

In Slavery With God's Children:  
The Law as Enslaved Agent in Galatians

by

Katherine Heather Burgett

Graduate Program in Religion  
Duke University

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Approved:

\_\_\_\_\_  
J. Ross Wagner, Supervisor

\_\_\_\_\_  
Stephen B. Chapman

\_\_\_\_\_  
Susan G. Eastman

\_\_\_\_\_  
Katherine A. Shaner

\_\_\_\_\_  
Brittany E. Wilson

Dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for  
the degree of Doctor of Philosophy,  
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ABSTRACT

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## **Abstract**

This dissertation focuses on three metaphors in Galatians 3:19-4:31 that cast the Law as enslaved: the Law is an enslaved παιδαγωγός (3:19-25), an enslaved ἐπίτροπος and οἰκονόμος (4:1-11), and Hagar the enslaved παιδίσκη (4:21-31). This particular cluster of metaphors has gone largely unnoticed by interpreters of Galatians, who have instead focused on Paul's depiction of humanity's enslavement *to* the Law. This dissertation examines Paul's depictions of the Law as an *enslaved* enslaver, situating these metaphors in the context of first-century Roman slavery and drawing out their implications for Paul's theology of the Law in Galatians. The study argues that Paul flexibly uses a variety of slavery metaphors to make a series of claims about the enslaved Law's agency in relation to other agents. Before the coming of Faith, the Law worked effectively with God in a preparatory role (3:19-25). But when the Galatians themselves attempt to come under the Law's authority after already receiving the Spirit, they end up frustrating both their own intentions and those of the Law (4:1-11, 21-31).

# Contents

Abstract .....	iv
Acknowledgements .....	viii
Introduction .....	1
1. Enslaved Agency in the Letters of Paul and Other Ancient Literature .....	16
1.1 Enslaved Agency Behind the Texts .....	23
1.2 Enslaved Agency in Other Ancient Texts .....	37
1.2.1 Aristotle .....	37
1.2.2 Epictetus .....	40
1.2.3 Plautus .....	46
1.3 Enslaved Agency in Paul .....	56
1.4 Conclusion .....	74
2. The Law was Our Παιδαγωγός .....	75
2.1 Contextualizing the Pedagogue Metaphor within Elite Sources .....	77
2.2 Pedagogues, Work, and Agency .....	85
2.2.1 Lydus the Pedagogue in Plautus’s <i>Bacchides</i> .....	85
2.2.2 Work and Agency .....	92
2.3 The Works of the Enslaved Law .....	96
2.3.1 Paul’s Perspective on (Enslaved) Work .....	96
2.3.2 Ἔργα Νόμου: An Ineffective Partnership between the Law and Human Beings .....	100
2.3.3 “The Law was Our Παιδαγωγός”: An Effective Partnership between the Law and God .....	113

2.4 Conclusion .....	123
3. Under Ἐπίτροποι and Οἰκονόμοι .....	124
3.1 Enslaved to the Στοιχεῖα, Under the Law .....	127
3.1.1 Introduction to the Law and the Στοιχεῖα .....	127
3.1.2 The Law and the Στοιχεῖα in Wisdom of Solomon .....	137
3.1.3 The Law and the Στοιχεῖα in Philo .....	143
3.1.4 The Law and the Στοιχεῖα in Galatia? .....	153
3.2 The Law and the Στοιχεῖα as Ἐπίτροποι and Οἰκονόμοι .....	155
3.2.1 Defining the Terms .....	155
3.2.2 Ἐπίτροποι and Οἰκονόμοι in the Imagination of Free Elites .....	165
3.2.3 Ἐπίτροποι and Οἰκονόμοι in the Imagination of their Enslaved Subordinates .....	175
3.3 Conclusion: Freedom in the New Creation .....	179
4. Children of Hagar the Παιδίσκη .....	183
4.1 Philo's Sarah-Hagar Allegories .....	187
4.2 Paul's Sarah-Hagar Allegory: Key Features .....	196
4.2.1 Who's Who in Paul's Allegory? .....	196
4.2.2 Hagar and the Law .....	205
4.2.3 Crossing Lines of Enslavement and Freedom .....	207
4.3 Crossing Boundaries of Enslavement and Freedom in Other Greek Literature .....	227
4.3.1 <i>Chaereas and Callirhoe</i> .....	229

4.3.2 Judith .....	232
4.4 Enslaved Galatians “Fulfilling” the Enslaved Law .....	236
4.5 Conclusion .....	248
Conclusions .....	249
Synthesis of the Study .....	249
Avenues for Future Research .....	252
Parting Words .....	255
Works Cited .....	256

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## Introduction

In the translator's note to her recent translation of *The Odyssey*, Emily Wilson explains the challenge she faced in describing the "elite households represented in *The Odyssey*": all of them "include a large staff of domestic slaves to work in the house, preparing and serving food and taking care of their masters' clothes, and field slaves to work the estate and tend the animals."<sup>1</sup> *The Odyssey* clearly reflects its provenance in what Moses I. Finley refers to as a "genuine slave society."<sup>2</sup> Ancient Greece was economically and socially dependent on the institution of slavery. Enslaved labor is essential to the running of *The Odyssey*'s households, and Homer, like his literary contemporaries, employs a wide variety of slavery vocabulary to refer to his enslaved characters, each specialized term designating a particular enslaved person's role within the household. When rendering this language of slavery into contemporary English, which has a much more limited slavery vocabulary, should the translator choose a word that represents an enslaved character's work, or his or her status as enslaved? In the end, Wilson decided that "the need to acknowledge the fact and the horror of slavery, and to mark the fact that the idealized society depicted in the poem is one where slavery is shockingly taken for granted" outweighed "the need to specify, in every instance, the type of slave."<sup>3</sup> Instead of calling an enslaved woman a "maid" or "domestic servant," for example, as in older translations of *The Odyssey*, Wilson uses the generic "slave."

Reflecting in a later interview on her decision to use the language of slavery so frankly in

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<sup>1</sup> Emily Wilson, "Translator's Note," *The Odyssey* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2018), 88.

<sup>2</sup> Moses I. Finley, *Ancient Slavery and Modern Ideology* (Princeton: Markus Wiener Publishers, 1980).

<sup>3</sup> Wilson, "Translator's Note," 89.

her translation, Wilson reports, “It sort of stuns me when I look at other translations... how much work seems to go into making slavery invisible.”<sup>4</sup>

The same could be said for translations of Paul’s letters, a collection of documents produced centuries after *The Odyssey*, but in the context of a similar “slave society”: the Roman empire.<sup>5</sup> Jennifer A. Glancy imagines day-to-day life for Paul and his contemporaries within urban Gentile churches as a life in which it would have been “impossible to avoid contact with slaves.”<sup>6</sup> Some of the members of Paul’s churches would have been enslaved themselves, of course. Although Paul relativizes their spiritual status in Galatians 3:28, he still expected that enslaved Christians would usually remain literally enslaved (cf. 1 Cor 7:21-23). Outside the churches, both enslaved and free Christians in Galatia would have mingled with enslaved persons who were both sellers and buyers in the marketplace, received hospitality from the enslaved persons who worked in the homes of those who hosted them, and encountered enslaved persons of all kinds of occupations walking the streets of the cities.<sup>7</sup> Enslaved persons served as menial laborers and educated tutors, entertainers and managers of large estates.<sup>8</sup>

Given the ubiquity of slavery in the Greco-Roman world it is not surprising that slavery language permeates Paul’s letters. But contemporary translations often seem

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<sup>4</sup> Anna North, “Historically, Men Translated the Odyssey. Here’s What Happened When a Woman Took the Job,” *Vox*, 20 November 2017.

<sup>5</sup> Finley, *Ancient Slavery and Modern Ideology*, 9.

<sup>6</sup> Jennifer A. Glancy, *Slavery in Early Christianity* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2006), 42

<sup>7</sup> Glancy, 42.

<sup>8</sup> Dale B. Martin, *Slavery As Salvation: The Metaphor of Slavery in Pauline Christianity* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1990), 11. Martin considers helpful Peter Garnsey’s “three categories for slaves in Roman society: those involved in production, those in ‘non-productive personal service within the households of the propertied,’ and those ‘active in the world of business and commerce as agents, or as managers of enterprises in which they themselves participated as bankers, shopkeepers, traders or craftsmen’” (15).

uneasy with his frequent use of slavery language, preferring to mask the word δοῦλος, for example, with more amenable English renderings. Compare several popular English translations of Philippians 2:7, in which Jesus takes the form of a δοῦλος. While the NRSV translates δοῦλος literally as “slave,” the NIV and ESV choose “servant,” and even the hyper-literal NASB prefers “bond-servant.” While these translation choices render the passage in question more palatable to contemporary English speakers, they also obscure the harsh realities of Roman slavery to which Paul appeals to make his point about Jesus’ extreme self-emptying. Over the past few decades biblical scholarship has begun to turn its attention explicitly to the social setting of the New Testament’s slavery language. Scholars like Jennifer Glancy, James Harrill, Sheila Briggs, and Katherine Shaner, among others, have insisted that interpreters of Paul’s letters recognize and respond to the harsh realities of slavery that Paul uses to shape his arguments. They and others have striven to make Paul’s slavery *visible*.

Still, however, much of Paul’s slavery language—especially the specialized language with which Emily Wilson wrestled in her translation of *The Odyssey*—remains invisible to its interpreters. This dissertation examines one such cluster of slavery language: Paul’s metaphors for the Law as various enslaved members of a household in Galatians 3:19-4:31. Concentrated within this short section of the letter are four different slavery terms Paul uses to describe the Law metaphorically: the Law is an enslaved παιδαγωγός (3:24-25), an enslaved ἐπίτροπος and οἰκονόμος (4:2), and Hagar the enslaved παιδίσκη (4:22, 23, 30, 31).

Paul's extended treatment of the Law as enslaved has gone largely unnoticed by contemporary interpreters of Galatians,<sup>9</sup> who have focused instead on Paul's images of humanity's enslavement *to the Law*. Interpreters of Galatians, of course, disagree profoundly on Paul's portrayal of the Law in this letter.<sup>10</sup> Does Paul use the word "Law" to refer to Israel's Torah in its totality, or only to its "boundary-marking" commandments that promote ethnic superiority? Does he think the coming of Christ and the Spirit renders Law-observance dangerous for all followers of Christ, or just for Gentiles? Nevertheless, most interpreters agree that Paul uses slavery imagery to warn the Gentile Galatians not to come under the Law's authority through the practices like circumcision or adopting the calendar prescribed by the Law. Indeed, Paul frequently uses the δούλος/δουλεύω/δουλόω word group to reproach the Galatians for placing themselves under the Law's enslaving authority. Paul is bewildered that the Galatians—as demonstrated by their inclination to observe practices of the Law—want "to be enslaved again" (ἄνωθεν δουλεύειν) τοῦ στοιχεῖα τοῦ κόσμου (Gal 4:9; cf. 4:1, 3, 7, 8).<sup>11</sup> Those

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<sup>9</sup> I have only come across one project that recognizes this grouping of slavery metaphors for the Law in Galatians: Samuel J. Tedder's *Children of Laughter and the Re-Creation of Humanity: The Theological Vision and Logic of Paul's Letter to the Galatians* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2020). Tedder briefly (in the span of one page) ties together these images of enslavement to bolster his argument that Paul uses the enslaved Hagar to represent the Law in Gal 4:21-5:1 (199-200). Frank J. Matera also seems at least to have connected Paul's slavery imagery in the Sarah-Hagar allegory to his Law-παιδαγωγός metaphor: "'She,' that is, the present Jerusalem, is enslaved (*douleuei*) because she is under the Law which Paul has already described as a *paidagogos*" (*Galatians*, SP [Collegeville: The Liturgical Press, 1992], 170). It is unclear, however, whether Matera understands the present Jerusalem to be enslaved *like* the παιδαγωγός, or *to* the παιδαγωγός.

<sup>10</sup> Tracing the history of scholarship on Paul and the Law as a whole is a daunting task, and one that lies outside the scope of this project. For a thorough and illuminating book-length treatment of this history, see Stephen Westerholm, *Perspectives Old and New on Paul: The "Lutheran" Paul and His Critics* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2004). (Note that because of its publication date Westerholm's project does not treat the more recent "Paul within Judaism" stream of interpretation. For a summary of this perspective, see Paula Fredriksen, "What Does It Mean to See Paul 'within Judaism'?" *JBL* 141 [2022]: 359-380.)

<sup>11</sup> See James D.G. Dunn, *The Theology of Paul's Letter to the Galatians* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993): "The heir under age was no better than a slave: to be under the guardianship of the

who take their lineage from Hagar (i.e., from either the Law itself or from those who would impose its observance on Gentile Christians<sup>12</sup>) are “beg[otten] into slavery” (εἰς δουλείαν γεννῶσα, 4:24; cf. 4:25).<sup>13</sup> The Galatians must refuse to submit to the “yoke of enslavement” (ζυγῶ δουλείας) that the Law’s command of circumcision would impose on them (5:3).<sup>14</sup> Moreover, as interpreters of Galatians often argue, Paul frequently uses the preposition ὑπό with a noun in the accusative case to indicate that the person or people “under” that noun are *enslaved* to it.<sup>15</sup> Paul talks about people being “under the Law” (ὑπὸ νόμον) seven times in Galatians, each time using the phrase as an image of constraint (3:10 [ὑπὸ κατάραν (τοῦ νόμου, 3:13)], 3:23, 25 [ὑπὸ παιδαγωγόν, (i.e., ὁ νόμος, 3:24)]; 4:4, 5, 21; 5:18).<sup>16</sup>

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law was like a form of slavery to the elemental forces of the world (4.1-3) ... If Jew and Gentile who have received the Spirit are no longer slaves but sons, the necessary corollary is that the Jew who has not yet believed in Christ is still in a slave-like condition under the law. This is why Paul was so astonished that his Galatian converts could want to revert to such a slave-like condition (4.8-9), where relationship with God was understood in terms of feast days rightly calculated (4.10), rather than in terms of the immediacy of the experience of the Spirit (4.6-7)” (94). See also Richard B. Hays: “The Law itself is among the enslaving ‘elements’; thus he as a Jew shared with the pagan Galatians a condition of slavery from which he needed to be liberated” (“The Letter to the Galatians: Introduction, Commentary, and Reflections,” *NIB* 11 [Nashville: Abingdon, 2000], 282). (I discuss the relationship of the Law to the στοιχεῖα in greater detail in Chapter 3.)

<sup>12</sup> See Chapter 4. Throughout this dissertation I use the word “Christian” not to denote followers of a religion entirely separable from Judaism, but in the sense that Luke and Peter use the word Χριστιανός as a shorthand to describe followers of Jesus, whether Jew or Gentile (cf. Acts 11:24; 26:28; 1 Pet 4:16). For a word of caution about using the word “Christian” anachronistically, see Pamela Eisenbaum, *Paul Was Not a Christian: The Original Message of a Misunderstood Apostle* (New York: HarperOne, 2009).

<sup>13</sup> See Martinus C. de Boer, *Galatians: A Commentary*, NTL (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2011): “How Paul comes to the astonishing identification of Mount Sinai, and thus the covenant of the law, with Hagar is not easily discernible. He apparently works from the assumption that being ‘under the law’ is a form of enslavement, a point he has repeatedly made, especially in 3:23-4:11” (299). See also Douglas J. Moo, *Galatians*, BECNT (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2013): “Here slavery is implicitly associated with the imposition of law obedience, and this becomes clearer as Paul’s argument unfolds” (294).

<sup>14</sup> See Hans Dieter Betz, *Galatians: A Commentary on Paul’s Letter to the Churches in Galatia*, Hermeneia (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1979): the gift of the Spirit “amounted to a liberation from the ‘elements of the world’ and their tyrannical regime of evil (1:4, 4:1-10), and included their liberation from slavery under the Law and sin (cf. 2:19; 3:13, 25; 4:5)” (256).

<sup>15</sup> E.g. Moo, *Galatians*, 274; Betz, *Galatians*, 176; Dunn, *Theology of Paul’s Letter to the Galatians*, 94; Martyn, *Galatians*, 371; de Boer, *Galatians*, 299.

<sup>16</sup> Martyn, *Galatians*, 371.

Although interpreters across the spectrum of opinions on Paul and the Law comment on this language of enslavement in Galatians, it has been particularly central for so-called “apocalyptic” readers of the letter, who are frequent (though not exclusive) interlocutors in this dissertation. The “apocalyptic” stream of interpretation can be defined by the way it characterizes Paul’s understanding of humanity’s plight and God’s solution. According to J. Louis Martyn, a prominent “apocalyptic” interpreter, in Galatians Paul depicts “the whole of humanity—indeed the whole of creation ([Gal 3:22])” as “trapped, *enslaved* under the power of the present evil age [cf. Gal 1:4].”<sup>17</sup> This “power of the present evil age” can also be characterized by “apocalyptic” interpreters as a collection of discrete “powers”—quasi-personified cosmic agents like Sin, Death, and the Law. In fact, at least on Martyn’s account, the Law is “chief among the enslavers” of humanity.<sup>18</sup> To deliver humanity from this plight, Martyn argues, God initiated an “invasive action in his sending of Christ, in his declaration of war [against the ‘powers,’ including the Law], and in his striking the decisive and liberating blow against the present evil age.”<sup>19</sup> Human beings, enslaved under the powerful Law (among other

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<sup>17</sup> Martyn, *Galatians*, 105, emphasis mine. Beverly Roberts Gaventa, herself an “apocalyptic” interpreter, adds to this definition an epistemological element, relating to the meaning of ἀποκάλυψις / ἀποκαλύπτω as “revelation,” “unveiling” (cf. Gal 1:12, 16). “The invasion of the gospel *renders visible* the extent to which all human beings are in the grasp of powers larger than themselves” (Gaventa, *Our Mother Saint Paul* [Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2007], 81, emphasis original). Other notable interpreters of Paul in the “apocalyptic” stream include Martinus de Boer, Susan Eastman, and Douglas Campbell (who prefers the phrase “pneumatologically participatory martyrological eschatology” [PPME] to name Paul’s theology). For an overview of “apocalyptic” interpretations of Paul that is both appreciative and critical, see J. P. Davies, *Paul Among the Apocalypses? An Evaluation of the “Apocalyptic Paul” in the Context of Jewish and Christian Apocalyptic Literature*, LNTS 562 (London: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2016).

<sup>18</sup> Martyn, *Galatians*, 371.

<sup>19</sup> Martyn, *Galatians*, 105.

“powers”), could do nothing to effect their own redemption. God needed to radically intervene to liberate them from this enslavement.

I find much to commend in “apocalyptic” readings of Galatians. Specifically, for the purposes of this project, they both helpfully center *some* of Paul’s slavery language in the letter and clearly show the reader that Paul understands the Law to be a powerful agent at work in the world. But no “apocalyptic” reading of the Law in Galatians—indeed, no reading of the Law in Galatians at all—has yet sufficiently accounted for the fact that Paul also depicts this powerful agent as enslaved. At several key points where Paul describes the Law as an *enslaver* in Galatians he also gives the Law a title that lets the reader know that it, too, is *enslaved*. The lines between enslavement and freedom are not as neatly drawn in Galatians as “apocalyptic” readers tend to draw them. Paul does not always use slavery language to express powerlessness. The Law is a powerful agent, but it is also an *enslaved* agent, constrained yet active in a complex web of relationships with other agents (human beings, God, Christ, the Spirit, the Flesh, Sin, etc.).

