic views on slavery, see Garnsey, *Ideas of Slavery*, 128-152; John T. Fitzgerald, 'The Stoics and the Early Christians on the Treatment of Slaves, in *Stoicism in Early Christianity*, Tuomas Rasimus, Troels Engberg-Pedersen and Ismo Dunderberg (eds.), (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic 2010), 141-175.

⁸¹ Epictetus' exceptional perspective on ancient slavery as a former slave is discussed by J.P.Hershbelle, who concludes that while Epictetus was thoroughly aware of the ills of slavery and does not seem to have taken on the outlook of a slave owner, he nevertheless did not argue for the abolition of slavery (J.P. Hershbelle, 'Epictetus: A Freedman on Slavery', *Ancient Society* 26 (1995), 185-204).

⁸² According to Kostas Vlassopoulos, *andrapodon* is the second main Greek term relating to slavery, after *doulos*. Whereas *andrapodon* refers to 'a person as a piece of property or to the physical act of capturing a person and selling him or her into slavery', *doulos* refers to 'the opposition between slave and free or conveys the sense of subjection of one party to another', see Kostas Vlassopoulos, 'Greek Slavery: From Domination to Property and Back Again', *The Journal of Hellenic Studies*, 131 (2011), 115 - 130, 119.

Neither Slave nor Free

Seneca takes similar liberties with the positions of slave and free. In his famous letter on slavery, Seneca, like Dio and Epictetus, declares that slave and free share a common origin.⁸³

“They are slaves”, people declare. No, rather they are men. “Slaves”, no comrades. “Slaves”. No, they are unpretentious friends. “Slaves”. No, they are our fellow slaves, if one reflects that Fortune has equal rights over slaves and free men alike’ (...) Kindly remember that he whom you call your slave sprang from the same stock, is smiled upon by the same skies, and on equal terms with yourself breathes, lives, and dies (Vis tu cogitare istum, quem servum tuum vocas, ex isdem seminibus ortum eodem frui caelo, aequae spirare, aequae vivere, aequae mori!). It is just as possible for you to see in him a free-born man as for him to see in you a slave (tam tu illum videre ingenuum potes quam ille te servum). (Seneca, *Epistle* 47.1, 10)

Again we can note parallels with Paul’s language. Seneca plays with the categories of slave and free like Paul does, questioning the distinctions assumed by ‘people’. Yet whereas Paul addresses his comments to slaves, Seneca aims his remarks at free people. Seneca writes for members of an elite audience, whom he encourages to treat slaves with a degree of respect and to make sure that slaves honour, rather than fear them (Epistle 47.18). His objective here is to engender a morally correct attitude in the master, not to improve the situation of slaves. Seneca saw good master-slave relations as ‘essential to the peace of the household and the survival of the existing social structure’.⁸⁴ The only distinction that truly matters is that between good and bad moral character.⁸⁵ According to Garnsey, the deterministic nature of Stoicism could rather work to reinforce the existing social hierarchies. Fate determined which role one played in life and one’s moral responsibility was to apply oneself willingly to playing that role. For slaves, this meant serving their masters well.⁸⁶

In this same letter, Seneca expresses concern about the effects that bad treatment has on slaves. When they are not allowed to talk to their masters, they will talk behind their backs. Seneca further discusses those masters who think it beneath themselves to have dinner with their slaves:

That is why I smile at those who think it degrading for a man to dine with his slave. But why should they think it degrading? It is only because purse-proud etiquette surrounds a householder at his dinner with a mob of standing slaves. The master eats more than he can hold, and with monstrous greed loads his belly until it is stretched and at length ceases to do the work of a belly; so that he is at greater pains to discharge all the food than he was to stuff it down. All this time the poor slaves may not move their lips, even to speak. (...)The result of it all is that these slaves, who may not talk in their master's presence, talk about their master. (...) Finally, the saying, in allusion to this same highhanded treatment, becomes current: "As many enemies as you have slaves." They are not enemies when we acquire them; we make them enemies (totidem hostes esse quot

⁸³ On this letter and Seneca’s ideas about slaves, see Trapp, *Philosophy in the Roman Empire*, 208-209; Miriam T. Griffin, *Seneca: A Philosopher in Politics* (Oxford: Clarendon Press 1992).

⁸⁴ Garnsey, *Ideas of Slavery*, 68.

⁸⁵ Trapp, *Philosophy in the Roman Empire*, 208.

⁸⁶ Garnsey, *Ideas of Slavery*, 128-152.

servos. Non habemus illos hostes, sed facimus.). With slaves like these the master cannot bear to dine; he would think it beneath his dignity to associate with his slave at the same table! (Seneca, *Epistle* 47.2-5, 10)

The situation described by Seneca, of masters sharing the table with their slaves, occurred during the annual festival of the Saturnalia, which was celebrated with enthusiasm in Roman times.⁸⁷ According to Fanny Dolansky, the celebration of this festival sprang from similar concerns as those expressed by Seneca. These concerns were signs of a certain 'discomfiture with aspects of slavery'. Even though Seneca, as a wealthy slave owner in his own right, 'did not actually wish to return to a Golden Age when slavery did not exist', yet his writing, according to Dolansky, 'suggests a definite anxiety that likely stemmed from genuine fear for personal safety and the safety of one's kin when living among slaves'.⁸⁸ The annual festivities in which the hierarchy between slave and free was relaxed, or even reversed, provided a safety valve for such anxieties. Since the festival ritualised the role reversal between slaves and masters, and since its origins were seen to lie in a time of 'extraordinary justice', when there were no slaves, we will take a look at the way the festival features in first-century sources.

2.2 Reversing Slave and Free: The Saturnalia

One of the most remarkable features of the Saturnalia, celebrated every year in December, was the 'temporary suspension of the social distinctions between master and servant'.⁸⁹ During the communal meals, slave and free dined together, and slaves were sometimes even served by their masters. In breaking through the conventional social hierarchy, the festival actually played a critical role in maintaining the conventional order within the household. The extent to which members of the household participated in the celebration corresponded to their relative positions in it. Taking part in the festival thus played a role in the process of socialisation, by showing everyone their place in the domestic hierarchy.⁹⁰ It also provided a way to channel the tensions between masters and slaves and in fact to legitimate the status quo. Dolansky calls this breaking of convention 'transgressing commensality'; having communal meals in which social superiors invite inferiors to dine with them. This transgression serves as a temporary and artificial break in the conventional order, with the effect that this order is in fact reinforced as normal.⁹¹ In spite of its experimental potential, ritual reversal did not carry the germ of structural social change.⁹² Although we have only a brief glimpse of the meals celebrated in the Pauline community (in 1 Corinthians 11: 20-22), these meals also seem to have involved a degree of transgression. It is most likely their breaking with social convention that created conflict in Corinth, and it is through Paul's scolding of the more wealthy members of the community that we know

⁸⁷ For the origin and practice of the Saturnalia, see Hendrik S. Versnel, *Transition and Reversal in Myth and Ritual*, (Leiden: Brill 1992), 136-227; Fanny Dolansky, 'Celebrating the Saturnalia: Religious Ritual and Roman Domestic Life' in *A Companion to Families in the Greek and Roman Worlds*, Beryl Rawson (ed.), (Malden: Wiley-Blackwell 2011) 488-503.

⁸⁸ Dolansky, 'Celebrating the Saturnalia', 497-499.

⁸⁹ Versnel, *Transition and Reversal*, 149.

⁹⁰ Dolansky, 'Celebrating the Saturnalia', 499-501.

⁹¹ Dolansky, 'Celebrating the Saturnalia', 497-499.

⁹² Versnel, *Transition and Reversal*, 118.

that such commensality was practiced. Paul corrects those who apparently felt they did not have to eat with the poorer members, some of whom may have been slaves:

when you come together, it is not the Lord's supper you eat (Συνερχομένων οὖν ὑμῶν ἐπὶ τὸ αὐτὸ οὐκ ἔστιν κυριακὸν δεῖπνον φαγεῖν). Because everyone goes ahead and eats their own supper, and one is hungry, another drunk (ἕκαστος γὰρ τὸ ἴδιον δεῖπνον προλαμβάνει ἐν τῷ φαγεῖν, καὶ ὃς μὲν πεινᾷ ὃς δὲ μεθύει.). Don't you have houses to eat and drink in? Or do you despise the community of God and humiliate those who have nothing (ἢ τῆς ἐκκλησίας τοῦ θεοῦ καταφρονεῖτε, καὶ καταισχύνετε τοὺς μὴ ἔχοντας)? Should I praise you? I do not praise you in this. (1 Corinthians 11:20-22)

The rich in the Corinthian community brought their privileged position into the shared meal. The exact nature of the offensive behaviour cannot be decided here. It was either not waiting for the poorer part of the community or eating their own portions, depending on the meaning of προλαμβάνει ('take beforehand' or 'take in', in 1 Corinthians 11:21). In either case, the rich were not sharing their meal with 'those who have nothing'.⁹³ Those who had time and money to spare humiliated those who were not free to come to the table until their work was done or who were not given enough to eat and remained hungry. Paul considered the behaviour of the rich not just an insult to the poor, but to the *ekklesia* as a whole. If the meal is not shared by all equally, it is not the Lord's supper, and its meaning is lost. The special meaning appears to derive from breaking the conventional order, which would have been that those who were welcome at the table, and the food that was served to each, would reflect their social position.⁹⁴ We can wonder whether those who took part in the community meals in Corinth were used to celebrating the Saturnalia. Would the meals shared by slaves and free people in this new context have signaled to them that the conventional social order had been left behind, not just for a few days in December, but this time for good?

2.2.1 The Origin of the Saturnalia: Equality of Slave and Free

As we will see in this section, discussions of the origins of the festival of the Saturnalia in ancient sources indicate that it was associated with a period of justice, when slavery was absent. Several authors describe the festival as an imitation of a mythical Golden Age, a time of plenty, when there were no slaves. According to Bruno Gatz, in his study of the Golden Age, the motif of the absence of slaves in the time of Kronos was present in ancient Greek comedy, but appears in later Roman sources in a more serious context, as an

⁹³ For an overview of the discussion, see Suzanne Watts Henderson, 'If Anyone Hungers...: An Integrated Reading of 1 Cor 11.17–34', *New Testament Studies*, 48/2 (2002), 195 - 208; also Martin, *The Corinthian Body*, 190-197; Bradley B. Blue, 'The House Church at Corinth and the Lord's Supper: Famine, Food Supply, and the Present Distress', *Criswell Theological Review*, 5/2 (1991), 221-239; Geert Hallbäck, 'Sacred Meal and Social Meeting: Paul's Argument in 1 Cor. 11.17-34', in *Meals in a Social Context: Aspects of the Communal Meal in the Hellenistic and Roman World*, Inge Nielsen and Hanne Sigismund Nielsen (eds.), (Aarhus: Aarhus University Press 1998), 167-176.

⁹⁴ See Keith Bradley, 'The Roman Family at Dinner', in *Meals in a Social Context: Aspects of the Communal Meal in the Hellenistic and Roman World*, Inge Nielsen and Hanne Sigismund Nielsen (eds.), (Aarhus: Aarhus University Press 1998), 36-55.

explanation for the freedom of slaves during the Saturnalia.⁹⁵ Since these authors, as we will see, explicitly associate the absence of slaves with justice and equality, it is not surprising that they no longer see such a time as a source of comedy. The cosmopolitan view of slaves as equally possessing reason and therefore equally human as their masters, as discussed above, will have contributed to this changed perspective on the time of Saturn. The absence of slaves is now no longer funny, but rather becomes an ideal that is recreated in the Saturnalia, and that can also be incorporated in the depictions of ideal communities, or expectation of a utopian future. The latter will be explored below, but first we examine those sources that describe the origins of the Saturnalia.

While Plutarch knows that many consider the Saturnalia to be a reminder of the age of Saturn, he rather ascribes the tradition to the second king of Rome, Numa. Plutarch compares Numa favourably to Lycurgus after his biographies of both, and observes that Numa was 'far more Hellenic' since he allowed slaves to taste freedom during the Saturnalia:⁹⁶

we shall own that Numa was far more Hellenic as a lawgiver, since he gave acknowledged slaves a taste of the dignity of freedom, by making it the custom for them to feast in the company of their masters during the Saturnalia (τοὺς ὠμολογημένους δούλους ἔγευσε τιμῆς ἐλευθέρας ἐν τοῖς Κρονίοις ἐστιᾶσθαι μετὰ τῶν δεσποτῶν ἀναμειγμένους ἐθίσας). For this too was one of the institutions of Numa, as we are told, who thereby admitted to the enjoyment of the yearly fruits of the earth those who had helped to produce them. Some, however, fancy that this custom was a reminder of the equality (ἰσονομίας) which characterized the famous Saturnian age, when there was neither slave nor master, but all were regarded as kinsmen and equals (ὡς μηδενὸς δούλου μηδὲ δεσπότη, πᾶν τῶν δὲ συγγενῶν καὶ ἰσοτίμων νομιζομένων). (Plutarch, *Numa* 23, 11)

The alternative view that Plutarch records is that the tradition is a reminder of the time of Saturn, which he describes as a time when there was equality (ἰσονομία), since all people regarded each other as relatives and equals (συγγενεῖς and ἰσοτίμοι).⁹⁷

A similar description, dating from the time of Augustus, can be found in the Epitome of Pompeius Trogus.⁹⁸ This work by the historian of the same name, about whom little is known, was preserved by Justin. The Epitome focusses on the Macedonian monarchy, but reaches far back, into the history of Italy. This passage confirms the idea that there were no slaves under Saturn, since he was a man of 'extraordinary justice'.

⁹⁵ Bruno Gatz, *Weltalter, goldene Zeit und sinnverwandte Vorstellungen*, (Hildesheim: Georg Olms, 1967), 127-128. The origin of the term Golden Age is discussed by Baldry, see H. C. Baldry, 'Who Invented the Golden Age?' *The Classical Quarterly* 2/1 (1952), 83-92.

⁹⁶ On Plutarch's portrayal of Numa, see Rebecca Preston, 'Roman Questions, Greek answers: Plutarch and the Construction of Identity', in *Being Greek under Rome: Cultural Identity, the Second Sophistic and the Development of Empire*, Simon Goldhill (ed.), (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 2001), 86-122; also Vinzenz Buchheit, 'Plutarch, Cicero und Livius über die Humanisierung Roms durch König Numa', *Symbolae Osloenses* 66 (1991), 63-77, 71.

⁹⁷ Herodotus also knows of a time when neither the Athenians, nor other Greeks had slaves, although he does not associate this with justice, see Herodotus, Hist VI 137, 3.

⁹⁸ For the background of the now lost works of Pompeius Trogus and Justin's summary, see John C. Yardley, *Justin and Pompeius Trogus: A Study of the Language of Justin's Epitome of Trogus*, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press 2003).

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The first inhabitants of Italy were the Aborigines, whose king, Saturn, is said to have been a man of such extraordinary justice, that no one was a slave in his reign, or had any private property, but all things were common to all, and undivided, as one estate for the use of every one (rex Saturnus tantae iustitiae fuisse dicitur, ut neque seruierit quisquam sub illo neque quicquam priuatae rei habuerit, sed omnia communia et indiuisa omnibus fuerint, ueluti unum cunctis patrimonium esset.); in memory of which way of life, it has been ordered that at the Saturnalia slaves should everywhere sit down with their masters at the entertainments, the rank of all being made equal. (Ob cuius exempli memoriam cautum est, ut Saturnalibus exaequato omnium iure passim in conuiuuis serui cum dominis recumbent). (Justin, *Epitome of Pompeius Trogus*, XLIII 1,3)

This portrait of the time of Saturn contains several of the characteristics that we observed in chapter I as belonging to ideal or utopian communities.⁹⁹ The absence of property and divisions between people and the absence of slaves exemplify the justice of Saturn, as they do utopian societies from Plato onwards. By the first century, the two themes of an ideal primordial time and of an ideal or utopian community have influenced each other and the characteristics of the latter especially have been incorporated in the former. We will return to this development in our examination of the absence of slaves in a future Golden Age and in ideal communities.

A final example is found in the second-century work on the Saturnalia by Lucian (2nd century CE), who put the following description in the mouth of Saturn himself:

‘that men may remember what life was like in my days, when all things grew without sowing or ploughing of theirs--no ears of corn, but loaves complete and meat ready cooked--, when wine flowed in rivers, and there were fountains of milk and honey; all men were good and all men were gold. Such is the purpose of this my brief reign; therefore the merry noise on every side, the song and the games; therefore equality for all, slaves and free people. When I was king, no one was a slave (ἰσοτιμία πᾶσι καὶ δούλοις καὶ ἐλευθέροις: οὐδεὶς γὰρ ἐπ’ ἐμοῦ δούλος ἦν).’ (Lucian, *Saturnalia* 1.7)

Again, the absence of slavery is associated with equality, and the Saturnalia are seen as a reminder of this. In Lucian, the theme of abundance, that also occurred in the comic depictions of the Golden Age, is more present than in the sources quoted above. The festivities reflect the time of plenty, when no slaves would have been needed to produce food, since this appeared ready-made. In a passage that is reminiscent of Paul, Lucian also emphasizes that hospitality should be shown to the poor who come visiting the houses of the wealthy during the Saturnalia.¹⁰⁰ Saturn's priest complains that the rich are not treating the poor with sufficient generosity during the feast, and he appeals to Saturn for help:

Tell them [the rich], moreover, to invite the poor to dinner, taking in four or five at a time, not as they do nowadays, but in a more democratic fashion, all having an equal share, not one man stuffing himself with dainties with the servant standing waiting for him to eat himself to exhaustion, then when this servant

⁹⁹ See also Wallace-Hadrill, ‘The Golden Age’, 23.

¹⁰⁰ Frederick B. Jonassen, ‘Lucian's "Saturnalia," the Land of Cockaigne, and the Mummers' Plays’, *Folklore* 101/1 (1990), 58-68, 62.

comes to us he passes on while we are still getting ready to put out our hand, only letting us glimpse the platter or the remnants of the cake. (Lucian, *Saturnian Letters* 119)

The behaviour of the rich that requires correction according to this passage seems remarkably similar to that of those Paul corrects in 1 Corinthians, discussed above (1 Corinthians 11:20-22). If the food is not shared equally, 'in a democratic fashion', then the ritual defeats the purpose.

The passages discussed in this section show that a life without slavery was portrayed by some in the early Empire as an ideal way of life; an ideal associated with justice and equality, and that was kept alive in the celebration of the Saturnalia. While the absence of slavery was a source of comedy in classical times, it became something much more serious during the Roman era, although it still remained an idea that was far removed from everyday society. A society without slaves was not easy to conceive under conventional circumstances.

Kostas Vlassopoulos stresses that since *douleia*, the Greek concept of slavery, was not primarily conceived of as a relationship of property, but rather as one of domination, any inequality in power was assumed to inevitably result in slavery.¹⁰¹ 'The Greeks understood clearly that as long as there were people who, because they had more wealth and power, were able to make others to obey their orders, *douleia* could not be extinguished.' In such an understanding of slavery, equality is not the result of the absence of slavery, but rather its prerequisite.

According to Vlassopoulos, this explains why 'slavery is absent only in a few cases of Greek utopias'; it can only be absent when there is either very little, or where there is abundance. Primitive societies can therefore be imagined to exist without slaves, since there are either not enough resources to allow some people to have more wealth or power than others, or people have only limited needs for which they do not require the service of others. The other form of Greek utopia where Vlassopoulos believes that slavery can be absent is a Golden Age, in that case 'either because the earth gives a bountiful production without work or because inanimate objects move and produce, and fish get cooked on their own and come straight to one's mouth'.

Although Lucian's description of the Golden Age falls in this latter category, neither in Plutarch nor in Pompeius Trogus is any mention made of either a lack or an abundance of food and other resources. The emphasis in both texts is on the moral connotations of not having slaves. Especially during the early Empire, there was evidently a broader range of situations in which slavery could be imagined as absent than Vlassopoulos suggests. In the next section, we will turn to several other sources that depict a way of life without slaves. Unlike the texts just discussed, these sources do not place the absence of slaves in the past, but rather in the future or the present. They provide further confirmation that in Paul's time, an ideal society could very well be imagined as a society where there were no slaves.

2.3 Ideal Communities and Times without Slaves

Our discussion of the Saturnalia has shown that various authors in the early Empire attributed the origin of the festival to an ideal past, when slave and free were equal. Yet

¹⁰¹ Vlassopoulos, *Greek Slavery*, 120.

during the imperial period, a new appropriation of this ideal past took shape in a process that can be called the 'eschatologisation' of the myth of the Golden Age.¹⁰² Whereas the Golden Age had previously been located in the past, it was now reinterpreted as an ideal future, one that to some extent might already be realised. With the fourth Eclogue, the poet Virgil, whether inspired by a similar move in the Sibylline prophecies or independently, established the return of Golden Age as a literary concept.¹⁰³ In Virgil, as in other Roman poets, the future Golden Age is imagined as a time of peace, justice and prosperity, but the theme of equality of slave and free does not feature, in contrast to those sources that place the ideal time in the past.¹⁰⁴

The position of slaves is mentioned, however, in the Epicurean prophecy of an ideal future that occurs in the inscription by Diogenes of Oenoanda, as well as in book 2 of the Sibylline Oracles. Both these prophecies also seem inspired by the idea of a Golden Age. The connection between equality and the absence of slaves that we encountered in several of the descriptions of the age of Saturn is also made by Philo in his descriptions of the Essenes and the Therapeutae. Of all ancient authors, Philo seems most explicit in connecting contemporary ideas about humanity as brothers and equal and the status of slaves. We will therefore begin with an examination of Philo's thought on slave and free, both in connection with the age of Saturn and with the ideal communities of the Essenes and Therapeutae, which share a number of important features.

2.3.1 Philo on Slaves and Equality

Although Roman emperors are associated with the blessings of a Saturnian age in a number of sources, both literary and epigraphical, the most elaborate description of such a time of justice and social equality is given by Philo, in connection with Caligula's ascension to power.¹⁰⁵ In his *Embassy to Gaius*, Philo gives a vivid account of the festivities that ensued all over the world, 'from the rising to the setting sun' (*Embassy to Gaius* 1.10) when Gaius became emperor:¹⁰⁶

On this occasion the rich were not better off than the poor, nor the men of high rank than the lowly, nor the creditors than the debtors, nor the masters than the slaves (οὐ δεσπότεαι δούλων περιήσαν), since the occasion gave equal privileges

¹⁰² Olaf Waßmuth uses the phrase 'die Eschatologisierung der "Goldenen Zeit"' to describe the trend of which the appropriation of this myth in the Sibylline Oracles is part. The same development in Virgil and other Augustan poets was an independent process, according to Waßmuth (Waßmuth, *Sibyllinische Orakel* 1-2, 167-168, 443).

¹⁰³ See Versnel, *Transition and Reversal*, 192-205. The question whether the Sibylline Oracles influenced Virgil is answered positively by several scholars on the Golden Age (Wallace-Hadrill, 'The Golden Age', 21; Versnel, *Transition and Reversal*, 193; Gatz, *Weltalter, goldene Zeit*, 90-97), but negatively by some working on the Oracles, such as Buitenwerf and Waßmuth (Waßmuth, *Sibyllinische Orakel* 1-2, 167-168; Buitenwerf, *Book III of the Sibylline Oracles*, 292, nt. 137).

¹⁰⁴ For an analysis of the way labour features in Virgil's Golden Age, see J. J. L. Smolenaars, 'Labour in the Golden Age: a Unifying Theme in Vergil's Poems' *Mnemosyne* 40 (1987) 391-405.

¹⁰⁵ Versnel cites several inscriptions that mention the peace and prosperity brought to the human race by the emperor and singles out Philo as the 'most striking and explicit instance of Saturnian imagery and terminology' (Versnel, *Transition and Reversal*, 198-199).

¹⁰⁶ Geoff Adams takes Philo's description as accurate, since it mirrors Suetonius' account of the genuineness of the people's welcome for the new emperor (Geoff W. Adams, *The Roman Emperor Gaius 'Caligula' and his Hellenistic Aspirations*, (Boca Raton: BrownWalker Press 2007) 144).

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and communities to all men (ἰσωνομίαν τοῦ καιροῦ διδόντος), so that the age of Saturn (Κρονικὸν βίον), which is so celebrated by the poets was no longer looked upon as a fiction and a fable, on account of the universal prosperity and happiness which reigned everywhere, and the absence of all grief and fear, and the daily and nightly exhibitions of joy (εὐφροσύνας) and festivity throughout every house and throughout the whole people, which lasted continually without any interruption during the first seven months of his reign. (Philo, *Embassy to Gaius* 1.13)

The first seven months of Gaius' reign saw the realisation of the 'age of Saturn', according to Philo. Even though Gaius later proved to be a disappointment, the initial reaction was the creation of a temporary topsy-turvy world characterised by equality (ἰσωνομία) between high and low, and between slave and free. According to Versnel, 'all the Saturn(al)ian ingredients have been moulded into one majestic hyperbole' by Philo, although his description 'contains germs of the anomic'.¹⁰⁷ Since Philo was very critical of Gaius, we have to allow for the possibility that he is not presenting a straightforwardly positive picture of the beginning of his reign, but rather one that already foreshadows the misery that was to follow.¹⁰⁸

The categories mentioned by Philo here in connection with the age of Saturn appear to owe something to Jewish prophetic literature, as Versnel correctly observes. Debtor and creditor, master and slave, and grief and joy are pairs of opposites that occur both in Old-Testament prophecies as well as in later eschatological texts.¹⁰⁹ The closest parallel to the pairs mentioned by Philo can be found in a prophecy in Isaiah:

See, the LORD is going to lay waste the earth and devastate it; he will ruin its face and scatter its inhabitants-it will be the same for priest as for people, for master as for servant (ὁ παῖς ὡς ὁ κύριος), for mistress as for maid, for seller as for buyer (ὁ ἀγοράζων ὡς ὁ πωλῶν), for borrower as for lender (ὁ δανείζων ὡς ὁ δανειζόμενος), for debtor as for creditor (ὁ ὀφείλων ὡς ὁ ὀφείλει). (...) The earth dries up (mourns, ἐπένησεν) and withers, the world languishes and withers, the exalted of the earth languish (mourn, ἐπένησαν). (...) The new wine dries up (mourns, πενήθει) and the vine withers (mourns, πενήθει); all the merrymakers (οἱ εὐφραϊνόμενοι τὴν ψυχὴν) groan. (*Isaiah* 24:1-2, 4, 7)

This prophecy foresees the total destruction of the world by God, involving all parts of the population, without regard for social distinctions.¹¹⁰ Several pairs of opposites mentioned in Isaiah are similar to those in Philo, although there does not seem to be a verbal parallel with the LXX.¹¹¹ The pairs 'master-slave' and 'creditor-debtor' occur in both, while the idea of

¹⁰⁷ See Versnel, *Transition and Reversal*, 200.

¹⁰⁸ On the Embassy and Philo's attitude towards Gaius, see Borgen, *Philo of Alexandria*, 176-193.

¹⁰⁹ The passages will be examined in the next chapter (Ch IV, section 2.2) in connection with Paul's listing of similar terms in 1 Corinthians 7:29-31.

¹¹⁰ James Todd Hibbard discusses ancient Near-Eastern texts with a similar theme of 'blurring of social distinction' (James Todd Hibbard, *Intertextuality in Isaiah 24-27: The Reuse and Evocation of Earlier Texts* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck 2006), 42.). According to John Watts, the theme of the passage is the 'devastated land', which is developed in various ways. Verse 2 shows that 'all elements of the population are involved', verses 4-6 indicate that the cause of the withered land is the people's sin, while verses 7-9 indicate the social standstill (John D.W. Watts, *Isaiah 1-33* (Waco: Word Books, 1985) 315-318.

¹¹¹ Similar pairs, although not slave-free, also occur in Ezekiel 7:12-13, see the discussion in Ch IV.

high and low is reflected in several of the pairs in Isaiah (priest-people, mistress-maid). Finally the opposition between grief and joy also appears in both passages (εὐφροσύνη, joy (Embassy to Gaius 13), εὐφραίνω, to rejoice (Isaiah 24:7). Similar pairs feature in a Sibylline prophecy as we will see below, as well as in Paul and in Gospel passages, as will be discussed in the next chapter in relation to marriage. Philo thus appears to associate a contemporary Jewish understanding of the end time with the age of Saturn. There is evidence in Philo's other works that the idea of equality between slave and free was of exceptional interest to him.

In general, Philo did not object to slavery and like many of his contemporaries who wrote on such matters, he encouraged masters not to treat slaves harshly, in order to 'receive the services to which you are entitled':

Cease, therefore, you who are called masters (οἱ λεγόμενοι δεσπότες), from imposing harsh and intolerable commands on your slaves, which break the strength of the body by their compulsion, and compel the soul to faint even before the bodies; for there is no objection to your exerting a moderate degree of authority, giving orders by which you will receive the services to which you are entitled, and in consequence of which your servants will cheerfully do what they are desired; and then they will discharge their duties but for a short period, as if early exhausted, and, if one must say the truth, brought by their labours to old age before their time; but like athletes, preserving their youthful vigour for a long time, who do not become fat and corpulent, but who are accustomed, by exertion and sweat, to train themselves, so as to be able to acquire the things which are necessary and useful for life. (Philo, *Special Laws* 2.90-91)

A master should not be harsh, but should exert a moderate degree of authority for best results. Such a view was quite common among Greek authors and generally, Jewish practices and attitudes with regard to slavery seem to have been no different from contemporary Greco-Roman ones.¹¹² Yet Philo does not limit himself to predictable advice such as this, and his own distinctive position on slavery is not always recognised. When discussing the command that slaves too should rest on the seventh day (Exodus 20:10, in *On the Special Laws* 2.66-69), he argues that this practice will lead towards virtue (ἀρετή), and serve as a reminder of equality (ἰσότης):

And from the occurrence of the free men at times submitting to the tasks of servants, and of the servants enjoying a respite and holiday, it will arise that the life of humankind advances in improvement towards perfect virtue (συμβήσεται τὸν τῶν ἀνθρώπων βίον ἐπιδοῦναι πρὸς ἀρετὴν τελειοτάτην), from their being thus reminded of the principles of equality (ὑπομνησκομενων ἰσότητος), and repaying each other with necessary services, both those of high and those of obscure rank. (Philo, *On the Special Laws* 2.68-69)

¹¹² Catherine Hezser, *Jewish Slavery in Antiquity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press 2002), 389. A similar conclusion is reached by Dale Martin: In the end, the decisive factors for the structures of slavery were not those of religion or ethnicity but geography and socio-economic position (Dale B. Martin, 'Slavery and the Ancient Jewish Family', in *The Jewish Family in Antiquity*, Shaye J.D. Cohen (ed.), (Atlanta: Scholars Press 1993) 113-129.

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The commandment for slaves to rest on the seventh day ensures that masters occasionally perform the tasks of slaves, so that they will know what to do should their position in life change. Slaves get a taste of freedom, to encourage them to be loyal in the hope of eventually being freed (On the Special Laws 2.66-67). According to Philo, this change of roles will help humankind to advance towards virtue, because mutual service will be a reminder of the principles of equality. The role change that Philo proposes thus seems to play on the same theme that appears in Epictetus and Seneca, discussed above. Philo, however, appears to expect not only that the attitude of the master towards the slave reflects their common origin, but rather that it is aimed at reaching a higher state of virtue for all people.¹¹³

This same ideal of equality and virtue is achieved, according to Philo, by two Jewish groups that reject slavery. In his description of the Essenes and the Therapeutae, Philo attributes to them a fundamental criticism of slavery. Both groups are portrayed as exemplifying Jewish virtue and as part of their high moral standard, they consider slavery to be against nature, which has created everyone as equals. Of the Essenes Philo writes:

Not a single slave is to be found among them, but all are free (δοῦλος τε παρ' αὐτοῖς οὐδὲ εἷς ἐστίν ἀλλ' ἐλεύθεροι πάντες), exchanging services with each other and they denounce the owners of slaves, not merely for their injustice in outraging the law of equality, but also for their impiety in annulling the statute of Nature, who, mother-like, has born and reared all men alike, and created them genuine brothers, not in mere name but in very reality (καταγινώσκουσι τε τῶν δεσποτῶν οὐ μόνον ὡς ἀδικῶν ἰσότητα λυμαινομένων ἀλλὰ καὶ ὡς ἀσεβῶν θεσμὸν φύσεως ἀναιρούντων ἢ πάντας ὁμοίως γεννήσασα καὶ θρεψαμένη μητρὸς δίκην ἀδελφὸς γνησίους οὐ λεγομένους ἀλλ' ὄντας ὄντως ἀπειργάσατο), though this kinship has been put to confusion by the triumph of malignant covetousness, which has wrought estrangement instead of affinity and enmity instead of friendship. (Philo, *That Every Good Man Is Free* 79)

The Essenes are a group made up only of free men, and in the absence of slaves, they perform services for each other. They appear to live out the way towards virtue set out by Philo in the passage discussed above on resting on the Sabbath. Philo ascribes their way of life to a radical criticism of slave owners, who are seen to violate the law of equality and disregard the fact that nature has created all people as brothers. Josephus also describes the Essenes as not having slaves, though for different and more practical reasons:

they neither marry wives, nor are desirous to keep servants; as thinking the latter tempts men to be unjust, and the former gives the handle to domestic quarrels (Josephus, *Jewish Antiquities*, 18.21).

As noted in our discussion of the Essenes in the first chapter, Josephus' and Philo's portrayal of the Essenes as a group that practices community of goods and lives without marriage or

¹¹³ Hezser sees little difference between Philo's and Stoic views. 'The distinction between body and soul and the emphasis on enslavement to passions, wrong thoughts, and emotions as the real slavery enabled Philo, and Stoics such as Seneca to encourage the slave's spiritual development. This also meant, however, that the actual bodily enslavement was not considered so important and that slaves were not urged to escape, but rather to give in to their fate. To some extent, then, these teachings helped to maintain the status quo of slavery as an indispensable institution within ancient society' (Hezser, *Jewish Slavery in Antiquity*, 61).

slavery fits within the wider tradition of utopian or ideal communities in Antiquity.¹¹⁴ Yet while many depictions of such communities are clear on the first two issues, as in a 'community of goods and women', the presence or absence of slaves is usually not addressed directly and is consequently a matter of debate among scholars.¹¹⁵ Philo and Josephus' statements on the Essenes are thus more clear on this issue than are other authors that describe ideal or utopian communities, and Philo's condemnation of slavery is more absolute. Still, not all scholars are convinced that a concern for equality is what drives Philo. Caroline Murphy suggests that Philo's aversion to slavery is not explained by the violation of equality, since, as noted above, he generally accepts slavery. She believes it is the sexual compromises associated with slavery which disgust Philo. Though he refers to it only obliquely, the problem for Philo is not only that slave owners make a slave out of a brother, but also that they make a sexual partner out of a man, thereby making a man into a woman. Murphy concludes that this concern may lead Philo to amplify the attitude of the Essenes towards slavery.¹¹⁶

Philo's criticism of slavery in the case of the Essenes is not an isolated expression, however. Above we already saw how Philo connects the age of Saturn to equality between slave and free. In his description of the Therapeutae, Philo also describes slavery as imposing inequality, when nature has created everyone free:

They do not have slaves (ἀνδραπόδων) to wait on them, as they consider that the ownership of servants is against nature (παρὰ φύσιν). For nature has borne everyone to be free, but the wrongful and covetous acts of some who pursued that source of evil, inequality (ἀνισότητα), have imposed their yoke, and invested the stronger with power over the weaker. (Philo, *On the Contemplative Life* 70)

There is a great deal of discussion about the question whether Therapeutae were in fact an existing group, or were made up by Philo for the purpose of argument. Troels Engberg-Pedersen argues that Philo's description of the Therapeutae is fictional, and is a 'philosopher's dream'. Its meaning therefore does not lie in the information it conveys about the Therapeutae, according to Engberg-Pedersen, but in what it tells us about Philo; they are Philo's Therapeutae.¹¹⁷

The best argument in favour of their actual existence seems to be that the group included female members. The Therapeutae are a group that exemplifies the life of

¹¹⁴ For the relationship between the Essenes as described by Philo and Josephus, and the Dead Sea Scrolls and the Qumran community see the observation in Ch I. The Dead Sea Scrolls do not confirm any criticism of slavery as expressed by Philo and Josephus. According to Catherine Murphy, 'the legal portions of the sectarian rules and halakhic texts nowhere forbid slavery. In fact, some texts seem to presume that it still exists' (Catherine M. Murphy, *Wealth in the Dead Sea Scrolls & in the Qumran Community* (Leiden: Brill 2002) 415).

¹¹⁵ On the community of goods and women in Plato and the Stoics, see Dawson, *Cities of the Gods*, 87-91, 188-193. Dawson concludes that the early Stoics considered all slavery to be contrary to nature (Dawson, *Cities of the Gods*, 178). Ferguson also ascribes a critical attitude towards slavery to Zeno (Ferguson, *Utopias of the Classical World*, 112). For a discussion of the presence of slaves in Plato's Republic, see Gregory Vlastos, 'Does Slavery Exist in Plato's Republic?' *Classical Philology* 63/4 (1968), 291-295; Brian Calvert, Slavery in Plato's Republic, *The Classical Quarterly* 37/2 (1987), 367-372. Iambulus' islanders are often assumed to live without slaves, although this is not spelled out, see Winiarczyk, *Die Hellenistischen Utopien*, 185; Ferguson, *Utopias of the Classical World*, 126.

¹¹⁶ Murphy, *Wealth in the Dead Sea Scrolls*, 416.

¹¹⁷ Engberg-Pedersen, 'Philo's *De Vita Contemplativa*', 63-64.

philosophical contemplation. While Philo generally is not very positive about women, to say the least, it is particularly difficult to imagine that women would have a place in his philosophical utopia. As Joan Taylor notes, 'one would not invent a group with features one then had to explain away'.¹¹⁸ While it is thus likely that Philo did model his description on an existing group, we have no way of knowing whether this group did or did not have slaves. Given his rhetorical aim, Philo is not really concerned with an accurate description of the practicalities of daily life in the community.¹¹⁹

Philo compares the meals of the Therapeutae with conventional symposia and attacks the sexual use of male slaves at such occasions. He contrasts Greek symposium culture, where slaves are present to serve the meal which then leads to pederasty, to the chaste Therapeutae where young people who are not slaves, serve the meals (*On the Contemplative Life* 58-61, 70-72). Philo strongly disapproves of sex with slave boys, not only from the point of view of the master, but also because it corrupts the boy. As noted above in our discussion of slaves and sexual ethics, Musonius Rufus also condemns the sexual use of slaves. He does so, however, because it shows a lack of self-control in the master, and does not discuss the situation of the slave. Holger Szesnat suggests that perhaps it is the fact that Philo ascribes a common nature to master and slave that allows him to regard the gender status of the boy as more important than his social status in this context.¹²⁰ Again it would be insufficient to attribute Philo's criticism of slavery solely to his sexual ethic. Even though he accepted slaves as a necessity, he also viewed slave and free as created equals and felt that this could become a reality in a philosophical community or an ideal time.

2.3.2 'No Slave' at the End Time: Sibylline Oracles 2

Several of the features of Philo's ideal communities can also be seen in the eschatological prophecy in book 2 of the Sibylline Oracles. The end time is portrayed here as a time when people will live as equals, sharing goods, not marrying and not having slaves:¹²¹

The earth belongs equally to all (γαῖα δ' ἴση πάντων), undivided by walls or fences (οὐ τεῖχεσιν οὐ περιφραγμοῖς διαμεριζομένη). It will bear abundant fruits spontaneously. Lives will be in common and wealth will have no division (κοινοί τε βίοι καὶ πλοῦτος ἄμοιρος). For there will be no poor man there, no rich, and no tyrant, no slave (οὐ γὰρ πτωχὸς ἐκεῖ, οὐ πλούσιος, οὐδὲ τύραννος, οὐ δοῦλος); no one will be either great or small anymore, there will be no kings, and no leaders: all are equal there (κοινῇ δ' ἴμα πάντες). (...) No spring, no summer, no winter, no autumn, no marriage, no death, no selling, no buying (οὐ γάμον, οὐ θάνατον, οὐ πράσεις, οὐδ' ἀγορασμούς), no sunset, no sunrise: because he will make one great day. (*Sibylline Oracles* 2. 319-329)

This passage is another example of the 'eschatologisation' of the Golden Age, or perhaps in this case better, of the 'Golden Aging' of eschatology.¹²² In his recent commentary on books

¹¹⁸ Taylor, *Jewish Women Philosophers*, 11.

¹¹⁹ Taylor and Davies, 'The So-Called Therapeutae', 16. Taylor and Davies point out that while Philo limits his description to the contemplative members of the community, there must have been others who plowed the fields, looked after the animals and prepared the food. It is only in the banquet context that the 'juniors' appear, to illustrate that the community does not have slaves.

¹²⁰ Holger Szesnat, "Pretty Boys' in Philo's *De Vita Contemplativa*", *The Studia Philonica Annual* 10 (1998), 87-107, 99.

¹²¹ This text and the relevant literature on this passage are discussed in Chapter I.

1 and 2, Olaf Waßmuth comes to the conclusion that the eschatological vision quoted here is part of the oldest, pre-Christian layer, which dates from the late first or early second century CE.¹²³ The author of this base-layer ('Grundschrift') uses the Greek idea of a Golden Age as his *Leitmotiv*, which is reflected at various points in the book (Sibylline Oracles 1. 65-86; 1.283-306; 2. 313-338).¹²⁴ In the final vision of the end-time, quoted here, the Golden Age is described in full. It will be a time of abundance, when food will grow without labour, and all will live as equals, sharing all goods. Like Philo's description of the festivities for Gaius reminiscent of the age of Saturn, this prophecy combines ideas from the Golden Age with Jewish eschatological motifs.

Again there is similarity with the high-low oppositions in Isaiah. Of the economic pairs mentioned in Isaiah, seller-buyer (ὁ ἀγοράζων ὡς ὁ πωλῶν), borrower-lender (ὁ δανείζων ὡς ὁ δανειζόμενος) and debtor-creditor (ὁ ὀφείλων ὡς ὃ ὀφείλει), the third, debtor-creditor, was mentioned by Philo (οὐ δανεισταὶ χρεωστῶν) while the first, selling and buying, occurs in the Sibylline prophecy (οὐ πράσεις, οὐδ' ἀγορασμούς). We can thus conclude that there was an appropriation of the Golden Age tradition in Jewish thought that connected these to biblical prophecy, resulting in descriptions of an ideal age that included a combination of motifs from both traditions. The same conflation can be seen in ideas about an ideal community. The absence of slavery, or an end to the distinction slave-free was a part of the depiction of the Golden Age, as well as of Jewish prophecy, and of strands of utopian thought, all of which came together in Jewish thought on an ideal community or time where there would be no slaves.

Although this motif of the absence of slaves finds its clearest expression in Jewish sources, it is also present in the Epicurean expectation of an ideal future found in the inscription of Diogenes of Oenoanda, already introduced in Ch I.¹²⁵ Diogenes also proclaims a message of hope for the future and the coming of a Golden Age:

then truly the life of the gods will pass to human beings. For all things will be full of justice and mutual love, and there will be no need of fortifications or laws and all the things which we contrive on account of one another (δικαιοσύνης γὰρ ἔσται μετὰ πάντα καὶ φιλαλληλίας, καὶ οὐ γενήσεται τειχῶν ἢ νόμων χρεία καὶ πάντων ὅσα δι' ἀλλήλους σκευωρούμεθα). As for the necessities derived from agriculture, as we shall have no [slaves then], for indeed we [ourselves shall plow] and dig and tend [the plants] and [divert] rivers (...) (περὶ δὲ τῶν ἀπὸ γεωργίας ἀνανκαίων, ὡς οὐκ ἔσομένων ἡμ[εῖν] τότε δούλων] καὶ γὰρ ἀ[ρόσομεν αὐτοῖ] καὶ σκάψο[μεν, καὶ τῶν φυ]τῶν ἐπιμελ[ησόμεθα], καὶ ποταμο[ὺς παρατρέ]ψομεν). (Diogenes of Oenoanda, Fragment 56)¹²⁶

¹²² The phrase 'die Eschatologisierung der „Goldenen Zeit“' is used by Olaf Waßmuth to describe the trend of that the Golden Age myth is placed at the end time, as happens in the Sibylline Oracles (Waßmuth, *Sibyllinische Orakel* 1-2, 167-168, 443).

¹²³ Waßmuth, *Sibyllinische Orakel* 1-2, 443, 487. Paul Trebilco dates the Jewish substratum of book 2 to sometime between 30 BCE and 70 CE, but is less confident about which parts belong to this layer. He does note that in book 2. 34-347 'the eschatological passages are probably substantially Jewish' (*Jewish Communities in Asia Minor* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press) 1991, 95).

¹²⁴ For an analysis of the Golden Age theme in these passages, see Waßmuth, *Sibyllinische Orakel* 1-2, 164-169.

¹²⁵ As indicated there, the reference to slaves is part of a reconstructed section of the text, see Ch I nt. 127.

¹²⁶ Translation by Pamela Gordon, *Epicurus in Lycia*, 126.

Diogenes sees the Golden Age as a time when there will be no laws or barriers, but only justice and mutual love. The absence of slaves also forms part of this idealised future. Everyone will work the land together without a need for slaves. Diogenes' description of this 'peaceful era of philosophy and cooperative gardening' is unique among Epicurean texts; there is no indication that Epicurus hoped for this kind of global utopia.¹²⁷ There is, however, a tradition recorded by Diogenes Laertius, which portrays Epicurus as 'symphilosophizing' with a slave called Mys.¹²⁸ Diogenes Laertius also notes Epicurus' gentleness to his servants (πρός τε τοὺς οἰκέτας ἡμερότης) and his benevolence to all mankind (καθόλου τε ἢ πρὸς πάντας αὐτοῦ φιλανθρωπία). Diogenes thus possibly picks up on these traditions by addressing his inscription to all Greeks and barbarians ('Ἑλλησι κ[αὶ] βαρβάροις) and declaring the whole world and the entire earth as the home of all people (Fragment 30). As discussed in the previous chapter, he expresses an Epicurean ideal in first-century terms. It seems possible then that Diogenes, Philo, the author of the Sibylline prophecy and Paul all made an element that was already present in their respective traditions, more explicit.

Conclusion

Our analysis of the cultural conversation about slave and free in this chapter has shown that the absence of slavery was part of the contemporary imagination of an ideal society, whether this was situated in the past, the present, or the future. The notion of the connectedness of all human beings to each other and to the divine, that was prominent in first-century cosmopolitanism, had implications for slave and free as well. Some of Paul's contemporaries argued that the positions of slave and free in society did not reflect a fundamental difference. In essence, slave and free could be seen as brothers. In Jewish thought especially, these elements came to a more definite expression.

Paul's statement that there is 'neither slave nor free' can be seen as part of this contemporary understanding. In light of the expectation of a coming end time, the ideal of the absence of slavery gains prominence in his thought. Even though the eschatological context is less present in discussions of slave and free than it is in connection with the other two pairs of the baptismal formula, we can still see its influence, especially in 1 Corinthians 7. When Paul reassures slaves that they can stay as they are, he does so in a chapter that discusses the relative unimportance of marriage in light of the approaching end of the world. Just as marriage was a feature of this disappearing world for Paul, as we will see in the next chapter, so was slavery.

Paul's statements about slave and free tie in with discussions in contemporary thought, both Stoic and Jewish. The notion of brotherhood between slave and free is found in Paul's letter to Philemon, in Stoic writers such as Seneca and Epictetus and in Philo's description of the Essenes and Therapeutae. Philo ascribes the notion that slavery is against the brotherhood and equality of people to some groups that he considers to be philosophically and morally superior. For him, these groups represent some of the best that the Jewish way of life had to offer. Paul's unique position lies in the fact that he created

¹²⁷ Gordon, *Epicurus in Lycia*, 126.

¹²⁸ Diogenes Laertius, *Lives of the Eminent Philosophers* 10.10, see Pamela Gordon, *Invention and Gendering of Epicurus* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press 2012) 99; Gordon, *Epicurus in Lycia*, 127.

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actual communities in which slave and free interacted, which existed not apart from, but as a part of, larger society. Paul did not advocate withdrawing from the world, relinquishing all possessions, and absolutely foregoing marriage. His attitude towards slaves was also not as absolute as in Philo's description of Essenes and Therapeutae. Rather, we see attempts in Paul to think through what the eschatological reality means for the current interactions between slave and free. Just as with the other two pairs, Paul interprets the new creation in Christ for the old creation in which he and his audience still live.

Chapter IV

Nor Male and Female: Marriage at the End of the World

Introduction

There can be no doubt that the communities founded by Paul had both male and female members. Numerous passages testify to men and women, some mentioned by name, being part of the groups to which his letters were addressed.¹ While this may seem to be a rather trivial observation, it is nonetheless one that is worth making, since we know that all-male religious groups existed in Antiquity, and we especially know of such Jewish groups. The all-male Essenes were seen by both Philo and Josephus to present an ideal way of life, partly because they allowed only men into the community, while rejecting wives and marriage.² Whereas some texts among the Dead Sea Scrolls appear to assume the presence of families, the *Rule of the Community* does not mention women and is generally seen as relating to a community of men only.³ Other Greek authors also know of groups that include only men and praise these groups for living ‘in great freedom’.⁴ Based on contemporary examples, Paul could thus very well have decided to limit membership, and direct his message, to men only.

For Paul, however, the presence of both men and women seems to be important, since he writes that ‘in the Lord woman is not independent of man nor man independent of woman’ (1 Corinthians 11:11). The baptismal saying in Galatians confirms the presence of both men and women ‘in Christ’, but signals a change in the situation of ‘male and female’, as it does for the other two pairs. This chapter will examine what this change amounted to and will analyse how this third pair relates to other passages in which Paul addresses issues concerning men and women, and especially marriage, in the context of first-century thought.

Contemporary sources that cite the same verse that is quoted in the baptismal formula, about creation into ‘male and female’ (Genesis 1:27), generally do so in the context of marriage and procreation. Although there are not many such sources, together they do

¹ See e.g. Romans 16, 1 Corinthians 1:11, Philippians 4:2-3.

² The sources on this for the Essenes are Philo, *Apology for the Jews* 11.14, 17 and Josephus, *Antiquities* 18. 18, *War* 2.19.

³ *The Rule of the Congregation* (1QSa) and the *Damascus Document* (CD) take the presence of women and children for granted. While the *Rule of the Community* (1QS) does not mention women, marriage or celibacy, it is often seen as associated with a community of celibate men. The question of celibacy in the movement behind the Dead Sea Scrolls is obviously tied to the question of Essene identification. For a brief overview of the discussion and relevant literature see: Cecilia Wassen, *Women in the Damascus Document* (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature 2005), 6-9. Also John Collins, who holds the view that the community was indeed celibate, but notes that ‘the silence (...) on matters relating to marriage is extraordinary on either explanation.’ (John Collins, *Beyond the Qumran Community: The Sectarian Movement of the Dead Sea Scrolls* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing Company 2010), 150-151). While many scholars assume a direct relationship between the Essenes and the Dead Sea Scrolls, I accept the more cautious position taken by Steve Mason see Ch I, nt. 99.

⁴ See Strabo, on the Thracians and the men of the Alexandrian museum (Strabo, *Geography* 7.3.3 and 17.1.8). For a discussion of these groups in the context of ideal communities, see CH I, section 3.2.2.

suggest a contemporary understanding of creation into 'male and female' as the creation of man and woman as a couple, as husband and wife, for the purpose of having children. When Paul declares that there is now no 'male and female', he should be heard against the background of this contemporary understanding.

As we shall see, Paul's discussion of the reasons why, and the circumstances under which, a person should be celibate, should marry, or is allowed to divorce, indicate that he had an exceptional view on these issues. Paul did not consider marriage as an important duty towards society, nature, or God, as most of his contemporaries did. In light of the approaching end of time, marriage was no longer of central importance for him. He does not present marriage as reinforcing society or the community, but rather as a distraction, to be avoided if possible. Marriage is part of the old world that is about to pass away.

The interpretation of the phrase 'nor male and female' presented in this chapter will thus depart from what appears to be the consensus view in scholarship, that it declares the equality between the sexes, or at least their interdependence.⁵ Many scholars embrace such a reading, which generally goes back to the influential reconstruction of the origin of the formula by Wayne Meeks. The first part of this chapter (section 1) will deal with the interpretation of the phrase 'male and female', beginning with a discussion of Meeks' interpretation and its subsequent development by Daniel Boyarin and Dennis Ronald MacDonald (section 1.1). We will then turn to the interpretation of the phrase 'nor male and female' in Paul's time, which shows that the phrase is seen as relating not to androgyny or to men and women in general, but specifically to their connection in marriage and procreation (section 1.2). The second part of this chapter focusses on Paul's attitude towards marriage, procreation and sexuality and connects his ideas to the contemporary cultural conversation about these issues (section 2). Both Paul's arguments for marriage (section 2.1) and his arguments against it (section 2.2) will be discussed.

Since the interpretation proposed here is different from the dominant scholarly reading, several issues that are usually seen as related to the third pair of the formula lose their relevance in connection to it. These are issues connected to the supposed tension in Paul's view on gender. The fact that a reference to 'male and female' is missing in the citation in 1 Corinthians 12:13 is often attributed to Paul's unease with the interpretation of this pair in the Corinthian community. His statements about the need for women to cover their heads and about women's silence in the community gatherings are also seen to be in tension with the presumed equality declared by Paul in the formula. I will briefly discuss these issues in the final part of this chapter (section 3).

As this chapter will show, the baptismal formula does not declare an end to the social or biological differences between men and women, but rather describes the fact that men and women are no longer oriented towards each other in marriage. While turning this orientation from each other to Christ does have some implications for the social positions of men and women, these are not the primary focus of Paul's message. Rather, a contextual reading of Paul's statement indicates that it should be heard as a declaration about the end-time, when there will be no marriage and no procreation. As we will see, such an understanding of the end time is also evident in other strands of Jewish and early-Christian

⁵ See e.g. Schüssler Fiorenza, who holds that the baptismal declarations 'unequivocally affirm the equality and charismatic giftedness of women and men in the Christian community' (Schüssler Fiorenza, *In Memory of Her*, 235). A similar view can be found in many scholars, such as Payne, *Man and Woman*, 461; Balch, '1 Cor 7:32-35 and Stoic Debates', 438-439.

thought. In the present, Paul encourages his audience to focus on this coming reality, instead of on the world that is about to pass away. Since marriage is part of this world that will soon end, it no longer has meaning for those who are in Christ.

1 Creation, Myth and Marriage: The Meaning of ‘Male and Female’

It has long been noted that the third pair, ‘nor male and female’, deviates in form from the other two pairs and thus breaks the parallelism of the baptismal formula.⁶ Based on the first two pairs, ‘neither Jew nor Greek’, and ‘neither slave nor free’, the third pair could be expected to read ‘neither man nor woman’, or ‘neither woman nor man’. Yet instead of the words most frequently used by Paul for man and woman, (άνήρ and γυναίκα), two much rarer terms are used here, and are linked not with the word ‘nor’ (οὐδέ) as in the previous two pairs, but with ‘and’ (καί). The third pair thus stands apart from the other two, raising the question why these particular words, and this particular form, are chosen.

Scholars generally agree that the wording of the third pair quotes the creation story in Genesis (1:27), where the same phrase occurs. The Septuagint reads,

‘And God made man (τὸν ἄνθρωπον), in the image of God he made him, male and female he made them’ (ἄρσεν καὶ θήλυ ἐποίησεν αὐτούς). God blessed them and said to them, ‘be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it’.
(Genesis 1:27-28)

Although the terms ‘male’ and ‘female’ are used together more often in ancient literature, the exact phrase as it is used in the formula is rarely found.⁷ When it does occur, it is often as a quotation of the creation into male and female in Genesis, as we will see below. It is therefore most likely that the third pair of the formula also derives its distinct form from the verse in Genesis and should be seen as a reference to the creation account. The formula would thus seem to deny something about the created order of male and female.

1.1 Equality and the Myth of the Androgyne

As noted above, many modern interpretations of the phrase assume that it denies the distinction between male and female in the sense that it declares men and women to be social equals, even though such a view creates a tension between the Galatian formula and Paul’s other statements about appropriate behaviour for men and women and the differences between them.⁸ The consequence of the ‘egalitarian’ interpretation of ‘nor male

⁶ See e.g. Betz, *Galatians*, Martyn, *Galatians*, 379-380; De Boer, *Galatians*, 246; Hansen, *All of You are One*, 9-10; Boyarin, *A Radical Jew*, 186; Schüssler Fiorenza, *In Memory of Her*, 211.

⁷ The phrase also occurs in the creation account in Genesis 5:2, and in relation to the animals that are allowed into Noah’s ark (Genesis 6:19, 20, 7:2, 3, 9, 16, 23). The two words occur together in 2 Maccabees, although not in this form. There it is said of the mother of the martyred sons that she is ‘filled with a noble spirit that stirred her womanly heart with manly courage (τὸν θήλυον λογισμὸν ἄρσενι θυμῷ) (2 Maccabees 7:21).