In the space of two chapters in Galatians, Paul uses four different terms to describe the Law as enslaved. First, insisting that the Law is not, in fact, “opposed to God’s promises” (3:21), Paul twice describes the Law as “our” temporary παιδαγωγός (3:24, 25). The word παιδαγωγός is notoriously difficult to render with a single English term. Translators variously use the words “disciplinarian” (NRSV), “guardian” (NIV, NLT), “tutor” (NASB), “schoolmaster” (KJV), etc. But each of these choices disguises the fact that a παιδαγωγός was an enslaved worker in the ancient household, responsible for overseeing the conduct of a wealthy, free child—usually male—before that child

reached the age of maturity.<sup>20</sup> Elite authors sometimes complain that the child's restraint "under a pedagogue" (ὕπὸ παιδαγωγόν, Gal 3:25) is *like* enslavement, but in this relationship it is the child's guardian who is legally enslaved, not the child himself. Second, alongside τὰ στοιχεῖα τοῦ κόσμου, Paul considers the Law one of the "guardians" (4:3) to which humanity was enslaved before the coming of Christ. Paul casts the Law, along with the στοιχεῖα, in the roles of an ἐπίτροπος (NRSV: "guardian") and οἰκονόμος (NRSV: "trustee") that once had oversight over the Galatians (4:2). Once again, the Galatians probably understood these figures to be enslaved—even as they *figuratively* enslaved the free minors whose property they managed before these heirs' age of maturity. Finally, Paul appeals to the stories of Sarah and Hagar in Genesis 16 and 21 (Gal 4:21-31), identifying the Law with the latter. Hagar, like the παιδαγωγός, the ἐπίτροπος, and the οἰκονόμος, is also an enslaved "enslaver." By bearing children as an enslaved woman, she creates enslaved children (whose legal status will follow that of their mother).

Paul characterizes the Law as enslaved with remarkable consistency, given his tendency elsewhere in his letters to pile up apparently mixed metaphors to make a complex point (cf. 1 Cor 3:5-17). This consistency is not linguistic; each discrete metaphor depicts the Law in a different enslaved role with a different title. But I suggest that Paul's Galatian auditors, entrenched in a "slave society," would naturally have drawn

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<sup>20</sup> Norman H. Young, "Paidagogos: The Social Setting of a Pauline Metaphor," *NT* 29 (1987), 150. Other interpreters (e.g., Moo, *Galatians*, 243; Betz, *Galatians*, 177; Dunn, *The Theology of Paul's Letter to the Galatians*, 89-90; Hays, "Galatians," 269; de Boer, *Galatians*, 240) do often note that παιδαγωγοί were usually enslaved, but only ever in passing.



on their experiences to connect the dots between these images that appear disparate to the modern reader.

Based on the ways in which Greco-Roman thinkers, contemporary historians of American slavery, and Paul himself seem to understand enslaved agency, I argue that these metaphors help to position the Law as an agent that is both active and constrained, an agent that is neither autonomous nor completely subsumed under the will of another. In attending to the social conditions of Greco-Roman slavery, this dissertation takes up American historian Walter Johnson's invitation "to try to imagine a history of slavery which sees the lives of enslaved people as powerfully conditioned by, though not reducible to, their slavery."<sup>21</sup> Because he was intimately acquainted with the social constraints facing enslaved members of his own churches, as well as their moral agency in the face of those constraints, Paul, I propose, would have had a similar understanding of the complexities of enslaved agency. And these complexities, I argue, provided Paul with particularly useful images to describe the Law's own complex and co-constituted agency.

Chapter 1 of this dissertation provides the theoretical foundation for my decision to use Paul's slavery metaphors for the Law to construct a case for the Law's complex agency in Galatians. In three parts, I conduct a study of varied understandings of enslaved agency in the ancient world and explore their ramifications for interpreting the enslaved Law in Galatians. First, I consider the ways Pauline scholarship (most obviously, though not exclusively, the "apocalyptic" school) has tended to minimize the agency of enslaved

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<sup>21</sup> Walter Johnson, "On Agency," *Journal of Social History* 37 (2003), 115.

persons when discussing the slavery metaphors Paul constructs. I challenge this assumption by turning to the work of Classicists, American social historians, theologians, and scholars of slavery in the NT who have sought better ways of talking about enslaved persons as non-autonomous agents. Second, I survey three ancient accounts of slavery that were (roughly) contemporary with Paul to get a sense of the range of thoughts on enslaved agency it was possible to hold in the Greco-Roman world: Aristotle's *Politics*, Epictetus's *Discourses*, and Plautus's *Pseudolus*. Although these three thinkers present a wide range of thought on the extent and shape of enslaved agency, none of them assumes that enslaved persons are mere automatons who unthinkingly and unresistingly carry out the wills of their masters. Finally, I survey Paul's letters to see what his various slavery metaphors say about his own understanding of enslaved agency. I find that Paul can move flexibly among the options expressed in Aristotle, Epictetus, and Plautus: in the course of four chapters in 1 Corinthians, for example, he exhibits understandings of enslaved agency that resemble both Aristotle (1 Cor 3-4) and Epictetus (1 Cor 7), and when he describes the Roman Christians' enslavement to both Sin and God (Rom 6), Paul most resembles Plautus. It is this metaphor of enslavement in Romans 6, I suggest, that is most illuminating for understanding the enslaved Law in Galatians: in both Rom 6 and Gal 3-4, Paul, like Plautus, crafts enslaved characters who are realistically constrained by their enslavement but nonetheless act as *subjects* to achieve both their own and others' ends.

In Chapter 2 I begin to use this account of enslaved agency to analyze Paul's slavery metaphors for the Law in Galatians. This chapter treats Paul's metaphor for the

Law as humanity's enslaved παιδαγωγός in Gal 3:19-25. I start by situating Paul's παιδαγωγός metaphor within its historical context, as reconstructed from elite, free sources relatively contemporary with Paul. I next return to Plautus to conduct a close reading of *Bacchides*—a play that features an enslaved pedagogue as one of its characters—in search of a more complex way to account for the agency of enslaved pedagogues, particularly as such agency manifests itself in their relationships to their masters, to their charges, and to the work imposed upon them. I then turn back to the text of Galatians to show how this expanded account of enslaved agency better helps us understand the enslaved Law's agency in relation both to God and to the human beings under its care. I argue that throughout Galatians Paul uses the phrase ἔργα νόμου—in the context of a broader pattern of discourse about the role of the Law—to name an ineffective partnership between the Law and human beings after the coming of Christ: when the Law and human beings attempt to work together the agency of both is diminished. When the Law works non-competitively with *God* in its role as a παιδαγωγός, however, its agency is far more robust. In fact, Paul uses precisely this slavery metaphor to *introduce* a sense of the Law's agency into an argument that has thus far tended to diminish it.

Chapter 3 treats Paul's metaphor for the Law as one of the ἐπίτροποι and οἰκονόμοι—i.e., enslaved household managers—that oversaw humanity in its minority (Gal 4:1-11). At this point in the letter Paul introduces a new set of characters he calls τὰ στοιχεῖα τοῦ κόσμου (4:3, 9) and sets them up in a kind of parallel position to the Law. Both the Law and the στοιχεῖα ruled over human beings, whom Paul alternately depicts

in this image as both free minors (4:1-2) and enslaved underlings (4:7-10). I argue for a new understanding of the relationship between the Law and the στοιχεῖα in Galatians, since it is not immediately clear why Paul would introduce the στοιχεῖα into his discussion of the Law's temporary authority over human beings. Considering evidence from Wisdom of Solomon and Philo, I suggest that Paul here refutes a strain of thinking about the Law that encourages its adherents to follow the Law so that the elements of the natural world (i.e., τὰ στοιχεῖα τοῦ κόσμου) will deal kindly with them. Then, after situating the titles ἐπίτροπος and οἰκονόμος in their historical context, I argue that in Gal 4:1-11 Paul significantly modifies the metaphor of the enslaved Law he constructed with his image of the Law as παιδαγωγός in 3:19-25. If Gal 3:19-25 shows how the Law was an effective agent when it collaborated with God before the coming of "Faith" (3:23), Gal 4:1-11 shows what happens when the Galatians try to come under the Law's authority at the wrong time (4:4). The Law becomes more threatening at this point in the letter because it holds a more powerful position within the metaphorical household. Ἐπίτροποι and οἰκονόμοι were regarded by free elites with more favor and trust than παιδαγωγοί. But when the Law is strong, on Paul's account, it is actually weak: its power to enslave is no match for the contrary will of God in Christ to set humanity free from its oversight.

Chapter 4 examines the Sarah-Hagar allegory Paul constructs in Gal 4:21-5:1, in which the Law is associated with the enslaved woman (παιδίσκη) Hagar. Paul ostensibly sets up Sarah and Hagar as foils for each other: Sarah is free, Hagar is enslaved, and the Galatians must recognize that they are children of the free woman *rather than* children of the enslaved woman (Gal 4:31). I demonstrate, however, that the dissimilarities between

Sarah and Hagar begin to break down precisely at the point of their captivity and freedom, especially when Paul introduces yet another Scriptural intertext, Isaiah 54:1, which depicts the plight and redemption of Jerusalem as a woman who experiences *both* enslavement *and* freedom. Paul uses this movement between enslavement and freedom in the lives of the paired figures of Sarah and Hagar, along with the woman who personifies Jerusalem in Isaiah, to focus the Galatians' attention on the very real threat that adopting practices of the Law will result in their metaphorical enslavement. The Galatians may have been set free once before, but they can become enslaved again (cf. 4:9) if they do not stand firm in their freedom (5:1). Setting Paul's allegory in conversation with Isaiah, Genesis, Philo's Sarah-Hagar allegory, the Greek novel *Chaereas and Callirhoe*, and the Jewish book of Judith, I show that in his own allegory Paul invokes a widespread cultural anxiety about the permeability between the categories of free and enslaved—particularly for women and children. In this allegory the enslaved Law's agency appears at its weakest: Hagar/the Law has no say in her/its childbearing. But just after Paul concludes his most pessimistic appraisal of the enslaved Law's own agency, along with the agency of the enslaved children it bears, he enjoins upon the Galatians a new kind of metaphorical enslavement to one another (5:13). I argue that this new enslavement *strengthens* the agency of the Galatians, and, along the way, strengthens the agency of the enslaved Law whose intentions they fulfill (5:14, 6:2).

In keeping with my emphasis on enslaved agency throughout the project, I offer a brief final note on terminology. I appreciate Emily Wilson's insistence on using the word "slave" to teach readers of *The Odyssey* just how much ancient Greece depended on

slavery. Her choice forces readers to confront the brutality of life in a “slave society.” However, I have chosen to avoid using the noun “slave” in this study. Instead, I use the adjective “enslaved” to describe persons—literal or metaphorical—experiencing enslavement. I do this for two reasons. First, I am following something of a consensus among historians of American slavery, who tend to prefer words like “enslaved person” because of the way this term “emphasizes the humanity of an individual within a slaveholding society over their condition of involuntary servitude.”<sup>22</sup> (New Testament scholarship as a whole has been much slower to adopt this convention.)<sup>23</sup> This terminological choice is not without controversy,<sup>24</sup> and it is quite possible that I and others will change our minds about the best words to use to describe the enslaved. I

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<sup>22</sup> “Language of Slavery,” National Park Service (Underground Railroad), 28 January 2022, <https://www.nps.gov/subjects/undergroundrailroad/language-of-slavery.htm>.

<sup>23</sup> Note, however, that the NRSV Updated Edition (2021) does occasionally use “enslaved person” (or similar phrases) instead of “slave.” The “Bible Sampler” advertising the this edition explains that “when possible” translators have used this kind of “person first” language to render slavery terminology in the Bible. Why? Because “careful communicators” should show that slavery is “an imposed condition, not an intrinsic aspect of a person’s being” (“NRSV Updated Edition Bible Sampler” [Chester Heights, PA: Friendship Press, 2021], xxiii). The example the translators provide comes from Gal 4:22, a text I examine in Chapter 4 below. While the original NRSV of Gal 4:22 read, “Abraham had two sons, one by a *slave* woman [παῖδίσκη] and the other by a woman,” the NRSVue now reads, “Abraham had two sons, one by an enslaved woman [παῖδίσκη] and the other by a free woman” (xxiii, emphasis original). I find the NRSVue to be quite inconsistent in its translation of slavery language, and it is not always clear why the translators think “person first” language would be “possible” or “impossible” in a given text. Take Acts 16:16, which introduces an unnamed παῖδίσκη who tells fortunes. Here the NRSVue reverts back to the language it claims to update in Gal 4:22, even though the syntax of the sentence would just as easily allow for “person first” language: “One day as we were going to the place of prayer, we met a *female slave* [παῖδίσκη] who had a spirit of divination...” (emphasis mine). An especially odd example from Mark 14:69, where another παῖδίσκη identifies Peter as one of Jesus’s disciples, appears immediately before the Gal 4:22 example in the NRSVue’s “Bible Sampler.” The translators include this example not to illustrate their treatment of slavery language in the NT, but to affirm their commitment not to use “off-putting or even offensive” language to refer to women. In this case, they replace the word “servant-girl” (παῖδίσκη) from the original NRSV with “female servant” (παῖδίσκη) (xxiii). Here, however, the NRSVue replicates the problem Wilson addresses in her translation of *The Odyssey*: this παῖδίσκη’s enslavement is altogether obscured. Indeed, the reader of the “Bible Sampler” who does not know Greek would have no idea that the sequential examples from Mark 14:69 and Gal 4:22 both address the challenges of translating the same Greek word.

<sup>24</sup> For a summary of the debate, see Katy Waldman, “*Slave or Enslaved Person?* It’s Not Just an Academic Debate for Historians of American Slavery,” *Slate*, 19 May 2015, <https://slate.com/human-interest/2015/05/historians-debate-whether-to-use-the-term-slave-or-enslaved-person.html>.

certainly do not think that any scholar's choice to use the word "slave" means these scholars think of enslaved persons as subhuman,<sup>25</sup> and so I reproduce the word "slave" in quotation marks when citing these scholars' use of it. (Of course, I also include the word "slave" in quotation marks when citing ancient authors who indicate that they *do* see the enslaved as subhuman.) Second, as Wilson notes, enslaved persons occupied a wide variety of roles in the Greco-Roman world, and their particular job titles communicated important information about their duties, relative authority, and even quality of life. While I respect Wilson's choice to sacrifice specificity for clarity about the enslaved status of characters in *The Odyssey*, I find that the particular job titles Paul uses to represent the Law are important for understanding his developing argument about the enslaved Law's agency in Galatians.

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<sup>25</sup> Some scholars, in fact, consciously retain the word "slave" precisely because they understand that choice to preserve our understanding that enslavement does not erase one's personhood. As Nicholas Rinehart explains, "The ethical injunction to substitute 'enslaved person' for 'slave' actually contains and relies upon the very claim it seeks to refute. That is, in order for the term 'enslaved' to recover the personhood of the slave, we must first presuppose that the term 'slave' expunges said personhood" ("Reparative Semantics: On Slavery and the Language of History," *Commonplace: The Journal of Early American Life*, <http://commonplace.online/article/reparative-semantics/>).

# **1. Enslaved Agency in the Letters of Paul and Other Ancient Literature**

I am writing this chapter at the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic. Schools are closed, small businesses shuttered, individuals and families confined to our homes except for trips to the grocery store. In my social and professional circles, at least, most people understand this “social distancing” to be a necessary inconvenience. We lament our inability to gather and to work in ways that allow us to flourish, and we worry about our financial futures, but we are committed to following government-instituted protocols that will slow the spread of the virus to protect the most vulnerable people in our communities. We surrender many of the things we would personally like to do for the sake of better outcomes for the whole. Others are not so privileged. Essential workers must continue to expose themselves and their loved ones to the virus. People living in unsafe conditions are finding it harder to escape their homes. In still other circles, however, “Stay at Home” or “Shelter in Place” orders have come to represent the looming threat of totalitarianism. Protesters have taken to the streets throughout the United States to demand the easing of quarantine restrictions, and as they do so some carry protest signs with their own slavery metaphors: “Covid Slave,” reads one sign bluntly outside the Ohio State House. “Land of the Obedient, Home of the Enslaved,” reads another. Some turn to biblical imagery of enslavement: “Let My People Go,” or, arrestingly, “EVEN PHAROAH FREED SLAVES DURING A PLAGUE.”

These comparisons to slavery (while offensive) reveal something interesting about the function of slavery in the twenty-first century American imagination. It seems



likely that even the most impassioned protester would concede that the comparison is inexact: protestors are not resisting a situation of forced labor, for example; in fact, they are largely demanding the ability to *return* to work. The metaphor functions instead to claim that governmental restrictions are an unjust constraint on the protestors' freedom, and consequently prohibit the exercise of the protestors' agency. That is, the protestors understand themselves, to use Emily A. Peck-McClain's language, as "only the objects of a system that disregards their humanity," rather than "subjects of their lives."<sup>1</sup> And to express their sense of objectification they turn to language of enslavement: slavery and agency become mutually exclusive.

"Apocalyptic" interpreters of Paul often understand Paul's slavery metaphors to be doing similar work to these protestors' slavery metaphors. Slavery—especially under the dominion of Sin, Death, or the Law itself—comes to indicate the absolute powerlessness of the metaphorically enslaved.<sup>2</sup> This reading of Paul's slavery metaphors does important interpretive work for apocalyptic readers of Paul: it helps to characterize humanity as passive, captive, in desperate need of an external deliverer to rescue us from overbearing powers. "The cosmic landscape," as J. Louis Martyn puts it, "now becomes a *battlefield*, and in that setting the need of human beings is not so much forgiveness of their sins as deliverance from malignant powers that hold them in bondage."<sup>3</sup> This

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<sup>1</sup> Emily A. Peck-McClain, "Agency in Paul and Implications for Adolescent Girls," *Religious Education* 110 (2015): 95-109, 95.

<sup>2</sup> Ironically, of course, the COVID protestors are certainly *not* absolutely powerless; their implication that public health measures make them so is part of what makes their slavery imagery offensive.

<sup>3</sup> J. Louis Martyn, *Galatians*, AB (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2004), 272-3, emphasis original.

reading of Paul's slavery metaphors puts the reader's focus squarely on God as the primary actor in history, and on enslaved humanity as that which is only acted upon.