⁸ The usual interpretation of the pair is expressed by many scholars in different ways. According to Hans Dieter Betz, ‘Gal 3:28 is the first occurrence of a doctrine openly propagating the abolition of sex distinctions’ (Betz, *Galatians*, 197). Despite seeing the pair as a reference to marriage, Schüssler Fiorenza maintains that the baptismal declarations ‘unequivocally affirm the equality and charismatic giftedness of women and men in the

and female' often tends to be that, as Daniel Boyarin puts it, when it comes to gender, 'Paul seems to have produced a discourse which is so contradictory as to be almost incoherent'.⁹ Brigitte Kahl describes the consensus view in feminist and liberation oriented readings on the baptismal statement as a 'lovely lonely alien unhappily trapped in the hostile matter of a Pauline letter'.¹⁰ While the so-called 'egalitarian' reading is thus widely accepted, its proponents agree that it is difficult to fit into a coherent understanding of Paul's attitude towards men and women as expressed in other passages.

The notion that the formula declares gender equality is argued in the influential reading of Wayne Meeks, already discussed in Chapter I, which sees the baptismal formula as a 'reunification formula' that reflects a longing for the original androgynous state of humanity.¹¹ According to Meeks, Paul 'accepts and even insists upon the equality of role of man and woman' based on this eschatological androgyny, even though the symbolic difference between the two is still preserved in the present time. Meeks' interpretation and its subsequent development by Dennis Ronald MacDonald and Daniel Boyarin has had a significant impact on the understanding of the Galatian formula and the Genesis quotation in it, yet it is based on a strained interpretation of the relevant sources.

In the first chapter of this study, the speculative nature of the proposed reconstruction of the origin and history of the baptismal formula was already discussed. Both MacDonald and Boyarin assume that the formula was in use among non-Pauline groups which proclaimed a more radical gender equality than Paul himself did.¹² Paul is thought to have taken over this formula from these groups and to have adapted it for his own purposes, but without the radical gender agenda, which then disappeared from Christianity. The formula only resurfaced in later Gnostic texts.¹³

While this speculative reconstruction is in itself problematic, a perhaps more fundamental challenge to the perspective of the androgyne myth has recently been put forward by Johannes Vorster.¹⁴ According to Vorster, the conviction held by Meeks and others that ancient thought associated the androgyne myth with equality and harmony between the sexes is based on a substantial misreading. Rather than symbolizing humankind's yearning for unity, harmony and equality, the imagery of androgyny 'represents not a harmonious utopian future, but rather a discordant, chaotic present'.¹⁵

Christian community' (Schüssler Fiorenza, *In Memory of Her*, 235). Robin Scroggs describes Paul as 'the one clear voice in the NT asserting the freedom and equality of woman in the eschatological community'. Galatians 3:28 means that 'every human being is equal before God in Christ and thus before each other' (Scroggs, 'Paul and the Eschatological Woman', 535). For a discussion of equality in relation to this text, see Jeremy Punt, 'Power and Liminality, Sex and Gender, and Gal 3:28: A Postcolonial, Queer Reading of an Influential Text' *Neotestamentica* 44/1 (2010), 140-166; Jorunn Økland, *Women in their Place: Paul and the Corinthian Discourse of Gender and Sanctuary Space* (London: T&T Clark International 2004), 6-7; Kahl, 'No Longer Male', 37.

⁹ Boyarin, *A Radical Jew*, 183.

¹⁰ Kahl, 'No Longer Male', 37.

¹¹ Meeks, 'The Image of the Androgyne', 185.

¹² MacDonald, *No Male and Female*, 127-132; Boyarin, *A Radical Jew*, 187.

¹³ For a criticism of MacDonald's hypothesis, see also Judith Gundry-Volf, 'Male and Female in Creation and New Creation: Interpretations of Galatians 3.28c in 1 Corinthians 7', in *To Tell the Mystery: Essays on New Testament Eschatology in Honor of Robert H. Gundry*, Thomas E. Schmidt, Moisés Silva and Robert Horton Gundry (eds.), (Sheffield: JSOT Press 1994), 95-121, 102-105.

¹⁴ Johannes N. Vorster, 'Androgyny and Early Christianity', *Religion & Theology* 15 (2008), 97-132.

¹⁵ Vorster, 'Androgyny and Early Christianity', 97.

This applies not only for the original Platonic version of the myth, but also for the later Gnostic interpretations.

As Meeks himself notes, Jewish sources that refer to a Platonic myth substantially reinterpret it, since its original focus is not on a fusion of a man with a woman, but rather on that of a man with man.¹⁶ In Plato's *Symposium*, men who yearn for oneness between men are rated as superior to those who long for a female other half. Although androgyny appears as a primordial situation in this myth, it does not carry a favourable connotation, according to Vorster.¹⁷ Based on an analysis of Gnostic texts such as the *Gospel of Philip* and *The Exegesis on the Soul*, which are also mentioned by Meeks, Vorster argues that androgyny is not seen in a more positive light in early Christianity. It does not function in these stories as an erasure of gender, nor as a device for the construction of equality, but rather serves to portray women in a negative light.¹⁸

There thus seems little reason to assume that Paul, in contrast to other ancient authors, did see the myth of an androgynous primal human being as referring to a positive, harmonious state, which could be restored in baptism. There does not seem to be a plausible contemporary understanding of androgyny that would support such a reading of Paul, nor do Paul's other statements about men and women suggest that he considered the differences between them as irrelevant. Rather, contemporary references to the phrase 'male and female he created them' (Genesis 1:27) point to a very different interpretation of this phrase, one that is much more consistent with Paul's thought.

1.2 'Male and Female' as Marriage and Procreation

One of the problems with the interpretation of Meeks and others is that it focusses on both earlier and later sources, and attempts to reconstruct a first-century understanding based on these. As this section will show, other, more contemporary references exist, which give a very different idea about how the phrase was understood. The references in Philo, in the *Damascus Document*, and in the Gospels, all quote this verse from Genesis in connection with marriage and procreation.

The importance of the references to Genesis in the Gospels (especially Mark 10:6) for understanding the phrase in Galatians was already suggested by Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza in her study *In Memory of Her*. According to Schüssler Fiorenza, the quotation introduces 'the theme of procreation and fertility' and the assertion in Galatians is therefore 'not that there are no longer men and women in Christ, but that patriarchal marriage—and sexual relationships between male and female—is no longer constitutive of the new community in Christ'.¹⁹ Schüssler Fiorenza's suggestion was taken up by Judith Gundry-Volf, who relates the baptismal saying to Paul's statements on marriage in 1 Corinthians and finds support for reading the phrase as a declaration about marriage in rabbinic interpretations of Genesis 1:27, as well as in the presumed intention of the Priestly writer in Genesis.²⁰ In his recent commentary, Martin de Boer also sees the passages in the Gospels, where Jesus rejects divorce and points out that there is no marriage beyond the resurrection (Mark

¹⁶ Meeks, 'The Image of the Androgyne', 186.

¹⁷ (Plato, *Symposium* 189E–192A), see Vorster, 'Androgyny and Early Christianity', 108.

¹⁸ Vorster, 'Androgyny and Early Christianity', 114–130.

¹⁹ Schüssler Fiorenza, *In Memory of Her*, 211.

²⁰ Gundry-Volf, 'Male and Female in Creation', 105–107.

12:25; Matthew 19:3-6; Mark 12:18-27, Matthew 22:23-32; Luke 20:27-38), as an indication that Paul's phrase about male and female 'probably concerns marriage'.²¹ Those scholars who interpret the phrase as referring to marriage and procreation tend to focus on the passages in the Gospels that quote Genesis 1:27. They seem to overlook that there are two other contemporary sources outside the New Testament that also cite this verse from Genesis when discussing marriage and procreation, thus further strengthening this interpretation. We will discuss the latter sources first, before turning to the Gospel passages.

1.2.1 Creation into 'Male and Female' in Philo

Philo reflects on creation into male and female in several instances, as part of his extensive exegesis of Genesis 1-3.²² He places different emphases in his exegesis, depending on the larger questions in focus. Philo's understanding of creation in general, and of the creation of human beings especially, is a complex subject that can only be presented in summary form here.²³ The key aspect of Philo's perspective on human creation is that he contrasts the first creation story told in Genesis 1 (Genesis 1:27), to the second, found in the second chapter (Genesis 2:7). The first account, according to Philo, describes the creation of the heavenly being who is 'in the image of God', while the second presents the creation of the earthly human being.²⁴ The phrase 'male and female he created them' creates something of a problem for Philo, since this is said of the heavenly being, but fits better with his understanding of the earthly human. Philo solves this problem in two ways. The first is to see 'male and female' as a potential that is contained in the first heavenly human:

And very beautifully after he had called the whole race "man," did he distinguish between the sexes, saying, that "they were created male and female" (ἄρρεν τε καὶ θήλυ) although all the individuals of the race had not yet assumed their distinctive form; since the extreme species are contained in the genus, and are beheld, as in a mirror, by those who are able to discern acutely. (Philo, *On the Creation of the World* 76)

According to David Runia, the human being here is 'identified primarily with his intellect' and is thus, in Philo's perception, 'still at a pre-sexual stage, despite the biblical words "male

²¹ De Boer, *Galatians*, 246. In his recent study of the 'social vision' of Galatians 3:28, Bruce Hansen acknowledges Gundry-Volf's reading as 'compelling', and takes it to mean that 'a *paterfamilias*, married with children, would have no greater status than an unmarried woman or a widow' (Hansen, *All of You Are One*, 10-11).

²² The main works of Philo that interpret Genesis 1-3 are *Allegorical Interpretation of the Laws*, *Questions on Genesis I*, and *On the Creation of the World*. On Philo's thought on creation, see William Loader, *The Septuagint, Sexuality, and the New Testament: Case Studies on the Impact of the LXX in Philo and the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans 2004); David T. Runia, *On the Creation of the Cosmos According to Moses: Introduction, Translation and Commentary* (Leiden: Brill 2001); Thomas H. Tobin, *The Creation of Man: Philo and the History of Interpretation* (Washington: Catholic Biblical Association of America 1983).

²³ Philo's understanding of creation is the subject of a number of recent studies, see Van Kooten, *Paul's Anthropology in Context*; Charles A. Anderson, *Philo of Alexandria's Views of the Physical World* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck 2011); Jonathan D. Worthington, *Creation in Paul and Philo: The Beginning and Before* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck 2011).

²⁴ On Philo's understanding of the two creation accounts, see Van Kooten, *Paul's Anthropology in Context*, 46-69; also Runia, *On the Creation of the Cosmos*, 21-25, Richard A. Baer Jr, *Philo's Use of the Categories Male and Female* (Leiden: Brill 1970), 14-44.

and female”²⁵. A similar explanation occurs in Philo’s *Allegorical Interpretation of the Laws*, though with a slightly different use of the terms ‘genus’ and ‘species’:

And this is found to be the course taken by God in all cases; for before making the species he completes the genera, as he did in the case of man: for having first modelled the generic man, in whom they say that the male and female sexes are contained (προτυπώσας γὰρ τὸν γενικὸν ἄνθρωπον, ἐν ᾧ το ἄρρεν καὶ τὸ θῆλυ γένος φησὶν εἶναι), he afterwards created the specific man Adam. (Philo, *Allegorical Interpretation of the Laws* 2.13)

While the first passage describes the species as already contained in the genus, the second states that they are formed after the genera have been completed.²⁶ Leaving the details of this distinction aside, both passages provide an interpretation of the phrase ‘male and female he created them’ (Genesis 1:27) that is compatible with an understanding of the created being as somehow preceding actual gendered male and female human beings.

When Philo then comes to the interpretation of the second creation story, in his exegesis of Genesis 2 (Genesis 2:7), he contrasts the gendered, earthly, mortal being created here, with the incorporeal, non-gendered first creation. He applies the idea of creation into male and female, which occurs in the first creation account, to the second, and paraphrases the first human as ‘neither male nor female’:

After this, Moses says that "God made man, having taken clay from the earth, and he breathed into his face the breath of life". And by this expression he shows most clearly that there is a vast difference between man as generated now, and the first man who was made according to the image of God. For man as formed now is perceptible to the external senses, partaking of qualities, consisting of body and soul, man or woman, by nature mortal (ἐκ σώματος καὶ ψυχῆς συνεστώς, ἀνήρ ἢ γυνή, φύσει θνητός). But man, made according to the image of God, was an idea, or a genus, or a seal, perceptible only by the intellect, incorporeal, neither male nor female, imperishable by nature (κατὰ τὴν εἰκόνα ἰδέα τις ἢ γένος ἢ σφραγίς, νοητός, ἀσώματος, οὔτ’ ἄρρεν οὔτε θῆλυ, ἀφθαρτος φύσει). (Philo, *On the Creation of the World* 134)

Philo’s strategy here is something of an ‘exegetical sleight of hand’.²⁷ He interprets the meaning of the words ‘male and female he created them’ as their apparent opposite: ‘neither male nor female’. It is likely that Philo is still working with the same concept here of the first human who was ‘in the image of God’ as ‘not yet male and female’.²⁸ According to Richard Baer, Philo sees the male-female polarity as ‘part of the mortal, corruptible world’, while what was patterned ‘after the divine Logos belongs to the realm where there is neither male nor female’.²⁹ Both Runia and Baer argue against an interpretation of this first human as androgynous. Baer rejects any mythological framework for Philo. Instead, Philo is

²⁵ Runia, *On the Creation of the Cosmos*, 243.

²⁶ On Philo’s concept of ‘genus’, see Runia, *On the Creation of the Cosmos*, 185, 242, 325; Baer, *Philo’s Use of the Categories Male and Female*, 26-35; William Loader, *The Septuagint, Sexuality, and the New Testament*, 59-69.

²⁷ Runia, *On the Creation of the Cosmos*, 325.

²⁸ Runia, *On the Creation of the Cosmos*, 243.

²⁹ Baer, *Philo’s Use of the Categories Male and Female*, 35.

concerned with philosophical categories such as genus and species, potentiality and actuality, which do not allow for androgyny.³⁰

A very different reference to creation into male and female occurs in Philo's work *Who Is Heir*, where he discusses 'who is the heir of the things of God' (1.1). Here, Philo mentions the creation of man and woman when discussing equality (ἰσότης). Equality, according to Philo, is the 'parent of peace', while inequality (ἀνισότης) is the 'parent of war' (1.162), and is associated with injustice and strife. Moses is the great 'praiser of equality' and he presents equality in his description of creation, as 'the muse of justice' (1.163). As an example of this equality, Philo cites the creation of male and female:

For it is equality which allotted night and day and light and darkness to existing things. It is equality (ἰσότης) also that divided the human race into man and woman (τὸν ἄνθρωπον εἰς ἄνδρα καὶ γυναῖκα), making two divisions, unequal in strength, but most perfectly equal for the purpose which nature had principally in view, the generation of a third human being like themselves (ἄνισα μὲν ταῖς ῥώμαις, πρὸς ὃ δὲ ἔσπευσεν ἡ φύσις, τρίτου τινὸς ὁμοίου γένεσιν, ἰσαίτατα). For, says Moses, "God made man; in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them" (ἔρσεν καὶ θῆλυ ἐποίησεν). (Philo, *Who is Heir* 164)

In this passage, the creation into male and female is discussed outside the context of Philo's understanding of Genesis 1-2 and the two accounts of creation. He is not burdened, therefore, with a contrast between a heavenly and an earthly human being and can take the quote simply as a reference to the creation of men and women. Even though this passage stresses equality and understands creation into male and female as resulting from equality, the two halves that are created are described as not being entirely equal, since they are 'unequal in strength'.

Their equality lies for Philo in their joint purpose, which is creating a third human being. That this is the divine intention in creation is supported with the quote 'male and female he created them'. Creation into male and female is thus clearly associated with procreation. When not burdened with fitting the verse into his scheme of creation, Philo appears to have quite a different interpretation of it. Male and female were created with the purpose of creating more humans in turn. Since Philo only allows for procreation within marriage, and even calls procreation 'what greatly resembles marriage', his interpretation of Genesis 1:27 fits with a contemporary understanding that is evident in other sources, where the verse is quoted in connection with regulations about marriage.³¹

1.2.2 'Male and Female' and Fornication in the Damascus Document

The second text that refers to God's creation of male and female, and confirms its association with marriage, is found in the *Damascus Document*. This is a text most likely dating from the late second century BCE, which contains numerous laws governing the life of a Jewish group whose character remains disputed.³² The section of the document

³⁰ Baer, *Philo's Use of the Categories Male and Female*, 34-35; Runia, *On the Creation of the Cosmos*, 243, 325. So also Loader, *The Septuagint, Sexuality, and the New Testament*, 64.

³¹ Philo, *On the Special Laws* 1.112.

³² The role of the *Damascus Document* in scholarly reconstructions of a Qumran community, which tend to give central importance to Josephus' account of the Essenes, is discussed by Sarianna Metso. Metso argues for a more detailed analysis of the text to reach the historical reality of the group behind it (Sarianna Metso, 'The

relevant for our purposes here criticizes those who do not belong to the group, and accuses them of various sins, including fornication:

(they) are caught twice in fornication: by taking two wives in their lives, even though the principle of creation is 'male and female he created them' (ברא אִוְתָם) (זכר ונקבה). (CD IV 20-21)

There is much debate as to the fornication in question here, which centres on the meaning of the word 'their lives' (בְּחַיֵּיהֶם). If this refers to the lives of the husbands, it would mean an absolute ban on second marriages; husbands cannot have a second wife during their own lives. If the lives in question are those of the wives, the passage prohibits polygyny, as well as a second marriage subsequent to divorce.³³ The exact nature of what is condemned in the passage cannot be explored here. What is relevant for our purposes is that the reference to creation into 'male and female' serves in either interpretation to establish the marriage bond between one man and one woman as the norm, from which it is a sin to deviate. It thus interprets the phrase 'male and female he created them' as referring to the union of husband and wife.

1.2.3 'Male and Female' and Divorce in the Gospels

In the Gospels, a quotation of the creation into 'male and female' is attributed to Jesus in a discussion on divorce, and is linked to a second text from Genesis that refers to marriage (Genesis 2:24). When questioned about legitimate reasons for divorce, Jesus replies with a reference to both these verses from Genesis:

Some Pharisees came and tested him by asking, 'Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife?' 'What did Moses command you?' he replied. They said, 'Moses permitted a man to write a certificate of divorce and send her away.' 'It was because your hearts were hard that Moses wrote you this law', Jesus replied. 'But at the beginning of creation God "made them male and female" (ἄρσεν καὶ θῆλυ ἐποίησεν αὐτούς). For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh. So they are no longer two, but one. Therefore what God has joined together, let man not separate.' (Mark 10:2-9; cf. Matthew 19:3-6)

In order to show that it is God who joins man and woman in marriage, Mark's Jesus combines the creation stories in Genesis 1 and 2 and connects the creation into 'male and female' to the union between husband and wife (Genesis 1:27; 2:24). Because God created 'male and female', a man will unite and become one with a wife. The phrase 'male and

Damascus Document and the Community Rule', in *The Damascus Document: A Centennial of Discovery*, Joseph M. Baumgarten, Esther G. Chazon and Avital Pinnick (eds.), (Brill: Leiden 2000), 85-93). See also Philip R. Davies, 'The Judaism(s) of the Damascus Document', in *The Damascus Document: A Centennial of Discovery*, Joseph M. Baumgarten, Esther G. Chazon and Avital Pinnick (eds.), (Brill: Leiden 2000), 27-43.

³³ For an overview of the various interpretations of this passage, see Wassen, *Women in the Damascus Document*, 114-118, Vered Noam, 'Divorce in Qumran in Light of Early Halakhah', *Journal of Jewish Studies*, 56/2 (2005), 206-223; Adiel Schremer, 'Qumran Polemic on Marital Law: CD 4:20-5:11 and its Social Background', in *The Damascus Document: A Centennial of Discovery*, Joseph M. Baumgarten, Esther G. Chazon and Avital Pinnick (eds.), (Brill: Leiden, 2000), 147-160. These scholars all argue for a narrow interpretation, suggesting the ban focusses on polygyny.

female' is quoted to substantiate the divine instigation of marriage, and its consequential holiness.³⁴ Because husband and wife are joined by God a man cannot divorce his wife.

While it is unclear whether the saying, and the interpretation of Genesis, go back to Jesus, it seems possible that the content of the teaching does, or at least represents a very early development, since Paul knows of a similar command which he ascribes to 'the Lord' (1 Corinthians 7:10). Paul largely shares Jesus' strict ethic on divorce, but he does allow both men and women to end their marriages under certain circumstances (1 Corinthians 7:12-13), as we will discuss below.³⁵

1.2.4 'No Male and Female' as No Marriage in Paul?

These three passages independently testify to an understanding of creation into 'male and female' as the creation of the two as a unit. Genesis 1:27 is read as creating male and female for a common purpose, to belong together. That Philo focusses on procreation, while the other two texts are concerned with regulations about marriage should not be seen as a substantial difference. In Philo's thought, marriage and procreation are closely associated. One of the main criteria by which Philo distinguishes legitimate sexual activity, necessarily within marriage, is the intention to procreate (see e.g. *On the Special Laws* 3.33-36).³⁶ When discussing marriage regulations, Philo observes 'these, then, are the ordinances which were established respecting marriage, and respecting what greatly resembles marriage, the procreation of children' (*On the Special Laws* 1.112). If Philo interprets the phrase as underlining the importance of procreation in God's creation, we can assume that he saw it as supporting marriage as well.

Although we have only three passages here, they do suggest a distinct contemporary understanding of the phrase 'male and female he created them'.³⁷ Importantly, this understanding is consistent with the larger pattern that saw the two creation accounts in Genesis as stories about marriage. Even though the evidence is scattered, there appears to have been a tendency in early Jewish texts, such as Tobit and Ben Sira, to 'see contemporary marriage as patterned on the biblical primal marriage'.³⁸ It thus seems probable that Paul

³⁴ The parallel between the use of the citation in Mark and the *Damascus Document* is frequently noted, even if it is not related to Galatians 3:28. Adela Yarbro Collins also discusses the parallels between these two passages in her commentary on Mark, where her focus is on the different approaches to divorce in both texts. She notes that both use Genesis 1:27 'to support a legal principle regarding marriage' (Adela Yarbro Collins, *Mark: A Commentary* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press 2007), 468, see also Raymond F. Collins, *Divorce in the New Testament* (Collegeville: Liturgical Press 1992), 97.

³⁵ The fact that this distinctive teaching forbidding divorce is an exception in contemporary Judaism could be an argument for attributing it to the historical Jesus (see Yarbro Collins, *Mark*, 468). For Jewish views on divorce, see Michael L. Satlow, *Jewish Marriage in Antiquity* (Princeton: Princeton University Press 2001), 182-185.

³⁶ The other main criterion is whether sexual activity constitutes rebellion against God. See Gaca, *The Making of Fornication*, 194.

³⁷ The understanding of the verse that is evident in the passages here continued during rabbinic times, as Gundry-Volf shows (Gundry-Volf, 'Male and Female in Creation', 105-107).

³⁸ Satlow, *Jewish Marriage*, 60. Satlow refers to Tobit 8:5-8, 6:16-17, Ben Sira 36:24 and 4QMMT B 40, and 4Q416 2.4 as texts that connect Genesis 1-2 to marriage. Jacques van Ruiten also concludes that early Jewish texts (in this case Tobit, Jubilees, Sibylline Oracles 1 and 2 Enoch) stress the marital relationship between Adam and Eve, in their reception of the narrative of creation (Jacques T.A.G.M. van Ruiten, 'The Creation of Man and Woman in Early Jewish Literature' in *The Creation of Man and Woman: Interpretations of the Biblical Narratives in Jewish and Christian Traditions*, Gerard P. Luttikhuisen (ed.), (Leiden: Brill 2000), 34-62, 61-62).

shared this understanding and also quotes 'male and female' as relating to marriage and procreation.

This possibility is all the more likely given that Paul, as we shall see in the next section, indeed had an exceptional attitude towards marriage. Marrying, having children and creating a household were generally seen as part of a person's duty towards God and society, not only in Jewish sources, but also in wider Greco-Roman thought.³⁹ Whereas some of Paul's contemporaries saw marriage as an obstacle for a man pursuing a philosophical life, Paul is alone in taking the drastic step of encouraging both men and women not to marry (e.g., 1 Corinthians 7:7, 32-34). Again unlike most of his contemporaries, Paul does not mention the need for procreation as a possible reason to marry. According to him, marriage is part of the world that is about to pass away and is therefore of little importance as a goal in itself (1 Corinthians 7:29-31).

Reading the pair 'male and female' as a reference to marriage therefore leads to a consistent understanding of Paul's thought, in contrast to a 'gender' or 'equality' reading. That there is an eschatological dimension to Paul's perspective on marriage and celibacy strengthens its link to the baptismal formula, since this should be seen in part as an expression of an eschatological reality, as argued in the first chapter of this study. In the next section, these different aspects of Paul's thought on marriage will be explored in greater detail, to see whether they can be understood as an explication of the idea that there is no 'male and female' in Christ.

2 'Male and Female' in Context: The Arguments for and against Marriage

Although it may seem somewhat surprising that the baptismal formula should include marriage as one of its three pairs, in light of the first-century understanding of society, a pronouncement on marriage would not be unexpected. Marriage was a hot topic in the early Empire; it was discussed by philosophers and law-makers, and appeared as the central theme of an emerging literary genre, the novel.⁴⁰ According to Plutarch there was no subject more important in philosophy than 'this discourse of marriage, whereby philosophy charms those who come together to share their lives, and makes them gentle and amenable to each other'.⁴¹

Plutarch's own main contribution to this discourse was a book of advice, written as a wedding gift for a friend, which detailed his ideas about the secret of a happy

³⁹ Satlow points out the similarities between the Stoic view on marriage and that shared by Jewish authors such as Josephus, Philo, Ben Sira and Pseudo-Phocylides (Satlow, *Jewish Marriage*, 12-21).

⁴⁰ This marital theme characterizes the novels that are commonly known as 'the big five'; the Greek novels of Chariton, Xenophon of Ephesus, Achilles Tatius, Longus, and Heliodorus. On the genre of the novels, see Niklas Holzberg, 'The Genre: Novels Proper and the Fringe', 11-28. The questions of the origin and readership are discussed in James Tatum (ed.), *The Search for the Ancient Novel* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press 1994). For the changing legal views on marriage, especially in the Augustan marriage codes which made several matters public that had up until then been private, see Treggiari, *Roman Marriage*, esp. 60-80; Judith Evans Grubbs, 'Promoting *Pietas* through Roman Law', in *A Companion to Families in the Greek and Roman Worlds*, Beryl Rawson (ed.) (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing 2011) 377-392.

⁴¹ *Advice to the Bride and Groom*, Introduction, lines 15-19.

marriage.⁴² The interest in the subject is also apparent in Stoics such as Musonius Rufus and Hierocles, who wrote treatises on the advantages of marriage and on how husband and wife should behave towards each other.⁴³ During this period, Chariton of Aphrodisias composed the first Greek love novel, *Chaereas and Callirhoe*, which revolved around the protagonists' desire to remain faithful to each other and to be reunited as a married couple.

As we will see below, there appears to have been a broad consensus that marriage constituted the basis of society, and that to get married was a duty for anyone concerned about the continuation of this society. Marriage took a privileged position among human relationships and this first connection was ultimately seen to extend, via children, relatives, fellow citizens and allies, to the whole of human race.⁴⁴ The contemporary understanding of marriage thus ties in with the idea of the fundamental interconnectedness of humanity, a philosophical notion already discussed in the previous chapters. Just as the concept of a cosmopolitan community can be seen to have influenced Paul's ideas about ethnic unity and the positions of slave and free, it also can be seen to form the background for his interest in, and his ideas about, marriage.

While most sources maintain that to marry and have children is to live in accordance with nature and divine intent, there was some debate at this time about whether or not marriage was a distraction best avoided in the pursuit of philosophy. For some, such as Musonius Rufus, the answer to this question was a clear 'no'. Jewish authors mostly shared his view; Philo and Josephus, for example, confirmed the importance of marriage as the basis for society. Others, such as Musonius' student Epictetus, felt that marriage did form a distraction for some people, under certain circumstances.

Since marriage was seen as fundamentally important in society, the absence of marriage was imagined only as an exception, or as part of a radically different way of life. While Philo and Josephus generally underline the necessity of marrying and setting up a household, in their depictions of the Essenes and the Therapeutae they praise these ideal communities exactly for rejecting marriage, along with slavery and property. In some eschatological expectation of the period, the idea that there will be no marriage occurs as part of a transformed end-time existence. In book 2 of the Sibylline Oracles, as well as in the Gospels, we find the notion that ultimately, there will be neither marriage nor death.

⁴² For a discussion of *Advice to the Bride and Groom*, see Sarah B. Pomeroy (ed.), *Plutarch's Advice to the Bride and Groom and A Consolation to His Wife: English Translations, Commentary and Interpretative Essays* (Oxford: Oxford University Press 1999).