To interpret Paul's slavery metaphors for the Law in Galatians along these lines might mean that the Law itself is absolutely powerless, completely in the grasp of the power(s) to which it is enslaved. But the particular enslaved images Paul uses to characterize the Law in Galatians cannot be so neatly understood to designate mutually exclusive categories of power and helplessness: in each case in Galatians the Law is both enslaved *and* enslaving, a powerful force under the control of yet more powerful forces. It is a παιδαγωγός who "imprisons" and "guards" (Gal 3:23-24), an ἐπίτροπος and οἰκονόμος who "enslaves" (4:2-3), Hagar the παιδίσκη who begets children for slavery (4:23-24). Slavery might partially diminish the Law's agency, but the Law still acts—and with enough power to threaten Paul's whole enterprise in the Galatian churches. The enslaved Law is both an object and a subject; it is neither autonomous nor powerless.

These complex images of the Law's action in Galatians require us to pause before using them to read Paul's theology of the Law in Galatians. If these images of enslavement cast the Law neither as a menacing tyrant nor as an agentless victim, just what *can* the Law do? According to these metaphors, how is the Law's ability to act conditioned by its network of relationships in which it both exercises power and is constrained by the power of others? Answering these questions requires some historical contextualization. A metaphor's own capacity to function effectively is predicated on its effective interaction with the social realities to which it refers: a metaphor works because those who hear it share with the metaphor-maker an experience of the metaphor's guiding

image.<sup>4</sup> Paul’s experiences with slavery in the first-century Roman empire—along with those of his Galatian auditors—enable him to create meaning with slavery metaphors.<sup>5</sup> And so it is important to consider just what kind of agency enslaved persons in the Roman Empire did have, as well as the particular ways in which that agency was manifested. And, perhaps more importantly for the purposes of understanding Paul’s own theological project, it is important to consider what people living in the Roman “slave society”—both enslaved and free—*thought* about enslaved agency. What was it possible to think about enslaved agency in Paul’s place and time, and how might these thoughts about enslaved agency shape the ways we think about the meaning(s) of slavery metaphors crafted in this society?

This chapter steps back from Galatians to explore these larger questions about Paul’s cultural “encyclopedia”—the cultural resources at his disposal for making an argument about the agency of the Law that relies heavily on particular images of enslavement.<sup>6</sup> It first considers important recent conversations in Classics, American social history, Christian Theology, and New Testament scholarship about the historical realities of enslaved agency in the Greco-Roman world (and, for the sake of comparison, in the history of American slavery). If, as these conversations have suggested, those who

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<sup>4</sup> Janet Martin Soskice, *Metaphor and Religious Language* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985).

<sup>5</sup> This is not to claim that Paul himself was enslaved, or that he ever directly enslaved others (although both are certainly *possible*). Rather, as someone embedded in a “slave society,” Paul would have regularly interacted with both enslaved persons and enslavers in his everyday life—including in the churches he founded.

<sup>6</sup> Umberto Eco, *The Name of the Rose* (New York: HarperVia, 2014), 574. See also his *The Limits of Interpretation* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1990), 143-44; *Semiotics and the Philosophy of Language* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1984), 81-84. For a more thorough discussion of Eco’s “encyclopedia” model and its usefulness for biblical interpretation, see J. Ross Wagner, *Reading the Sealed Book: Old Greek Isaiah and the Problem of Septuagint Hermeneutics*, FAT 88 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2013), 37-45.

were enslaved have always been able to live lives that were, in the words of Walter Johnson, “powerfully conditioned by, though not reducible to, their slavery,”<sup>7</sup> then we should at least look for signs of this complex manifestation of enslaved agency in ancient texts like Galatians that discuss and appeal to the realities of slavery.

But it is also possible that ancient texts fundamentally misunderstand—or seek to suppress—the realities of enslaved agency “on the ground,” especially if they are written from a free perspective. So this chapter next examines three accounts of slavery that were (roughly) contemporary with Paul: Aristotle’s *Politics*, Epictetus’s *Discourses*, and Plautus’s *Pseudolus*. I have chosen Aristotle, Epictetus, and Plautus not because I think Paul drew upon their ideas (Epictetus, after all, postdates Paul), nor because I think these three somehow represent (elite) Greco-Roman ideas of enslaved agency in the aggregate. Rather, these three texts give the reader a sense of the *range* of thoughts on enslaved agency it was possible to hold in the Greco-Roman world.<sup>8</sup> These three texts span ranges

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<sup>7</sup> Johnson, “On Agency,” 115.

<sup>8</sup> One may wonder at this point why I have not chosen to include in this schema any specifically Jewish accounts of enslaved agency that would have been roughly contemporary with Paul. The answer is that Hellenistic Jews do not appear to have held substantially different views on enslaved agency—and slavery in general—than others living in the Greco-Roman world, at least as far as historians can reconstruct these views. (On the historiographical challenges of even identifying enslaved Jews and Jewish masters in the Greco-Roman world, see Dale B. Martin, “Slavery and the Ancient Jewish Family,” *The Jewish Family in Antiquity*, ed. Shaye J. D. Cohen, *Brown Judaic Studies* 289 [Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1993].) In her comprehensive study of Hellenistic and Rabbinic Jewish attitudes towards and practices of slavery, Catherine Hezser finds “striking ... the great similarities in the literary representation of slavery in ancient Jewish and Graeco-Roman society” (*Jewish Slavery in Antiquity* [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005], 381). Distinctively Jewish practices like the Passover seder may have occasionally provided the opportunity for “masters and slaves” to unite “at the same table” in a “symbolic enactment of human equality” (380). But Hezser argues that biblical imperatives to mitigate the harshness of Israelite slavery—e.g., in Ex 21:2-6, the command to distinguish between Hebrew and non-Hebrew “slaves” and to offer the former freedom after six years—are “generally absent in Jewish texts of Hellenistic and Roman times” (385). Martin goes even further than Hezser in his evaluation of Hellenistic Jewish attitudes towards the enslaved. He insists that “slavery among Jews of the Greco-Roman period did not differ [at all] from the slave structures of those people among whom Jews lived” (“Slavery and the Ancient Jewish Family,” 113). All of this is not to say that it would be fruitless to examine specifically Jewish writings that deal with

of time, genre, even language: Aristotle's *Politics* is a philosophical treatise written in Greek in the fourth century BCE; Epictetus's *Discourses* is also a philosophical treatise written in Greek, but from the first century CE; and Plautus's *Pseudolus* is a play written in Latin in the third century BCE. All three can be illuminating for understanding Paul's conceptions of enslaved agency, however, because, as Keith Bradley argues, the system of slavery that made both Greece and Rome genuine "slave societies"<sup>9</sup> was "steady." That is, "the centrality of slavery in ancient society was ... continually being reinforced and legitimized, generation after generation, at all social levels, and ... all possible impetus to change [this system] was thus forestalled."<sup>10</sup>

Within this steady system, however, we find a variety of ways to conceptualize the agency of those who were enslaved. Aristotle argues that the enslaved should be seen as mere tools that allow owners to carry out their own intentions effectively, though he still thinks the enslaved need a particularly enslaved kind of virtue to be *able* to carry out their masters' intentions. Epictetus—himself formerly enslaved—argues that an enslaved person's capacity for agency is equal to a free person's; indeed, enslaved persons can even surpass their masters in "freedom" (which Epictetus equates with agency) if they have the proper inner disposition. Plautus crafts enslaved characters who effectively navigate the particular circumstances of their enslavement more realistically—acting to

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enslaved agency. In fact, the writings of Philo of Alexandria play a large role in Chapters 3 and 4 of this dissertation, and Chapter 4 also closely examines Paul's engagement with slavery imagery in Genesis and Isaiah. But the project of the present chapter is to establish the range of understandings of enslaved agency in the Greco-Roman world, and Hellenistic Jewish conceptions seem to have fallen within this range, not defined its extremes.

<sup>9</sup> Finley, *Ancient Slavery and Modern Ideology*.

<sup>10</sup> Keith Bradley, "Review Article: The Problem of Slavery in Classical Culture," *Classical Philology* 92 (1997): 273-282, 281.

achieve at least some of their desires, but doing so in a way that mitigates the retribution from free people that they might incur by acting according to Epictetus's advice.

Although these three thinkers present a wide range of thought on the extent and shape of enslaved agency, none of them assumes that enslaved persons are mere automatons who unthinkingly and unresistingly carry out the wills of their masters.

We should not be surprised, then, to find that Paul, writing in the same Roman "slave society," can also use slavery imagery in varied and complex ways to communicate a variety of points about the agency of the things or persons he depicts as enslaved. To prepare us to examine Paul's understanding of the enslaved Law's agency in Galatians, the final section of this chapter turns back to Paul to briefly examine some examples of how he conceptualizes enslaved agency outside of Galatians. We will see that Paul can move flexibly among the options surveyed above: in the course of four chapters in 1 Corinthians he exhibits understandings of enslaved agency that resemble both Aristotle (1 Cor 3-4) and Epictetus (1 Cor 7), and when he describes the Roman Christians' enslavement to both Sin and God (Rom 6), Paul most resembles Plautus. It is this metaphor of enslavement in Romans 6, I suggest, that is most illuminating for understanding the enslaved Law in Galatians: in both Rom 6 and Gal 3-4, Paul, like Plautus, crafts enslaved characters who are realistically constrained by their enslavement but nonetheless act as *subjects* to achieve both their own and others' ends.

## *1.1 Enslaved Agency Behind the Texts*

At the outset of this chapter it is important to consider an ongoing twentieth- and twenty-first century conversation in Classics and New Testament Studies about the nature of Greco-Roman slavery—and, specifically, about the extent to and manner in which enslaved persons in the Greco-Roman world could be said to exercise agency. Some late twentieth-century scholars, rightly criticizing a prevailing romantic view of slavery in the Roman empire that considered it a relatively benign institution,<sup>11</sup> took care to emphasize Greco-Roman slavery’s dehumanizing qualities. Orlando Patterson, for example, famously characterized *all* forms of slavery—Roman or otherwise—as a kind of “social death.”<sup>12</sup> On Patterson’s account, all iterations of slavery subject the enslaved to: 1) bodily vulnerability at the hands of masters who have legal recourse to violence, 2) “natal alienation,” or the inability to claim ethnic origins or family ties, and 3) exclusion from the “game of honor”: those who are enslaved cannot accumulate any kind of honor for

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<sup>11</sup> Allen Dwight Callahan, Richard A. Horsley, and Abraham Smith (“Introduction: The Slavery of New Testament Studies,” *Semeia* 83/84 [1998]: 1-15), who self-consciously and enthusiastically build off Orlando Patterson’s work, list many examples of studies of Greco-Roman slavery that they consider insufficiently aware of the horrors of slavery in the Greco-Roman world. Among the studies they list are Peter Stuhlmacher, *Der Brief an Philemon* (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neuhirchener Verlag, 1981); Norman R. Petersen, *Rediscovering Paul: Philemon and the Sociology of Paul’s Narrative World* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1985); J. Albert Harrill, *The Manumission of Slaves in Early Christianity* (Tübingen: Mohr [Siebeck], 1995); Martin, *Slavery as Salvation*; and I. A. H. Combes, *The Metaphor of Slavery in the Writings of the Early Church: From the New Testament to the Beginning of the Fifth Century* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1998). It would be unfair to say that all of these studies characterize Greco-Roman slavery as a whole as relatively benign. The very first sentence of Martin’s book, for example, clearly and emphatically calls “slavery in the Roman Empire... an oppressive and exploitative institution” (xiii), and he maintains this position throughout the book, even as he probably overstates the influence and security that enslaved persons with specialized managerial roles (a minority among the enslaved population) could hold. (See Chapter 3, where I examine the ways Paul uses two of these enslaved managerial roles to delineate both the Law’s relative power and its vulnerabilities.) For a study that truly idealizes Greco-Roman slavery, see Joseph Vogt, *Ancient Slavery and the Ideal of Man*, trans. Thomas Wiedemann (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1975).

<sup>12</sup> Orlando Patterson, *Slavery and Social Death: A Comparative Study* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1982).

themselves, leaving them vulnerable to dishonoring behaviors (like sexual assault) that the free refrain from committing among themselves. Slavery, on Patterson's account, is designed to strip away enslaved humanness entirely, leaving the enslaved *socially*, if not physically, dead. Enslaved persons become merely an extension of their master's personhood, with little to no personhood of their own.

Patterson's study has been highly influential in New Testament Studies. Take, as a particularly striking example, the article written by Allen Dwight Callahan, Richard A. Horsley, and Abraham Smith to introduce a 1998 issue of the journal *Semeia* that focused exclusively on slavery in the New Testament. Slavery, these authors insist, "is the exercise of a malevolent alien will against a person in a position of humiliation to the exclusion of all other claims and relations. The slave is a walking social atrocity living in the shadow of another's will without respect and without choice in any respect."<sup>13</sup> The extremity of this position—that an enslaved person's will is *entirely* subsumed under the "alien will" of another—continues to find voice in scholarship on slavery in the New Testament, even in otherwise thoughtful and perceptive studies. In her 2018 book on slavery metaphors, for example, Marianne Bjelland Kartzow expresses her disturbance that Paul advises enslaved members of the Corinthian church not to be concerned about their enslavement (1 Cor 7:21-23). Kartzow protests that this apparently flippant advice would be hard for an enslaved person to swallow because "slave owner[s] had complete power [over] a slave's body, soul, and spirit."<sup>14</sup> Her concern is understandable: as we will

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<sup>13</sup> Callahan, Horsley, and Smith, "The Slavery of New Testament Studies," 1.

<sup>14</sup> Marianne Bjelland Kartzow, *The Slave Metaphor and Gendered Enslavement in Early Christian Discourse: Double Trouble Embodied* (London: Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group, 2018), 4.



see towards the end of this chapter, Paul's comments in 1 Cor 7, especially taken in isolation, may downplay the very real constraints placed upon enslaved persons. But in her attempt to highlight these constraints Kartzow makes them absolute, ceding enslaved persons' agency to their masters entirely.

As we have seen, this tendency to treat enslavement as a condition that *replaces* an enslaved person's will with their master's is also often evident in "apocalyptic" readings of the New Testament, and especially Paul. "Apocalyptic" readers tend to use Paul's language of "slavery to" various malevolent "powers" (Sin, Death, the Law, etc.) to argue that Paul understands metaphorically enslaved humanity to be utterly incapable of redemptive action, entirely dependent on another's (i.e., God's) "alien will" for rescue. Take, for example, the way Susan Eastman summarizes Ernst Käsemann's characterization of relational ontology in Paul: "Apart from Christ, humanity is so *enslaved* and deluded by sin that there is no individual at all; *agency is, as it were, swallowed up by the powers of sin and death.*"<sup>15</sup> This tendency to treat enslavement and agency as mutually exclusive is a notable point of contact between subdisciplines in New Testament Studies that rarely intersect.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> Susan Grove Eastman, *Paul and the Person: Reframing Paul's Anthropology* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2017), 105, emphasis mine. See also Eastman's own comments on the power of sin in Romans 7:7-25: "Paul personifies sin as both a destructive relational system and a hostile agent that *enslaves* the human subject and *evacuates his or her agency*" (132, emphasis mine).

<sup>16</sup> It is also not limited to "apocalyptic" interpretations of Paul (although the tendency does tend to show up most starkly in these interpretations). See, for example, John M. G. Barclay's "Introduction" to *Divine and Human Agency in Paul and his Cultural Environment*, ed. John M. G. Barclay and Simon J. Gathercole (London: T&T Clark, 2006): Barclay describes what many readers have taken to be Paul's "radical view of the insufficiency of human agents" with reference to these human agents' "incapacity to do God's will and their *enslavement* by supra-human powers" (1, emphasis mine).

It is also an important corrective to unjust tellings of the story of Greco-Roman slavery that gloss over its brutal intentions. But this singular focus on the imposition of *another's* will on an enslaved person, this insistence that the actions carried out by an enslaved person are fundamentally *alien* to their own will, also risks devolving into what Vincent Brown calls an “anatomy of doom.”<sup>17</sup> By rightly seeking to preserve the horrors of Greco-Roman slavery in our collective memory, studies like Patterson’s can create the impression that the dehumanizing programs of elite slaveowners *worked*, and worked thoroughly: enslaved persons were doomed to social death. But, as Katherine Shaner argues, such tellings of enslaved persons’ stories can also unwittingly participate in elite attempts to kill enslaved personhood. After all, as all scholars of Greco-Roman history are quick to note, the historical record has left us very little that was written from the perspective of the enslaved themselves. Most of our surviving philosophical treatises on slavery and freedom come from the perspective of free elites. These accounts, Shaner warns, are not neutral historical descriptions; they are attempts to create relationships of power in which masters are dominant and enslaved persons subordinate. And even to make these attempts, Shaner suggests, implies that they were necessary: enslaved persons must have acted in “socially resistive” ways for elites to feel the need to write about how to subdue social resistance.<sup>18</sup> Shaner argues instead that “master-slave hierarchies” were not as clean-cut as our elite sources would like us to believe; rather, they were “unclear,

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<sup>17</sup> Vincent Brown, “Social Death and Political Life in the Study of Slavery,” *The American Historical Review* 114 (2009), 1235.

<sup>18</sup> Katherine A. Shaner, *Enslaved Leadership in Early Christianity* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2018), xxi.

disjointed, and even subverted in the everyday activities of enslaved persons.”<sup>19</sup>

Ironically, although many elite sources *attempt* to suppress the agency of the enslaved, the cracks in their writing reveal the resistant agency of their enslaved subjects.

Moreover, as Lynn Thomas cautions historians, simply establishing the fact of any person’s agency is not an interesting or productive question: persons by definition have agency.<sup>20</sup> It is more interesting to ask instead: what does a particular person’s agency look like? How does it manifest in complex networks with other “nonhuman and human actors”?<sup>21</sup> These questions are especially important to ask within an academic tradition that has tended to conflate “agency” with “autonomy”—or, in Willie Jennings’s terms, “self-sufficiency,” a kind of independent mastery over one’s self and one’s environment.<sup>22</sup> Jennings reminds us that the idea that a person can (and should) be a *freestanding* agent whose will is entirely “self-directed” came from a particular time and place; that is, from the colonial, modern West.<sup>23</sup> It would be both anachronistic and ethnocentric to impose this particular understanding of agency on other times, places, and peoples.

Because modern Western readers tend to assume “agency” means “autonomy,” some scholars argue that the term does not have the capacity to describe the intent and actions of anyone who is not the ideal Western agent, i.e., in Jennings’s words, the “self-

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<sup>19</sup> Shaner, xxi.

<sup>20</sup> Lynn M. Thomas, “Historicising Agency,” *Gender & History* 28 (2016), 324.

<sup>21</sup> Thomas, 330.

<sup>22</sup> Willie James Jennings, *After Whiteness: An Education in Belonging* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2020), 28.

<sup>23</sup> Jennings, 27.

sufficient white man.”<sup>24</sup> Walter Johnson, for example, cautions historians of American slavery not to frame their projects as “giving the slaves back their agency” because the term “agency... smuggles a notion of the universality of a liberation notion of selfhood, with its emphasis on independence and choice, right into the middle of a conversation about slavery against which that supposedly natural (at least for white men) condition was originally defined.”<sup>25</sup> Because I use the term frequently in this study, and especially in this first chapter, it is important at the outset that I clarify my own use of the word “agency”: the *term* “agency” can continue to be productive for understanding enslaved persons in the Roman Empire as subjects, as long as it is uncoupled from concepts like “autonomy” and “self-sufficiency.”