⁴³ Musonius Rufus, 'What is the Chief End of Marriage?' (13A and 13B) and 'Is Marriage a Handicap for the Pursuit of Philosophy?' (14). See Runar M. Thorsteinsson, *Roman Christianity and Roman Stoicism: A Comparative Study of Ancient Morality* (Oxford: Oxford University Press 2010) 47. Hierocles wrote treatises on marriage and on household management, which may originally have been part of his work 'On Appropriate Acts', see Ilaria L.E. Ramelli and David Konstan (eds.), *Hierocles the Stoic: Elements of Ethics, Fragments, and Excerpts* (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2009), xxvii.

⁴⁴ Cicero, *On the Ends* 5.65, see Treggiari, *Roman Marriage* 208. For a discussion of contemporary thought on marriage, especially in Stoic thought, see Michael Trapp, *Philosophy in the Roman Empire*, 155-165; Gretchen Reydam-Schils, *The Roman Stoics: Self, Responsibility, and Affection* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005) 143-176.

All these different voices briefly sketched here were part of the cultural conversation on marriage in which Paul took part, and many aspects of this conversation are reflected in his thought. Since Paul too gives arguments both for and against marriage in his most comprehensive discussion of marriage (in 1 Corinthians 7), this will be the organising principle of this section. We will see how Paul's thought relates to the contemporary discussion about marriage, when it comes to the arguments put forward in favour of marrying (section 2.1) and those raised against it (section 2.2). The objective is not to provide a comprehensive view of the debate about marriage, but rather to see whether Paul's particular take on marriage is compatible with the baptismal claim that there is no fundamental orientation towards marriage, no 'male and female', in Christ.⁴⁵

2.1 The Arguments for Marriage: Procreation and Society

In the first part of this section, we will focus on those sources that express the widely held view that marriage was a good thing, and that to marry was to make an important contribution to society and to live in accordance with nature and divine will.⁴⁶ The passages discussed above, in relation to creation into male and female, already indicate that Genesis 1:27 was interpreted in this vein. According to Philo, male and female were created for the purpose of coming together and creating a third being like themselves (Philo, *Who is Heir* 164). Since Philo allows procreation only within marriage, and sex within marriage only for procreation, the importance of marriage in creation is implied here.⁴⁷ The *Damascus Document* (CD IV 20-21) and the Gospels (*Mark* 10:2-9; cf. *Matthew* 19:3-6) explicitly connect creation into male and female to marriage and make this the principle on the basis of which polygyny or divorce can be rejected. Marriage was seen as the connection of one man and one woman intended by God from creation.

Many Jewish sources of the time agree that marriage is a good thing and that having children and establishing a household is in accordance with nature and divine will. According to Michael Satlow, 'nearly all Jewish writings from the Second Temple share this view'.⁴⁸ An

⁴⁵ The relation of Paul's thought on marriage and celibacy to that found in contemporary, especially Cynic and Stoic sources has been the subject of extensive research, see Deming, *Paul on Marriage and Celibacy*; David Balch, '1 Cor 7:32-35 and Stoic Debates about Marriage, Anxiety, and Distraction', *Journal of Biblical Literature* 102/3 (1983) 429-439; O. Larry Yarbrough, *Not Like the Gentiles: Marriage Rules in the Letters of Paul* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1985); Osiek and Balch, *Families in the New Testament World*, 103-109. Kathy Gaca argues vehemently against any influence of Stoic thought on Paul, placing him firmly in a Septuagint tradition. She also believes the advocates of 'procreationism' such as Philo, Musonius and Seneca derive their ideas not from Stoicism, but that from Pythagoreanism and develop 'from uniquely Pythagorean concerns', see Gaca, *The Making of Fornication*, 115, 292-296.

⁴⁶ On the importance of marriage for Roman Stoics, see Reydam-Schils, *The Roman Stoics*, 143-176; Elisabeth Asmis, 'The Stoics on Women', in *Feminism and Ancient Philosophy*, Julie K. Ward (ed.), (London: Routledge 1996), 68-92; Deming, *Paul on Marriage and Celibacy*, 76-87.

⁴⁷ After detailing the regulations about marriage for priests, Philo concludes the discussion with 'these, then, are the ordinances which were established respecting marriage, and respecting what greatly resembles marriage, the procreation of children' (*On the Special Laws* 1.112). Philo condemns sex between husband and wife not intended for procreation, such as during menstruation or when a man marries a woman who is known to be infertile (*On the Special Laws* 3.32-36). For a discussion of the origin of Philo's 'procreationism', see Gaca, *The Making of Fornication*, 115; also William Loader, *Philo, Josephus, and the Testaments on Sexuality: Attitudes towards Sexuality in the Writings of Philo and Josephus and in the Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 2011), 61-65.

⁴⁸ Satlow, *Jewish Marriage*, 14-15.

example can be found in the *Sentences* of Pseudo-Phocylides, a Jewish classicising poem by an anonymous author (dating between 100 BCE and 100 CE). This work contains moral instruction on a range of subjects, including family, sexuality and marriage. On the reasons for marriage the *Sentences* are clear:

Remain not unmarried, lest you perish nameless (μὴ μείνης ἄγαμος, μὴ πως νόμιστος ὄληαι). And give something to nature (φύσει) yourself: beget in turn as you were begotten. (Pseudo-Phocylides, *Sentences* 175-176)⁴⁹

The author of these sentences expresses an attitude towards marriage that is typical of Jewish sources of the period. Marriage is an obligation and to fail to marry or have children is a disgrace. This view is presented as being in accordance with nature (φύσις), as was common. Moral codes were often presented as predicated on the inherent constitution of the cosmos.⁵⁰ The second century Stoic Hierocles, whose idea of the connectedness of people in the form of concentric rings was already discussed in Chapter II, similarly sees marriage as the most elementary bond:

A discussion of marriage is most necessary. For our entire race is naturally disposed towards community (ἅπαν μὲν γὰρ ἡμῶν τὸ γένος ἔφυ πρὸς κοινωνίαν), and the first and most elementary of the communities is that in accord with marriage. For there would not be cities if there were not households. (Hierocles, *On Marriage*)⁵¹

The concentric circles that connect a person with his family, his relatives, his tribe and ultimately, with all of humanity, begin with the connection formed in marriage.⁵² Enthusiasm for marriage and for having children is fitting for someone who loves his relatives and friends, as well as his city and his country. Marriage thus forms the basis for society, and the community between husband and wife is similar to the larger community.

The Stoic Musonius Rufus is one of the most articulate proponents of the view that everyone should marry. Without marriage, he argues, the human race would be destroyed:

I say, it would be each man's duty to take thought for his own city, and to make of his home a rampart for its protection. But the first step toward making his home such a rampart is marriage. Thus whoever destroys human marriage destroys the home, the city, and the whole human race (ὥστε ὁ ἀναιρῶν ἐξ ἀνθρώπων γάμον ἀνειρεῖ μὲν οἶκον, ἀνειρεῖ δὲ πόλιν, ἀνειρεῖ δὲ σύμπαν τὸ ἀνθρώπειον γένος). For it would not last if there were no procreation of children and there would be no just and lawful procreation of children without marriage. That the home or the city does not depend upon women alone or upon men alone, but upon their union with each other is evident. One could find no other association more necessary nor more pleasant than that of men and women. (Musonius Rufus, *Is Marriage a Handicap for the Pursuit of Philosophy?* 14.9-14)

⁴⁹ Walter T. Wilson, *The Sentences of Pseudo-Phocylides* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2005), 5-7.

⁵⁰ Wilson, *The Sentences of Pseudo-Phocylides*, 188-189.

⁵¹ Translation Ramelli and Konstan, *Hierocles the Stoic*, 73.

⁵² A similar view can be found in Cicero, *On Duties* I.54, see Asmis, 'The Stoics on Women', 70-73.

Like Philo, Musonius sees a close link between marriage and procreation. As the single unit that enables the creation of legitimate children, husband and wife are necessary to ensure the continuation of the human race. Marriage forms the first connection and the cornerstone on which the city and even humanity as a whole are built.⁵³ While this quote establishes the tie between marriage and having children, it also shows that for Musonius, there is an additional value in marriage in the emotional connection between husband and wife. In his treatise on the purpose of marriage, he states that procreation alone is not what sets marriage apart, since animals too can create offspring. Marriage, in addition to procreation, is about mutual devotion:

But in marriage there must be above all perfect companionship and mutual love of husband and wife, both in health and in sickness and under all conditions, since it was with desire for this as well as for having children that both entered upon marriage. Where, then, this love for each other is perfect and the two share it completely, each striving to outdo the other in devotion, the marriage is ideal and worthy of envy, for such a union is beautiful. (Musonius Rufus, *What is the Chief End of Marriage?* 13A 4-5)

Marriage is thus not just about preserving the continuation of society, it is also about a harmonious union of two people, who are each devoted to the other. Though Musonius is one of the most outspoken advocates of marriage as a social as well as emotional bond, many sources both before and after him share elements of his view. According to the earlier Stoic Antipater (second or first century BCE), other friendships and loves resemble mixtures of juxtaposed items 'like beans', but the love of a husband and wife is a homogeneous mixture, just as wine mixes completely with water.⁵⁴ While Paul seems to share this idea of mutuality between husband and wife in marriage, the widely held view that it is good to marry to contribute to the continuation of society is largely absent in his thought.

2.1.1 Paul's Confirmation of Marriage: Protection against Porneia

In his discussion of marriage in chapter 7 of 1 Corinthians, Paul gives arguments both against and in favour of marrying. He makes it clear, however, that the best option for both men and women would be to remain unmarried (1 Corinthians 7:1-9, 26-28, 32-40). This constitutes a considerable departure from the dominant opinion just described, although there were others who also argued that it would be better for some people not to marry under certain circumstances. We will look at the arguments put forward by Paul and others against marriage below, but here we focus on the reasons Paul gives for confirming marriage, and the way he depicts husbands and wives.

Many commentators assume that Paul's discussion of marriage in his first letter to the Corinthians is determined to a considerable degree by his Corinthian audience.⁵⁵ They mirror-read the chapter to the extent that it ends up revealing more about his

⁵³ For a discussion of Musonius Rufus' views on marriage, see Runar M. Thorsteinsson, *Roman Christianity and Roman Stoicism: A Comparative Study of Ancient Morality* (Oxford: Oxford University Press 2010), 47-48; Asmis, 'The Stoics on Women', 80-84.

⁵⁴ SVF 3.63, Antipater, see Asmis, 'The Stoics on Women', 77-79.

⁵⁵ Will Deming, for example, states that 'inasmuch as Paul has chosen to express himself in the Stoic idiom of his readers, both his logic and the details of his discussion have been shaped by the Corinthians' own moral sensibilities' (Deming, *Paul on Marriage and Celibacy*, 214-215).

presumed opponents' view, than about Paul's own ideas. In his excellent study on sexuality and marriage in 1 Corinthians, Alistair Scott May analyses these mirror readings and highlights their fallacies.⁵⁶ The assumptions about Paul's supposed opponents take various forms, but the general suggestion is that they advocated some form of radical asceticism. The main problem with the idea that Paul combats ascetic tendencies in Corinth, however, is that his own message encourages everyone who is able to do so *not* to marry. He does not employ any of the conventional arguments in favour of marriage; Paul does not discuss children, the setting up of a household, or fulfilling one's duty to society. He does not encourage marrying as in line with divine intention or natural inclinations, as many of his contemporaries did. Like May, I think the chapter makes sense as part of a larger discussion of sexuality in 1 Corinthians 5-6, and should be seen as a reflection of Paul's thought about marriage, not that of his audience.⁵⁷

At the end of chapter 6 of the letter, Paul explains the nature of *porneia* as a sin that causes a person to break away from Christ (1 Corinthians 6:15-20). This passage, as was already discussed in the previous chapter in relation to slaves, demonstrates the grievous problem that sexual sin constituted for Paul. Having emphasised the serious nature of *porneia*, Paul then names it in the opening of the next chapter as the reason for marriage:

Now concerning the matters about which you wrote, it is good for a man not to touch a woman (καλὸν ἀνθρώπῳ γυναικὸς μὴ ἄπτεσθαι). But because of sexual sin, each man should have his own wife and each woman her own husband (διὰ δὲ τὰς πορνείας ἕκαστος τὴν ἑαυτοῦ γυναῖκα ἔχέτω καὶ ἕκαστη τὸν ἴδιον ἄνδρα ἔχέτω.). The husband should give to his wife what is her right, and similarly the wife to her husband. A wife does not have power over her own body, but her husband does; similarly, a husband does not have power over his own body, but his wife does. Do not deprive one another except perhaps by agreement for a set time, to devote yourselves to prayer, and then come together again, so that Satan may not tempt you because of your lack of self-control. (1 Corinthians 7:1-5)

The passage opens with a reference to a letter that Paul received from the Corinthians. The subsequent line is often read as a quote from this letter. It is thought that the Corinthians who wrote to Paul used this phrase as their ascetic motto: 'it is good for a man not to touch a woman'. Yet while Paul appears to advise the opposite in the passage above, throughout the chapter he clearly affirms the preference expressed in this supposed motto for not marrying. It is therefore best to see the line, as May suggests, as one that derives from Paul's own teaching.⁵⁸ It may well be a quote, but it is one that most likely presents an

⁵⁶ On various backgrounds proposed for 1 Corinthians 7 based on mirror reading, and May's critique, see May, *The Body for the Lord*, 144-179.

⁵⁷ May, *The Body for the Lord*, 179. Dale Martin also sees this chapter as part of the larger discussion in chapters 5-7 that shows Paul's concern about the integrity of the body, 'both the individual Christian's body and the body of Christ' (Martin, *The Corinthian Body*, 212).

⁵⁸ May establishes a pattern based on 5:9-13, suggesting that Paul first restates his original instruction, then clarifies it, and refutes misinterpretations. He argues that Corinthians exaggerated Paul's potentially socially radical position in order to make it easier to ignore it. The same would then apply for the opening of chapter 7. The Corinthian opponents are not attacking marriage, according to May, but rather his preference for singleness (May, *The Body for the Lord*, 210-211).

interpretation of Paul's own words.⁵⁹ In the chapter, Paul nuances this statement by indicating that it does not mean that married people should divorce, or that getting married is necessarily bad in all cases. He confirms that celibacy is best, but also maintains that there is still a role for marriage.

The role that marriage has according to Paul is to prevent *porneia*. Every man should have a wife and every woman a husband so that there is less danger of sexual sin, the sin that breaks a person away from unity with Christ (1 *Corinthians* 6:15). Even within marriage Paul still sees a risk of sin, when husband and wife abstain from sexual relations. He therefore gives the advice to do so only for a limited time.⁶⁰ To suggest, as Paul does, that marriage is the antidote to sexual misconduct is not unusual, nor is the association between sexual sin and apostasy. *Porneia* is often seen in Jewish sources as a characteristic of religious outsiders, while Jews are portrayed as having a superior sexual ethic.⁶¹

What is exceptional about Paul's view is that he warns against *porneia* and yet at the same time encourages what seems to be recreational, rather than procreational, sex between husband and wife. Within marriage, Paul allows for more sexual activity than some of his contemporaries, such as Philo, Josephus and Musonius Rufus.⁶² His concern is thus apparently not with sexual relations per se, as has often been assumed, but with the context in which sex takes place. Just as marriage functions to keep a person safe from sexual misconduct, so sex within marriage serves to keep temptation at bay.

Immediately after this passage, Paul explains that the advice to have a partner in order to prevent *porneia* is a concession on his part, not a command (τοῦτο δὲ λέγω κατὰ συγγνώμην οὐ κατ' ἐπιταγήν, 7:6). His wish is for everyone to be as he himself is, that is, celibate. Since not everyone possesses the gift (χάρισμα) that is required for this, those who do not have Paul's self-control should marry rather than burn (7:7-9).⁶³ The main justification given by Paul for his advice to both men and women to have a spouse is thus the danger of sexual misconduct by those who are not able to control themselves. Even though further along in the chapter, Paul reassures his audience that getting married is not a sin (7:28, 36, 38), and makes the same concession, he does not present any further reason why this is so. Improper actions and the degree of self-control are the only considerations that Paul mentions in relation to the decision whether or not to marry. As noted above, the conventional confirmation of the importance of marriage is entirely absent here.

That this is no mere coincidence or oversight on the part of Paul will become clear when we look at his arguments against marrying. Paul states that marriage is an aspect of the world that will soon come to its end (7:29-31). It seems entirely possible therefore that Paul, like many of his contemporaries, saw marriage as one of the basic building blocks of society. Yet because his eschatological outlook meant he believed that the world as he knew

⁵⁹ Deming makes a convincing case that the phrase is a quote, but makes too much of the exact wording (Deming, *Paul on Marriage and Celibacy*, 111-113).

⁶⁰ A similar idea of abstaining for prayer is found in the *Testament of Naftali*, see Deming, *Paul on Marriage and Celibacy*, 111-113.

⁶¹ The *Wisdom of Solomon* for example considers the invention of idols as the origin of *porneia* (14:12). See May, *The Body for the Lord*, 111-113. Gaca, *The Making of Fornication*, 164-72.

⁶² For a discussion of the advocates of 'procreationism' such as Philo, Musonius and Seneca, see Gaca, *The Making of Fornication*, 115, 292-296.

⁶³ The exact nature of the gift (χάρισμα) mentioned here is disputed, especially whether Paul would consider being married a gift, as well as being single. I share May's view that this is unlikely given Paul's attitude towards marrying here as 'not a sin' (May, *The Body for the Lord*, 210).

it was about to end, affirming this world order through marriage was for him a thing of the past. In the current situation, just before the end, the only remaining role for marriage was to provide a safety net for those who cannot live without sex. If Paul understood 'nor male and female' as a declaration about the ultimate eschatological absence of marriage, that implied its insignificance for the present, this would provide him with the rationale to make such a limited case in favour of marriage.

Before turning to the arguments Paul puts forward against marriage, and for remaining single, it is important to have a closer look at one aspect of the contemporary view of marriage that Paul does appear to confirm. In the passage quoted above, Paul formulates each of his three guidelines twice, once for men and once for women, 'each man should have his own wife and each woman her own husband'. This is a recurring pattern in his discussion of marriage that can also be found in other authors, and that would seem to reflect the ideal of marriage as a relationship characterised by mutuality and interdependence. Since Paul confirms this mutuality within marriage but also appears to transfer it to the position of men and women 'in the Lord' (1 Corinthians 11:11), it merits further examination.

2.1.2 Reciprocity in Sexuality and Marriage

In the passage about having a spouse to prevent *porneia*, discussed above, Paul takes pains to formulate the same instruction twice. He does so several times, saying that 'each man should have his own wife and each woman her own husband' (7:2), 'the husband should give to his wife what is her right, and similarly the wife to her husband' (7:3) and again 'a wife does not have power over her own body, but her husband does; similarly, a husband does not have power over his own body, but his wife does' (7:4). This seems no mere accidental pattern, but a deliberate effort.⁶⁴ Although Paul also directs advice to men only (7:27-28; 36-38), or only to women (7:39-40), the reciprocal formulations dominate the chapter. When discussing divorce, Paul gives the following guidelines for those believers married to someone outside the community:

To the married I give this command (not I, but the Lord): A wife must not separate from her husband (γυναῖκα ἀπὸ ἀνδρὸς μὴ χωρισθῆναι). But if she does, she must remain unmarried or else be reconciled to her husband. And a husband must not divorce his wife (καὶ ἄνδρα γυναῖκα μὴ ἀφιέναι.). To the rest I say this (I, not the Lord): If any believer has a wife who is an unbeliever, and she consents to live with him, he should not divorce her (εἴ τις ἀδελφὸς γυναῖκα ἔχει ἄπιστον καὶ αὕτη συνευδοκεῖ οἰκεῖν μετ' αὐτοῦ, μὴ ἀφιέτω αὐτήν.). And if any woman has a husband who is an unbeliever, and he consents to live with her, she should not divorce that husband (καὶ γυνὴ εἴ τις ἔχει ἄνδρα ἄπιστον, καὶ οὗτος συνευδοκεῖ οἰκεῖν μετ' αὐτῆς, μὴ ἀφιέτω τὸν ἄνδρα.). For the unbelieving husband is made holy through his wife, and the unbelieving wife is made holy through the believing husband. Otherwise, your children would be unclean, but as it is, they are holy. But if the unbelieving partner divorces, let them divorce; in such a case the brother or the sister is not bound (εἰ δὲ ὁ ἄπιστος χωρίζεται, χωρίζεσθω· οὐ δεοῦλωται ὁ ἀδελφὸς ἢ ἡ ἀδελφὴ ἐν τοῖς τοιούτοις.). (1 Corinthians 7:12b-15a)

⁶⁴ This pattern has been observed by many scholars, and is often interpreted in terms of equality of the partners, see e.g. Balch, '1 Cor 7:32-35 and Stoic Debates', 436-437, Deming, *Paul on Marriage and Celibacy*, 116-117; Meeks, 'The Image of the Androgyne', 199; Scroggs, 'Paul and the Eschatological Woman', 294-295.

In connection with divorce, Paul again phrases each guideline once for men and once for women. While Paul generally uses the term ‘brothers’ to denote believers in general, and rarely uses the female form ‘sister’, except in relation to a particular woman (such as in Romans 16:1 and Philemon 2), he explicitly mentions ‘the brother or the sister’ to include both in relation to divorce. Paul does not seem to differentiate between men and women here, when it comes to their position in marriage. Both a believing man and a believing woman are encouraged to stay in their marriage with an unbelieving partner. For both, it is their faith which determines the family as a whole, sanctifying it, in spite of the religious orientation of the other partner.

A woman who has come to accept faith in Christ, is evidently not under any obligation to follow her husband’s gods. Nor does Paul expect the believing man to determine the religious orientation of the household as a whole. Unlike Plutarch, for example, who urges wives to worship only their husbands’ gods, Paul seems to accept the individual preference of both spouses.⁶⁵ While women were free to initiate divorce under Roman law, and seem to have done so frequently, for a man to tell other men that they should simply leave the decision about the fate of their marriage up to their wives is unusual, and can be seen as a further indication of the relative unimportance of marriage for Paul.⁶⁶

When outlining why being single is preferable to being married, Paul also puts this in a quite elaborate double formulation:

An unmarried man is concerned about the Lord's affairs—how he can please the Lord. But a married man is concerned about the affairs of this world—how he can please his wife— and his interests are divided. An unmarried woman or virgin is concerned about the Lord's affairs: Her aim is to be devoted to the Lord in both body and spirit. But a married woman is concerned about the affairs of this world—how she can please her husband. (*1 Corinthians* 7:32-34)

In this passage, the content of which will concern us in more detail below, we again see the pattern that both the male and the female position are mentioned in quite elaborate formulations that could easily have been abbreviated. It is clear that in discussions of the three major aspects of his message about marriage—on remaining single, on divorce and on having a spouse to prevent *porneia*—Paul’s words show a remarkable symmetry.

While Paul’s letter appears to be the most elaborate example, the same pattern can be observed in contemporary sources. While the familiar trope of the wife as a nuisance and a burden to the husband still appeared, there was also, as noted above, a strong emphasis on mutuality and harmony. Several texts express this mutuality in a pattern similar to that seen in Paul. We will discuss three such texts that are roughly contemporary to Paul.

⁶⁵ Plutarch writes that ‘A wife ought not to have friends of her own, but use her husband’s as their common stock. And the first and most important of our friends are the gods. A married woman should therefore worship and recognize the gods whom her husband holds dear, and these alone. The door must be closed to strange cults and foreign superstitions. No god takes pleasure in cult performed furtively and in secret by a woman’ (Plutarch, *Advice to the Bride and Groom* 19).

⁶⁶ On Roman divorce practices see Treggiari, *Roman Marriage*, 435-482; Michael Satlow suggests that although it is difficult to establish the rate of divorce among Jews, it was ‘analogous to that of contemporary Rome’ (Satlow, *Jewish Marriage*, 183).

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The first occurs in the *Sentences* of Pseudo-Phocylides, a collection of moral instruction introduced above. This collection of sayings is attributed in the work itself to the sixth-century Greek poet Phocylides of Miletus. In keeping with this attribution, the text is written in archaizing Greek, although the choice of words or word forms betrays its post-classical origin.⁶⁷ Perhaps this archaizing tendency is the reason that the parallelism here is not as complete as in Paul, but uses synonyms:

Love your wife: for what is sweeter and better than when a wife is lovingly disposed to her husband into old age and a husband to his spouse (ἀνδρὶ γυνὴ φρονέη φίλα γήραος ἄχρως καὶ πόσις ἢ ἀλόχῳ)? (Pseudo-Phocylides, *Sentences* 195-197)⁶⁸

Even though the sentiment is parallel, the words ἀνὴρ and γυνή in the first line are echoed in the second by πόσις (husband, spouse) and ἀλόχος (spouse, wife). As noted above, Pseudo-Phocylides shares the dominant view that marriage is natural and good. According to Walter Wilson, the rhetorical question ‘what is sweeter and better’ derives from Homer’s affirmation that ‘nothing is greater and better than when husband and wife dwell in a home in one accord’.⁶⁹ Wilson draws attention to the fact that Pseudo-Phocylides’ adaptation of the Homeric passage emphasises ‘the presence of mutual and abiding love’, which reflects ‘the widespread opinion that concord was the key to a successful marriage’. The reciprocal formulation thus seems to be introduced by Pseudo-Phocylides to express this mutuality.

The same emphasis on mutuality can be seen in Musonius Rufus, for whom the goal of marriage is ‘perfect companionship and mutual love of husband and wife’. This mutuality extended to the body for Musonius, as it did for Paul:⁷⁰

The husband and wife, he used to say, should come together for the purpose of making a life in common and of procreating children, and furthermore of regarding all things in common between them, and nothing peculiar or private to one or the other, not even their own bodies. (Musonius Rufus, *What is the Chief End of Marriage* 13A.2)

Like Paul and Pseudo-Phocylides, Musonius can express this focus of husband and wife on each other with a double formulation. In a passage reminiscent of Philo’s description of creation into male and female for the purpose of creating a third person, Musonius describes the division into two sexes as aimed at procreation:

For, to what other purpose did the creator of mankind first divide our human race into two sexes, male and female (τὸ μὲν εἶναι θήλεος τὸ δὲ ἄρρενος), than implant in each a strong desire for association and union with the other, instilling in both a powerful longing each for the other, the male for the female and the female for the male (τῷ μὲν ἄρρενι τοῦ θήλεος τῷ δὲ θήλει τοῦ ἄρρενος)? Is it not then plain that he wished the two to be united and live together, and by their joint efforts to devise a way of life in common, and to produce and rear children

⁶⁷ Walter T. Wilson, *The Sentences of Pseudo-Phocylides* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter 2005), 5-7.

⁶⁸ Translation Wilson, with small alteration.

⁶⁹ Homer, *Odyssey* 6.182-184, see Wilson, *The Sentences of Pseudo-Phocylides*, 202.

⁷⁰ See Elisabeth Asmis, ‘The Stoics on Women’, 82.

together, so that the race might never die? (Musonius Rufus, *Is Marriage a Handicap for the Pursuit of Philosophy?* 14.5-6)

For Musonius, creation into male and female should be understood as a reflection of the divine intention that men and women come together in marriage and produce offspring. Both men and women have instilled in them a strong desire for the other sex, and this desire is described by Musonius with a parallel formulation, 'the male for the female and the female for the male'. While there is a clear similarity in form with Paul's statements about husband and wife, Musonius in fact has a diametrically opposite view on marriage. While Musonius sees male and female as focussed on each other and living up to their divine purpose in marrying and having children, according to Paul, it is not desire, but rather self-control that is a gift from God, enabling both men and women to focus on the Lord, instead of each other. We will come back to this idea more fully when we have discussed Paul's arguments against marriage in the next section.

The same treatise contains a second case of a double formulation. In this passage, Musonius argues that marriage is not only the first and most necessary connection between people, but also the highest form of love. According to Musonius, this love surpasses all other family bonds and even parental love, since 'no reasonable mother or father would expect to entertain a deeper love for his own child than for the one joined to him in marriage'.⁷¹

For what man is so devoted to his friend as a loving wife is to her husband? What brother to a brother? What son to his parents? Who is so longed for when absent as a husband by his wife, or a wife by her husband (ὡς ἀνὴρ γυναῖκί καὶ γυνὴ ἀνδρὶ)? (Musonius Rufus, *Is Marriage a Handicap for the Pursuit of Philosophy?* 14.15-16)

The relationships of affection that Musonius mentions here in contrast to marriage are not phrased in a reciprocal way. It is only the bond between husband and wife that is singled out by this emphatic formulation.