Jennings, for example, continues to use the term “agency” to talk about *collaborative* action—even collaboration that is *imposed* upon some of the collaborators. When he describes the aesthetic “collision” that took place when colonizing Europeans encountered and subjected colonized people groups around the world, Jennings presses his readers to acknowledge the “reality of shared agency” that produced the “cultural baroque” that emerged from this encounter: European culture, aesthetics, and technology were changed by the cultures they encountered in the colonial project, not *just* the other

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<sup>24</sup> Jennings, 29.

<sup>25</sup> Johnson, “On Agency,” 115. See also Alexander G. Wehyle, *Habeas Viscus: Racializing Assemblages, Biopolitics, and Black Feminist Theories of the Human* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2014). In his study of Black feminism’s contribution to “theories of the human” Wehyle foregrounds the experience and practices “of the oppressed in the face of extreme violence.” He argues that the paired concepts of “resistance” and “agency”—understood to “assume full, self-present, and coherent subjects working against something or someone”—have “a tendency to blind us, whether through strenuous denials or exalted celebrations of their existence, to the manifold occurrences of freedom in zones of indistinction” (2).

way around.<sup>26</sup> The “white aesthetic regime” may have been what forcibly instigated this encounter, and it may have claimed (and continue to claim) ownership of the baroque products of colonialism, but this claim masks the very real contributions the colonized made to these products.<sup>27</sup> “Although native peoples were chained to the white aesthetic, it did not mean that their creativity was chained,” Jennings argues. “They indeed brought their own aesthetic judgments to the built environment and the master-made world pressed upon them, and they made things different and often made things better.”<sup>28</sup> Jennings’s account of “shared agency”—and especially the way this agency manifests in situations where some parties involved in this “sharing,” like native peoples colonized by Europeans, neither chose their initial encounter with the other nor received credit for their contributions—is important for considering the agency of those who were forcibly enslaved in the Roman Empire.

In fact, Jennings’s account helps us understand “Paul’s” letter to the Galatians as itself a product of “shared agency.” Galatians was formed in a different kind of encounter than the modern colonial age, but its formation was still collaborative across lines of status and power.<sup>29</sup> When Paul remarks at the end of Galatians that switching over to “his own hand” produces such “large letters” (Gal 6:11), he implies that the rest of the letter—like so many letters in the ancient world, including Romans (Rom 16:22)—was written

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<sup>26</sup> Jennings, *After Whiteness*, 50.

<sup>27</sup> Jennings, 50.

<sup>28</sup> Jennings, 50.

<sup>29</sup> Colonialism, of course, is not identical to slavery. But for an argument defending the fruitfulness of comparing Euro-American colonialism to Greco-Roman slavery, see Jane Webster (a self-described “postcolonial Romanist”), “Less Beloved. Roman Archaeology, Slavery, and the Failure to Compare,” *Archaeological Dialogues* 15 (2008): 103-123.

by an enslaved secretary.<sup>30</sup> Paul was not a solitary, self-sufficient author; as Candida Moss insists, his (figurative) “writing desk” was “crowded” with the contributions of the unnamed secretary who collaborated with him on the letter.<sup>31</sup> Enslaved secretaries were hardly “agency-less non-authorial assistants who help[ed] the author realize their vision smoothly and without dissent.”<sup>32</sup> We know that they “drafted letters, corrected stylistic and grammatical mistakes, and improved manuscripts”<sup>33</sup>—all activities that “contributed to the *meaning* of the texts they produced.”<sup>34</sup> Moss’s work invites us to consider that complex portraits of enslaved agency in Galatians as themselves the product of a complex collaboration between Paul and an enslaved secretary.<sup>35</sup>

In this letter, “Paul”—a designation I will continue to use as a shorthand for the combined efforts of Paul and his secretary—assumes a general account of human agency

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<sup>30</sup> Candida R. Moss, “The Secretary: Enslaved Workers, Stenography, and the Production of Early Christian Literature,” *JTS* (forthcoming), 17-21. Moss criticizes studies (like E. Randolph Richards’s *The Secretary in the Letters of Paul*, WUNT II.42 [Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1991] and Jerome Murphy-O’Connor’s *Paul the Letter-Writer: His World, His Options, His Skills* [Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1995]) that promote what Tom Geue calls the “fiction of voluntarism”—i.e., that Paul’s secretaries were both free and volunteered their labor to assist Paul (“Soft Hands, Hard Power: Sponging Off of the Empire of Leisure [Virgil, *Georgics* 4],” *JRS* 108 [2018]: 115-40; cited in Moss, 8). Rather, as Moss argues persuasively, “the majority of Roman secretaries and stenographers were enslaved or formerly enslaved people,” including, most likely, the secretaries who assisted Paul. “Alongside readers, schoolteachers, grammarians, notaries, and copyists, they were part of a cohort of enslaved literate workers whose work was indispensable to the administration of the Roman household and empire” (21).

<sup>31</sup> Moss, 26.

<sup>32</sup> Moss, 16.

<sup>33</sup> Moss, 2-3.

<sup>34</sup> Moss, 4, emphasis original.

<sup>35</sup> As Moss notes at the conclusion of her article, distributing “agency across a more diverse group of actors” gives the Christian reader of Paul’s letters additional “theological *possibilities*... It offers an opportunity to think more expansively about the nature of scriptural inspiration” (37, emphasis mine). Expanding the authorship of the Pauline epistles beyond a singular “Paul” need not be a *threat* to Christian doctrines of biblical inspiration. Christian scholars like Brevard Childs, for example, have ably theologially accommodated the clear evidence that many Old Testament books were the product of multiple authors/redactors, produced over long stretches of time, without ceding their inspiration (see his *Introduction to the Old Testament as Scripture* [Philadelphia: Fortress, 1979]). (We are, however, still left with the ethical problem that Christian scripture is the product of enslaved labor.)

that also resists modern, Western reductions of the concept to autonomy or self-sufficiency. Susan Eastman has drawn attention to Galatians 2:19-20 as a key expression of Paul's understanding that personhood is fundamentally relational, fundamentally *not* self-sufficient. Here, in the same breath, Paul: 1) insists that he has been "crucified with Christ," with the result that "it is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me," and 2) can still talk about an "I" who lives: "the life *I now live* in the flesh *I live* by faith in/of the Son of God who loved me and gave himself for me." On Eastman's account, this apparent contradiction helps us better understand Paul's non-autonomous, non-competitive conception of agency: Paul can still think of himself as an agent, even when he is "inhabited by other active agents" (in this case, Christ).<sup>36</sup> Christ living in Paul does not reduce Paul to "a channel for the divine life," either here or throughout Galatians. "Rather, [Paul] himself [remains] the subject of active verbs: he lives, believes, he exhorts the Galatians, he wishes and wonders and is perplexed."<sup>37</sup> Paul portrays himself as an agent—addressable, accountable, willing and striving—even as he insists that Christ is living, willing, and working in him.

Expanded understandings of agency like those of Jennings, Moss, and Eastman are especially important for scholars of slavery. Walter Johnson's analysis is illuminating here, even though Johnson rejects the *term* "agency" because of the ways it has been conflated with autonomy. (He prefers to use the term "humanity" instead.) Johnson chastises scholars of American slavery who frame their projects as "discoveries of Black

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<sup>36</sup> Eastman, *Paul and the Person*, 18.

<sup>37</sup> Eastman, *Paul and the Person*, 128.

humanity”—that is, projects that try to show how enslaved Africans could, at times, exert the kind of autonomy that has come to define “humanity” in the liberal West; specifically, through overt acts of resistance or revolution.<sup>38</sup> Requiring autonomy to be a precondition for humanity, Johnson explains, “shove[s] to the side... a condition of humanness lived outside the conventions of liberal agency, a consideration, that is, of the condition of enslaved humanity.”<sup>39</sup> Johnson, like Thomas, calls historians of slavery to take the humanity of the enslaved as a given, and then ask questions about the “conditions” of that particular expression of humanity. Such questions, Johnson suggests, allow us “to imagine a history of slavery which sees the lives of enslaved people as powerfully conditioned by, though not reducible to, their slavery.”<sup>40</sup> Of course it is difficult to imagine enslaved agency if “agency” is defined as the absence of slavery! But more complicated understandings of agency, of humanness, allow the scholar of slavery to tell stories that allow enslaved lives to be understood as both “thoroughly determined and insistently transcendent.”<sup>41</sup>

One exemplary teller of these kinds of stories is Vincent Brown, another historian of American slavery. Brown takes on Patterson’s image of “social death” as helpful for explaining the slaveholding ideology that *tries* to kill enslaved persons socially, but he judges it unhelpful for explaining both “the actual behavior of slaves” and “the existential condition of the enslaved.”<sup>42</sup> In fact, Brown argues, it is more important to consider what

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<sup>38</sup> Johnson, “On Agency,” 114.

<sup>39</sup> Johnson, 115.

<sup>40</sup> Johnson, 115.

<sup>41</sup> Johnson, 116.

<sup>42</sup> Brown, “Social Death and Political Life,” 1234.



enslaved Africans were able to do *given* the death—social and otherwise—that was forced upon them. For example, Brown tells the story of a group of newly enslaved women aboard the ship *Hudibras* in 1786. When the woman who had been their *de facto* leader died mid-journey, the rest of the women were confined below deck, unable to carry out their “rite of mourning.”<sup>43</sup> But the women protested their captivity in the hold until, “fearing a general insurrection, the captain let several of the women out ... and had the corpse lowered into the water in their presence.”<sup>44</sup> Brown suggests that this story would be difficult to tell in historiographies that emphasize either “hopeful stories of heroic subalterns” or the absolute social domination of enslaved persons: the women were not protesting the system of slavery itself, but they also did not simply accept the particular conditions of domination that were forced upon them in that moment.<sup>45</sup> Instead, Brown suggests, the scene “typifies the way that people who have been pronounced socially dead... have often made a social world out of death itself.”<sup>46</sup> (Social) death, for these women, became a “productive peril”:<sup>47</sup> it enabled them to “publicly contemplate what it meant to be alive and enslaved,”<sup>48</sup> and in their “articulat[ion of] their visions of what it was that bound them together”<sup>49</sup> to become “the mothers of gasping new societies.”<sup>50</sup>

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<sup>43</sup> Brown, 1231.

<sup>44</sup> Brown, 1231.

<sup>45</sup> Brown, 1235.

<sup>46</sup> Brown, 1232-3.

<sup>47</sup> Brown, 1248.

<sup>48</sup> Brown, 1232.

<sup>49</sup> Brown, 1232.

<sup>50</sup> Brown, 1241.

Many historians of Roman slavery have turned to American stories like Brown's—and, more often, to autobiographical material written by enslaved Americans themselves—to make (admittedly speculative) claims about the lived experiences of the enslaved in the Greco-Roman world.<sup>51</sup> Again, almost all of our explicit writing about Roman slavery comes from the perspective of the free elite.<sup>52</sup> In the absence of evidence from the perspective of the enslaved, so the argument goes, enslaved narratives from the Americas provide the best available analogues for thinking about what it would have been like to be enslaved in the Roman Empire. The risk of anachronism is outweighed by the value of an insider perspective. But it is notable that Brown's retelling of the story of the women aboard the *Hudibras* does not come from an account written by any of the women themselves; he reconstructs the story from the later reflections of William Buttersworth, a British man who was on board the *Hudibras* as a young man. Brown's historiography shows that autobiography is not necessary for the historian to tell stories about enslaved humanness—either in America or in Rome.

Some recent scholarship on Roman slavery has, like Brown, found ways to tell stories about enslaved humanness in the Roman Empire that do not depend on firsthand

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<sup>51</sup> See Keith Bradley, *Slavery and Society at Rome* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994). See also Sandra R. Joshel, "Nurturing the Master's Child: Slavery and the Roman Child-Nurse," *Signs* 12 (1986): 3-22. In her attempt to recover the attitudes of enslaved nurses in the Greco-Roman world—and in the absence of first-person narrative from enslaved persons from this world—Joshel turns to testimony from enslaved "black mammies" in the American south. Joshel recognizes that "the factor of race as well as differences in economic structures and patterns of slaveholding and manumission prohibit direct comparisons between Rome and the antebellum American south," but she argues that "a juxtaposition of the black mammy's views and her master-nursling's assumptions suggests the degree to which Roman authors may have omitted the nurse's sensibilities and experience" (11). Jennifer Houston McNeel takes similar tactics in her *Paul as Infant and Nursing Mother: Metaphor, Rhetoric, and Identity in 1 Thessalonians 2:5-8* (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2014).

<sup>52</sup> Plautus, as we will see, may be an exception: there is a tradition that he wrote some of his plays while enslaved.

accounts of enslavement. Shaner, for example, uses early Christian texts (written, most likely, by free people) along with archeological evidence from Roman Ephesus to reconstruct a picture of early Christian communities that included enslaved leaders.<sup>53</sup> She opens with a story extracted from the second-century CE letters of Pliny the Younger, the governor of the province of Bithynia, to the Emperor Trajan—a free, elite perspective if there ever was one! As Pliny seeks advice from Trajan about how to handle those accused of being Christians, he expresses his frustration that these Christians do not seem to be committing any kind of crime—not “fraud, theft, or adultery.” They are merely guilty, rather, of “depraved, excessive superstition.” How can Pliny be certain about the Christians’ practices? He has procured court-admissible testimony by torturing “two slave women, whom they [i.e., the local Christian community] call ministers/deacons” (... *necessarium credidi ex duabus ancillis, quae ministrae dicebantur, quid esset ueri, et per tormenta quarere, Ep. 10.96-97*).<sup>54</sup>

Shaner acknowledges that it is difficult to know exactly what role these two *ministrae* played in their community. It seems likely that Pliny himself understood them to be analogous to the *ministrae* in Rome who “performed obligatory menial tasks as part of the cult of the *Augustales*”—merely menial assistants to priests, the real “independent actors in religious practices.”<sup>55</sup> But Pliny, Shaner points out, is not the one who gave these women their title: they were called *ministrae* by their fellow Christians. And it is likely that these Bithynian Christians understood *ministrae* differently. The Latin likely

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<sup>53</sup> Shaner, *Enslaved Leadership in Early Christianity*, xxiv-xxv.

<sup>54</sup> Shaner, xi.

<sup>55</sup> Shaner, xxviii.

translates the Greek *διάκοναι*, a term used by early Christians to refer to leaders in their communities (cf. Rom 15:8, 1 Tim 3:8, Rom 16:1, the latter in reference to a female *διάκονος*). So while Pliny may have understood these two enslaved women to be “lower-level functionaries,” they may have actually functioned as “enslaved Christian leaders” in their own community.<sup>56</sup> Historians of Roman slavery may have access mostly to elite, free perspectives on slavery. But even in these sources other perspectives may push through—perhaps partly because, as Candida Moss reminds us, elite authors rarely wrote alone, but usually in collaboration with enslaved secretaries! The ancient sources we have are still valuable resources for understanding the agency of enslaved persons in the Greco-Roman world; they can provide careful readers with sometimes surprising glimpses into the ways enslaved persons acted.<sup>57</sup> And, of course, they show us what a variety of people in the ancient world—free, enslaved, formerly enslaved—*thought* about

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<sup>56</sup> Shaner, xxviii.

<sup>57</sup> Of course, for the purposes of this project, the foregoing discussion is moot if it does not shed light on *Paul's* particular understanding of enslaved agency—or at least on the pictures of enslaved agency that emerge from his letters. Shaner's project need not privilege Paul's perspective; in fact, it would be counter-productive for her to do so. Shaner explicitly names Paul as *one*—and only one—voice in the conversations around slavery that are mediated through his letters (44). Paul's perspective as a free man has historical value, but his understanding of slavery does not necessarily represent his Christian communities' understanding(s) of slavery, nor accurately depict the lived experiences of enslaved Christians within those communities. For Shaner, Paul's voice becomes useful in the way Pliny's voice is useful: it provides points of data buried in his implicit assumptions and arguments about slavery—points of data that can then be reframed by attending to other perspectives that emerge in reading between Paul's lines. According to Shaner, the ambiguities surrounding slavery in Paul's letters do not necessarily reflect Paul's *own* ambiguous position on slavery, but more likely arise from his “multifaceted, ongoing conversation” with the various communities with whom he is in correspondence (44): tensions in Paul's letters provide the reader with opportunities to identify these other voices. For example, based on Paul's use of the verb *διακονέω*—a technical term for cultic service in first century Ephesus—to describe Onesimus's service in Philemon 13, Shaner suggests that Onesimus exercised a great deal more religious authority in the Ephesian church than Paul's letter gives him credit for. In fact, according to Shaner, Paul finds it necessary to reassert his own authority over “Onesimos the trained minister” by referring to him as his *τέκνον*—his child (Phlm 10, Shaner, 60-61). For *this* project, in contrast, the question of Paul's own understanding of enslavement is germane to interpreting his metaphors.

the agency of enslaved persons, and how ancient writers could use various perspectives on enslaved agency to further their philosophical, theological, and literary aims. And so, to set the stage for how enslaved agency manifests in Paul’s own letters, we turn now to examine three ancient texts that speak—directly or indirectly—about enslaved agency: Aristotle’s *Politics*, Epictetus’s *Discourses*, and Plautus’s *Pseudolus*.

## ***1.2 Enslaved Agency in Other Ancient Texts***

### **1.2.1 Aristotle**

Aristotle infamously describes enslaved persons as “living tools” (ὄργανα ἔμψυχα, *Pol.* 1253b28-29 [Rackham, LCL]). They are useful—indeed, necessary—for carrying out the intentions of their owners, but they neither have nor carry out any intentions of their own beyond serving their masters well. It is worth noting, as Peter Garnsey does, that Aristotle maintains his firm distinction between enslaved and free agency only with some difficulty.<sup>58</sup> The enslaved, on Aristotle’s account, must have *some* agency. They must have some ability to act in a way that produces results consonant with their intentions, provided those intentions match their masters’. Otherwise, on Aristotle’s line of reasoning, they could not be distinguished from “lifeless tools” (ὄργανα ἄψυχα, *Pol.* 1253b28-29). They are uniquely useful tools precisely because they are ἔμψυχα; if inanimate tools like a weaving shuttle or a writing quill “could perform [their] own work

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<sup>58</sup> Peter Garnsey, *Ideas of Slavery from Aristotle to Augustine* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 122. Aristotle’s strained attempt to maintain some kind of natural distinction between the free and the enslaved can also be seen in his brief acknowledgement that “naturally free” people can be captured and enslaved in war (*Pol.* 1255a22-32).

when ordered, or by seeing what to do in advance,” there would be no need for slavery (*Pol.* 1253b33-1254a9).

The enslaved must have some capacity for *action*, and they must develop the skills, knowledge, and virtues necessary to carry out that action. But all this *capacity* threatens to blur the line between enslaved and free, and so Aristotle is forced to create entirely separate *kinds* of skill, knowledge, and virtues for the enslaved and the free. It is only the enslaved, on Aristotle’s account, who are *capable* (δυνάμενος) of belonging to another; that capability, however undesirable on the part of the free, cannot be attained by the free (*Pol.* 1254b21-23). Enslaved persons and their masters also have different “sciences” (ἐπιστήμαι): “slaves” should know how to cook, clean, and perform manual labor, and masters should know how to govern. It is imperative, on Aristotle’s account, that masters *not* “know how to execute” the tasks they set for their “slaves.” In fact, if they are “rich enough,” they should not even involve themselves in the details of their “slaves” employment; they should instead “have a steward [ἐπίτροπος] who takes this office, while they themselves engage in politics or philosophy” (*Pol.* 1255b31-40).

To carry out their respective skills, using their respective knowledge, the enslaved and the free must also make use of their own respective kinds of virtue (ἀρετή), which Aristotle understands to be necessary for the exercise of one’s agency. Aristotle is emphatic: the difference between enslaved virtue and free virtue is a “difference in kind” *not* a “difference in degree.” For, he reasons, “if it is proper for both to partake in nobility of character, how could it be proper for the one to rule and the other to be ruled?” (*Pol.* 1259b35). Aristotle’s argument again seems to falter here: of course, he admits, a virtue

like temperance is necessary both to rule and to be ruled. (*Pol.* 1259b38-1260a4). But he quickly divides even discrete virtues into an enslaved variety and a free variety: courage can be either the “courage of command” or the “courage of subordination, and the case is similar with the other virtues” (*Pol.* 1260a5-25).<sup>59</sup>

Perhaps uncomfortable with the virtues he has thus far ascribed to the enslaved, Aristotle concludes this discussion by reminding his reader that “the slave is serviceable for the mere necessities of life,” and so “needs only a small amount of virtue (ἀρετῆς δεῖται μικρᾶς), in fact, just enough to prevent him from failing in his tasks owing to intemperance and cowardice” (*Pol.* 1260a35-37). Aristotle is forced to ascribe *some* agency to the enslaved, but only the minimum necessary to carry out their masters’ intentions well. Any enslaved intent or action that does not correspond to a master’s, in fact, becomes a *failure* of will, brought about by insufficient virtue. In the end of Aristotle’s analysis, an enslaved person is, as a master’s “article of property” (μόριον) simply a “part” (μόριον) of a master, not a separate *person* at all (*Pol.* 1254a10-14). The relationship between master and enslaved is so totalizing that it eclipses any enslaved person’s agency that is not fully aligned with the master’s. Nevertheless, that agency to perform the will of a master is not automatic, and it requires a particular kind of enslaved virtue to exercise.

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<sup>59</sup> Aristotle uses this specific language to talk about the difference between men and women, respectively, but in a section of the treatise that explicitly compares this hierarchy of men and women to the hierarchy of free and enslaved (*Pol.* 1260a10-11).

## 1.2.2 Epictetus

Aristotle and Epictetus hold, in many ways, opposing views of enslaved agency—probably, at least partially, because Epictetus himself had formerly been enslaved. While Aristotle only ascribes agency (and then only limited agency) to enslaved persons whose intentions line up exactly with their masters', Epictetus insists that enslaved persons can live lives that are “independent and self-determining” (αὐτεξούσιον ... καὶ αὐτόνομον)” (*Disc.* 4.1.56),<sup>60</sup> entirely unaffected by their relationships with their masters. With enough philosophical education (*Disc.* 2.1.22), an enslaved person can “live as he wishes” (ὁ ζῶν ὡς βούλεται). He “is neither constrained, nor hindered, nor compelled” (ὅν οὔτ' ἀναγκάσαι ἔστιν οὔτε κωλύσαι οὔτε βιάσασθαι). His “desires attain their end” (αἱ ὀρέξεις ἐπιτευκτικαί) and his “aversions do not fall into what they would avoid” (αἱ ἐκκλίσεις ἀπερίπτωτοι, *Disc.* 4.1.1 [Oldfather, LCL]). How, on Epictetus's account, can the enslaved exercise such a robust kind of agency when they are so obviously constrained by the terms of their enslavement?

Epictetus's answer is two-fold. First, proper philosophical education can teach slaves (and, as we will see, free people) to desire properly, in a way that is actually liberating. In keeping with his Stoic training, Epictetus encourages his students to take an honest look at their circumstances and to evaluate rigorously what is actually in their power to control, so that they can decide what to value. If someone values that which they cannot control, Epictetus reasons, their agency—their ability to achieve their

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<sup>60</sup> Unless otherwise noted, translations of Epictetus come from *Discourses, Fragments, Handbook*, trans. Robin Hard, Oxford World's Classics (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014).



desires—becomes constrained. And what resides within one’s power turns out to be far less than what we might expect, even for the enslaved. Other people can act in ways one would not prefer—those people lie outside one’s control, and one should not attach value to their actions. Property, too, is fragile, and can be destroyed or stolen by other people or by fate. But so, too, is the human body, as a whole or as its parts. At any point one’s legs could be shackled, one’s hands cut off, one’s heart pierced with a sword. The philosophically educated enslaved person must not attach desire to any of these things, because they are ultimately outside of his control. To do so would only restrain him further, and minimize the exercise of his agency. To “attach value to anything that isn’t your own,” to “conceive a desire for anything that is subject to anyone else and is perishable” is to “put your head under the yoke” (*Disc.* 4.1.77). Epictetus recommends to his students an exercise in letting go of all that is not theirs “to procure or keep as [they] wish” (*Disc.* 4.1.77): all day long they should practice looking at things around them with detachment.

Begin with the smallest and most fragile things, a pot, or a cup, and then pass on to a tunic, a dog, a horse, a scrap of land; and from there, pass on to yourself, to your body, and the parts of your body, and to your children, your wife, your brothers. Look around you in every direction, and cast these things far away from you. Purify your judgements so that nothing that is not your own may remain attached to you, or become part of yourself, or give you pain when it comes to be torn away from you. (*Disc.* 4.1.111-112)

But, secondly, this disciplining of desire frees the enslaved to act in a way that is consonant with their intentions. If one does not desire what one cannot have, then there can be no disappointment, no frustration of the will when a desired thing or outcome becomes unattainable or proves fleeting. Epictetus uses several provocative examples to

argue that the kind of disciplined desire that produces true freedom is possible even for the enslaved (or for free persons put in the position of the enslaved). Even if a “tyrant,” for example, should threaten to shackle a person’s legs, the philosophically educated person will be able to reply, defiantly, “If you think that will do you any good, chain them up.” This person, “by nature free” (τὸ φύσει ἐλεύθερον), has “attache[d] value... to his choice,” rather than to his legs. He can call the tyrant “master of my carcass [sic]” (τοῦ νεκροῦ... μου κύριος) and remain in full control of his own self—a self that will not allow a tyrant to dictate the exercise of his will. After all, Epictetus explains in his case study, what the tyrant really wants is for his captive to “pay attention to [him]” (ἐμὲ οὐ θεραπεύεις;). Even a prisoner is free to attend to himself instead, only paying the tyrant the same heed he would to a “cooking pot” (*Disc.* 1.19.7-10). Anyone—even if they are enslaved—is capable of exercising this will to attend to the self rather than to the attention-seeking demands of another. It is only a person’s “poor body” (σωματίον, *Disc.* 4.1.151) that can be controlled by a tyrant—or an owner.

Lest this hypothetical example seem too unrealistic to his students, Epictetus also presents them with a “real” example: the fourth-century BCE Cynic philosopher Diogenes, who was allegedly enslaved by pirates and sold in a market to a weak-willed master. But Diogenes continued to insist—plausibly, on Epictetus’s account—that “he could never be enslaved by anyone” (*Disc.* 4.1.114). At every step of a journey that a philosophically ignorant person might describe as harrowing, Diogenes demonstrates the equanimity that comes from “cast[ing] off (ἀποβάλλω) everything that could allow slavery to gain hold of him to enslave him” (*Disc.* 4.1.152). Because Diogenes attaches

no value to his possessions, his “parents, friends, and country,” his leg, or even “his whole body” (*Disc.* 4.1.153), he is able to resist numerous attempts by free people to dominate him, even as he is sold into literal slavery. When he is first captured by pirates, he refuses to “call any of them master,” and even “rebuke[s] them for not giving enough food to their captives!” (*Disc.* 4.1.115-16). In the market he regards prospective buyers as his potential “slaves,” aiming to exercise his will over theirs (*Disc.* 4.1.116). And once he is sold he successfully treats his master as enslaved, arguing with him, “saying that he oughtn’t to dress as he did, or have his hair cut in the way that it was,” and telling him how his sons ought to behave (*Disc.* 4.1.116). Diogenes goes on in his career to be able to “speak as [he] please[s]” (ὡς βούλει διαλέγεσθαι) even with “the king of the Persians, and Archidamas, king of the Spartans.” When asked why he was “permitted to do so,” Diogenes responds, “Because I regard this poor body as not my own, because I have need of nothing” (ὅτι τὸ σωματίον ἐμὸν οὐχ ἡγοῦμαι, ὅτι οὐδενὸς δέομαι, *Disc.* 4.1.158). Any claims Epictetus may lay to the historicity of this account are dubious; as William Desmond explains, by the time Epictetus was writing Diogenes had become a common “stock character” to illustrate “the thematic possibility of a ‘king’ in chains.”<sup>61</sup> Nevertheless, the example functions in Epictetus’s argument as proof that with enough philosophical education the enslaved can live virtually free lives, able to exercise their wills even over against the intentions of their masters to dominate them.

It is hard to imagine Aristotle agreeing with Epictetus’s assessment of legally enslaved persons’ capacity for willful action that conflicts with their master’s intentions.

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<sup>61</sup> William Desmond, *Cynics* (Stocksfield: Acumen, 2008), 21-22.

But Epictetus’s understanding of slavery is not entirely distant from Aristotle’s. He still uses a similar *concept* of slavery and freedom to work out his thoughts on the nature of human agency in general: Epictetus still uses the concept of slavery to indicate that a person is in a state of diminished agency, and he uses the concept of freedom to describe persons “whose motives are unimpeded,” who “achieve [their] desires and [do not] fall into what [they] want to avoid” (Ἐλεύθερός ἐστιν ὁ ζῶν ὡς βούλεται, ὅν οὔτ’ ἀναγκάσαι ἔστιν οὔτε κωλύσαι οὔτε βιάσασθαι, οἷ αἱ ὁρμαὶ ἀνεμπόδιστοι, αἱ ὀρέξεις ἐπιτευκτικάι, αἱ ἐκκλίσεις ἀπερίπτωτοι, *Disc.* 4.1.1). For Epictetus, one’s legal status has little to do with her or his *true* freedom, her or his actual ability to act in ways that produce results consonant with her or his intentions. Those who are legally enslaved can be truly free. And the corollary is also true: a person who is legally free can herself be truly enslaved. Anyone who “act[s] against one’s will and under constraint”—and those who do so are numerous, on Epictetus’s account—can be “confidently declare[d]” a “slave” (i.e., “not free” [θαρρῶν λέγε μὴ εἶναι ἐλεύθερον], *Disc.* 4.1.56). If he “live[s] in error” (ζῆν ἁμαρτάνων), vainly trying to grasp for things or people who lie outside of his control, even the richest, most politically powerful person “differ[s] not a whit with regard to [his] being a slave from those who’ve been sold three times over” (*Disc.* 4.1.1-7). It is all too easy to become a “slave in a purple-bordered robe” (δοῦλος περιπόρφυρον<sup>62</sup> ἔχοντα, *Disc.* 4.1.57), a legally free person who thinks he has everything but is really controlled by his futile desires to master that which lies outside his control. When Epictetus calls someone a “slave” he does mean that their agency has been diminished: they have not

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<sup>62</sup> A garment reserved for the senatorial class.

attained the ability to attend only to themselves; they are restricted by their need to appease others.

Epictetus's account of agency conflates agency with freedom, even as it redefines freedom as the ability to attend primarily to one's self, whether in or out of legal slavery. It elevates an enslaved person's potential for strong agency, especially compared to Aristotle's account. But this kind of "freedom" also requires those who are legally enslaved to take on potentially lethal risks that their legally free counterparts can more easily avoid. The Roman "slave society" did not look favorably upon enslaved persons who attended only to themselves: those who did not comply with the wishes of their masters could be beaten on a whim or sent to do hard labor as punishment. In the worst-case scenario, an enslaved person could be crucified for insubordination. As Joel Marcus demonstrates, crucifixion was considered a "slave's death" precisely because it parodied the pretensions of enslaved persons (and other socially "inferior" persons) who had "gotten 'above' themselves"—by "insult[ing] their masters," for example.<sup>63</sup> You think you're so much better than free people? Fine: we'll raise you up—on a cross!<sup>64</sup>

Epictetus freely concedes the possibility that enslaved readers might die by following his instructions; in fact, on his account, "the only sure means to secure one's freedom is to be happy to die" ([Διογένης που λέγει] μίαν εἶναι μηχανὴν πρὸς ἐλευθερίαν τὸ εὐκόλως ἀποθνήσκειν, *Disc.* 4.1.30). For enslaved persons—and for free persons—freedom comes from relinquishing their attachment to their "poor bodies." But for those

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<sup>63</sup> Joel Marcus, "Crucifixion as Parodic Exaltation," *JBL* 125 (2006), 78.

<sup>64</sup> Cf. also the Gospel of John's double entendre with the word ὑψώω to describe both Jesus's crucifixion and his ascension: Jesus makes ironic use of the Romans' ironic form of execution (e.g., John 8:28, 12:32-33)!

who were literally, legally enslaved, and so at the mercy of legal masters, this renunciation was more likely actually to result in death.

### 1.2.3. Plautus

Plautus provides a third way that resists the binary of enslaved agency set up by Aristotle and Epictetus. Although his plays do not deliver sustained philosophical reflections on enslavement, their enslaved characters conform neither to Aristotle's conception of enslaved persons as mere extensions of their masters' will, nor to Epictetus's insistence that external slavery has no bearing on a person's interior will. It is possible that Plautus could craft more complex portraits of enslaved agency because he himself was or had been enslaved, at least for part of his life.<sup>65</sup> But even if Plautus never

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<sup>65</sup> See Amy Richlin, *Slave Theater in the Roman Republic: Plautus and Popular Comedy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017) for this admittedly speculative suggestion. Richlin notes that Aulus Gellius, a second-century CE Roman author, reports the tradition, via first-century BCE tradents like Varro, that Plautus "wrote *Fatso and Wage Slave* and a third play, the name of which now escapes me, in a mill. He had lost in trading ventures all the money that he had made in jobs related to the theater, and had returned to Rome, penniless, and in order to make enough money to eat he had hired out his labor to a miller, for turning the mill" (Gell. 3.3.14, in Richlin, 5). Plautus, on this account, was forced to sell himself into debt slavery—and slavery of a particularly brutal kind. Throughout his corpus Plautus's enslaved characters fear being sent to work in their masters' mills. The threat of mill labor often functions effectively as a deterrent against insubordination, or raises the stakes for an enslaved character's decision to act in defiance of that threat. If Plautus himself had experienced enslavement in a mill—and even written a play about wage slavery from that mill!—he certainly would have been able to draw from that experience to craft authentic enslaved characters in similar situations.

Of course, the extent to which Gellius's account is historically accurate is debatable. Richlin, who herself admits that this account is "folkloric" (Richlin, 6), must argue against scholarly consensus to claim that it is even possible that Plautus ever experienced enslavement. Most scholars of Plautus, she explains, doubt this biographical detail precisely because it appears too conveniently "consonant" with his work (Richlin, 6). Roberta L. Stewart, for example, quickly dismisses the historicity of Gellius's claims under the assumption that they "follow a general [ancient] pattern of conjuring biographical details from an author's writings" (*Plautus and Roman Slavery* [Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2012], 18). But Richlin suggests that this easy dismissal is "perhaps illogical" (Richlin, 6): authors, as the cliché goes, often "write what they know." And history knows of other authors who have written works in "dire circumstances": Richlin notes Hitler's *Mein Kampf*, Gramsci's *Prison Notebooks*, and King's "Letter from Birmingham Jail" (Richlin, 5); we, of course, should also include Paul's prison correspondence! It is entirely possible,

experienced slavery himself, Amy Richlin suggests that his plays may contain authentic enslaved voices. How? Because, like Paul's letters, theater is never just the production of an isolated writer. A script is not a play:<sup>66</sup> a play requires actors to interpret lines as they perform them, set-makers to craft the visual world of the play, costume designers to provide visual clues about a character's status or personality.<sup>67</sup> Richlin points to clues scattered throughout Plautus's corpus that indicate the enslaved status of at least some of the plays' actors. Take the prologue to *Captivi*, for example. As the speaker of the prologue explains the soap-opera-like plot of the play—the wealthy Hegio has just unknowingly purchased his own son, who was kidnapped as a baby, sold into slavery under another wealthy family, and recently captured in battle alongside his new owner—he wanders into existential commentary about how the whims of fate more strongly batter “little guys” (*homunculi*) like the play's enslaved characters and actors (*Capt.* 51 [Richlin, 140]). “This action (*res*),” i.e., the play's depiction of an enslaved person passed back and forth between owners, with little knowledge of his own origins, “will be real for us, a play for you [free audience members]” (*Capt.* 52 [Richlin, 140])). Richlin suggests that the word *res* here “surely has a double meaning: ‘the matter of our play,’ ‘the internal reality of the play,’ and ‘reality for us actors,’ with the consciousness of the presence of

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though certainly not verifiable, that Plautus is able to represent genuine enslaved perspectives in his plays because of his own experiences of slavery.

<sup>66</sup> Richlin, *Slave Theater in the Roman Republic*, 10, citing Niall Slater, *Plautus in Performance: The Theatre of the Mind* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1985).

<sup>67</sup> Unfortunately, of course, contemporary historians do not have access to the full staging of a Plautine play. But, as Richlin points out, citing C. W. Marshall, “the texts we have [of Plautus's plays] are not scripts but performance transcripts” (Richlin, 10, citing *The Stagecraft and Performance of Roman Comedy* [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006]): they have not come to us straight from Plautus's pen, but have been assembled from the notes taken by actors in the plays, many of whom were likely enslaved themselves.

slaves and freedmen” among the acting troupe.<sup>68</sup> The play’s depiction of a father ironically purchasing his own son might be particularly fantastical, but the speaker of the prologue reminds free audience members that such subjection to the whims of the free might not be so far-fetched for enslaved actors accustomed to this subjection themselves.