The final example of this pattern occurs in Plutarch's *Advice to the Bride and Groom*. In spite of its title, Plutarch mainly gives advice to the bride in this treatise, since it is her behaviour that needs to change most upon marrying. She should be a mirror, reflecting the moods and feelings of her husband, to the extent that she has 'no feelings of her own'.⁷² Even though Plutarch emphasises the appropriate attitude of the bride, he also on occasion addresses the same instruction to both husband and wife:

A wife must always and everywhere avoid offending her husband, and a husband his wife. It is particularly important to be careful about this in sleeping together (ἀεὶ μὲν δεῖ καὶ πανταχοῦ φεύγειν τὸ προσκρούειν τῷ ἀνδρὶ τὴν γυναῖκα καὶ τὴν γυναῖκί τὸν ἄνδρα, μάλιστα δὲ φυλάττεσθαι τοῦτο ποιεῖν ἐν τῷ συναναπαύεσθαι καὶ συγκαθεύδειν). (Plutarch, *Advice to the Bride and Groom* 39)

According to Plutarch, it is important to keep the marriage bed free from argument, since 'disputes, quarrels, and angry passions bred in bed cannot easily be resolved at any other

⁷¹ *Is Marriage a Handicap for the Pursuit of Philosophy?* 14.17.

⁷² Plutarch, *Advice to the Bride and Groom*, 14, see Pomeroy, 'Commentary on Plutarch, *Advice to the Bride and Groom*', 49.

time or place'.⁷³ Both husband and wife apparently carry responsibility for keeping disagreements out of the bedroom.

This overview of parallel passages shows that the pattern observed in Paul, of emphasizing the reciprocal nature of the relationship between husband and wife, or the similar position that both are in, was a feature of contemporary discussions of marriage. This same symmetry in the relationship between husband and wife occurs on a much larger scale in the Greek novel, since it is a noticeable characteristic of the marital relationships depicted in these works. The romances, which developed as a new literary genre during the early Empire, each describe the adventures of a married couple.⁷⁴ The protagonists invariably end up separated, and struggle to remain faithful and be reunited.

David Konstan characterises the attitude towards the male and female protagonists in the novels as 'sexual symmetry'. According to Konstan, the equality or symmetry that characterises the lovers at the moment that they both fall in love with each other is confirmed and elaborated by the pattern of action in the rest of the novel. Their mutual passion is played out in a series of episodes that place them in more or less identical positions, facing threats from rival lovers and other challenges to their mutual fidelity.⁷⁵ This representation of the relationship between the primary couple in the Greek novels is a departure from the classical paradigm of active and passive partners. Konstan notes that this unequal or asymmetrical pattern does appear in the novels, but only in depictions of erotic relationships between men, which serve as a foil to highlight the symmetrical relationship of the male-female couple.⁷⁶

The novels can thus be seen as a further indication that the identification of mutual desire and mutual fidelity was a distinctive feature of contemporary thought about marriage. It seems reasonable to assume that this mutuality formed the background for the stylistic pattern observed in Paul and others. Perhaps it is useful to observe here that none of these authors assume that mutuality implies equality between husband and wife. As discussed in the previous chapter, Musonius argues against a double standard that would allow men more sexual liberties than women, on the basis that men are the stronger sex.⁷⁷ Plutarch shares Musonius' view to some extent and makes a similar point about double standards:

A husband who enjoys pleasures which he prohibits in his wife is like a man who tells his wife to fight the enemy to whom he has himself surrendered. (Plutarch, *Advice to the Bride and Groom* 47)

Still, when faced with a husband who cannot manage such strict self-discipline, a wife should not hold this against him, as long as he shows some discretion:

⁷³ Plutarch, *Advice to the Bride and Groom*, 39.

⁷⁴ On the genre of the novels, see Niklas Holzberg, 'The Genre: Novels Proper and the Fringe', 11-28.

⁷⁵ David Konstan, *Sexual Symmetry: Love in the Ancient Novel and Related Genres* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994), 34.

⁷⁶ J. Edward Ellis compares Paul and the romantic novels for their portrayal of sex and marriage, concluding that Paul's thought is 'in harmony' with that of the novels (Ellis, *Paul and Ancient Views of Sexual Desire*, 147-159). Ellis does not seem to discuss the eschatological dimensions of Paul's ideas about marriage.

⁷⁷ Musonius Rufus, *On Sexual Indulgence* 12.

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When Persian kings dine, their legal wives sit beside them and share the feast. But if they want to amuse themselves or get drunk, they send their wives away, and summon the singing-girls and the concubines. And they are quite right not to share their drunken orgies with their wives. So, if a private citizen, intemperate and tasteless in his pleasures, commits an offense with a mistress or a maidservant, his wife ought not to be angry or annoyed, but reflect that it is his respect for her that makes her husband share his intemperance or violent behaviour with another woman. (Plutarch, *Advice to the Bride and Groom* 16)

Plutarch thus clearly has a double standard himself, even if he does frown upon men who cannot control their pleasures.⁷⁸ Even though Paul gives more extensive parallel guidelines for men and women in relation to marriage, divorce and celibacy, there is no need to assume that he would equate mutuality with equality. Rather, as we shall see below, Paul appeals explicitly to the difference and hierarchy between men and women when discussing women's speech and dress. What characterises these particular views of men and women is not equality, but mutuality and interdependence.

We have thus observed a pattern in contemporary discourse about marriage that would appear to reflect a particular conceptualisation of it. The pattern emphasises mutuality and reciprocity between husband and wife. Paul uses this pattern in a distinct way. Not only does he come up with more elaborate forms of the pattern, but he applies it not just to the relationship between men and women within marriage, but also to men and women in their religious concerns. We actually see this shift from marriage to religion occurring in the passage quoted above, about undivided attention to the Lord (1 Corinthians 7:32-34). Paul contrasts being unmarried to being married here, and applies the idea of mutual concern on the part of husband and wife for each other, to the concern for the Lord of both *unmarried* men and women. Instead of being focussed on pleasing their spouses, the unmarried man and woman can be concerned about the affairs of the Lord. The logic of mutual involvement in marriage is thus transferred to religious involvement of both men and women.

This same mutual involvement can be seen in a statement Paul makes about men and women 'in the Lord', which occurs in the well-known discussion about women's head coverings, to which we will return in the final section of this chapter. After having outlined the difference and hierarchy between men and women with an appeal to the creation of the first woman from the first man (1 Corinthians 11:7-10), Paul apparently intends to qualify this hierarchy:

Nevertheless, in the Lord woman is not independent of man or man independent of woman (πλὴν οὔτε γυνὴ χωρὶς ἀνδρὸς οὔτε ἀνὴρ χωρὶς γυναικὸς ἐν κυρίῳ).
For just as woman came from man, so man comes through woman; but all things

⁷⁸ In her commentary Lisette Goessler is less inclined to see precept 16 as a modification of precept 47: 'It is impossible to know whether the good-hearted Plutarch really believed in this rather strange explanation (given in precept 16), or whether he was simply making a concession to actual circumstances. But there can be no doubt that in the depths of his heart he condemned infidelity on the part of the husband as well as the wife. See Lisette Goessler, 'Advice to the Bride and Groom: Plutarch gives a Detailed Account of His Views on Marriage', in *Plutarch's Advice to the Bride and Groom and A Consolation to His Wife: English Translations, Commentary and Interpretative Essays*, Sarah B. Pomeroy (ed.), (Oxford: Oxford University Press 1999), 97-115, 111.

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come from God (ὡσπερ γὰρ ἡ γυνὴ ἐκ τοῦ ἀνδρός, οὕτως καὶ ὁ ἀνὴρ διὰ τῆς γυναικός· τὰ δὲ πάντα ἐκ τοῦ θεοῦ.). (1 Corinthians 11:11-12)

Even though men are primary and women secondary in creation (11:8-9), they are mutually dependent 'in the Lord'. Paul uses a chiasmic structure here similar to that observed in Musonius and Plutarch. He appears to refer to procreation when saying that woman came from man and man through woman. This would tie in with the emphasis on procreation as the divine intention for creating male and female that is found in Musonius and Philo. Paul then adapts this argument from creation to apply not to the aim of having children, but to underscore the mutual connectedness of men and women 'in the Lord'. For Paul here, as for others, as noted above, mutuality and inequality are not incompatible.

In a similar vein, Musonius observes that neither women nor men alone can form the basis for society:

That the home or the city does not depend upon women alone or upon men alone, but upon their union with each other is evident (ὅτι μὲν γὰρ οἶκος ἢ πόλις οὔτ' ἐκ γυναικῶν συνίσταται μόνον οὔτ' ἐξ ἀνδρῶν μόνον, ἀλλ' ἐκ τῆς πρὸς ἀλλήλους κοινωνίας, δηλον). One could find no other association more necessary nor more pleasant than that of men and women (ἀνδρῶν δὲ καὶ γυναικῶν κοινωνίας ἄλλην οὐκ ἂν εὔροι τις οὔτ' ἀναγκαιοτέραν οὔτε προσφιλεστέραν). (Musonius Rufus, *Is Marriage a Handicap for the Pursuit of Philosophy?* 14.13-14)

Musonius bases the necessity of both men and women to form a society not only on their obvious mutual necessity for procreation, but also in their unique connection. The association or *koinonia* between men and women is the most basic and most agreeable relationship and the foundation for all others.⁷⁹ Even though Paul did not endorse marriage in the way that Musonius does, his view of the community in Christ as requiring the involvement of both men and women seems to draw on a similar type of understanding of their role and relationship.

Such a view of men and women was by no means universal, as is evident from Philo and Josephus' negative remarks about marriage and wives. As we will see below, both authors describe the Essenes as a community that does very well without women, especially because the male Essenes are free from the burden of marriage. According to Philo, no one of the Essenes ever marries a wife, 'because woman is a selfish creature and one addicted to jealousy in an immoderate degree' (*Apology for the Jews* 11.14). Josephus believes the Essenes live only with men and do not marry, because wives lead to quarrels (*Jewish Antiquities* 18, 21). By not marrying, the Essenes, 'guard against the lascivious behavior of women', since 'none of them preserve their fidelity to one man'. (*Jewish War* 2.119). Their negative views of women and marriage thus allow Philo and Josephus to confirm that a community such as the Essenes can function very well without both. Paul's understanding of men and women as both necessary in Christ thus suggests that he had a more positive view of their roles, not unlike that of Musonius.

To round off this section on the arguments for marriage, we can conclude that Paul shares the contemporary conception of marriage as a mutual undertaking of husband and wife, but that he does not confirm its importance or encourage its practice for any other

⁷⁹ For Paul, it is *koinonia*, or association with Christ and the spirit that is central, but he does not use the term in connection with men and women (e.g. 1 Corinthians 1:9; 10:16; 2 Corinthians 13:13; Philippians 2:1).

reason than to protect against sexual sin. Arguments based on the need for procreation and the continuation of society that dominated the discourse about marriage are conspicuously absent, as is the view that marriage is in line with nature or divine purpose. To leave out such obvious arguments would seem to require a very definite alternative perspective on marriage. To understand this alternative view, we will now turn to a closer examination of the arguments put forward by Paul against marriage.

2.2 The Arguments against Marriage: Distraction at the End of the World

While it was thus widely felt, as discussed in the previous section, that marrying was natural and good, some objections to marriage were also raised in contemporary discussion of marriage. Under particular circumstances, not marrying was thought to be the better option. We already encountered Josephus' and Philo's depictions of the Essenes as a group who did not marry and thereby enabling their ethic of mutual service among their members.

Following the influential study of Will Deming, the critical perspective on marriage is usually described by New-Testament scholars as the Cynic view, even though it occurs in the writings of such non-Cynics as Philo and Epictetus. Ideas about marriage that may have their origin in some form of Cynicism are incorporated during this period into very different world views. Epictetus' discussion of the Cynic who is right to reject marriage, for example, occurs within a thoroughly Stoic perspective on society.⁸⁰ We will examine the views of those who question marriage in this section, and see how they compare to Paul's. We will take Paul's argumentation as our guideline in this section and address the two points he brings forward as reasons why it is better not to marry.

The first part of this section (2.2.1) deals with Paul's eschatological argument; because the world, including marriage, is about to end, those who are married should live as if they are not. The idea that marriage was a feature of this world and not of the next occurs in other eschatological texts as well, as we shall see. This is a crucial point to establish, since the suggestion that the third pair of the baptismal formula, 'nor male and female', proclaims an end to marriage finds its context here. For Paul, the conviction that this eschatological end to marriage is close already has implications for the lives of believers.

Paul's second argument, which is discussed in the second part of this section (2.2.2), presents marriage as a distraction from devotion to the Lord. The idea that marriage could be an obstacle to an ideal life is an established part of the conversation about marriage in Paul's time. Unlike his contemporaries, however, who focus on men, Paul sees both husband and wife as a distraction for each other and encourages both men and women not to marry.

In both arguments raised by Paul against marrying, we thus see the return of elements of the contemporary understanding of marriage, as described above. Marriage was seen as a fundamental part of the fabric of society and the cosmos, and since Paul

⁸⁰ Deming of course acknowledges this incorporation into other perspectives. On the origins of the Cynic view, see Deming, *Paul on Marriage and Celibacy*, 83-89. For the idea that Paul too was heavily influenced by Cynicism, including in his ideas about marriage, see Gerald Downing, who appears to rely heavily on Deming on this issue (F. Gerald Downing, *Cynics, Paul and the Pauline churches: Cynics and Christian Origins II* (London: Routledge, 1998)). Earlier discussions of Paul also use the opposition Stoic-Cynic, see e.g. David Balch, '1 Cor 7:32-35', 429-439.

believed this world would pass away, it makes sense that marriage would be destroyed along with it. There was little point in investing in this social structure through marrying and having children. The second element that we see is the idea that both men and women are involved in marriage, in a mutual partnership. When this partnership falls away, as Paul advocates, both parties can put their energy in ‘the Lord’. The section will be rounded off with a brief conclusion (2.2.3), that ties together the different strands, and connects them to the third pair of the baptismal formula, ‘nor male and female’.

2.2.1 Marriage and Eschatology

Before turning to Paul’s argument about marriage and eschatology, I will give a brief sketch of his line of thought in the chapter, leading up to this point. As noted above, in section 2.1.1, Paul begins the chapter by confirming that it is good not to marry, a position that he repeats at various points (1 Corinthians 7:1-9, 26-28, 32-40). He makes a concession, however, because of the danger of *porneia*, for those who do not have the gift to live a celibate life. He then turns to divorce, which he does not allow for the believing husband or wife, but encourages them to accept when initiated by an unbelieving partner. Paul next formulates a general guideline, about staying as one is, and brings in two examples from circumcision and slavery, a passage that was discussed extensively in the previous chapter (CH III 1.1). Returning to the main subject, Paul applies this principle of staying as one is, to marriage:

Are you married? Do not seek a divorce. Are you unmarried? Do not look for a wife (δέδεσαι γυναικί, μὴ ζήτηι λύσιν· λέλυσαι ἀπὸ γυναικός, μὴ ζήτηι γυναῖκα). But if you do marry, you have not sinned; and if a virgin marries, she has not sinned (ἐὰν δὲ καὶ γαμήσης, οὐχ ἥμαρτες· καὶ ἐὰν γήμηῃ ἡ παρθένος, οὐχ ἥμαρτεν). (1 Corinthians 7:27-28)

Again Paul states that not marrying is preferable for both men and women, but that marriage is still allowed. He then comes to the reason why everyone can stay as they are:

I mean, brothers, that the appointed time has grown short (ὁ καιρὸς συνεσταλμένος ἐστίν); from now on, let those who have wives be as though they had none (οἱ ἔχοντες γυναῖκας ὡς μὴ ἔχοντες ὄσιν), and those who mourn as though they were not mourning, and those who rejoice as though they were not rejoicing (οἱ κλαίοντες ὡς μὴ κλαίοντες καὶ οἱ χαίροντες ὡς μὴ χαίροντες), and those who buy as though they had no possessions (οἱ ἀγοράζοντες ὡς μὴ κατέχοντες), and those who deal with the world as though they had no dealings with it. For the present form of this world is passing away (παράγει γὰρ τὸ σχῆμα τοῦ κόσμου τούτου). (1 Corinthians 7:29-31)

Marriage is thus not only second choice, but once in it, a person should not be absorbed by it, but should live ‘as if not’. The reason for this attitude towards marriage is that time has been shortened (ὁ καιρὸς συνεσταλμένος ἐστίν), by which Paul no doubt refers to the death and resurrection of Christ, which has set in motion a chain of events that will lead to the ultimate end.⁸¹ Since this eschatological explanation is sandwiched between two passages

⁸¹ See Adams, *Constructing the World*, 131, who quotes Fee in agreement (Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, 339); also Van Kooten, *Cosmic Christology*, 104. Deming translates this instead as ‘time is

that underline Paul's preference for being unmarried, it is likely that it supports this position as well. Not only should the approaching end encourage those who are married to live as if not, it also implies that it is preferable not to become married in the first place.

Along with buying, mourning and rejoicing, marriage thus belongs to the present form of the world, which is 'passing away' (παράγει γὰρ τὸ σχῆμα τοῦ κόσμου τούτου 7:31). Paul's unusual choice of words here, the form of the cosmos, has led to some debate about what it is exactly that Paul is referring to. Some scholars, such as Deming, see this not primarily as a reference to the more cosmological events of the eschaton, the 'destruction of the earth and creation of a new one', which rather recede to the background here. According to Deming it is the 'the day-to-day responsibilities of a householder and his wife' that are in focus; the 'social and economic infrastructure' which forms the context that makes the activities mentioned here possible.⁸² Edward Adams, however, concludes on the basis of an analysis of all the components of this verse, 'this world' (τοῦ κόσμου τούτου), 'passing away' (παράγει) and 'the form' (τὸ σχῆμα) that Paul is rather referring to the 'whole state of existence' and is making 'a cosmological claim'. As Adams notes, it would be difficult to imagine that it is only the external appearance that goes, while the essence of this present, and for Paul evil, world continues.⁸³ Paul believes that the events leading up to the end have been activated and this new perspective on time gives him a new perspective on marriage.

The categories mentioned by Paul here appear to form something of an eschatological motif; they occur together in earlier prophetic eschatological passages in Isaiah and Ezekiel:

See, the LORD is going to lay waste the earth and devastate it; he will ruin its face and scatter its inhabitants-it will be the same for priest as for people, for master as for servant (ὁ παῖς ὡς ὁ κύριος), for mistress as for maid, for seller as for buyer (ὁ ἀγοράζων ὡς ὁ πωλῶν), for borrower as for lender (ὁ δανείζων ὡς ὁ δανειζόμενος), for debtor as for creditor (ὁ ὀφείλων ὡς ὁ ὀφείλει). (...) The earth dries up (mourns, ἐπένησεν) and withers, the world languishes and withers, the exalted of the earth languish (mourn, ἐπένησαν). (...) The new wine dries up (mourns, πενήσει) and the vine withers (mourns, πενήσει); all the merrymakers (οἱ εὐφραυνόμενοι τὴν ψυχὴν) groan. (*Isaiah 24:1-2, 4, 7*)

compressed' and suggests that it is an indication that a person's normal routine should be adapted in the final days (Deming, *Paul on Marriage and Celibacy*, 183-184).

⁸² Deming, *Paul on Marriage and Celibacy*, 197, 185. I thus strongly disagree with Deming's interpretation of this passage, and with much of his criticism of the view of Wolfgang Schrage. According to Deming, Schrage has 'simply misread the apocalyptic motivation' behind this passage, since it is not about the imminence of the end, but about 'what was to precede the End' (Deming, *Paul on Marriage and Celibacy*, 193, criticizing Schrage, 'Die Stellung zur Welt'). I would suggest that it is rather Deming who misreads the text, based on his narrow interpretation of the word form (τὸ σχῆμα), while Schrage correctly recognised Paul's eschatological motivation. Deming believes that these verses are an expression of Stoic calmness and detachment, although they also owe a debt to its apocalyptic heritage. Engaging in an inexplicable degree of mirror reading, he then concludes that are an indication not of Stoic influence on Paul, as one might expect, but rather 'that Paul's audience in Corinth stands intellectually and spiritually between Judeo-Christian and Stoic traditions' and that the passage stems from a source in Corinth (Deming, *Paul on Marriage and Celibacy*, 197).

⁸³ Adams, *Constructing the World*, 135.

This prophecy foresees the end of the world as the work of God; it is a total destruction that involves all parts of the population, without regard for social distinctions.⁸⁴ The pairs of opposites are reminiscent of Paul's, especially the master and slave, and are a feature of eschatological prophecies, as discussed in Chapter I. There is more emphasis here on the economic opposites, not only buying, as in Paul, but also borrowing and debt. The emotions mentioned by Paul, mourning and rejoicing (κλαίω and χαίρω), also appear, although different verbs are used. These emotions are emphasised in the Septuagint, with a repeated use of 'to mourn' (πενθέω) where the Hebrew reads לַבֹּאֵר or לַמָּוֶת, which is generally translated as 'to dry up' and 'to languish'.

A similar combination of terms is occurs in Ezekiel, although here again, as in Isaiah, there is no mention of marriage. Mourning and rejoicing are connected directly with buying and selling in this passage:

The time has come, the day has arrived (ἴκει ὁ καιρὸς ἰδοὺ ἡ ἡμέρα). Let not the buyer rejoice nor the seller grieve (ὁ κτῶμενος μὴ χαίρῃτω καὶ ὁ πωλῶν μὴ θρηγείτω), for wrath is upon the whole crowd. The seller will not recover the land he has sold as long as both of them live, for the vision concerning the whole crowd will not be reversed. Because of their sins, not one of them will preserve his life. (Ezekiel 7:12-13)

The impending judgement is described here as well in terms of its impact on buying and selling, mourning and rejoicing; there is no reason to feel joy or grief, because everyone will perish. According to Leslie Allen, this is a variation on the 'prophetic futility curse', such as 'though you have built stone mansions, you will not live in them; though you have planted lush vineyards, you will not drink their wine' (Amos 5:11, cf. e.g. Micah 6:15; Zephaniah 1:13).⁸⁵ Characteristic for this theme is the inability to capitalise on the initiated action. The tension between the initiated action and the sudden impact of the end time is also present in the later passages where the theme of buying and selling recurs, to which we will now turn.

It is important to note that when these categories occur in later eschatological texts, they include a reference to marriage. Two passages from the Gospels illustrate this. The first occurs in both Luke and Matthew and is generally seen as deriving from Q:

Just as it was in the days of Noah, so also will it be in the days of the Son of Man. People were eating, drinking, marrying and being given in marriage (ἔσθιον, ἔπινον, ἐγάμου, ἐγαμίζοντο) up to the day Noah entered the ark. Then the flood came and destroyed them all. It was the same in the days of Lot. People were eating and drinking, buying and selling, planting and building (ἔσθιον, ἔπινον, ἠγόραζον, ἐπώλουν, ἐφύτευον, ὠκοδόμουσαν). But the day Lot left Sodom, fire and

⁸⁴ James Todd Hibbard discusses ancient Near-Eastern texts with a similar theme of 'blurring of social distinction' (James Todd Hibbard, *Intertextuality in Isaiah 24-27: The Reuse and Evocation of Earlier Texts* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2006), 42.). According to John Watts, the theme of the passage is the 'devastated land', which is developed in various ways. Verse 2 shows that 'all elements of the population are involved', verses 4-6 indicate that the cause of the withered land is the people's sin, while verses 7-9 indicate the social standstill (John D.W. Watts, *Isaiah 1-33* (Waco: Word Books 1985) 315-318.

⁸⁵ Leslie C. Allen, *Ezekiel 1-19* (Dallas: Word Books 1994), 109, although Allen mistakenly identifies the passage as Amos 4:11.

sulphur rained down from heaven and destroyed them all. It will be just like this on the day the Son of Man is revealed. (*Luke 17:26-30, par. Matthew 24:37-39*)

The passage illustrates the unexpected coming of the Son of Man. Just as the flood and the destruction of Sodom caught people by surprise, so will the present generation be surprised when the Son of Man comes.⁸⁶ The activities in which people are involved include buying and selling, as in the prophetic texts quoted above, with the addition of eating and drinking and marrying and being given in marriage. Although these can be seen as exemplifying 'ordinary activities', it seems more likely that they also typify those activities that constitute engagement with the present world and investment into its continuation.⁸⁷ Planting, building and marrying especially are concerned with the future and the inability to enjoy the results of these actions that was identified as a prophetic theme above, seems relevant here as well. Since marrying was seen as crucially important for the continuation of society in the early Empire, as we saw in the previous section, its inclusion among such activities in this period fits with the contemporary understanding.

Buying and marriage also occur together in the parable of the, clearly eschatological, banquet (*Luke 14:15-24*), where the guests refuse the invitation they are given, on the grounds that they are busy with either of these two things:

"But they all alike began to make excuses. The first said, 'I have just bought a field (*ἀγρὸν ἠγόρασα*), and I must go and see it. Please excuse me.' "Another said, 'I have just bought five yoke of oxen (*ζεύγη βοῶν ἠγόρασα πέντε*), and I'm on my way to try them out. Please excuse me.' "Still another said, 'I just got married (*γυναικὰ ἔγημα*), so I can't come' (*Luke 14:18-20*).

On each of the three occasions mentioned in the parable, the invitation is turned down because the intended guest is engaged with his purchases or with his newly formed marriage.⁸⁸ The suggestion is not simply that they are simply busy, but more specifically, that they are focussed on the future.⁸⁹

⁸⁶ On the Matthean descriptions of the coming of the Son of Man, see David C. Sim, *Apocalyptic Eschatology in the Gospel of Matthew* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1996) 96-97.

⁸⁷ Sjef van Tilborg sees these activities as typically those 'in which people engage continuously'. He therefore argues that the verb *γαμῶ*, in its active and passive form refers not to marrying, but instead 'to engage in sexual activities as man and as woman'. When seen not as typical daily activities, but rather as those that exemplify an engagement with the world, 'marrying and being given in marriage' does seem the better translation. Although Van Tilborg gives examples of cases where *γαμῶ* is used in the sense of 'having sex', with a man as the subject, he does not support his argument with any instances where *γαμίζω* might refer to a woman having sex, nor does his TLG search appear to have uncovered any. (Sjef van Tilborg, 'The Meaning of the Word *γαμῶ* in Lk 14:20; 17:27; Mk 12:25 and in a Number of Early Jewish and Christian Authors' *Hervormde Theologische Studies* 58/2 (2002), 802-810, 805).

⁸⁸ Bruce Longenecker observes the central marriage theme that connects this passage with parallels in Matthew 22:1-14 and the Gospel of Thomas 64. In relation to the passage in Luke, Longenecker makes the somewhat unfortunate suggestion that the 'message of the kingdom of God in Luke 14 is encased in a package of gentle humour' (Bruce W. Longenecker, 'A Humorous Jesus? Orality, Structure and Characterisation in Luke 14:15-24, and Beyond', *Biblical Interpretation* 16/2 (2008), 179-204, 204). The joke in question, however, depends on a rather sloppy translation of the excuses given by the first two men, why they need to be elsewhere. In spite of the two very different statements ('I must go and see it' in the first case, and 'I'm on my way to try them out' in the second) Longenecker renders both as 'I must go try it out'. In Longenecker's view, this repeated phrase sets the audience for up the third man, the one who has just gotten married. In this case, it is not specified where he needs to go, allowing the audience to fill in, according to Longenecker, 'I must go

The passages discussed so far mention marriage and buying to signify involvement with the world, as Paul does, in contrast with a prophesied end time. There are also contemporary texts that present the associated idea, and describe the end time as a time when there will be *no* marriage. The first example of such a text is the eschatological prophecy found in the second Sibylline Oracle, which was already introduced in the first chapter. Here, the notions of buying, selling and marrying occur in pairs of opposites, among a number of other such pairs. They do not function in this text as characteristics of the present world; instead, their denial is what distinguishes the next world:

The earth belongs equally to all (γάλα δ' ἴση πάντων), undivided by walls or fences (οὐ τείχεσιν οὐ περιφραγμοῖς διαμεριζομένη). It will bear abundant fruits spontaneously. Lives will be in common and wealth will have no division (κοινοί τε βίοι καὶ πλοῦτος ἄμοιρος). For there will be no poor man there, no rich, and no tyrant, no slave (οὐ γὰρ πτωχὸς ἐκεῖ, οὐ πλούσιος, οὐδὲ τύραννος, οὐ δοῦλος); no one will be either great or small anymore, there will be no kings, and no leaders: all are equal there (κοινηὴ δ' ἅμα πάντες). (...) No spring, no summer, no winter, no autumn, no marriage, no death, no selling, no buying (οὐ γάμον, οὐ θάνατον, οὐ πράσεις, οὐδ' ἀγορασμούς), no sunset, no sunrise: because he will make one great day. (*Sibylline Oracles* 2. 319-329)

The many pairs of opposites that are negated in this end-time vision connect natural opposites, such as 'no summer, no winter', to social opposites, several of which are reminiscent of the eschatological vision of Isaiah (Isaiah 24:2). The pairs listed there, priest-people, master-servant, seller-buyer, seem to be echoed in the Oracle as 'no one will be either great or small', 'no kings, no leaders', no tyrant, no slave' and 'no selling, no buying'. There is also a considerable overlap with two of Paul's statements. Not only with the baptismal formula, especially the pairs 'slave-free' and 'male-female', but also with the passage under consideration in this section, about living as if not. The pairs 'no marriage, no death, no selling, no buying (οὐ γάμον, οὐ θάνατον, οὐ πράσεις, οὐδ' ἀγορασμούς) (*Sibylline Oracles* 2. 328) seem similar to Paul's description of the world that is passing away, where those who have wives are encouraged to live as if not, and those who buy as if they had no possessions. Like Paul, this prophecy connects property and marriage and sees both as absent after the end has come.