If Epictetus shows his enslaved students how to *die* in way that produces true “freedom,” Plautus’s enslaved characters give us glimpses into what it is like to *live while enslaved*, creatively and skillfully negotiating the constraints placed upon them by those who are free. Plautus’s enslaved characters exercise their agency differently than Epictetus’s enslaved exemplars. They do not attend only to their own inner selves, scorning the material and insisting on entirely independent action. They are highly aware of the ways other people’s attitudes and actions affect their quality of life, and they adjust their own actions accordingly. They do not, in other words, act “freely,” at least as Epictetus defines freedom. But recall Vincent Brown’s caution about conflating agency with freedom in the historical study of slavery: “everything in this assertion hangs on the word ‘freely,’ a fatal qualification for a theory of the social relations of slavery.”<sup>69</sup> Enslaved characters in Plautus’s plays do not act freely, but they do *act*—with the nimbleness and creativity they need to exercise their agency within the confines of slavery. They find ways to achieve at least some of their desires and still stay alive. They depict for their audience a realistic—if exaggerated for comedic effect—portrayal of

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<sup>68</sup> Richlin, 140. Note Stewart’s objection on this point: on Stewart’s account, nothing in Plautus’s plays represents the actual subjectivities of enslaved persons. The plays simply served to reinforce the elites’ political and economic interests, encouraging “good” (i.e., subservient) behavior among the non-elite, including enslaved persons (*Plautus and Roman Slavery*, 16-20).

<sup>69</sup> Brown, “Social Death and Political Life,” 1248.



enslaved persons exercising an agency that neither fully aligns with their masters' (as in Aristotle) nor surrenders all material attachments for inner freedom (as in Epictetus).

Plautus makes no Stoic attempt to be “legal-status blind”: his plays openly acknowledge the disparities that exist between legally free and legally enslaved persons. His enslaved characters know that they cannot *freely* exercise their wills under the constraints of demanding masters. They also know that they can be beaten—or, worse, sent to work in the mill—for displeasing masters who are not subject to the same threats. Enslaved persons are understood to be, by satirical definition, “whip-worthy.”<sup>70</sup> But by portraying what these enslaved characters desire, Plautus’s plays also show their audiences what it looks like to be an *enslaved* agent; that is, an actor whose agency is “powerfully conditioned by, though not reducible to, [its] slavery.”<sup>71</sup> The plays neither encourage enslaved audience members, as Epictetus does, to do away with wanting things that are not within their power to secure (manumission, good food and wine, sex, the satisfaction of exercising control over an owner), nor do they preclude them, as Aristotle does, from seeking ends that are in some way their own. The enslaved characters in Plautus’s plays are not *independent* agents. Their desires and actions are realistically confined by other agents, both free and enslaved. But within these networks of actors, enslaved characters desire and take action to achieve things they understand to be good for *them*, not just for the free people to whom they are subject. Enslaved characters in Plautus’s plays do not act freely; their actions are often particularly *enslaved*

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<sup>70</sup> Erich Segal, *Roman Laughter: The Comedy of Plautus* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987), 138.

<sup>71</sup> Johnson, “On Agency,” 115.

strategies for getting what they want from free people. But neither are their wills completely eclipsed by their enslavement.

An extended example from Plautus illustrates these points well. *Pseudolus* depicts its titular enslaved character as a “trickster” who “transforms the skills for surviving slavery into mechanisms of self-assertion.”<sup>72</sup> Pseudolus is enslaved to Simo and Calidorus, a father and son with conflicting desires. Calidorus is in love with the prostitute Phoenicium,<sup>73</sup> whom the pimp Ballio plans to sell to a soldier and send far away from Calidorus. Calidorus is despondent, and enlists Pseudolus to cheat the stingy Simo out of twenty minas so that he can purchase Phoenicium before the soldier has paid for her in full. Pseudolus will dutifully and skillfully help his owner Calidorus acquire the girl. So far, Aristotle might be pleased that Pseudolus uses the virtue at his disposal to serve his master’s ends. But to do so Pseudolus will have to negotiate his own way out of a double-bind that Aristotle does not acknowledge: Pseudolus has two masters, and they each want him to help them achieve their own conflicting intentions. Pseudolus delicately tries to appease both of them in a way that is most advantageous to his own ends. And in the end he succeeds: he pockets the twenty minas himself, secures a promise from Simo that he will not beat him for the rest of his life, and enjoys a feast that leaves him comically drunk.

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<sup>72</sup> Stewart, “*Plautus and Roman Slavery*,” 183.

<sup>73</sup> Who is also enslaved herself! It should be noted that the play never gives its audience insight into Phoenicium’s own subjectivity: her will, wishes, desires, and intentions. Throughout his corpus Plautus gives scant attention to his enslaved female characters, a limitation Richlin acknowledges, and which will make Plautus less useful for comparison with Hagar in Gal 4:21-5:1 (see Chapter 4). These enslaved female characters, like Phoenicium, tend to be presented as objects that fit into the schemes of the enslaved male characters around them.

Pseudolus very clearly lays out for his audience the constraints under which he works. He often appears confident and self-congratulatory about his plan and about his ability to pull the wool over the eyes of various free and enslaved characters. When we first meet Simo Pseudolus cheekily confides in us, “I’ll dig twenty minas out of this old tomb today” (*Pseud.* 413 [de Melo, LCL]). But behind Pseudolus’s cheeky confidence is reasonable fear. As the play unfolds Pseudolus is explicit with both his masters and the audience about the precariousness of his plans and about the dangers he would face if the plan should fail. Pseudolus eventually enlists Simia, the enslaved accomplice he had requested, to carry out part of his plan. Simia must be the one to actually retrieve Phoenicium from Ballio by pretending to be enslaved to the soldier who has agreed to purchase Phoenicium, since Ballio would recognize Pseudolus if he tried to carry out the same trick. While he waits for Simia to do his part, Pseudolus worries. He expresses to the audience a “threefold fear”: that Simia will desert him before completing the plan, that his master will return early, and that he and Simia will be caught after they’ve successfully robbed Ballio of his prostitute. “I’m dead!” he groans while he waits. Simia is “coming out far too slowly. / My heart is waiting with its baggage tied up so that / if he doesn’t take the woman out with him at the same time, / it may flee out of my chest into exile” (*Pseud.* 1032-36).

In order to achieve his ends from within these fearful constraints, Pseudolus resorts to means that would appear to an elite, free audience to lack honor. Simo complains early on that Pseudolus is accustomed to getting the things he wants “through trickery and clever guiles” (*per sycophantiam atque per doctos dolos*, *Pseud.* 485).

Throughout the play Pseudolus confuses the free people around him with clever wordplay and arranges intricate schemes of impersonation. Simo soon correctly guesses Pseudolus's plan to procure from him the twenty minas and is incensed that Pseudolus has tried to hide it from him. Pseudolus protests that he has been caught in a catch-22: if he had snitched on Calidorus to Simo, he would be committing "the evil custom / of a slave accusing his own master in front of his other master" (*Pseud.* 492-93), an act that Simo's free friend confirms would have resulted in Pseudolus being sent to the mill (*Pseud.* 494). But, Simo presses, "Didn't you know that the mill was waiting for you from me when you kept quiet about it?" (*Pseud.* 500). Yes, Pseudolus responds, but "that trouble [i.e., the trouble of speaking badly about Simo's son] was at hand, yours was still some way off" (*Pseud.* 501). The line is intended to amuse the audience, but also to deflect Simo's wrath by indirectly and humorously pointing out the fact that Simo wants Pseudolus to do two contradictory things. And it works: Pseudolus deflects the tension through his cleverness. Simo's free friend is delighted by Pseudolus's turns of phrase and prompts him to speak even more boldly, so Pseudolus suggests a wager: if Pseudolus can kidnap Calidorus's girlfriend—and thus save Simo twenty minas—Simo will promise never to beat Pseudolus again. If Pseudolus fails, Simo can send him to the mill for the rest of his life. Pseudolus's behavior is risky, but it also evinces a keen understanding of how to achieve his own ends by working within the expectations imposed on him by the free.

As Keith Bradley explains, behavior like Pseudolus's is often characterized "moralistically" in elite sources as "poor work performance." "Roman slave-owners

expected trickery from their slaves,” and, like Aristotle, saw it as evidence of their *failures* of will, failures to act straightforwardly and efficiently to accomplish the ends these slave-owners considered most pressing.<sup>74</sup> According to Roberta Stewart, the play itself implicitly punishes Pseudolus for this kind of behavior, and so reinforces “the arbitrary logic of [a] slave system” that justifies the enslavement of morally “inferior,” naturally “slavish” persons.<sup>75</sup> After all, she points out, Pseudolus, like every other enslaved “trickster” in the Plautine corpus, is still enslaved at the end of the play. And he seems content with a drunken party as the reward for carrying out his scheme successfully; he neither “desire[s]” nor “pursu[es] release from slavery.”<sup>76</sup> On Stewart’s account, the end of the play reveals Plautus’s true understanding of enslaved agency. Even as the play “encodes the autonomous action of slaves,” it also puts them in their place: Pseudolus’s “slavish” behavior justifies his enslavement.<sup>77</sup> *Pseudolus* becomes a morality tale about the moral turpitude of the enslaved. Sure, “slaves” can achieve their own ends. But their ends are petty, worthless, revelatory of their moral failings. They cannot achieve that which Stewart considers most important: manumission.

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<sup>74</sup> Keith Bradley, “Resisting Slavery at Rome,” in *The Cambridge World History of Slavery*, ed. Keith Bradley and Paul Cartledge (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 374.

<sup>75</sup> Stewart, *Plautus and Roman Slavery*, 189.

<sup>76</sup> Stewart, 189.

<sup>77</sup> Stewart, 189. For a similar view of the conservative function of Plautus’s enslaved characters, see J. Albert Harrill, *Slaves in the New Testament: Literary, Social and Moral Dimensions* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 2006). Harrill argues that the stock figure of the “clever slave” in Plautus “never challenges the authority figure against which he rebels,” nor does he “represent the point of view of actual slaves or recover the lost voices of the poor, oppressed, and marginalized in ancient society” (74). Harrill also argues that Luke adopts this stock figure to depict Rhoda (Acts 12:13-16) and the parabolic dishonest manager (Luke 16:1-8; see Chapter 3), both of which, on Harrill’s account, “encouraged early Christians to laugh at slaves as moral inferiors” (83).

However, as Bradley argues, behavior like Pseudolus's can also be viewed as "decisions consciously taken to vex, annoy and defy slave-owners, to lighten workloads, to protest against servitude."<sup>78</sup> And there is evidence within *Pseudolus* that suggests the play itself admires Pseudolus's (and other enslaved characters') particularly enslaved ways of exercising their agency. *Pseudolus*, along with other Plautine plays, is never romantic in the way it depicts its enslaved characters. There are good enslaved characters, and bad enslaved characters—although, contrary to what Aristotle might expect, the "good" enslaved characters in Plautus are celebrated for seeking their own ends more than their masters', and the "bad" enslaved characters become laughingstocks for deferring too much to the free.<sup>79</sup> And neither do the plays categorically present enslavement as evidence of heroism. When Plautus's characters call each other "slave" (*seruos*) they sometimes do so as an insult. At the outset of his scheme, for example, Pseudolus has a run-in with Harpax, who is enslaved to the soldier who plans to buy Phoenicium. When Harpax knocks at Ballio's door Pseudolus appears and pretends to work for Ballio, hoping he can intercept the money the soldier intends to deliver as payment for the girl. Harpax interrogates Pseudolus, asking who he is, what he does, and whether or not he is enslaved. Pseudolus responds, "For the time being I'm a slave" (*Pseud.* 610). And then the insults begin: "That's what you look like," Harpax retorts,

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<sup>78</sup> Bradley, "Resisting Slavery at Rome," 374-5.

<sup>79</sup> Harpax, for example, is lampooned in the play for trying too hard to be, from the perspective of a slave-owner, an ideal slave. Harpax brags, "A slave who thinks nothing of his master's command is bad and useless, / but someone who is forgetful in doing his duty unless he's reminded is worthless ... When I'm given an order, I consider my master to be present, even if he's away" (1103-4, 1113). However, as the result of Pseudolus's scheme, Harpax is eventually accused of impersonating himself, and ultimately fails to carry out his master's goal of procuring Phoenicium.

“and you don’t look as if you deserve to be free” (*Pseud.* 611). Pseudolus fires back, “Don’t you normally look at yourself when you insult someone else?” (*Pseud.* 612). Pseudolus here accepts Harpax’s premise and turns it back onto him: even among the enslaved, it is an insult to say someone *looks* like they are enslaved and to suggest that they deserve their enslavement.

But at other times in the play the title “slave” indicates that a character has a special capacity for action, a particularly enslaved *ability*. Soon after Pseudolus successfully fools Harpax he realizes that his plan will require an accomplice. When he runs into his master Calidorus and Calidorus’s friend Charinus, he instructs them to procure “someone bad / clever, smart, who, when he’s understood the beginning [of the plan], / knows by himself what he needs to do further” (*Pseud.* 724-26). Charinus asks, “Does it matter if it’s a slave?” (*si seruos est, numquid refert?*, *Pseud.* 727). And Pseudolus responds, “No, I much prefer a slave to a free man” (*immo multo mauolo quam liberum*, *Pseud.* 728). Here, as in Pseudolus’s earlier exchange with Harpax, being enslaved carries with it implications about the morality of the enslaved person. Harpax suggests the enslaved “deserve” their enslavement; Pseudolus looks for someone “bad” (*malum*) and suggests it would be easier to find him among the enslaved. But this exchange with Charinus also says something more about enslaved *capacity*. Pseudolus needs someone who is “clever” (*callidus*) and “smart” (*doctus*) enough to understand the complexity of his plan and to be able to improvise on it. And Pseudolus—himself a “clever slave”—prefers to trust the practical wisdom of an enslaved person over that of a free person. While the title “slave” in this exchange still implies deficient morality, it

does not imply a diminished capacity for action. When Pseudolus calls for a “slave,” he calls for a skilled, intelligent agent upon whom he can rely to achieve his own enslaved ends.

### ***1.3 Enslaved Agency in Paul***

Paul does not have (or at least express) a consistent philosophy of enslaved agency—or a consistent evaluation of slavery in general.<sup>80</sup> In the single letter of 1 Corinthians, for example, Paul can write about slavery in ways that alternately resemble both Aristotle and Epictetus.<sup>81</sup> When Paul speaks about himself and other apostles as metaphorically enslaved to God in 1 Cor 3-4 he sounds more like (though not identical to) Aristotle: the apostles’ labor is significant only insofar as it carries out the intentions of their metaphorical master, God/Christ. This is a particularly rhetorically useful view of enslaved agency at this point in the letter, as Paul reprimands the Corinthians for their factionalism. Some of them are claiming to follow Paul, some Apollos, some Cephas (1 Cor 3:4, 22). Paul rebukes these allegiances with two images of enslavement (or at least servitude): he calls himself and Apollos merely “servants (διάκονοι) through whom [the Corinthians] came to believe, as the Lord assigned to each” (3:5), and “servants

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<sup>80</sup> Paul’s words were famously employed in both sides of American abolition debates, for example. As Emerson B. Powery and Rodney S. Sadler Jr. (*The Genesis of Liberation: Biblical Interpretation in the Antebellum Narratives of the Enslaved* [Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2016]) trace Frederick Douglass’s use of biblical interpretation they find that when he was confronted with Philemon as evidence that Paul discouraged enslaved persons from running away (itself only one way to read Philemon!) “Douglass’s rejoinder was not to tackle the exegetical concerns of the Philemon story directly, but rather to redirect the focus to another Pauline passage,” that is, to 1 Tim 1:9-10, which condemns “menstealers” (131).

<sup>81</sup> On the unity of 1 Corinthians, see Margaret M. Mitchell, *Paul and the Rhetoric of Reconciliation: An Exegetical Investigation of the Language and Composition of 1 Corinthians* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1992).



(ὕπηρέτας) of Christ and stewards (οἰκονόμους) of God’s mysteries” (4:1).<sup>82</sup> Paul’s point here is clear: the Corinthians should not focus on the particular work or charisma of individual apostles, but on the God who directs their work and makes it fruitful (3:6-7). As God’s stewards (οἰκονόμοι—a word Paul will also use to name the Law in Gal 4:2),

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<sup>82</sup> Whether or not these terms each refer specifically to *enslavement* (rather than free servitude) is more or less certain, depending on the term. BAGD finds that διάκονος is largely used in the New Testament as a general term for someone “who is busy with something in a manner that is of assistance to someone,” whether as an “intermediary in a transaction” (e.g. Phoebe in Rom 16:1) or as someone who “gets something done... at the behest of a superior” (e.g., as a ridiculous counterfactual, Jesus in Gal 2:17!) (230). Figures who are labelled διάκονος tend not to be *enslaved*, either literally or metaphorically, but they are understood to occupy a subservient position and to carry out the will of someone else. (Note that Paul says the διάκονοι in 1 Cor 3 will receive “wages” [μισθός, 3:8], a word he will use later in the letter [1 Cor 9:17] to distinguish enslaved from free labor: the latter receives a μισθός, while the former receives an οἰκονομία). Gordon Fee (*The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, NICNT [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1987]) notes that the term ὑπηρέτης “originated to describe the slaves who rowed in the lower tier of a trireme,” but that by the first century CE “it came to be used of any who were in a subservient position, with emphasis on the relationship of one who served a superior” (173, fn 467). In the Gospels and Acts ὑπηρέτης is used frequently to name the “guards” (or, per the NRSV, “police”) who protect the temple or other religious leadership (e.g. Matt 5:25, 26:58; Mark 14:54, 65; John 7:32, 45, 18:3, 18 19:6; Acts 5:22), but Luke can also use it to describe someone in any kind of attendant or protective position (e.g., Luke 1:2, 4:20; Acts 13:5, 26:16). (1 Cor 4:1 is the only place Paul uses the term.)