While Paul does not directly connect death to marriage, as the Sibylline prophecy does, victory over death is clearly part of his eschatological expectation. Paul's portrayal of Christ as the second Adam in both Romans and 1 Corinthians sees him bringing life through the resurrection and eventually destroying death as 'the last enemy' (1 Corinthians 15:26).⁹⁰

try her out' (Longenecker, 'A Humorous Jesus?', 187). In line with his main argument, Van Tilborg suggests that the man is in effect saying 'I just had sex' and therefore has to wait until evening in order to take a cleansing bath, when it will be too late to come to the feast (Sjef van Tilborg, 'The Meaning of the Word γαμῶ', 805).

⁸⁹ Howard Marshall notes that the excuses bear a resemblance to those that are legitimate for a holy war (*Deuteronomy* 20:5-7; 24,5) although this correspondence is too vague to count as the main underlying motif (I. Howard Marshall, *The Gospel of Luke : A Commentary on the Greek Text* (Exeter : Paternoster Press, 1978) 588-589). John Nolland rejects the suggestion made by Marshall and others that there is a relationship with the excuses mentioned in Deuteronomy and maintains that the parable is about 'people deciding that they have better things to do and that they will not come after all' (John L. Nolland, *Luke 9:21-18:34* (Waco: Word Books 1993) 756).

⁹⁰ See Dunn, *The Theology of Paul*, 126 ; Van Kooten, *Paul's Anthropology in Context*, 83, 102.

Although Paul thus does not explicitly link marriage and death, neither when discussing the former nor the latter, he does appear to share the idea that both are part of the world that will soon come to an end.

The Gospels contain several passages that confirm the connection between the absence of marriage and the end time. The first is an enigmatic reference to eunuchs in Matthew, that follows immediately on Jesus' saying about divorce discussed above, in which creation into 'male and female' is quoted. The disciples, who are apparently used to a more lenient attitude towards divorce, come to the conclusion that if it is this difficult, then it is better not to marry:

Jesus replied, 'Not everyone can accept this word, but only those to whom it has been given. For some are eunuchs because they were born that way; others were made that way by men; and others have renounced marriage because of the kingdom of heaven (εἰσὶν εὐνοῦχοι οἵτινες εὐνούχισαν ἑαυτοὺς διὰ τὴν βασιλείαν τῶν οὐρανῶν). The one who can accept this should accept it.' (Matthew 19:11-12)

Jesus offers an alternative reason for not marrying. Rather than doing so to avoid being trapped in marriage without the possibility of divorce, some choose not to marry as a way of orienting themselves in the present on the coming kingdom. While there is much discussion about the meaning of the term eunuchs here, the assumption seems to be that in the future kingdom, there will be no marriage.⁹¹

A second text that shares this notion that marriage is restricted to the present world and absent in the next occurs in a discussion about the resurrection. Mark and Matthew have a brief version of this important scene, while Luke has a slightly longer version that gives more detail relevant for our question about marriage and death (Mark 12:18-27; Matthew 22:23-32; Luke 20:27-38). In the story, Sadducees approach Jesus and try to trick him by asking a question about the resurrection, attempting to demonstrate its absurdity:⁹²

Then the Sadducees, who say there is no resurrection, came to him with a question. "Teacher," they said, "Moses wrote for us that if a man's brother dies and leaves a wife but no children, the man must marry the widow and have children for his brother. Now there were seven brothers. The first one married and died without leaving any children. The second one married the widow, but he also died, leaving no child. It was the same with the third. In fact, none of the seven left any children. Last of all, the woman died too. At the resurrection

⁹¹ Loader, *Sexuality and the Jesus Tradition*, 127-134. For a discussion of the position of eunuchs in society and its possible relevance for this passage, see Warren C. Carter, *Matthew and the Margins: A Socio-political and Religious Reading* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2000), 383-384.

⁹² While some commentators, correctly in my view, feel that the Sadducees, in their question, present the resurrection as absurd (so e.g. Caroline Vander Stichele, 'Like Angels in Heaven: Corporeality, Resurrection, and Gender in Mark 12:18-27', in *Begin with the Body: Corporeality Religion and Gender*, Jonneke Bekkenkamp and Maaïke de Haardt (eds.), (Leuven: Peeters, 1998), 215-232, 219; Adela Yarbro Collins, *Mark: A Commentary*, (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2007), 559-560), others, such as François Bovon, e.g. see the question as genuine. Bovon sees the opposition that the wording of the question creates between raising offspring through Levirate marriage, and raising someone from the dead as an opposition that may have worried the Sadducees, 'gibt es eine andere als die vom Gesetz gebotene "Auferstehung", dann verliert die vorgesehene Ordnung jeglichen Sinn und mündet ins Unmögliche. Bei einer solchen "Auferstehung" werden all sieben Männer dieselbe Frau haben'. (François Bovon, *Das Evangelium nach Lukas* (2. Teilbd.: Lk 9,51-14,35), Zürich: Benziger Verlag, 1996, 114-115).

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whose wife will she be, since the seven were married to her?" Jesus replied, "Are you not in error because you do not know the Scriptures or the power of God? When the dead rise, they will neither marry nor be given in marriage; they will be like the angels in heaven (ὅταν γὰρ ἐκ νεκρῶν ἀναστῶσιν οὔτε γαμοῦσιν οὔτε γαμίζονται, ἀλλ' εἰσὶν ὡς ἄγγελοι ἐν τοῖς οὐρανοῖς). Now about the dead rising—have you not read in the book of Moses, in the account of the bush, how God said to him, 'I am the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob'? He is not the God of the dead, but of the living. You are badly mistaken!" (*Mark* 12:18-27)

The absurdity of this tale of the seven brothers who all share one wife, rests on the premise that they will still be married after the resurrection. Whose wife will she be, when she was married to all seven? This is the premise that Jesus attacks. When the dead rise, they do not marry nor are they given in marriage, a double formulation that describes marriage from the perspective both of men and women (*Mark* 12:25). Marriage belongs to this world, not to life after the resurrection, so the problem that the Sadducees have sketched simply does not exist.⁹³ She will be nobody's wife, because there will be no marriage.

As support or further explanation for the fact that there will be no marriage, Jesus adds that 'they will be like the angels in heaven' (*Mark* 12 :25). The resurrection is thus not presumed to be bodily, but rather spiritual or heavenly, which appears to have been the dominant expectation among contemporary Jews.⁹⁴ In what sense will they be like angels? Various possibilities have been suggested in scholarship, such as that they will be celibate, that there will be no sexual difference, or that they will have a different corporeality from mortal humans.⁹⁵ The latter idea is also found in 2 Baruch, where it is said that those who are justified will be transformed, 'into the splendour of angels' (2 Baruch 51:1-5). Paul's description of the resurrected body similarly emphasises discontinuity, and mocks those who would assume, that any resurrection would result in the same body:

The body that is sown is perishable, it is raised imperishable; it is sown in dishonour, it is raised in glory; it is sown in weakness, it is raised in power; it is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body. (1 Corinthians 15:42-44)

⁹³ Bradley Trick argues that the question here is not marriage, but remarriage. 'I suggest that Jesus does not refer to the dissolution of the woman's marital bonds at the resurrection because those bonds would already have been annulled. That is to say, I suggest that he refers only to re-marriage because it is death—not, as the commentators all suggest, resurrection—that terminates the marriage covenant.' Trick quotes Paul, who mentions on two occasions that death ends marriage. 'A woman is bound as long as her husband lives. But if the husband dies, she is free to be married to whomever she desires, only in the Lord' (1 Corinthians 7:39; cf. Romans 7:1-3). That marriage ends with the death of one of the partners is of course already implicit in the story about the brothers, otherwise the woman could not marry the next brother. Trick seems to interpret the wording here in a too narrow sense, limiting its meaning to the act of getting married, excluding the possibility that it refers to the consequent state of being married as well. He is even forced to conclude that Jesus' answer does not address the question of what happens to the marriages of those who are still living at the time of the resurrection (Bradley R. Trick, 'Death, Covenants, and the Proof of Resurrection in *Mark* 12:18-27', *Novum Testamentum* 49 (2007) 232-256).

⁹⁴ See Adele Yarbro Collins, *Mark*, 561.

⁹⁵ For the different interpretations, in feminist scholarship in particular, see Vander Stichele, 'Like Angels in Heaven', 224-231.

Paul stresses the difference between the normal human body and the body after the resurrection. Although he does not compare this body to that of angels, he uses terms that suggest a similar understanding.

Luke's version of this same encounter between Jesus and the Sadducees gives a different explanation for the comparison with angels:

Jesus said to them, "Those who belong to this age marry and are given in marriage (Οἱ υἱοὶ τοῦ αἰῶνος τούτου γαμοῦσιν καὶ γαμίσκονται); but those who are considered worthy of a place in that age and in the resurrection from the dead neither marry nor are given in marriage (οὔτε γαμοῦσιν οὔτε γαμίζονται). Indeed they cannot die anymore, because they are like angels and are children of God, being children of the resurrection (οὐδὲ γὰρ ἀποθανεῖν ἔτι δύνανται, ἰσάγγελοι γὰρ εἰσιν καὶ υἱοὶ εἰσιν θεοῦ τῆς ἀναστάσεως υἱοὶ ὄντες). (Luke 20:34-36)

The explanation given here is that the resurrected are like angels, in the sense that they do not die anymore. The close connection between procreation and marriage in contemporary thought, noted above, explains how marriage, necessary for the continuation of the human race, loses its meaning once humans become immortal.⁹⁶ We thus see a contemporary eschatological idea that is summed up in the oracle of the Sibyl in only four words, 'no marriage, no death'. Paul's conviction that death will be conquered and destroyed, that the resurrection will lead to a new, spiritual body, and his idea of marriage as no longer relevant in the time to come, are all consistent with contemporary understandings of the end time.⁹⁷

2.2.2 Marriage as Obstacle and Distraction

We now turn to the second argument that Paul puts forward against marrying, which follows immediately on the passage discussed in the previous section, about the approaching end. Here Paul opposes concern for a husband or wife to concern for 'the Lord's affairs', and argues that it is best to be able to focus entirely on the latter:

I would like you to be free from concern (ἀμερίμνους). An unmarried man is concerned about the Lord's affairs—how he can please the Lord (ὁ ἄγαμος μεριμνᾷ τὰ τοῦ κυρίου, πῶς ἀρέσῃ τῷ κυρίῳ). But a married man is concerned about the affairs of this world—how he can please his wife (ὁ δὲ γαμήσας μεριμνᾷ τὰ τοῦ κόσμου, πῶς ἀρέσῃ τῇ γυναικί)— and his interests are divided (καὶ μεμέρισται). An unmarried woman or virgin is concerned about the Lord's affairs (καὶ ἡ γυνὴ ἢ ἄγαμος καὶ ἡ παρθένος μεριμνᾷ τὰ τοῦ κυρίου), to be holy in both body and spirit. But a married woman is concerned about the affairs of this world—how she can please her husband (ἡ δὲ γαμήσασα μεριμνᾷ τὰ τοῦ κόσμου, πῶς ἀρέσῃ τῷ ἀνδρί). I am saying this for your own good, not to restrict you, but that you may live in a right way in undivided devotion to the Lord. (τοῦτο δὲ πρὸς τὸ ὑμῶν αὐτῶν σύμφορον λέγω, οὐχ ἵνα βρόχον ὑμῖν ἐπιβάλλω ἀλλὰ πρὸς τὸ εὐσχημον καὶ εὐπάρεδρον τῷ κυρίῳ ἀπερισπάστως.) (1 Corinthians 7:32-35)

⁹⁶ Joseph A. Fitzmyer, *The Gospel According to Luke* (II:X-XXIV), (Garden City: Doubleday, 1985), 1300.

⁹⁷ In his study *Sexuality and the Jesus Tradition*, William Loader observes 'it is striking how much of the little we have about sexuality in the Jesus tradition finds some echo in 1 Corinthians 7 and its context (Loader, *Sexuality and the Jesus Tradition*, 185).

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Being married creates a state of division between concern for one's spouse and concern for the Lord. Concern for a spouse is equated here with concern for the world (κόσμος) of which Paul has just said that it was about to end.⁹⁸ In order to promote undistracted devotion to the Lord, Paul encourages his audience not to marry. Paul's argumentation in this passage, as well as his terminology, has been discussed extensively, especially with regard to the similarities with Stoic and Cynic discussions of marriage.⁹⁹ The parallel between Paul and Stoics such as Epictetus and Hierocles, who see a conflict between devotion to a wife and devotion to philosophy, has been well established and it is not my aim to go over this again. What I do want to highlight is where Paul differs from these philosophers, since this often seems to have been neglected. Unlike his Stoic contemporaries, Paul does not only see marriage as a distraction for a man, but as an equal distraction for both men and women. A brief discussion of Epictetus will serve as an example.

Epictetus generally felt that marrying was good and a way to fulfil one's purpose in life, since it contributed to the well-being of the state (see e.g. *Discourses* 2.23.37-38).¹⁰⁰ Yet based on this same principle of the good of society, he also makes an exception for someone who can benefit society more when not married, whom he calls 'the Cynic'. Whereas in an ideal state composed only of wise men, a Cynic could marry, because his wife and children would also be wise, under the present social conditions, which he compares to a war zone, he need not:

But with things as they are — in a virtual crisis — it's better, perhaps, that the Cynic not be distracted by domestic duties (ἀπερίσπαστον εἶναι). He needs to focus on his sacred ministry (πρὸς τῆ διακονίᾳ τοῦ θεοῦ), and be free to move around — not be tied down by personal obligations that he cannot very well ignore, but which, if he honours, will detract from his role of messenger, scout and herald of the gods (τὸν ἄγγελον καὶ κατάσκοπον καὶ κήρυκα τῶν θεῶν). (Epictetus, *Discourses* III.22.69)

The similarities with Paul's discussion of the distractions of marriage are clear. Both Paul and Epictetus contrast a religious duty with the obligations that marriage brings. Epictetus paints a lively picture of these obligations; a husband has responsibilities with regard to his wife and father-in-law, he has to fetch hot water to bathe the baby, and buy it all the things it needs such as a cot and oil and drinking cups (Epictetus, *Discourses* III.22.69-71). Where would he find time for his higher duties? When asked how neglecting to marry will help society in general, since this is after all the bigger goal, Epictetus answers:

For God's sake, who benefits society more (μείζονα δ' εὐεργετοῦσιν ἄνθρώπους), people who produce two or three brats with runny noses to survive them or those who supervise in each person's life what they care about, or mistakenly neglect? (Epictetus, *Discourses* III.22.77)

⁹⁸ Loader describes Paul's view of 'the world' here, 'it is not evil, but it is, at least, transitory' (Loader, *Sexuality and the Jesus Tradition*, 177).

⁹⁹ These similarities centre on the use of the terms ἀμερίμνος, free from care, μερμινάω, to be concerned, μέριζομαι, to be divided, and ἀπερισπαστως, without distraction. See e.g. Huttunen, *Paul and Epictetus on Law*, 82-83; Deming, *Paul on Marriage and Celibacy*, 197-205; David Balch, '1 Cor 7:32-35 and Stoic Debates', 429-439.

¹⁰⁰ For a fuller discussion of Epictetus' ideas on marriage, Deming *Paul on Marriage and Celibacy*, 83-87; Reydams-Schils, *The Roman Stoics*, 143-176.

The Cynic's contribution to society through supervision of the lives of others is thus no less than that made by people who marry and have children. In spite of his Cynic stance on marriage here, Epictetus' concern is still what is good for people in general, which is in fact a Stoic concern.

In spite of the obvious similarities between Paul and Epictetus in their view of marriage as a distraction, there are clearly also major differences. While Epictetus makes an exception for the Cynic, who has a distinct role as 'messenger, scout and herald of the gods', and expects people generally to continue marrying, Paul feels that everyone has such a special calling, and that both men and women, whether never married, divorced or widowed, do well not to marry. There is no exception made in order to care for society in a special way, while others go on reproducing it in the conventional manner. Rather, everyone is better off without marriage, and the continuation of society as a whole is of no concern, since it will pass away.

That these differences between Paul and Epictetus are rarely observed, as far as I have been able to assess, is unfortunate, since a distinctive element of Paul's thought is thereby missed. In his comparison of Epictetus' and Paul's attitude towards the law, Niko Huttunen describes the Cynic-like stance promoted by Epictetus and then concludes that 'Paul shares this view: married men cannot devote themselves to God without distraction'.¹⁰¹ The position of married women is not addressed by Huttunen, even though they are clearly mentioned by Paul.

Similarly, David Balch's notion that 'Musonius, Epictetus, Hierocles and Paul conclude (...) that marriage is helpful for some, not advantageous for others' seems only partially correct.¹⁰² Even though Balch examines the ideas about women in both the Stoics and Paul, he sees mainly similarities there too, and argues that these authors all suffer from an inconsistency between theory and practice. Musonius and Hierocles may both consider a wife to be similar or equal to her husband, yet in practice, she is subordinated by both as well. Paul too has a 'theory of equality', by which Balch refers to the baptismal formula, but also subordinates women when it comes to practical matters, such as head-coverings.¹⁰³

Balch fails to note that Paul considers marriage to be a distraction for everyone who enters it, both men and women. The exception is not the rare male philosopher who is exempted from the duty of marriage in order to focus entirely on his pursuits, rather, the exception for Paul is the person who cannot control him or herself and live a celibate life. By failing to observe that women too were better off not marrying, according to Paul, scholars have missed an important aspect of his thought. This is not that men and women are equal, but rather that for Paul, marriage really is a thing of the past.¹⁰⁴ Devotion to a divine calling has come to replace marriage as the major concern in the lives of all believers.¹⁰⁵

¹⁰¹ Huttunen, *Paul and Epictetus on Law*, 82-83.

¹⁰² Balch, '1 Cor 7:32-35 and Stoic Debates', 439.

¹⁰³ Balch, '1 Cor 7:32-35 and Stoic Debates', 438-439.

¹⁰⁴ Two scholars who are not primarily focussed on Stoic parallels, William Loader and Alistair Scott May, are much more aware of the eschatological dimension in Paul's thought on marriage. Loader concludes 'Paul does not see marriage as having a positive value for living in the present in relation to the cares of living and he sees it as irrelevant for the future age (Loader, *Sexuality and the Jesus Tradition*, 177, see May, *The Body for the Lord*, 249).

¹⁰⁵ David Horrell argues that it is 'ironic' that Paul, in these and other instances, claims to be different from contemporary ethical standards, when in fact there is a large overlap (David Horrell, *Solidarity and Difference*,

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The distinct character of Paul's view of marriage as a distraction can be further explored through a comparison with other groups that lived without marriage. The Essenes and Therapeutae described by Philo and Josephus as exemplary Jewish groups also did not have a conventional understanding of marriage. As discussed in Chapter I, the descriptions of these groups can be seen as part of a broader theme of an ideal city or utopia, where the conventional family structures are absent. The idea of a 'community of goods and women' already occurs for comic effect in the plays of Aristophanes and much more seriously in Plato.¹⁰⁶ There, individual family is abandoned in order to create a single all-encompassing family or *oikos*. Plato portrays the absence of marriage as a relief for men. They can now live in peace, without the burden to provide for their families or the trouble of handing their money over to their wives and slaves (*Republic* 465 b-c).¹⁰⁷ A similar negative attitude towards wives is attributed to the Essenes by Philo and Josephus, and is shared by many ancient sources.¹⁰⁸

Josephus describes the Essenes as a group that had a community of goods, though not a community of women, since women were entirely absent.¹⁰⁹ For the Essenes, according to Josephus, marriage is to be avoided as a source of disagreements:

It also deserves our admiration, how much they exceed all other men that give themselves over to virtue, and this in righteousness: and indeed to such a degree, that as it has never appeared among any other men, neither Greeks nor barbarians, no, not for a little time, so has it endured a long time among them. This is demonstrated by that institution of theirs, which will not allow anything to hinder them from having all things in common; so that a rich man enjoys no more of his own wealth than he who has nothing at all. There are about four thousand men that live in this way, and neither marry wives, nor are desirous to keep slaves; as thinking the latter tempts men to be unjust, and the former gives the handle to domestic quarrels; but as they live by themselves, they minister one to another. (Josephus, *Antiquities* 18. 20-21)

In Josephus' description of the Essenes, several of the categories that we discussed above (section 2.2.1) in connection with marriage and eschatology are mentioned. Possessions, slaves and marriage are all absent in this community, as they are in the Sibylline prophecy and to some extent in other eschatological depictions. While Josephus does not attribute a distinct eschatological perspective to the Essenes, they do distinguish themselves from society generally through not participating in exactly those spheres that are considered typical of involvement with the world in the eschatological perspective, such as buying and

158-163). In this case at least, the overlap and irony disappear when taking into account to whom these standards were applied.

¹⁰⁶ Several of the plays of Aristophanes derive their comedy from the idea that women take over power and disrupt social conventions. As 'The Ecclesiazusae' illustrates, the idea of women in an *ekklesia* was funny in itself. See Dawson, *Cities of the Gods*, 37-39. Dawson finds an explanation for this ideal and the connection between goods and women in the economic and social structures of fifth century Athens: 'Only in an economy of private ownership could such a communistic ideal seem a radical alternative to existing society; only a society that did not hold private ownership sacrosanct could consider such a theory at all. Only in a society that had not yet reached the point of clearly separating family from property could these theories so readily embrace the notion of sexual communism.'

¹⁰⁷ See Annas, 'Plato's Republic', 312.

¹⁰⁸ See Treggiari, *Roman Marriage*, 206-208.

¹⁰⁹ The fact that Essenes shared property is also noted by Philo (*That every good man is free*, 1.85-86).

selling and marrying (1 Corinthians 7:29-31). While there thus seems to be a similar interest in property and marriage in both Paul and among Josephus' Essenes, the criticism of marriage that is attributed to the Essenes by Josephus is very different from Paul's:

They do not absolutely deny the fitness of marriage, and the succession of mankind thereby continued; but they guard against the lascivious behavior of women, and are persuaded that none of them preserve their fidelity to one man. (Josephus, *Jewish War* 2. 121)

Philo attributes the Essene rejection of marriage also to the nature of women. The Essenes do not marry

'because woman is a selfish creature and one addicted to jealousy in an immoderate degree, and terribly calculated to agitate and overturn the natural inclinations of a man, and to mislead him by her continual tricks' (*Apology for the Jews* 11.14).¹¹⁰

As noted above in our discussion of the contemporary arguments for marriage, neither Philo nor Josephus has any objections to marriage in general; it is in the context of picturing this exemplary group that its rejection becomes a sign of virtue.

The second Jewish group that is described as rejecting marriage is Philo's Therapeutae. This group consists of both men and women, and here the situation with regard to marriage is somewhat different.¹¹¹ Marriage is not described as something to be avoided because of the problematic nature of women. Neither men nor women who belong to the group seem to be involved in marriages, but hostility to marriage as such is attributed to the group. The female Therapeutae are described as virgins, by their own choice:

And the women also share in this feast, the greater part of whom, though old, are virgins in respect of their purity (not indeed through necessity, as some of the priestesses among the Greeks are, who have been compelled to preserve their chastity more than they would have done of their own accord), but out of an admiration for and love of wisdom, with which they are desirous to pass their lives, on account of which they are indifferent to the pleasures of the body, desiring not a mortal but an immortal offspring, which the soul that is attached to God is alone able to produce by itself and from itself, the Father having sown in it rays of light appreciable only by the intellect, by means of which it will be able to perceive the doctrines of wisdom. (Philo, *On the Contemplative Life* 68)

According to Philo, these women have chosen not to marry because they prefer immortal to mortal offspring. As noted above, marriage and procreation are firmly connected in Philo's thought (cf. e.g. *Special Laws* 1.112; 3.33-36), as they are for Josephus (*Against Apion*

¹¹⁰ Josephus also knows of a different order of Essenes who do marry, but only for the sake of having children (*Jewish War* 2. 160).

¹¹¹ For a discussion of the reality of the Therapeutae, see Troels Engberg-Pedersen, 'Philo's *De Vita Contemplativa* as a Philosopher's Dream', *Journal for the Study of Judaism* 30 (1999), 40-64; Taylor, J.E., *Jewish Women Philosophers of First-Century Alexandria: Philo's 'Therapeutae' Reconsidered*, Oxford 2003; Taylor, J.E. and P.R. Davies, 'The So-Called Therapeutae of *De Vita Contemplativa*: Identity and Character', *Harvard Theological Review* 91.1 (1998) 3-24.

2.199), since both allow sexual intercourse even within marriage only with this intention.¹¹² The female Therapeutae still produce offspring, but of a different kind, inspired by God.

The male Therapeutae seem to have a different, less virginal background. They only join the community after leaving their family and property in good hands. Philo praises them for making a gift of their wealth to others when they choose to go off to pursue philosophy (*On the Contemplative Life* 13-16). The asceticism of men and women is thus portrayed differently: men do not produce spiritual offspring; women do not abandon wealth and family. In Philo's description, the group's male and female members lead separate lives and even when joining in worship and song, remain spatially separated (*On the Contemplative Life* 33, 69).

Apart from the question of how real any of these groups were or how accurate are the descriptions given, it is clear that asceticism and abandoning or rejecting marriage, along with property and slavery, functioned as a philosophical, ethical and religious ideal for Philo and Josephus. Even though Philo believes that marriage is natural and good, he can still present the Therapeutae and Essenes as examples of a high standing Jewish morale, in part because of their rejection of married life.

We can now conclude, based on our examination of Paul's statements in the context of the contemporary conversation about marriage, that what Paul objects to is not the quarrelsome or unfaithful nature of wives that Josephus and Philo lament. Nor is it the snotty nosed children, the difficult in-laws or the seeming endless amount of purchases required for a new baby, that burden Epictetus' Cynic. Rather, what Paul sees as the negative side of marriage is exactly the mutual concern and care, and the investment into the continuation of society that his contemporaries so appreciated. It is because marriage involved the complete union of man and woman, that Paul saw it as an obstacle to union with Christ.

In this sense, Paul confirms the cosmopolitan notion that saw marriage as the first bond that ultimately connected men and women to all other humans and to society in general. It is exactly because marriage constituted a commitment to the continuation of the world that Paul felt the need to discourage it. Since the world would soon come to an end, there was no reason to accept such a commitment, which constituted a distraction from what was of ultimate importance. Since in Christ there was no 'male and female' united with each other, both men and women could focus on the things of the Lord.

3 Loose Ends: Gender Tensions

Since I have argued in this chapter that the third pair of the baptismal formula does not relate primarily to gender, as is often assumed, but rather to marriage, several issues that are usually discussed in connection to this third pair have not been addressed. The question of the tension between the presumed equality in Galatians and the difference and hierarchy between men and women stressed in 1 Corinthians has not been raised, since there is no question in my interpretation of a pronouncement on equality between the sexes.¹¹³ Nor is

¹¹² On procreationism in Jewish literature, see Ellis, *Paul and Ancient Views of Sexual Desire*, 91-95.

¹¹³ Daniel Boyarin, e.g., observes that 'in Galatians, Paul seems indeed to be wiping out social differences and hierarchies between the genders, in addition to those that obtain between ethnic groups and socioeconomic classes, while in Corinthians he seems to be reifying and reemphasizing precisely those gendered hierarchical differences (Boyarin, *A Radical Jew*, 183). So also Meeks, 'The Image of the Androgyne', 200.

there a direct reason to discuss Paul's statements about women's dress and women's speech (in 1 Corinthians 11:3-16 and 14:33-36) in connection to the baptismal formula. Yet since these issues remain important, and could raise questions about the reading I have proposed, I will briefly address them in this final section.

Firstly, the question of the missing third pair will be discussed (section 3.1). It is often assumed that Paul leaves out the third pair when he quotes the formula in 1 Corinthians, because the Corinthians already had a far more radical stance on the equality of men and women than Paul did. If the quote from Genesis refers to marriage instead, the question remains why Paul would not mention the third pair in this letter, especially if it formed the basis of his arguments against marriage, as just stated. This question will be answered here not on the grounds of the content of the formula, but rather on its form.

The second subsection (3.2) will deal with Paul's thought on women's dress and speech. After a brief discussion of the attitudes towards women's dress and speech in the veiling culture in which Paul lived (3.2.1), his argument that women need to cover their heads when praying or prophesying and his instruction that women be silent in the *ekklesia* (3.2.2) will be examined. While these passages are often seen as contradictory, it will become evident that these two passages from 1 Corinthians in fact show a consistent attitude towards women, one that is concerned with order, convention and particularly shame. In Paul's thought, as in contemporary thought in general, women's dress and women's speech were related subjects, which were both seen from the perspective of propriety and shame. In both, a woman's submissive position with respect to men should become evident.

3.1 Missing 'Male and Female': The Absence of the Third Pair in the Corinthian Formula

The third pair in the Galatian formula is not only different because of its form, but also because unlike the other two pairs, it is missing from the parallel formula in 1 Corinthians (1 Corinthians 12:13). The explanation generally put forward for the abbreviated baptismal formula is the conflict between what Paul proclaims in Galatians in terms of gender equality, and what he is willing to grant women in this letter.¹¹⁴ However, it is rarely asked how the phrase 'nor male and female' would fit into the sentence as it is formulated here. Could Paul simply include this clause; what would the wording of the formula and this particular part of it be if he did?

The text in 1 Corinthians is slightly different from the formula as it occurs in Galatians:

¹¹⁴ So for example David Horrell who argues that Paul dropped 'neither male nor female' from the formula in 1 Corinthians, because it was a source of 'too much misunderstanding and social disruption' (David Horrell, *The Social Ethos of the Corinthian Correspondence*, (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1996), 86). William Loader believes there are grounds for speculating that 'the male-female pair is deliberately omitted to counter misunderstanding' (Loader, *Sexuality and the Jesus Tradition*, 199); David Balch notes that many modern commentators 'are frustrated by Paul's knowing and stating a theory of equality (Gal 3:28), then consciously omitting it in a difficult practical situation (1 Cor 12:13; 7:17-24), (Balch, '1 Cor 7:32-35 and Stoic Debates', 439).

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There is neither Jew nor Greek, neither slave nor free, nor male and female, because you are all one in Christ Jesus (οὐκ ἔστι Ἰουδαῖος οὐδὲ Ἕλληνας, οὐκ ἔστι δούλος οὐδὲ ἐλεύθερος, οὐκ ἔστι ἄρσεν καὶ θήλυ). (*Galatians* 3:28)

Because in one spirit we all were baptized into one body (καὶ γὰρ ἐν ἑνὶ πνεύματι ἡμεῖς πάντες εἰς ἓν σῶμα ἐβαπτίσθημεν), whether Jews or Greeks, slaves or free and were all given one spirit to drink (εἴτε Ἰουδαῖοι εἴτε Ἕλληνες εἴτε δούλοι εἴτε ἐλεύθεροι, καὶ πάντες ἐν πνεύματι ἐποτίσθημεν). (*1 Corinthians* 12:13).

Two important differences can be seen between the formula in Galatians and that in 1 Corinthians. Instead of the singular forms used in Galatians, the nouns in 1 Corinthians are plural: Jews instead of Jew, slaves instead of slave etc. Secondly, the formula is not phrased as a denial: rather than the negative ‘neither ... nor’ (οὐκ ἔστι ... οὐδὲ), or, ‘nor ... and’ (‘nor male *and* female’, οὐκ ἔστι ἄρσεν καὶ θήλυ), for the third pair in Galatians, we find the hypothetical ‘whether ... or’ (εἴτε ... εἴτε). The shift from ‘neither .. nor’ to ‘whether’ means a change in focus from the pairs together, to the separate groups. In 1 Corinthians, each group is listed separately. If the third pair was to be included in the formula in its Corinthian form, its wording would have to be changed considerably in comparison with Galatians. No longer could it be a quote from Genesis 1:27, where male and female are taken together. As noted above, in Galatians the third pair differs from the other two in its specific form, and breaks the parallelism of the phrase as a whole. Yet in the Corinthian formula, it would be difficult to insert the pair in this form. It would result in a very awkward construction, to something along the lines of ‘in one spirit we all were baptized into one body, whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free, whether *male and female*’.

In order to be included in a meaningful way, the third pair would need to undergo similar changes to the other two pairs, and would no longer be recognisable as a quote from Genesis. The full formula can be hypothetically reconstructed as: ‘because in one spirit we all were baptized into one body, whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free, whether *men or women* (εἴτε ἄρσενες εἴτε θήλειαι), and were all given one spirit to drink’.

We might ask whether this proclamation would really be very objectionable to Paul. In the previous chapter, he makes statements that seem to come quite close: ‘Nevertheless, in the Lord woman is not independent of man or man independent of woman. For just as woman came from man, so man comes through woman; but all things come from God’ (1 Corinthians 11:11-12). Men and women are both ‘in the Lord’, they are mutually dependent on each other. There is no reason to assume that Paul would not feel that both men and women are part of the one body of Christ. Nor would Paul most likely deny that both men and women can receive the spirit. While Paul objects to women praying and prophesying with bare heads, he does not object to women performing these activities as such, which would presumably require possession of the spirit.

I would therefore suggest that Paul does not leave out ‘male and female’ from the Corinthian formula because it would undermine his message about gender. Rather, Paul does not include the third pair into the formula in 1 Corinthians because doing so would necessarily mean losing the reference to Genesis, and the creation account, which, as we have just seen, is essential to its meaning.

3.2 Shameful for a Woman: Paul's Attitude towards Women's Dress and Speech

In his first letter to the Corinthians, Paul opposes certain actions of women, on the grounds that they do not reflect the appropriate difference between the sexes. These two well-known passages deal with the need for women to cover their heads (1 Corinthians 11:3-16) and the prohibition of women speaking in the community gatherings (1 Corinthians 14:33-36). These texts are sometimes seen as contradictory, since the first allows female speech under certain restrictions, while the second does not allow it in the *ekklesia*, the assembly. The tension between these two instructions, combined with the contradictions mentioned above, have led some scholars to the conclusion that Paul cannot be the author of the command to women to keep silent, and that the passage is in fact a later addition to the text.¹¹⁵

In this section, we will see that the apparent contradictory nature of Paul's ideas on women's behaviour conceals a strong consistency, which is entirely in line with contemporary thought on gender. The appearance and behaviour deemed appropriate for women was seen as naturally different from that appropriate for men. These two passages from 1 Corinthians in fact show a consistent attitude towards women, one that is concerned with order, convention and particularly shame. In Paul's thought, as in contemporary thought in general, women's dress and women's speech were related subjects, which were both seen from the perspective of propriety and shame. In both, a woman's submissive position with respect to men should become evident.

3.2.1 Women's Dress and Speech in a Veiling Culture

Although we cannot reconstruct the exact practices and attitudes with regard to veiling in Antiquity, it is clear that Paul lived in a veiling culture. According to a recent study by Lloyd Llewellyn-Jones, the veiling of women was routine in Greek culture, from the archaic era up until Roman times, with the possible exception of slaves.¹¹⁶ As in other veiling cultures, issues of modesty, honour and shame, social invisibility, pollution and sexuality can all be identified as components of ancient ideas about the veil.¹¹⁷ The evidence for women wearing veils in Antiquity is predominantly literary, although visual representations of women with head coverings also occur.¹¹⁸

¹¹⁵ Gordon Fee, e.g., notes that 'these two verses [33-34] simply lack any genuine correspondence with either the overall argument of chaps. 12-14 or the immediate argument of vv. 26-40 (Gordon Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians* (Grand Rapids 1987), 702).' Also Ross S. Kraemer, *Her Share of the Blessings: Women's Religions among Pagans, Jews, and Christians in the Greco-Roman World* (New York: Oxford University Press 1992), 149; Hans G. Conzelmann, *1 Corinthians: A Commentary on the First Epistle to the Corinthians* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press 1975). For an extensive overview of the discussion see Curt Niccum, 'The Voice of the Manuscripts on the Silence of Women: The External evidence for 1 Cor. 14.34-35', *New Testament Studies* 43 (1997), 242-255.

¹¹⁶ Lloyd Llewellyn-Jones, *Aphrodite's Tortoise: The Veiled Woman of Ancient Greece* (Swansea: Classical Press of Wales 2003), 315. For the lack of evidence on slave women veiling, see 140-141. See also Judith L. Sebesta, 'Symbolism in the Costume of the Roman Woman', in *The World of Roman Costume*, Judith L. Sebesta and Larissa Bonfante (eds.), (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press 1994) 46-53, 48-49.

¹¹⁷ Llewellyn-Jones, *Aphrodite's Tortoise*, 155.

¹¹⁸ Llewellyn-Jones notes that the veil is frequently absent in Greek iconography. He attributes this to artistic considerations, see Llewellyn-Jones, *Aphrodite's Tortoise*, 85-114.

One remarkable literary example is the first century Latin author Valerius Maximus, who relates the case of a man who divorced his wife because he had caught her outside with uncovered head, 'a stiff penalty, but not without a certain logic'.¹¹⁹ Plutarch's description of women's clothing, when discussing a festival which included ritual transvestism for both sexes, is telling: 'peploi and veils (καλύπτραις)'. Llewellyn-Jones concludes concisely that 'dress' and 'veil' spell out 'woman'.¹²⁰ Different veiling customs seem to have coexisted. Sometimes a loose veil was worn; sometimes the top of the cloak was lifted over the head. Dio Chrysostom praises the women from Paul's home town of Tarsus for wearing a veil that covered their entire face, leaving only a small slit through which they could see the road in front of them (*Oration* 33.48-49).¹²¹

In spite of what can be understood from Valerius Maximus, Roman veiling custom may have been less uniform than Greek. According to Gerd Theissen, Roman and particularly Corinthian grave monuments depict many women without a veil. The different depictions of freedwomen as opposed to free women suggest that this could be a reflection of different social practices, although evidence from art is problematic as a source for social custom.¹²²

Jewish veiling practices do not seem to have differed from Greek ones.¹²³ The earliest iconographical evidence of Jewish dress comes from the synagogue of Dura-Europos (third century AD). In these murals, all the women are shown wearing head coverings.¹²⁴ More importantly, both Philo and Josephus assume that married women wear a veil (Philo, *The Special Laws* III.52–62, Josephus, *Jewish Antiquities* III.270). Paul's concern that women cover their heads when praying and prophesying is thus in line with both Jewish and Greek custom. Similarly, his particular sensitivity to women's veiling in combination with women's speech is echoed in other sources. Like Paul, Plutarch also connects the visibility of a woman's body with her speech.

Theano once exposed her hand as she was arranging her cloak. "What a beautiful arm", said someone. "But not public property," she replied. Not only the arms but the words of a modest woman must never be public property (δέι δὲ μὴ μόνον τὸν πῆχυν ἀλλὰ μηδὲ τὸν λόγον δημόσιον εἶναι τῆς σώφρονος). She should be shy with her speech as with her body, and guard it against strangers. Feelings, character, and disposition can all be seen in a woman's talk. (Plutarch, *Advice to the Bride and Groom* 31)

¹¹⁹ Valerius Maximus 6.3.10, quoted in Llewellyn-Jones, *Aphrodite's Tortoise*, 167.

¹²⁰ Llewellyn-Jones, *Aphrodite's Tortoise*, 16.

¹²¹ See also Terence Paige, 'The Social Matrix of Women's Speech at Corinth: The Context and Meaning of the Command to Silence in 1 Corinthians 14:33b-36', *Bulletin for Biblical Research* 12/2 (2002) 217-242, 228.

¹²² Gerd Theissen, *Psychological Aspects of Pauline Theology* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark 1987), 160-161. The problem in seeing art as a reflection of social custom is discussed by Preston Massey (Preston T. Massey, 'The Meaning of κατακαλύπτω and κατὰ κεφαλῆς ἔχων in 1 Corinthians 11:2-16', *New Testament Studies* 53 (2007), 502–523, 518).

¹²³ See Llewellyn-Jones on the unveiling during Jewish wedding rituals (*Aphrodite's Tortoise*, 228-229). Josephus also describes both Jewish and non-Jewish women as wearing a veil in various situations (see Douglas R. Edwards, 'The Social, Religious, and Political Aspects of Costume in Josephus', in *The World of Roman Costume*, Judith L. Sebesta and Larissa Bonfante (eds.), (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press 1994) 153-159, 153-155.

¹²⁴ Lucille A. Roussin, 'Costume in Roman Palestine: Archeological Remains and Evidence from the Mishnah', in *The World of Roman Costume*, Judith L. Sebesta and Larissa Bonfante (eds.), (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press 1994) 182-190, 182.

A woman should be shy with her speech as well as with her body, for fear of showing too much of herself. For a woman, speaking is almost like undressing in public, as Richard Hawley notes in his commentary on this text.¹²⁵ By covering up her body and keeping her words and feelings to herself, a woman showed that she was not part of the public domain. Veiling helped to preserve and signal female chastity. It rendered a woman socially invisible and sexually inviolate. Neither her speech nor her body were to be seen as public property, as Plutarch states. Rather, the veil marked her as the property of the male whose honour was reinforced by both her invisibility and her chastity.

Since a woman's natural place was in the home, when she moved outside, the veil served as a sort of home away from home, shielding her from the outside world. Llewellyn-Jones describes the veil as 'a kind of portable domestic space' confining women, yet at the same time enabling them to leave the home and operate in the public sphere. He describes how the face veil, the *tegidion*, gained popularity in Hellenistic world, at a time when women increasingly operated outside the home.¹²⁶ By making them even more socially invisible, the face veil allowed women more corresponding freedom to go out in public. Increasing female freedom of movement and the growing control over female sexuality were thus intertwined. Plutarch continues by indicating where women's speech is appropriate, viz. to and through her husband:

A wife should speak only to or through her husband (δεῖ γὰρ ἢ πρὸς τὸν ἄνδρα λαλεῖν ἢ διὰ τοῦ ἀνδρός), and should not feel aggrieved if, like a piper, she makes nobler music through another's tongue. (Plutarch, *Advice to the Bride and Groom* 32)

Plutarch thus connects a woman's seclusion and public silence with submission to her husband. As he states elsewhere, 'A good woman, on the other hand, should be seen most when she is with her husband, and stay at home and be hidden when he is away.'¹²⁷ A woman embodies the honour and shame of her husband or male kin.¹²⁸ In this way, the veil ultimately supported an ideology that advocated female modesty, chastity, silence and invisibility.

3.2.2 Veiled Speech and Submissive Silence

We will now examine the way Paul deals with women's veils and women's speech, and the arguments given in his letter to the Corinthians. Both passages contain some unusual statements and claims, and the line of reasoning, particularly in the passage discussing veils, is rather confusing, as has often been noted.¹²⁹ It is not my intention here to analyse Paul's reasoning in detail. Rather, I aim to show the consistency between the two paragraphs and

¹²⁵ Richard Hawley, 'Practicing What You Preach: Plutarch's Sources and Treatment', in *Plutarch's Advice to the Bride and Groom and A Consolation to His Wife: English Translations, Commentary and Interpretative Essays*, Sarah B. Pomeroy (ed.), (Oxford: Oxford University Press 1999), 116-127, 119, 120.

¹²⁶ Llewellyn-Jones, *Aphrodite's Tortoise*, 189-214.

¹²⁷ Plutarch, *Advice to the Bride and Groom* 9.

¹²⁸ Llewellyn-Jones, *Aphrodite's Tortoise*, 155-188.

¹²⁹ According to Gerd Theissen, Paul raises 'merkwürdigen Argumenten' (Theissen, *Psychologische Aspekte paulinischer Theologie*, 161. See also Schüssler Fiorenza, *In Memory of Her*, 228; Hogan, "No Longer Male and Female", 41.

the shared emphasis on shame and convention, which conforms entirely to the values of a veiling culture, as just outlined.

When introducing his point that women should cover their heads, Paul immediately sets out by bringing in the notion of shame:

But I want you to understand that of every man Christ is the head, and the head of a woman is the man, (παντὸς ἀνδρὸς ἡ κεφαλὴ ὁ Χριστὸς ἐστίν, κεφαλὴ δὲ γυναικὸς ὁ ἀνὴρ,) and the head of Christ is God. Any man who prays or prophesies with something on his head shames his head (κατὰ κεφαλῆς ἔχων καταισχύνει τὴν κεφαλὴν αὐτοῦ), but any woman who prays or prophesies with her head unveiled shames her head (ἀκατακαλύπτω τῇ κεφαλῇ καταισχύνει τὴν κεφαλὴν αὐτῆς) -- it is one and the same thing as having her head shaved. For if a woman will not veil herself, then she should cut off her hair; but if it is shameful (αἰσχρὸν) for a woman to have her hair cut off or to be shaved, she should veil herself. (1 *Corinthians* 11:3-6)

In spite of the lack of clarity with respect to certain aspects of the argument, there can be no doubt as to its main point: women should cover their heads when praying or prophesying.¹³⁰ Even though various other matters are addressed along the way in the paragraph as a whole, the issue of women's head coverings is unmistakably the main item on Paul's agenda. In order to introduce his argument with a forceful point, Paul starts off with a forceful statement about heads: Christ is the head of every man, man is the head of woman and God is the head of Christ. The hierarchy is spelled out straight away. From this hierarchy of metaphorical heads, the appropriate attitude towards men's and women's physical heads can be deduced. Men should not cover their heads, but women should. Breaking this gender boundary is shameful for men and women, and Paul uses the same word for both (καταισχύνει 1 *Corinthians* 11: 4,5). The shame of gender bending can be compared to the shame of having a shaved head. Here Paul uses the term αἰσχρὸς shameful. This term occurs in only two instances in Paul's letters, in this passage and when describing a woman speaking in the assembly. There he states that it is shameful, αἰσχρὸς for a woman to speak. We will return to this issue when discussing the passage on women's silence.

It is not exactly clear to what Paul refers when equating the shame of not veiling with the shame of having a shaved head.¹³¹ He makes his point with the use of a *reductio ad absurdum*. By suggesting that a woman who does not wear a veil should also shave her head, he discredits the idea that a woman can leave her head uncovered and thereby enforces veiling as the social norm. Of course, Paul's logic only holds persuasion for those who already accept the idea that showing one's hair in public is inappropriate.

At the end of the passage, after bringing in several other points, most notably the hierarchy in the creation of man and women, Paul returns to issues of honour and convention:

¹³⁰ Massey has convincingly shown by analyzing Paul's terminology that the issue can only be that of head covering, not that of hairstyles, as has sometimes been suggested (Massey, 'The Meaning of κατακαλύπτω', 502-523).

¹³¹ For the possibly shameful context of shaved heads relating to a Syrian custom, see Cynthia L. Thompson, 'Hairstyles, Head-coverings, and St Paul: Portraits from Roman Corinth', *Biblical Archeology*, 51/2 (1988), 99-115, 104, 110.

Nor Male and Female

Does not nature itself teach you that if a man wears long hair, it is degrading (ἀτιμία) to him, but if a woman has long hair, it is her glory (δόξα)? For her hair is given to her for a covering (περιβολαίου). But if anyone is disposed to be contentious - we have no such custom, nor do the churches of God. (1 *Corinthians* 11:14-16)

Paul asks the Corinthians the rhetorical question: 'does not nature itself teach you that if a man wears long hair, it is degrading (ἀτιμία) to him, but if a woman has long hair, it is her glory (δόξα)? Although Paul mentions men several times in this passage, it seems unlikely that he is indeed criticising their behaviour. They probably serve merely as a foil in this passage, since the question is what is proper for women, as Paul explicitly states in verse 13: 'is it proper for a woman to pray to God with her head unveiled'? The purpose of the men mentioned in the text is to provide a contrast. As non-women, they illustrate that what is shameful for them is the opposite of what is shameful for women.¹³² Since Paul argues from the hierarchy between men and women, he assumes that their different positions should be reflected in their appearance. The male norm is the undisputed standard, the female norm must be different. Paul thus assumes that nature teaches what is degrading and what is not.

To appeal to nature in order to confirm the social differences between men and women, as Paul does in this text, may not have been unfamiliar to Paul's audience.¹³³ Epictetus argues in a similar vein when discussing the relevance of beards:

Nature has found a most becoming use even for that [the beard], enabling us to discriminate between man and woman. Nature (ἡ φύσις) identifies itself even at a distance: 'I am a man: come and deal with me on these terms. Nothing else is needed; just take note of the signs'. (Epictetus, *Discourses* I.16.10-11)

Continuing his argument, Epictetus insists that the distinctions between man and woman are not only based on nature alone, they are in fact symbols from God:

That is why we should safeguard the signs that God has given us (τὰ σύμβολα τοῦ θεοῦ) and by virtue of which the genders were intended to be distinguished. (Epictetus, *Discourses* I.16.14)

Like Paul, Epictetus thus sees the differences between the sexes, in this case in the form of facial hair, as stemming from a natural and divine order.¹³⁴

After this appeal to nature, Paul adds one final argument, that of convention. None of the other communities, or as Paul describes them here 'the *ekklesiai* of God' has such a custom. 'We just don't do that' is what his message basically comes down to. The Corinthians are encouraged not to deviate from the social norm. Paul's argumentation thus relies heavily on ideas of what is shameful for men and women, what is accepted, appropriate and natural. These are precisely the types of arguments one would expect,

¹³² But see David W.J. Gill, 'The Importance of Roman Portraiture for Head-coverings in 1 Corinthians', *Tyndale Bulletin* 41/2 (1990), 245-260. The Corinthian statue of Augustus wearing a veil is often suggested to be a possible background for Paul's reference to men covering their heads.

¹³³ Philo uses as similar argument: 'For just as in their nature (ἐν τῇ φύσει) men take precedence over women, so also in families they shall have the first share.' (*Special Laws* II. 124).

¹³⁴ Epictetus in this same passage also mentions the softer note in a woman's voice as one of the features distinguishing women from men (Epictetus, *Discourses* I.16.12).

based on Llewellyn-Jones' interpretation of the culture of veiling. We will see that when it comes to women's speaking, Paul has a similar line of reasoning.

We now turn to the other well-known passage where Paul gives instruction for the behaviour of women. There are several notable similarities between Paul's instructions about veiling and his command that women should be silent in the *ekklesia*. Straight away, Paul links his instruction to the convention of the churches:

For God is a God not of disorder but of peace. As in all the *ekklesiai* of the saints, (Ὡς ἐν πάσαις ταῖς ἐκκλησίαις τῶν ἁγίων) women should be silent in the *ekklesiai* (αἱ γυναῖκες ἐν ταῖς ἐκκλησίαις σιγάτωσαν). For they are not permitted to speak, but should be subordinate, as the law also says (καθὼς καὶ ὁ νόμος λέγει). If there is anything they desire to know, let them ask their men (τοὺς ἰδίους ἄνδρας) at home. For it is shameful (αἰσχρόν) for a woman to speak in the *ekklesia*. Or did the word of God originate with you? Or are you the only ones it has reached? (1 Corinthians 14:33-36)

Paul claims that it is shameful (αἰσχρός) for a woman to speak in church, using the same term as in his instructions about veiling. For a woman, both speaking in the *ekklesia* and having a shaved head, or as implied, an uncovered head when praying, is shameful. For both men and women, Paul also uses the related verb *καταισχύνω*, put shame on. For men to wear their hair long he calls *ἀτιμία*, degrading. Gender boundaries were obviously very loaded. The fact that Paul uses the term shameful (αἰσχρός) only in these two instances, both concerned with women's behaviour and gender boundaries, should be taken as a serious indication that both passages reflect his ideas and that both were indeed written by Paul.

The idea that these verses instructing women to be silent are a later interpolation is held by many scholars, to the point that the New Revised Standard Version even places the text in brackets. Yet very little can be said to support this idea. With regard to internal evidence, Gordon Fee maintains that the repetition of the word *ekklesia* in verses 33-34 presents a redundancy which is hardly bearable.¹³⁵ However, the term *ekklesia* is used here in two different meanings. 'As in all the *ekklesiai* of the saints', refers to the communities in different geographical locations. The second part, 'women should be silent in the *ekklesiai*', refers to the gathering of the community on a specific occasions, the assemblies. If the second use of the word was omitted, the command might be unclear as to when women need to be silent. The double use of *ekklesia* serves to make the instruction both general and specific: in all communities, women should be silent when gathering for the assembly.

The textual evidence adduced to confirm the text as a gloss is rather weak. There is no manuscript where the passage is not found, only some where it is found in a different location, viz. verses 34-35 are found after verse 40. Careful analysis of the textual evidence has shown that these variant manuscripts in fact in all likelihood go back to one tradition, and stem from one archetype.¹³⁶ The different placement of the two verses can best be understood as the result of a scribal error.

¹³⁵ Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, 702.

¹³⁶ See Niccum, 'The Voice of the Manuscripts', 242-255. Wire, *The Corinthian Women Prophets*, 149-152.

The passage on women's silence does not differ fundamentally as to content when compared with the chapter as a whole, as is sometimes claimed.¹³⁷ Just as the previous passages, the text is concerned with instructions about being silent (σιγάτω, 14:28, 30) and speaking (λαλέω, 14:27, 28, 29) when in the *ekklesia*. The fact that the transition to women is rather abrupt, and the return to the original subject equally sudden should not be seen as an indication of a later addition. Rather, this could be seen to signify Paul's discomfort with the subject, as do the unusual type of argumentation and the rather sarcastic rhetorical questions. Shameful behaviour is painful to talk about.

If Paul clearly shows a consistent attitude towards women's behaviour in both passages, how then to explain the apparent contradiction between the instruction to women to wear a veil for certain forms of speech on the one hand, and to be silent, on the other?¹³⁸ If Paul categorically demands silence from women in the *ekklesia*, or assembly, it inevitably follows that when he wants women to cover their heads when speaking in prayer and prophecy, he assumes that they speak outside the *ekklesia*. Indeed, nowhere in his argument about head coverings does Paul mention the *ekklesia*. Only in the second part of the chapter, in verse 18, does he turn to the community gatherings.

Is there any indication that activities such as prayer and prophecy did indeed take place on occasions other than the *ekklesia*? Confirmation can be found in Paul's own boast about his ability to speak in tongues. Typically, even wanting to be good at what might, on certain occasions, be bad, he states:

I thank God that I speak in tongues more than all of you; nevertheless, in the *ekklesia* (ἐν ἐκκλησίᾳ) I would rather speak five words with my mind, in order to instruct others also, than ten thousand words in a tongue. (1 Corinthians 14:18-19)

Paul speaks in tongues more than anyone, but has particular restrictions for doing so in the community gatherings. In the *ekklesia*, speaking with the mind is preferable. All the speaking in tongues that Paul claims to do apparently occurs outside the *ekklesia*. Of course, we are faced here with a piece of rhetoric: Paul does not want to be outdone by the Corinthians on any level, yet still wants to make his point about what is appropriate for the gatherings of the community. He stresses his fluency, lest anyone should suggest that it is his inability to speak in tongues which leads him to a preference for prophecy. Still, the text indicates that there are places other than the *ekklesia* where someone might speak in tongues.

¹³⁷ Gordon Fee believes that 'these two verses [33-34] simply lack any genuine correspondence with either the overall argument of chaps. 12-14 or the immediate argument of vv. 26-40' (Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, 702).

¹³⁸ Terence Paige lists five different solutions to the apparent contradiction: 1) eliminating 11:5 by claiming it is only a hypothetical possibility, 2) eliminating 14:34-35 by claiming it is a non-Pauline interpolation 3) eliminating 14:34-35 by claiming it is Paul's summary of a Corinthian position that he rebuts, 4) defining the "speaking" as not normal prayer or prophecy but some sort of threat to male authority, 5) defining the "speaking" as simply disruptive chatter by women. My solution would then come closest to 1), an apparently heavily outmoded view, with the notable exception of Antoinette Clark Wire's study on Corinthian women prophets. See Terence Paige, 'The Social Matrix of Women's Speech at Corinth: The Context and Meaning of the Command to Silence in 1 Corinthians 14:33b-36', *Bulletin for Biblical Research* 12/2 (2002) 217-242, 217-218.

A similar case can be made for prayer outside the *ekklesia*. Paul mentions his own frequent prayers (Rom 1:10), which evidently did not all take place in the *ekklesia*. Though there are no direct references to prophesying outside the *ekklesia*, there is no reason to assume that this is such a fundamentally different activity, that it could not be done on other occasions as well.

Perhaps the question where women prayed and prophesied can be fruitfully connected to the question where women would not wear a veil. As Llewellyn-Jones makes clear, wearing a veil was a widespread custom. We have no indication that women would not wear a veil in any situation, except presumably in their home or when in the company of other women. It would seem entirely possible and in keeping with the separation of men and women in Antiquity, that female members of the community would sometimes meet in their homes, without men present. In such meetings, they could pray and prophesy publicly, in front of a female audience, and might not wear a veil. It would not be the activities as such which raised Paul's anger, but the attire of those speaking, because he saw them as endangering the hierarchy between men and women. This could also be the sphere where we should see the activity of Paul's female co-workers. Women were most likely active in spreading the gospel among other women.