Whether or not these figures are enslaved is unclear. Notably, when John recounts the scene in the courtyard of the high priest he places together a group of ὑπηρέται (here probably in the position of “soldiers”) with a group of δοῦλοι, all warming themselves around a fire (John 18:18); ὑπηρέται can at least occupy the same social space as unambiguously enslaved δοῦλοι. For John Byron (“Slave of Christ or Willing Servant? Paul’s Self-Description in 1 Corinthians 4:1-2 and 9:16-18,” *Neot* 37 [2003]) the *distinction* between ὑπηρέται and δοῦλοι is important: he points out that Plato distinguishes between δοῦλοι as “property” and ὑπηρέται as free persons (ἐλευθέροι) “who serve voluntarily and willingly (179, citing *Politicus* 289c-e). On Byron’s account, in fact, “Paul does not identify himself as Christ’s slave *anywhere* in 1 Corinthians,” presumably because this self-designation would have been too distasteful to the status-obsessed Corinthians; Paul’s service is entirely voluntary (Byron, 179, emphasis mine). While the terms διάκονος and ὑπηρέτης may not necessarily trigger associations with enslavement on their own, however, Paul pairs them with the term οἰκονόμος, which he uses twice in 1 Cor 4:1-2. The word οἰκονόμος often—though not always—refers to an enslaved household manager; see Chapter 3 for an extended discussion of this term as a designation of the Law’s enslavement in Gal 4:2. Paul *may* begin his extended metaphor in 1 Cor 3-4 by characterizing himself and Apollos as free, low-status workers. But by the end of this section of the letter Paul modulates the metaphor to depict the apostles as enslaved workers: οἰκονόμοι (4:1, 2) who must be found πιστός (4:2) by their master (κύριος, 4:4, 5; Fee suggests that “the [household] metaphor itself... dictated this choice of titles” for Christ in the passage [177]; Anthony C. Thiselton [*The First Epistle to the Corinthians: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, NIGCT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000), 300] agrees). This combination of terms seems to follow a pattern of intensifying servitude similar to Jesus’s instructions in Mark 10:43-44 (cf. Matt 20:26-27). Jesus first tells his disciples that “whoever wishes to be great among [them] must be [their] servant (διάκονος),” then intensifies his instructions to say that “whoever wishes to be first among [them] must be a slave (δοῦλος) of all. (C.K. Barrett [*A Commentary on the First Epistle to the Corinthians*, Harper’s New Testament Commentaries (New York: Harper & Row, 1968), 100] also notes this pattern of intensification.)

the apostles must be found by God to be “faithful” (πιστός)—an adjective Matthew and Luke often use to describe the activity of enslaved parabolic figures who successfully carry out their masters’ intentions (Matt 24:45; 25:21, 23; Luke 12:42; 16:10, 11, 12; 19:17).<sup>83</sup> The metaphorically enslaved apostles must skillfully exert themselves, using whatever particular skills they have at their disposal (cf. 3:6, 8), to do the work God has assigned to each of them. But what matters most is that this is *God’s* work; the identity of the particular enslaved worker who carries it out is irrelevant.<sup>84</sup>

Just a few chapters later, however, when he addresses the situation of literally enslaved members of the Corinthian congregation, Paul begins to sound more like Epictetus: he is less concerned with the Corinthians’ legal status, and more concerned with how each of them—enslaved or free—lives out their calling from Christ, which does not depend on legal freedom. In 1 Cor 7 Paul instructs *all* of the Corinthians to “remain in the condition in which [they] were called” (7:20). He then directs his attention to the enslaved: “Were you called as a slave (δοῦλος)? Don’t let it concern you (μή σοι μελέτω)” (7:21a). Paul’s next instruction is famously difficult to translate: ἀλλ’ εἰ καὶ δύνασαι ἐλεύθερος γενέσθαι, μᾶλλον χρῆσαι. Here Paul raises the possibility that the enslaved Corinthians might have an opportunity to become free, then tells them that it is better to “make use of (χρῆσαι)”... something. He does not provide an object for the

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<sup>83</sup> For πιστός as an adjective describing enslaved managers, see Glancy, *Slavery in Early Christianity*, 115-18; Pheme Perkins, *First Corinthians*, Paideia Commentaries on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2012), 77; Raymond F. Collins, *First Corinthians*, SP 7 (Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 1999), 172; Richard B. Hays, *First Corinthians*, IBC (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2011), 65.

<sup>84</sup> William F. Orr and James Arthur Walther (*I Corinthians*, AB 32 [Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1976]) agree, with an interesting rendering of God’s agency in the work of the apostles: “human servants... [perform] the work of God, whose activity uses their service for life and growth” (172, emphasis mine).

infinitive. Just what does Paul want the enslaved Corinthians to “make use of”? Two interpretations are possible: 1) “Were you a slave when called? Don’t worry about it. But also, if it’s possible to become free, make use [of the opportunity to do so].” Paul instructs enslaved members of the congregation to seek freedom if possible, although this instruction is not at all urgent.<sup>85</sup> 2) “Were you a slave when called? Don’t worry about it. But even if it’s possible to become free, rather make use [of your enslaved status to serve Christ where you were called].” Paul instructs the enslaved Corinthians to stay enslaved no matter what.<sup>86</sup> This translation issue obviously has serious pastoral implications: does Paul encourage oppressed people to remain in a state of oppression? But regardless of how one chooses to translate 7:21b it is clear from the larger context of this directive that Paul is here, like Epictetus, relatively indifferent towards literal enslavement as a determining factor for action—in Paul’s case, for obeying God effectively (7:19). The following verse makes this indifference explicit: “For whoever was called in the Lord as

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<sup>85</sup> Cf. the NIV, ESV, NASB, CEB. Commentators who opt for this translation include Perkins, *First Corinthians*, 111; Joseph A. Fitzmyer, *First Corinthians: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, AB 32 (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2008), 309; Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, 339; Hays, *First Corinthians*, 125-26.

<sup>86</sup> Cf. the NRSV: “Even if you can gain your freedom, make use of your present condition now more than ever.” (The recent [2021] update to the NRSV, however, renders this translation more hesitantly, including a pronoun with an ambiguous antecedent: “Were you a slave when called? Do not be concerned about it. Even if you can gain your freedom, make the most of it.”) Commentators who opt for this translation include Thiselton, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, 544; Hans Conzelmann, *I Corinthians: A Commentary on the First Epistle to the Corinthians*, Hermeneia (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1975), 125; Orr and Walther, *I Corinthians*, 215. For a more exhaustive list of interpreters who opt for either of these translations, see Thiselton, 554-59; S. Scott Bartchy, *Μᾶλλον χρῆσαι: First Century Slavery and the Interpretation of I Cor. 7:21* (Missoula: Scholars Press, 1973), 6-7. Bartchy’s own translation attempts to chart a middle way between the two cited above: he understands the object of *μᾶλλον χρῆσαι* to be *κλήσις* (“calling,” 7:20). Whether or not the enslaved Corinthians are manumitted, they should “live according to God’s calling” (155-59); their social status is entirely irrelevant. (J. Paul Sampley, “The First Letter to the Corinthians: Introduction, Commentary, and Reflections,” in *Acts; Introduction to Epistolary Literature; Romans; I Corinthians*, vol. 10 of *The New Interpreter’s Bible* [Nashville: Abingdon, 1994-2004], 881, follows Bartchy.)

a slave is a freed person of the Lord; likewise, the one called as free is a slave of Christ” (ὁ γὰρ ἐν κυρίῳ κληθεὶς δοῦλος ἀπελεύθερος κυρίου ἐστίν· ὁμοίως ὁ ἐλεύθερος κληθεὶς δοῦλος ἐστὶν Χριστοῦ, 7:22). Like Epictetus, who can speak of a legally enslaved person as “by nature free” (τὸ φύσει ἐλεύθερον, *Disc.* 1.19.7-10) and a legally free person as a “slave in a purple-bordered robe” (δοῦλος περιπόρφυρον ἔχοντα, *Disc.* 4.1.57), Paul relativizes his congregants’ legal status and insists that their literal enslavement or freedom has no bearing on their ability (in Christ) to respond obediently to God’s call.<sup>87</sup>

In the course of four chapters in 1 Corinthians Paul can flexibly shift between different conceptions of enslaved agency to make different theological points. In 1 Cor 3-4 Paul can exploit an understanding of enslaved agency closer to Aristotle’s: the Corinthians should not fixate on the work of any one apostle because, as laborers who are metaphorically enslaved to God, the apostles are each carrying out the intentions of their common “master” (κύριος). Paul may plant, Apollos may water; they may each be found competent and “trustworthy” (πιστός, 4:2) in their assigned tasks. But it is ultimately “God who gives the growth” (3:7), using his enslaved “tools” to do so. In 1 Cor 7, however, Paul switches tactics, using instead another available understanding of enslaved agency—one closer to Epictetus’s—to relativize the Corinthians’ literal social standing. Depending on our translation of 1 Cor 7:21b Paul *may* here acknowledge that being literally free would be preferable to being literally enslaved. But, whether or not he

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<sup>87</sup> Scholars often note this connection between Paul’s apparent indifference to the categories of literal enslavement and freedom in 1 Cor 7:21-24 and the attitudes of Stoic and Cynic writers (including Epictetus); see Perkins, *First Corinthians*, 110; Thiselton (who calls this connection an “accidental overlap”), *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, 557-8; Will Deming, *Paul on Marriage: The Hellenistic Background of 1 Corinthians 7* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2004), 161-73; Sampley, 881.

makes that concession, Paul's larger point is that one's social status need not determine one's *ability* to "obey the commandments of God" (7:19). These two understandings of enslaved agency in 1 Corinthians—one closer to Aristotle's, one closer to Epictetus's—intersect with and complicate each other: what are the literally enslaved Corinthians metaphorically free to do in 1 Cor 7? To serve God, who has metaphorically "bought [them] with a price (τιμῆς ἠγοράσθητε)" (7:23). And what is the net result of Paul's insistence that he and the other apostles are merely God's enslaved tools? That Paul can carry out his apostolic labor and exercise his apostolic authority without fear of the Corinthians' judgment (4:3-4).<sup>88</sup> Paul is not ideologically committed to any one theory of enslaved agency, but shifts between and within them pragmatically to make a variety of theological moves.

When it comes to the particular slavery metaphors Paul uses to characterize the Law in Galatians, Paul looks most like Plautus. Paul's enslaved Law acts—in a variety of ways, sharing its agency with a variety of other actors—both within and despite the constraints of its enslavement. Before turning to examine how this understanding of enslaved agency manifests in each of Paul's slavery metaphors for the Law in Galatians—the topic of the following three chapters—it will be helpful to consider another extended example of a Pauline slavery metaphor that is illumined by Plautus's presentation of enslaved agency. In Romans 6 Paul introduces a slavery metaphor to describe the effect of the death and resurrection of Christ on Christian believers: Christ

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<sup>88</sup> This, in fact, is Dale Martin's argument about the function of Paul adopting slavery language for himself in 1 Corinthians: Paul can ironically claim a great deal of authority over the Corinthians *because* this slavery language allows him to pass his own actions off as Christ's.

has freed believers from enslavement to Sin and has enslaved them (in a paradoxically liberating way) to righteousness (6:6-7, 14, 17-18, 20-23). This transfer of metaphorical ownership, according to Paul, changes everything; Paul likens it to the believer's own passage through death and into new life (6:3-4, 6-8, 21-22). But the slavery metaphor seems to strain when Paul moves from proclaiming God's action to instructing the Romans on how to act accordingly: Paul exhorts the Romans to continue to *choose* their master rightly. "Do not let Sin rule in your mortal bodies," he insists (μη ... βασιλευέτω ἡ ἁμαρτία ἐν τῷ θνητῷ ὑμῶν σώματι εἰς τὸ ὑπακούειν ταῖς ἐπιθυμίαις αὐτοῦ, 6:12). Or later: "Do you not know that if you present yourselves to anyone as obedient slaves, you are slaves of the one whom you obey?" (οὐκ οἴδατε ὅτι ὃ παριστάνετε ἑαυτοὺς δούλους εἰς ὑπακοήν, δοῦλοί ἐστε ὃ ὑπακούετε ... ;, 6:16).

These exhortations present the contemporary reader with something of a puzzle: on the one hand, Paul describes the "enslaved" Romans as passive in their transfer of ownership from Sin to God: "We know that our old self was crucified with him so that the body of Sin might be destroyed and we might no longer be enslaved to Sin. For whoever has died is freed from sin" (τοῦτο γινώσκοντες ὅτι ὁ παλαιὸς ἡμῶν ἄνθρωπος συνεσταυρώθη, ἵνα καταργηθῇ τὸ σῶμα τῆς ἁμαρτίας, τοῦ μηκέτι δουλεύειν ἡμᾶς τῇ ἁμαρτίᾳ, ὁ γὰρ ἀποθανὼν δεδικαίωται ἀπὸ τῆς ἁμαρτίας, 6:6-7). On the other, Paul casts the "enslaved" Romans as active agents with the ability to choose to whom they will be enslaved: "Do you not know that if you present yourselves to anyone as obedient slaves, you are slaves of the one whom you obey, either of Sin, which leads to death, or of obedience, which leads to righteousness?" (οὐκ οἴδατε ὅτι ὃ παριστάνετε ἑαυτοὺς

δούλους εἰς ὑπακοήν, δοῦλοι ἐστε ᾧ ὑπακούετε, ἤτοι ἀμαρτίας εἰς θάνατον ἢ ὑπακοῆς εἰς δικαιοσύνην; 6:16). These exhortations appear to contradict each other, and they also seem to make little sense of the experiences of literally enslaved persons in the Roman Empire. Enslaved persons, after all, did not choose masters; masters chose them.

To try to solve this puzzle of enslaved agency, commentators on Romans 6 frequently assume that Paul's injunctions not to "present [παρίστημι] one's self" (6:16, or one's "members," 6:13, 19) as "obedient slaves" to Sin refers to the practice of self-sale into slavery. Robert Jewett,<sup>89</sup> Brendan Byrne,<sup>90</sup> James Dunn,<sup>91</sup> Joseph Fitzmyer,<sup>92</sup> and Douglas Moo<sup>93</sup> all argue that Paul draws on what they assume to be a common practice in which a free person sells him- or herself into slavery, usually in order to pay a debt. Enslavement *itself*, on these accounts, becomes a choice—even if, as some of these commentators concede, the possibility of financial ruin leaves few other options available to those who choose self-sale.<sup>94</sup> But self-sale is also considered by these commentators to be an ill-advised choice, one that removes from the newly enslaved debtor any possibility of making *future* choices. As Dunn starkly describes the situation of the newly enslaved, "For the slave, obedience is the only option; as the chattel of his master he has no other function than obedience."<sup>95</sup> If we assume self-sale is in the background of his metaphor, Paul's point in Romans 6 could be paraphrased: "Don't sell yourselves into slavery to

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<sup>89</sup> Robert Jewett, *Romans*, Hermeneia (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress Press, 2006), 416.

<sup>90</sup> Brendan Byrne, *Romans*, SP 6 (Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 1996), 205.

<sup>91</sup> James D.G. Dunn, *Romans 1-8*, WBC 38A (Dallas: Word Books, 1988), 341.

<sup>92</sup> Joseph A. Fitzmyer, *Romans*, AB 33 (New York: Doubleday, 1993), 448.

<sup>93</sup> Douglas J. Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans*, NICNT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996), 398.

<sup>94</sup> For example: Jewett, *Romans*, 416; Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 398.

<sup>95</sup> Dunn, *Romans 1-8*, 342.

Sin; it may seem like self-sale is your only short-term solution, but it will leave you doomed to a future in which Sin will make all your decisions for you!”

But there are both historical and literary problems with assuming that Paul refers to self-sale in Romans 6. First, the historical: as Jennifer Glancy points out, the notion that self-sale was common in the ancient world tends to appear only in New Testament studies; moreover, proponents of the idea tend to rely primarily on a single reference, S. Scott Bartchy’s 1973 dissertation, *Μᾶλλον χρῆσαι: First-Century Slavery and 1 Corinthians 7:21*.<sup>96</sup> Classics scholars who study Greco-Roman slavery almost never list self-sale as a significant source of enslaved labor in the Roman Empire.<sup>97</sup> Glancy herself finds scant evidence to suggest that self-sale was a common phenomenon in this time period. The few arguments that have been made in favor of the widespread practice of self-sale have largely been made from silence: self-sale, so the argument goes, would have been “taboo” because the practice of self-sale would have threatened the neat existential division between enslaved and free that made free people feel secure in their freedom.<sup>98</sup> And the few explicit mentions of self-sale in the historical record often occur in hyperbolic depictions of self-abnegation (as in 1 Clem. 55.1-3<sup>99</sup>) or in satirical depictions of foolish men who will give up anything—including their honor as a free

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<sup>96</sup> Glancy, *Slavery in Early Christianity*, 80.

<sup>97</sup> Glancy cites Iza Biezunska-Malowist, *L’Esclavage dans l’Égypte gréco-romaine: seconde partie* (Wrocław: Ossolineum, 1977); Bradley, *Slavery and Society at Rome*; and Walter Scheidel, “Quantifying the Sources of Slaves in the Early Roman Empire,” *Journal of Roman Studies* 87 (1997): 156-169.

<sup>98</sup> Glancy, *Slavery in Early Christianity*, 81-82.

<sup>99</sup> Clement claims that “many among ourselves have given themselves to bondage so that they might ransom others. Many have delivered themselves to slavery, and provided food for others with the price they received for themselves.” (55.2, cited in Glancy, 82.)



person—to gain wealth (as in Petronius’s *Satyricon*, 57).<sup>100</sup> Certainly, Glancy concedes, self-sale “was known and at least occasionally practiced in the Roman Empire.”<sup>101</sup> But she rightly resists the “stronger claim that the practice was common.”<sup>102</sup> And if the practice of self-sale were relatively uncommon, it would seem unlikely that Paul would use it to make a theological point that he finds he can only explain in a “human way” (ἄνθρωπινον, Rom. 6:19)—i.e., by appealing to the lived experiences of his auditors.

But, more importantly, identifying self-sale as the underlying concept in Romans 6 makes little sense of the metaphor in its *literary* context. Even if self-sale *were* a historical commonplace—even if the Roman Christians saw self-sale happening every day in the marketplace—the timeline of Paul’s extended metaphor would make a reference to self-sale unlikely. Paul addresses Roman Christians who are *already* metaphorically enslaved: to God (6:22) and to things associated with God such as grace (6:14), a “form of teaching” (6:17), and righteousness (6:18). Within the world of the metaphor they are not free people making a choice about whether or not to enslave themselves to *anyone*; they are enslaved persons who have been “handed over” (παρεδόθητε, 6:17) from one master to another—passively, with no say in this transaction.

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<sup>100</sup> As Glancy summarizes the plot, “Petronius’s outrageous freedman, Trimalchio, in the *Satyricon* explains that he chose to become a slave with the eventual goal of achieving Roman citizenship and hence avoiding the taxes that Rome levied on provincials. Since Petronius’s satirical humor derives from the excessiveness of his portrayal of the flamboyant freedman, to describe Trimalchio’s career as following a typical trajectory is tendentious” (Glancy, 82).

<sup>101</sup> Glancy, 84.

<sup>102</sup> Glancy, 84.

Nevertheless, Paul still exhorts the Romans to make choices about their metaphorical masters, and to choose wisely. The stakes are high: enslavement to Sin results in death, but enslavement to God results in eternal life (6:23). How can this imperative to choose one's master accompany the indicatives Paul has already laid out? Some commentators who otherwise rely on self-sale as an explanatory concept recognize the passivity of the Roman Christians' passage from slavery to Sin to slavery to God and see it as a challenge to the coherence of Paul's metaphor. Dunn, for example, proposes that in verse 17 Paul switches his referent from self-sale to the transfer of ownership. But this new metaphor, on Dunn's account, breaks down quickly: even Paul himself is "aware that the real life parallel [to a slave's transfer in ownership] is not entirely applicable" precisely because "he talks of the convert's part in the transfer of ownership."<sup>103</sup> Perhaps Paul's concession about speaking in a "human way" (ἀνθρώπινον) in 6:19 is actually an apology for poor metaphor-making!

It is, of course, possible that Paul here mixes his slavery metaphors—in 1 Corinthians 3, after all, he calls the Corinthians God's field, God's building, and God's temple all in the same breath. It is also possible that Paul, as a free person, was simply out of touch with the extent to which enslaved persons were constrained in their choices. Perhaps here in Romans 6 Paul mixes together references to self-sale and to captivity without bothering to craft a single, cohesive image that would resonate with the actual experiences of enslaved persons in the Roman Empire and in his house-churches. But I propose that Paul was more careful with his metaphor-making in Romans 6. As we will

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<sup>103</sup> Dunn, *Romans 1-8*, 354.

see, the complex but coherent image of enslavement upon which he relies would both resonate with an audience familiar with the dynamics of Roman slavery *and* provide him with a particularly helpful metaphor to use as he exhorts his audience to “become who they are” in Christ.