In conclusion, we can say that Paul's ideas about women's behaviour with regard to veiling and speech are entirely in line with contemporary social values. The difference between the sexes which results from divine ordering and which is reflected in nature should be confirmed in the appearance and behaviour of men and women. Any challenge to this difference is shameful for both men and women. Yet while shame in a veiling culture is particularly associated with female sexuality and a threat to chastity, Paul shows no such concern in his instructions about sexual behaviour. He does not single out women as responsible for the honour of the community, on the contrary, his guidelines show a remarkable degree of reciprocity. Rather, we should accept Paul's own focus on male-female hierarchy as his main reason for instructing women to veil and to be silent.

Conclusion

If we take Paul's statement that there is no 'male and female' in Christ as a contribution to the cultural conversation of his time, we have to conclude that it is a statement about the eschatological end of marriage. This chapter has identified three reasons for doing so. The first is the contemporary understanding of the creation of man and woman in Genesis, and the verse 'male and female he created them' in particular, as the creation of marriage. God's creation of 'male and female' was seen as the instigation of marriage, for the purpose of procreation.

The second reason is Paul's own argumentation about marriage and the reasons he gives why a person should or should not marry. The absence of any of the conventional arguments in favour of marriage, most importantly procreation and the continuation of society, suggest that Paul had a substantially different understanding of marriage from most of his contemporaries, even if his symmetrical references to men and women confirm the contemporary idea of marriage as a partnership. He himself connects this understanding with the approaching end. Since marriage is part of the world that will soon disappear, there is no reason to be focussed on it. The only reason left to marry is to avoid sexual sin.

The third reason is that Paul's expectation about the eschatological end of marriage was not an isolated phenomenon, but was part of a wider expectation that is summed up in the Sibylline end-time prophecy as 'no marriage, no death'.

Paul thus believes that marriage only has meaning for the present world, and that there is no marriage 'in Christ'. His stipulations about when to choose to marry and when not to, confirm the notion that has been building throughout this study, that the formula should not be taken as a straightforward description of the community. It rather describes a new creation, a reality that is not yet entirely present, but upon which believers can orient their lives. If they are able, they should not marry, but if *porneia* is too much of a threat, they can still do so. Paul draws implications from this new creation, but does not suggest that it already erases the world as it is. He negotiates the ideal of the end time with the reality of the present world.

Conclusion

We started our exploration in this study with two questions about Paul's statement on unity in Christ. We asked first of all what it would mean, in a first-century context, to say 'there is neither Jew nor Greek, neither slave nor free, nor male and female'; what it would mean to put these three pairs together. The second question, derived from this, focussed on the possible meaning of the individual pairs. It asked what can we learn about Paul's thought on Jew and Greek, on slave and free, and on male and female, if we understand the formula in which these terms occur as part of the cultural conversation about these pairs in Paul's time. Having analysed both the statement as a whole and each of the three pairs as part of contemporary thought, we can now formulate an answer to both these questions.

Three Pairs Together

As this study has shown, the three pairs of Paul's formula were all significant in the cultural conversation of his time about how to live, and how to organise society and family. On the one hand, they played a role when people talked about ensuring the continuation of society and the stability of the household. Philosophers of the early Empire emphasised the duties of the socially superior over the inferior; the duties of fathers over children, of husbands over wives and of masters over slaves, and the duty of all, especially the elite, to procreate and ensure the continuation of a stable and harmonious society by marrying and producing new legitimate citizens. 'Remain not unmarried, lest you perish nameless', urges the poet Pseudo-Phocylides, 'beget in turn as you were begotten' (*Sentences* 175-176).

At the same time, the pairs feature in first-century thought about a way of life that was in some sense a mirror-image of this hierarchically-structured society. When people imagined what an ideal world might be, they pictured it as a place 'full of justice and mutual love' (Diogenes of Oenoanda, Fragment 56), that did not require difference and barriers to ensure harmony. They looked forward to a time when property and work would be shared by everyone, without the need for slaves. They prised exotic communities where people did not live divided into separate families, but mixed up their relationships and their children. The different versions of this ideal all shared the notion that unity, harmony and freedom could be the result of abolishing those differences which were all important in society generally; differences created by laws, by property and by family. When Paul uses these three pairs together, he can therefore be understood to make a contribution to the contemporary debate about these types of questions.

Our exploration of Paul's thought on baptism highlighted why Paul felt the need to address such issues and make a statement about social unity. He was driven by the conviction that the end time had come, and that all people could now become part of God's new creation through Christ. Paul worked out the consequences of this messianic age along the lines of contemporary notions about ideal ways to live: he envisioned a unity of all human beings with God and with each other. In a first-century understanding, such a unity implied a rejection of the conventional barriers between people created by family and law. In Paul's eschatological perspective, the continuation of society, which was thought to depend on the continuation of marriage and family, suddenly became an out-dated concept. The breakdown of the cosmos that God had begun in Christ, implied and enabled a breakdown of society as it had been.

The approach taken in this study, of reading the formula as a whole in the context of the contemporary conversation about the categories mentioned in it, has thus opened up a new way of understanding its meaning. It allows us to see how Paul contributed to the discussions at the time, and what was distinctive of his contribution. For a first-century audience, the three pairs would most likely have conjured up an image of an ideal way of living, an ideal community. Paul's language may have presented an obstacle to someone unfamiliar with a Jewish perspective or Jewish scripture. The pair Jew and Greek, if heard as a subversion of the Greek opposition between Greek and barbarian, could possibly have sounded strange. The quotation from Genesis in the third pair also required some knowledge of Jewish scripture and its possible interpretations. Yet apart from these aspects, the formula would have struck a chord with a first-century understanding of an ideal time or way to live.

Paul's formula then also made a competitive contribution to contemporary discussions about the ideal. By portraying unity in Christ in these terms, Paul makes a claim for his gospel: the social reality that others dream about is real for us. We already experience an ideal community, an ideal way of life, and we are part of the new creation that will soon see this ideal realised in full. Perceiving the formula in these new terms also allows it to add to our understanding of what made Paul's message attractive in his time. Paul presents an ideal that his contemporaries can relate to, that speaks to the ideas of the time about harmony and unity in the way people live together.

Yet we not only have a better idea of what Paul does in using these three pairs, we can also recognise what he does not do. A further insight that the contextual approach of this study gives, is highlighting what Paul does not mention. One aspect that features in many depictions of utopian groups, one that is fundamental, for example, to Plato's Republic, as well as for the Essenes in the descriptions of Philo and Josephus, is the absence of property. Sharing all goods equally 'like brothers' is seen the basis for their community. Paul's formula, like the Sibylline prophecy, could have included the pair 'neither rich, nor poor' (*Sibylline Oracles* 2. 322), but does not.

Paul does suggest that difference in wealth should not create difference within the community, when he instructs the wealthier members of the community not to despise 'those who have not' (1 Corinthians 11:22) and that having possessions is something that belongs to the old world, not the new creation (1 Corinthians 7,30). Apart from this, however, the concept of property does not seem to play a role in his thought on an ideal community, unlike that of most of his contemporaries. Paul's ideal therefore challenges the claim that wealth was seen in Antiquity as one of the fundamental causes of strife, which required its absence in an ideal community.¹

Conversely, Paul's statement as an expression of a contemporary ideal also increases our understanding of ancient, especially utopian, thought. It confirms the importance of the absence of slavery as a component of contemporary social ideals. It further confirms that the absence of marriage did not, by this time, necessarily imply the absence, or sharing, of women. In Paul's view, both men and women can turn their attention away from their spouses to focus on the central concern of the group, which has both male and female members. Even though he argues against marriage, and urges both men and women to

¹ See the discussion on utopian thought in Chapter I, section 3.

remain unmarried, the way Paul treats marriage in this discussion confirms the first-century understanding of it, as a mutual undertaking of husband and wife.

Engaging with Scholarship

By understanding Paul's statement in the cultural conversation of his time, we have gained a fresh perspective on it, which allows us to advance beyond the scholarly stalemate of 'inclusion' versus 'equality'. As observed in the introduction to this study, these two dominant interpretations of Paul's statement appear driven in part by modern agendas and concerns. Our contextual approach confirmed neither of these qualifications as a suitable characterisation for the message of Paul's formula, since neither interpretation has dug down deep enough in Paul, or in the thought of his time, to adequately describe first-century concerns. While both inclusiveness and a lack of difference and hierarchy play a role in conceptions of the ideal, they do so in terms that are not immediately recognisable from, or transferable to, a modern context.

The idea that the three pairs merely refer to the inclusion of these groups while not affecting their respective hierarchical positions is difficult to maintain, in light of the clear emphasis on the absence of distinctions in discussions on the ideal.² In descriptions of the ideal, people are seen as being equals, sharing everything (κοινῆ δ' ἅμα πάντες, *Sibylline Oracles* 2. 324) and as brothers (ἀδελφοί, so, e.g., Philo, *That Every Good Man Is Free* 79). The relationships within an ideal community are different from those in society generally, exactly because all the members of the group can share a common interest. In ancient thought, such a common interest required the absence of social differences which were thought to create inequity and strife.

As Philo explains, slavery creates 'estrangement instead of affinity' and 'enmity instead of friendship' (Philo, *That Every Good Man Is Free* 79). While such hostility does not present a problem in society generally for Philo, it is not acceptable in the context of an ideal community, such as the Essenes. Slavery goes against the mutual service which is characteristic of their way of life. That Paul shared this ideal of mutual service is suggested by his encouragements to 'be slaves of each other' (Galatians 5,13) and to 'be devoted to one another in brotherly love' (Romans 12,10, see also Romans 14,9; 15,7; Galatians 6,2; Philippians 2,3; 1 Thessalonians 4,9; 5,15).

At the same time, the conception of equality that can be seen to play a role in thought on the ideal is not envisioned as the equality of individuals, 'irrespective of class or gender'.³ In our examination both of utopian thought and of Paul's ideas about male and female, we have concluded that any notion of gender equality is absent. Since I have argued for an understanding of the third pair as referring to marriage rather than to gender as such, the notion that Paul proclaimed the equality of man and woman, in whatever sense, has to be rejected. Nor is there any indication that Paul, as Schüssler Fiorenza has suggested, was questioning patriarchy or structures of dominance in denying the importance of marriage.⁴ Paul can rather be seen to reflect the contemporary notion of marriage as a partnership, not as a relationship that is oppressive to women. There is thus no basis for seeing the formula as a declaration of gender equality, or the equality of individuals generally.

² For this view see John Elliott, 'Jesus Movement', 205, whose ideas were discussed in the introduction, along with others who interpreted the formula as referring to 'inclusion'.

³ Beavis, 'Christian Origins', 36.

⁴ Fiorenza, *In Memory of Her*, 213.

While there is a concept in traditions about the ideal, of something that is seen as equality, this is conceived in terms that are distinctly ancient. In ideal communities, unity and equality can be seen as a consequence of not knowing who your parents, or who your children are, as in Plato's *Republic* or among *Iambulus'* islanders. Equality appears to be associated with the absence of the family; it can be achieved by living together in a group of only unmarried men, or unmarried men and women living separately, having left their families behind. Without family connections to divide them, people were thought to be able to have all things in common.

This particular understanding of equality also has implications for the assumption that Paul uses the three pairs as a cypher, to indicate all social differences. Paul's statement refers to something that is more specific and concrete than the general absence of social difference. As any utopian or social ideal, it echoes the particular social circumstances under which it was conceived and the society or way of life for which it presents an alternative. It focusses specifically on those divisions that were seen as obstacles for unity: the boundaries between peoples and the divisions of the household.

Each of the Three Pairs

The second question that was formulated at the beginning of this study asked what we can learn about Paul's thought on each of the three pairs, if we understand his formula as part of the cultural conversation about these pairs in his own time. For each of the pairs, our contextual approach and the emphasis on the ideal has made it possible to contribute new insights to these aspects of Paul's thought.

Neither Jew nor Greek

The first pair of the formula is the most salient one for Paul and one that concerns him throughout his letters. In this sense, it reflects the contemporary interest in ethnic difference, or rather, in its absence. First-century cosmopolitanism saw the consequences of human unity first and foremost in terms of ethnic and religious unity. As Dio Chrysostom declares, the whole human race, 'the Greeks and the barbarians alike' share in reason, and therefore in an innate knowledge of the divine (Dio Chrysostom, *Oration 12. 27*).

Paul's ardent claims that God does not distinguish between Jew and gentile can be understood as a particular first-century elaboration of expectations about gentile salvation. His polemical redefinition of concepts such as the children of Abraham or circumcision, allows him to bring all people into God's family. His thought can be described, as I have suggested, as a form of Jewish cosmopolitanism; a Jewish conception of a unified humanity, predicated on the end time. Yet in emphatically declaring that there is 'no distinction between Jew and Greek' (Romans 10:12), Paul speaks to much wider concerns about the differences between people.

Paul's eschatological perspective can also illuminate our understanding of his thought on the law. This perspective, as I have argued, allows us to see the radical nature of Paul's statements about the Jewish law not as a consequence of a perceived problem in the law or in 'Judaism'. Rather, it is because Paul assumes that God has taken a new step in sending Christ, thereby allowing both Jews and gentiles access to God on the same grounds of 'faith in Christ', that the law no longer functions as a characteristic of those who belong to God. Paul's problem with the views of others arises when they do not share his conviction that

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the end time has begun, or do not share his conviction about the implications of this end time for the positions of Jews and non-Jews in relation to God.

Paul's concern about the law as creating difference between people is shared by his contemporaries. They imagine an ideal time when 'there will be no need of fortifications or laws' (Diogenes of Oenoanda, Fragment 56), when 'the earth will belong equally to all undivided by walls or fences' (*Sibylline Oracles* 2. 319-320). Both Jews and non-Jews in Paul's time can see laws as obstacles and boundaries between people. A unified human community does not seem to coexist with laws, unless it is an explicitly uniform law that is valid for all. As the Sibyl prophesies about such a new, universal law: 'The Immortal in starry heaven will put into effect a common law for the people, valid over the entire earth, (...) for he is the sole God and there is no other' (*Sibylline Oracles* 3. 757-760).

Neither Slave nor Free

When it comes to the second pair, the contextual approach and emphasis on the ideal has brought a new aspect of contemporary thought on slavery to our attention. The absence of slaves as one of the characteristics of an ideal society has so far been overlooked in discussions of Paul's thought, yet it adds an important element to our understanding. Various expressions of ideal times and communities mention explicitly that there are no slaves to be found in them. Plutarch looked back to the age of Saturn 'when there was neither slave nor master, but all were regarded as kinsmen and equals' (Plutarch, *Numa* 23, 11). In the early Empire, traditions about a past Golden Age were influenced by eschatological thought, and vice versa. For both types of thought, this resulted in an increased emphasis on the absence of slavery, both in depictions of the past and the future.

That such an ideal of a society without slaves would resonate in the first century can be understood in connection with the prominence of cosmopolitanism. The idea that all human beings were connected to each other and to the divine had implications not only for ethnic categories, but also for slave and free, who could be seen in this light as 'kinsmen, brothers by nature' (Epictetus, *Discourses* I. 13, 2-4). In Jewish thought, these elements of the absence of slavery and the notion that all people are created as brothers, come to a clear expression in the ideal communities of the Essenes and the Therapeutae. The Therapeutae 'do not have slaves to wait on them, as they consider that the ownership of servants is against nature' (Philo, *On the Contemplative Life* 70). Paul's statement that there is 'neither slave nor free', and his claim that slave and free are brothers, can be seen as part of this contemporary understanding that an ideal way of life would not include slavery.

Nor Male and Female

In connection with the third pair, a contextual reading offers little support for the accepted opinion that Paul here refers to the equality of men and women, however defined. I have argued instead, based on the perspective of eschatological unity, and the focus in the contemporary conversation, that Paul here refers to the end of marriage and procreation. Several Jewish authors in Paul's time understand the creation of man and woman in Genesis, and the verse 'male and female he created them' in particular, as the creation of marriage. God's creation of 'male and female' was seen as the instigation of marriage, for the purpose of procreation.

That Paul denies the relevance of marriage and procreation in light of the end time is confirmed by his own line of reasoning on these issues. Paul's expectation about the eschatological end of marriage was not an isolated phenomenon, but was part of a wider

expectation that is summed up in the Sibylline end-time prophecy as ‘no marriage, no death’ (*Sibylline Oracles* 2. 328). Paul thus argues that it is better for both men and women not to marry, and supports his argument by identifying marriage as one of the aspects of the world that is about to pass away. Paul thereby confirms the cosmopolitan notion that saw marriage as the first bond that ultimately connected men and women to all other humans and to society in general. It is exactly because marriage constituted a commitment to the continuation of the world that Paul felt the need to discourage it.

In looking at Paul’s discussions of each of these three pairs, a pattern has emerged. In each case, Paul draws implications from his eschatological perspective and the coming of a new creation, but he does not suggest that it already erases the world as it is. He negotiates the ideal of the end time with the reality of the present world. This confirms the observation made in our analysis of the baptismal formula in Paul’s thought, that he does not use it directly in connection with the community of believers, but rather as a description of Christ.

The formula cannot be taken as a straightforward description of Pauline community. It rather describes a new creation, a reality that is not yet entirely present. This new creation has consequences for the way believers live, but it does not already erase the world as it is. In his letters, Paul can be seen to urge believers to reorient their lives towards a divine action: by sending Christ and resurrecting him after his death, God has set in motion the beginning of the end and this future is already impinging on the present.

What this reorientation means exactly, in terms of the practical consequences for the lives of those who undertake it, is not always easy to establish from Paul’s letters. Paul did not expect to have to make any long term plans. The communities that he founded were, in a sense, provisional; they covered the time between the beginning of the end and the end of that beginning, i.e. the return of Christ. Paul did envision these communities, however, as already trying to live out the new reality that was to come. In this sense, they were an attempt to realise an ideal community.

In the metaphors that Paul uses, it is clear that he expects a community that is close-knit and mutually supportive. By calling believers brothers, and occasionally sisters, and by referring to them as a body, by asking them to be each other’s slaves and bear each other’s burdens, he emphasises their mutual dependence. The fact that these types of metaphors also occur in other depictions of utopian or ideal communities confirms that we should see Paul’s letters as contributions to the contemporary conversation about the ideal.

Further Questions

In the introduction, I made the observation that Paul’s is one of the few voices from antiquity that we can still hear today. This examination of his ideas in the context of contemporary thought has shown that his was not a lone voice, as is sometimes thought. Paul’s expression of unity in Christ was unique, but it nevertheless shows affinity with contemporary understandings. This affinity is one of the aspects of this study that raises further questions.

There is much to explore in the way Paul interacted with contemporary thought. It would be worthwhile to see whether we can identify with more accuracy the types of ideas that were relevant to him; the types of thought he engaged with. The prophecies of the Sibylline Oracles, for example, appear to have much in common with Paul’s eschatology, yet these works have often been overlooked in Pauline scholarship. The same may be said for

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the Greek romances, which offer a wealth of material that is underused, especially when it comes to issues such as the family, slaves, sexuality and marriage. Both the Greek novels and Paul's letters, along with other New-Testament texts, are rare in that they have an interest in aspects of ordinary first-century daily life.

In connection with the law, the eschatological perspective identified here has only addressed certain parts of Paul's thought and can be extended to other aspects, such as his references to the law of Christ, or the law of faith. The way Paul conceptualises these laws, needs further analysis, especially in connection with wider contemporary conceptions of a single law for the ideal final society, as this was imagined in the early Empire.

In connection with other New-Testament texts, this study raises several questions. The reading of Paul's formula advanced here, as a description of an ideal, opens up the issue of Paul's affinity with traditions about Jesus. Since the portrayal of Jesus in the Gospels as rejecting family and property is also understood in connection with the characteristics of ideal communities such as that of the Essenes, the similarities between the two traditions deserve further study. The argument made here for understanding Paul's thought in connection with contemporary cosmopolitanism also raises questions about the later pseudo-Pauline letters, especially with regard to their views on marriage and family. These very different approaches to the family must also relate in some way to the contemporary emphasis on the connections between people, and the implications this is thought to have for views on slavery and marriage.

Finally, this study has implications for the understanding of Paul in continental philosophy, especially in the work of Alain Badiou. Badiou's influential study on Paul as the founder of 'universalism' centres on the idea that Paul's thought constituted a radical break with the ideas of his time.⁵ To the extent that the views of Badiou and others are open to criticism from a historical perspective, there would seem to be the possibility for a fruitful dialogue.

Our focus on Paul's statement as a contribution to the cultural conversation has shown how it interacts with first-century thought. His conviction that he was called at this crucial moment to participate in God's ultimate plan for the world, stimulated him to imagine what a new and ideal creation would be like, and how people would live in such a new creation. His summary of this new creation as 'neither Jew nor Greek, neither slave nor free, nor male and female' resonated with the concerns of his contemporaries.

⁵ Alain Badiou, *Saint Paul: The Foundation of Universalism* (Stanford: Stanford University Press 2003), 107.

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Samenvatting

Dit proefschrift is de weerslag van onderzoek naar de bekende uitspraak van Paulus, 'er is geen Jood of Griek, geen slaaf of vrije, geen man en vrouw, want jullie zijn allemaal één in Christus' (Galaten 3:28). Deze uitspraak is veelbesproken en vaak geciteerd, maar er bestaat weinig overeenstemming over de betekenis ervan. De wetenschappelijke discussie spitst zich vooral toe rond de vraag of Paulus het hier heeft over gelijkheid, of over inclusie. Met ander woorden: is iedereen gelijk of mag iedereen meedoen? Deze vraag lijkt met name voort te komen uit een moderne discussie en de gebruikelijke benaderingen bieden niet veel zicht op een oplossing. Dit onderzoek kiest er daarom voor om zijn uitgangspunt te nemen in de discussie in de oudheid en stelt de volgende vragen: wat betekent het in Paulus' tijd om deze drie paren, Jood-Griek, slaaf-vrij en man-vrouw, bij elkaar te noemen? Als we deze uitspraak begrijpen in de context van de toenmalige culturele discussie over deze paren, wat voegt dit dan toe aan ons begrip van Paulus' denken over elk van deze paren?

In het eerste hoofdstuk staan de drie paren samen centraal. In literatuur uit de eerste eeuw worden sociale verschillen en sociale hiërarchie soms uitgedrukt in paren van tegengestelden, ook de paren die Paulus noemt. De juiste verhouding tussen de man, de meester en de vader aan de ene kant, en de vrouw, de slaven en de kinderen aan de andere, was een onderwerp dat velen bezig hield.

Tegelijk zien we in deze periode een gemeenschapsideaal dat gebaseerd is op het tegenovergestelde van deze hiërarchische relaties, en waarin dezelfde paren voorkomen. In de Sibyllijnse Orakels, bijvoorbeeld, wordt gezegd dat de aarde in de eindtijd van iedereen zal zijn, zonder muren of hekken, zonder rijk of arm, zonder tiran of slaaf (Sibyllijnse Orakels 2. 319-329). Een ander voorbeeld is de beschrijving van de Essenen door Philo van Alexandrië en Flavius Josephus, die worden gekenschetst als een ideale gemeenschap. Deze groep bestaat uitsluitend uit mannen, die niet trouwen en geen slaven hebben, zodat de leden met elkaar op gelijke voet staan. Paulus' uitspraak lijkt te passen in deze voorstellingen over een ideale tijd of samenleving, en precies die groepen te benoemen die voor zijn tijdgenoten ook centraal stonden.

Het tweede hoofdstuk richt zich op het eerste paar, 'geen Jood, geen Griek'. De verhouding tussen Joden en niet-Joden is van groot belang in Paulus' brieven en het eerste paar komt daarin dan ook het meeste voor. In Paulus' tijd leefden binnen het Jodendom verschillende verwachtingen met betrekking tot de eindtijd en de niet-Joodse volken. Eén van de utopische eschatologische scenario's, die in verschillende bronnen is terug te vinden, is de verwachting dat de volken van de wereld hun afgoden zullen wegdoen en de ene ware God eer bewijzen. Wanneer Paulus verkondigt dat de eindtijd is aangebroken en niet-Joden ook bij God kunnen horen, heeft dit waarschijnlijk zijn achtergrond in deze traditie. Met de komst en opstanding van Christus is deze ideale toekomst voor hem tegenwoordige tijd geworden (zie Galaten 4:4; ook 1 Korintiërs 15:20-25; Romeinen 5:12-21). Deze gedachte vormt de achtergrond waartegen Paulus' ideeën over besnijdenis, over de figuur van Abraham, en over de wet in dit hoofdstuk begrepen worden. Juist omdat voor Paulus, in tegenstelling tot de andere bronnen waarin we deze verwachting tegenkomen, de eindtijd al realiteit geworden is, moet hij een eigen en meer gedetailleerde invulling geven van de nieuwe situatie waarin Joden en niet-Joden samen God vereren. In de manier waarop hij dat doet, blijkt de invloed van het culturele klimaat van zijn tijd, waarin kosmopolitanisme een

belangrijke rol speelde: de gedachte dat alle mensen en volken tot één homogene samenleving behoren. Paulus' denken over Jood en Griek moet gezien worden als een vorm van Joods kosmopolitisme, gebaseerd op de verwachting dat de eindtijd was begonnen.

In het derde hoofdstuk gaat het over het tweede paar, 'geen slaaf of vrije' en worden de verschillende passages in Paulus' brieven waarin slaven voorkomen besproken. In deze passages ontkent Paulus steeds het verschil tussen slaaf en vrij, en beschrijft hij een nieuwe verhouding. Zoals hierboven al genoemd was een samenleving zonder slaven een ideaal dat door verschillende eerste-eeuwse auteurs wordt beschreven, en dat kon worden gesitueerd in het verleden, het heden of de toekomst. Het kosmopolitische idee van de verbondenheid van alle mensen is te herkennen in het denken over slaven, ook dat van Paulus. Slaven en vrije mensen konden worden voorgesteld als in wezen broeders, ondanks hun verschillende sociale posities. De uitspraak 'geen slaaf of vrije' past dus in de voorstelling van een ideale gemeenschap, zoals die in Paulus' tijd leefde.

Het vierde en laatste hoofdstuk bespreekt het derde paar, 'geen man en vrouw'. Algemeen wordt aangenomen dat Paulus met de specifieke formulering van het derde paar een vers uit Genesis citeert over de schepping, 'man en vrouw schiep hij hen' (Genesis 1:27). Hoewel het derde paar vaak is begrepen als een uitspraak over de gelijkheid van mannen en vrouwen, wijzen de verschillende interpretaties van dit vers uit Genesis in Paulus' tijd in een andere richting. Het werd met name opgevat als een vers over trouwen en voortplanting, dat direct kon worden verbonden aan de erop volgende instructie 'wees vruchtbaar en word talrijk' (Genesis 1:28). Het is dus aannemelijk dat Paulus' ontkenning, 'geen man en vrouw', ook het beste gelezen kan worden als een verwijzing naar huwelijk en voortplanting. Deze interpretatie strookt met het voor zijn tijd ongebruikelijke advies van Paulus aan zowel mannen als vrouwen om zich niet te laten afleiden door een partner en dus bij voorkeur niet te trouwen (1 Korintiërs 7). Het past bovendien in de voorstelling van een ideale gemeenschap waarin mensen niet verdeeld leven in families, maar samen alles delen.

De benadering van deze studie, om de uitspraak van Paulus te lezen in de context van de culturele discussie van zijn tijd, maakt dus een nieuwe interpretatie mogelijk. Het laat zien hoe Paulus bijdroeg aan het denken over een ideale samenleving, en wat daarin voor hem belangrijk was. Paulus presenteert een ideaal dat voor zijn tijdgenoten begrijpelijk was en dat in direct verband staat met toenmalige ideeën over sociale harmonie en eenheid in de manier waarop mensen met elkaar samenleven. Voor zover deze idealen te maken hebben met gelijkheid, heeft dit niet de vorm van gelijkwaardigheid of een algemene ontkenning van verschil, maar van wederzijdse dienstbaarheid en liefde. Paulus draagt zijn gehoor op elkaars lasten te dragen en slaven van elkaar te zijn.

Paulus' overtuiging dat hij geroepen was om op dit cruciale moment een rol te spelen in Gods redding voor de wereld, stimuleerde hem om zich voor te stellen hoe een nieuwe en ideale schepping er uit zou zien en hoe mensen daarin zouden leven. Zijn samenvatting van deze nieuwe schepping als 'geen Jood of Griek, geen slaaf of vrije, geen man en vrouw' vertolkte de idealen van zijn tijd.