Interpreters of Romans 6 who rely on self-sale to explain Paul’s metaphors tend to assume that any genuine choice can only be made by a person who is legally free. But, as we have seen, that assumption—while often well-intentioned—unhelpfully forecloses the possibility of enslaved *agents* acting, within the constraints of enslavement, in meaningful ways. Paul’s metaphorical directives in Romans 6 provide an instructive example of how a first-century writer could present a more complex picture of enslaved agency, precisely because these metaphorical directives rely on the lived experiences of enslaved persons in a very particular state, that of liminal ownership—i.e., enslaved persons who have recently been transferred from one master to another, or who are owned by multiple owners with competing aims.<sup>104</sup> In these states of liminal ownership,

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<sup>104</sup> It was, in fact, possible for enslaved persons in the Roman Empire to be legally owned by multiple masters. Glancy suggests that Jesus’ teaching that “no one can have two masters” (Matt 6:24) has become “so proverbial” in contemporary Western society that “we have lost sight of the difficult reality to which it refers, the double bind experienced by slaves who did in fact have two or more owners” (*Slavery in Early Christianity*, 107). Glancy examines first-century Egyptian documents of slave ownership and finds that “local law and custom” allowed owners to own partial shares of an enslaved person; an enslaved person could be “one-half or one-third free,” or could be owned by multiple owners (108). She examines one set of documents in particular (P.Fam.Tebt. 37, 38, 40) to try to reconstruct the lived experience of one enslaved woman in this situation: a woman named Martilla. Glancy’s reconstruction of Martilla’s situation is admittedly speculative; neither Martilla nor any other multiply enslaved person has left an autobiographical account of their experience. We do know, however, that Martilla was jointly owned by three brothers, one of whom was so in debt that his creditors kidnapped Martilla as payment. The other two brothers would eventually file a legal petition against their indigent brother for profiting by himself off this “transaction;” they hoped to gain back possession of Martilla in the courts. While the documents she examines recount the situation only from the perspective of the brothers, Glancy ventures an educated guess about how this “tense and protracted conflict”—which we know included kidnapping—affected Martilla: “One wonders how many shouting and shoving matches occurred over the years with Martilla caught in the middle—ordered to stay with the men who claimed to be her new owners, ordered to depart with her original

obedience to one master is hardly an enslaved person's "only option."<sup>105</sup> For better or worse, such slaves must make choices in order to negotiate between the whims of masters with competing aims. In Romans 6, the metaphorically enslaved Roman Christians must navigate between God, to whom the Roman Christians have already been transferred, and Sin, who is still trying to exercise dominion over those who were formerly enslaved to it. The Roman Christians have experienced a gracious but unchosen metaphorical transfer in ownership from Sin to God. However, after this transfer they remain in a state of liminal ownership, able to make choices that will *effectively* either re-enslave them to their old master, Sin, or acknowledge the reality of their enslavement to their new master, God.

Plautus frequently depicts enslaved characters in similar states of liminal ownership, making similar kinds of constrained choices. His enslaved characters frequently and skillfully negotiate between competing masters for their own ends, showing Paul's readers what it may have been like for enslaved persons to navigate conflicting demands from multiple owners—whether this entails dealing with multiple owners who reside within the same household (for example, a father and son), or navigating the legal transfer from one owner to another (after being captured in war, for example). Plautus's enslaved characters in these states of liminal ownership do not find obedience to one master to be their "only option." Instead, they continually make decisions about if, how, and whom they will obey. Sometimes such moments of decision look like impossible dilemmas. But sometimes these moments of decision look like

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owners, unsure who her legal owners were, certain only that she was subject to violence from all these men" (108).

<sup>105</sup> Cf. Dunn, *Romans 1-8*, 342.

opportunities for enslaved characters to achieve their own ends by manipulating their rival owners.

Many of Plautus's plays pit a free son against a free father and place an enslaved character right in the middle of the conflict. This is an extremely precarious position for the enslaved character. Take, for example, the predicament of the enslaved pedagogue Lydus in *Bacchides*. Lydus is assigned to teach and to discipline his free charge, but, as he laments, when he does try to discipline the boy, the youngster "immediately cracks the pedagogue's head with his tablet" (*Bacch.* 441 [de Melo]). When Lydus goes to the boy's father to complain about his son's behavior, he is chastised and beaten again: "'Hey, you worthless old fogey, don't you touch the boy for this, since he's acted spiritedly!'" (*Bacch.* 445). Lydus cannot win: there is no way for him to obey his older master's charge without provoking the wrath of his younger master, which then provokes the wrath of the older master, his father. Having multiple masters, as Lydus would tell us, is not *always* an opportunity to make creative and beneficial choices.<sup>106</sup>

But sometimes it is. Recall the plight of the eponymous protagonist of *Pseudolus*, for example, who is enslaved to a father and son with conflicting intentions. Pseudolus has no control over his legal ownership: he did not choose to be enslaved to Calidorus and Simo. But by selectively and skillfully "presenting himself" as obedient either to Calidorus or to Simo at different turns, Pseudolus can manipulate his unchosen conditions to achieve at least some of his own desires. Pseudolus remains enslaved to two masters throughout the play. The Roman Christians have experienced a transfer of

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<sup>106</sup> But neither does it strip away Lydus's agency altogether, as we will see in Chapter 2.

ownership from one master to another within the metaphor of Romans 6. The comparison is inexact, but it does show how situations of liminal ownership can provide the enslaved person with both danger and opportunity—and the necessity of constantly making choices about how to navigate those situations.

The best Plautine comparison to Romans 6 comes in the play *Captivi*, which depicts precisely the situation of an enslaved person who has recently experienced a transfer in ownership, but whose former master still makes claims on his allegiance. *Captivi* is a tale of mistaken identity: it is a soap opera full of long-lost relatives and restored fortunes. But it is also a tale of *chosen* identity—at least for its principal enslaved character, Tyndarus. Tyndarus operates within some oppressive, unchosen constraints. Born as the free son of Hegio, he is kidnapped in his father's household at a young age, sold into slavery in faraway Elis, then captured, along with his new owner, in warfare. The play opens with Hegio purchasing Tyndarus and his former owner—now co-captive—Philocrates. Tyndarus has had no say in all these goings-on, nor does he effect his own happy fate at the end of the play, when it is finally revealed that he is Hegio's long-lost son. But in the body of the play, within the constraints imposed on him by outside forces, Tyndarus is able to negotiate between the conflicting desires of his old and new masters in an attempt to achieve his own ends.

Tyndarus's identity is in flux throughout the play. On the one hand, Tyndarus is legally enslaved to Hegio, his new owner. On the other, Tyndarus demonstrates continued loyalty to Philocrates—his old owner and current co-captive—who continues to lay claim to Tyndarus's allegiance. At the outset of the play, the audience is privy to Tyndarus's and

Philocrates's plan to switch places in order to trick Hegio: Tyndarus will pretend to be Philocrates, and Philocrates will pretend to be Tyndarus. That way, when Hegio tries to send "Tyndarus" back to Elis to negotiate an exchange of prisoners, he will actually be sending Philocrates back to freedom. At the same time that Tyndarus is pretending to be Philocrates, he is also only *pretending* to be compliant with his new owner, Hegio. He pretends to agree with Hegio's logic of enslavement: Hegio's purchase of both Tyndarus and Philocrates should transfer Tyndarus's allegiance from Philocrates to Hegio. Speaking as "Philocrates" to Hegio, Tyndarus concedes that "Tyndarus" should not "fear me more than you; the power of the enemy has put my lot on an equal footing with his" (*Capt.* 301-302 [de Melo]).

All the while, however, Tyndarus maintains some control over his own identity and allegiances as he negotiates competing claims to his loyalties from his old master and his new one. Like the Roman Christians, Tyndarus has been transferred from one owner to another by means of captivity. But, also like the Romans Christians, Tyndarus's ties with his former owner are not completely severed, and his former owner continues to lay claim to his allegiance and his affection. Read this plea from Philocrates to Tyndarus at the outset of the play and picture Sin speaking similar words to the Roman Christians: "What I used to order you to do before, as was my right, I'm now asking you by way of entreaty.... [D]on't honor me any less than when you were my slave and remember carefully who you were and who you are now" (*Capt.* 244, 247-248). Philocrates, like Sin, continues to try to "rule" his former "slave," to "make him obey [his] desires" (cf. Rom 6:12)—even after he no longer has any legal claim to Tyndarus's obedience.

And Philocrates is successful. Tyndarus judges Philocrates's appeal to their shared history to be more persuasive than Hegio's legal claim to his allegiance, and he pledges his continued loyalty to his old master—much to the displeasure of his new master. Once he discovers Tyndarus's and Philocrates's elaborate ruse Hegio becomes angry with Tyndarus for being “more faithful to him than to me” (*Capt.* 716) and threatens to send Tyndarus to the mines as punishment. But Tyndarus speaks up for himself and his decisions, the way Paul fears the Roman Christians might speak about their continued loyalty to Sin: “What? You expected to teach me in one night and one day, a man taken prisoner recently, a fresh novice, to look after your interests better than those of a man I'd spent my life with from childhood?” (*Capt.* 717-720). What—you expect the Roman Christians to serve God automatically and wholeheartedly after a lifetime enslaved to Sin?

But new owner God has an advantage that new owner Hegio does not. Hegio can make no claim that Tyndarus himself will benefit from “presenting himself” as enslaved to Hegio rather than to Philocrates. On the contrary, Tyndarus seems to expect that he will be able to advance his own interests better by sticking with Philocrates. As he sends Philocrates back home he at least hints at the benefit he expects to receive for his continued loyalty to his old master. Remember: Tyndarus is at this point pretending to be Philocrates in order to trick Hegio. Speaking as “Philocrates,” Tyndarus dispatches his master—pretending to be enslaved to him—with these words: “When my father knows what your attitude was toward his son and himself, Tyndarus, he'll never be so greedy as not to make you a free man at his own expense. And if I return from here, I'll use my own



efforts to make him do so more readily” (*Capt.* 405-409). Presumably the *real* Philocrates gets the hint: Tyndarus’s freedom would be a just and fitting reward for his allegiance to Philocrates during this difficult and dangerous ordeal. The wages of Hegio is slavery, but the gift of Philocrates and his father ought to be manumission.

It is in Tyndarus’s best interest to “present himself as a slave” to Philocrates, and he makes his choices—from within the confines of slavery—accordingly. On Paul’s account, God can make the same claim to the metaphorically enslaved Roman Christians, who are also in a position to balance their loyalty to multiple masters: “the wages of Sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life” (Rom. 6:23). The Roman Christians are in a more fortunate situation than Tyndarus: their new master offers them greater benefits than the old. But Sin still lies at the door, threatening to retain the Roman Christians’ allegiance—an allegiance that can only lead to death. The Romans must choose accordingly.

The evidence from Plautus suggests that Paul’s slavery metaphor in Romans 6 does not rely on the practice of self-sale; rather, it refers to the experiences of enslaved persons in states of liminal ownership who must make continued and complex decisions about their allegiances. The advantage of this reading is two-fold: first, it allows Paul to speak in a more complex way about enslaved persons’ agency—both here in Romans 6 and, potentially, elsewhere in his epistles. Second, this kind of historical imagination—that is, a willingness both to acknowledge the coercive constraints that enslaved persons experienced *and* to recognize the ways in which those enslaved persons still made choices in the midst of these constraints—also helps us read Romans 6 as a coherent

metaphor. The “saints” in Rome (Rom. 1:7) did not choose their enslavement to Sin; neither did they have a say in being “handed over” to God (6:17). But they do have choices to make about how to navigate the conditions of metaphorical enslavement that have been forced upon them, whether by Sin or by God—and to do so in a way that is most advantageous for them. The Roman Christians may not be able to choose their *legal* master. But they can choose how—and to whom—they will become obedient “from the heart” (ἐκ καρδίας, 6:17).

#### ***1.4 Conclusion***

This chapter has shown that enslaved agency could be conceptualized in a variety of ways in ancient literature: enslaved persons need not be *autonomous* to be agents. Paul’s letters display this variety internally: at times the enslaved agents in Paul’s letters look more like Aristotle’s extension of their masters; at times like Epictetus’s internally free agents; and at times like Plautus’s creative navigators of the competing constraints of their enslavement. We turn now to examine the particular Pauline slavery metaphors with which this dissertation is concerned: Paul’s threefold portrayal of the Law as enslaved in Galatians 3-4, beginning with the Law as humanity’s enslaved παιδαγωγός in Gal 3:19-25. What does Paul think the Law can and cannot do as a παιδαγωγός? In what webs of relationships is the Law-as-παιδαγωγός embedded, and how does it share agency with other agents? We will find that, as with the metaphorically enslaved human agents in Romans 6, Plautus’s complex portraits of enslaved agents will help us better understand the enslaved agency of the Law-as-παιδαγωγός.

## 2. The Law was Our Παιδαγωγός

ὥστε ὁ νόμος παιδαγωγός ἡμῶν γέγονεν εἰς Χριστόν, ἵνα ἐκ πίστεως δικαιωθῶμεν.

“So the Law was our [enslaved] παιδαγωγός until Christ came, so that we might be justified through faith” (Galatians 3:24).

Paul introduces the image of the Law as a “pedagogue” (παιδαγωγός) in his comments about the purpose of the Law in Gal 3:19-25. Paul has just been condemning the “foolish” Galatians (3:1) for entertaining the possibility of “rely[ing] on the works of the Law” (3:10) to take the next step in their Christian maturity (cf. 3:3). This would be a foolish decision, Paul insists, because those who rely on the works of the Law are “under a curse” (3:10) and fail to take into consideration the potency of God’s original gracious promise to Abraham (3:15-18). But, perhaps because he recognizes how negatively he has just portrayed the Law, Paul then seems to feel compelled to answer the question, “Why, then, the Law?” (3:19).<sup>1</sup> Paul ambiguously answers, “τῶν παραβάσεων χάριν προσετέθη” (“it was added *because of* transgressions?”<sup>2</sup> “*for the sake of* transgressions?”<sup>3</sup> “to *provoke* transgressions?”<sup>4</sup>) He then expands this answer to describe a process by which the Law (here referred to as “Scripture” [ἡ γραφή<sup>5</sup>]) imprisoned all things—

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<sup>1</sup> Most translators render this question, “Why, then, the Law?” This translation introduces a question of purpose into Paul’s discussion; he must account for the place and function of the Law within God’s plan (or the plan of a more sinister cosmic power). Some, however (e.g., Betz, *Galatians*, 161), prefer the translation, “What, then, is the Law?” Translating the question this way would potentially allow more distance between divine intent and the coming of the Law. Taking into account the sense of purpose in the answer to this question (τῶν παραβάσεων χάριν προσετέθη), however, I prefer the traditional translation.

<sup>2</sup> E.g., Richard N. Longenecker, *Galatians*, WBC (Dallas: Word, 1990), 139.

<sup>3</sup> E.g., de Boer, *Galatians*, 227.

<sup>4</sup> E.g., Martyn, *Galatians*, 354-55; Betz, *Galatians*, 165.

<sup>5</sup> See below for my argument for treating νόμος and γραφή as synonyms in this passage.

including humanity—until the coming of faith, thus temporarily functioning as humanity’s παιδαγωγός (3:22-24).

In this chapter I use the account of enslaved agency laid out in Chapter 1 to examine the function of this first slavery metaphor for the Law in Paul’s collection: what does Paul think the Law, as a παιδαγωγός, can and cannot do? I begin by situating Paul’s παιδαγωγός metaphor within its historical context—as reconstructed from elite, free sources relatively contemporary with Paul. These sources provide most of our extant information about what life was like for an enslaved pedagogue in the Greco-Roman world, and about how the elite, free people around them viewed them. But, as we have seen in Chapter 1, these writers are not our *only* sources of information about the lives of enslaved persons, and they can be less than helpful for accurately and sensitively talking about the agency of enslaved pedagogues. So I next return to Plautus to conduct a close reading of *Bacchides*—which features an enslaved pedagogue as one of its characters—in search of a more complex way to account for the agency of enslaved pedagogues, particularly as it manifests in their relationships to their masters, to their charges, and to the work imposed upon them.

I then turn back to the text of Galatians to show how this expanded account of enslaved agency better helps us understand the enslaved Law’s agency in relation to both God and the human beings under its care. One task of each of the remaining chapters—to establish each slave metaphor’s particular relation to the Law—is quite easy when it comes to Paul’s pedagogue metaphor: Paul straightforwardly tells the Galatians, “the Law was our pedagogue” (ὁ νόμος παιδαγωγὸς ἡμῶν γέγονεν, 3:24). The simplicity of

this metaphor’s construction—notwithstanding the complex interpretive questions it prompts—affords us extra space in this chapter to first consider a broader pattern of language in Galatians: Paul’s repeated use of the phrase ἔργα νόμου (“works of the Law,” 2:16; 3:2, 5, 10). I argue that Paul uses this phrase—in the context of a broader pattern of discourse about the role of the Law—to name an ineffective partnership between the Law and human beings after the coming of Christ: when the Law and human beings attempt to work together the agency of both is diminished. Finally I center our attention on Galatians 3:19-25 to show when the Law works with *God*, non-competitively, in its role as a παιδαγωγός, its agency is far more robust. In fact, Paul uses precisely this slavery metaphor to *introduce* a sense of the Law’s agency into an argument that has thus far tended to diminish it.

## ***2.1 Contextualizing the Pedagogue Metaphor within Elite Sources***

The word παιδαγωγός is notoriously difficult to render with a single English word. (I largely leave the word untranslated in what follows, but when I do use the English cognate “pedagogue” it is not to communicate that a παιδαγωγός was an expert in teaching methods, but because it can function as something of a linguistic catch-all to refer to both the Greek παιδαγωγός and its Latin cognate *paedagogus*.) Other English translators variously use the words “disciplinarian” (NRSV), “guardian” (NIV, NLT), “tutor” (NASB), “schoolmaster” (KJV), etc. The denotative semantic range of the word παιδαγωγός is quite narrow: it refers to a particular kind of enslaved worker in the ancient world who was responsible for overseeing the conduct of a child—usually male—before

that child reached the age of maturity.<sup>6</sup> Most available accounts of the relationship between παιδαγωγός and his charge depict the παιδαγωγός overseeing a wealthy child, the son of his owner. But it was also common for a παιδαγωγός to look after the enslaved children in a wealthy household; legally severed from familial ties, these children still had to be brought up and trained for future service in the household.<sup>7</sup> Perhaps this role of enslaved overseers in raising enslaved children helps account for some of Paul's later slippage between calling the Galatians "sons" and "slaves" in chapter 4, but here in chapter 3 Paul clearly envisions his metaphorical παιδαγωγός as the overseer of free children, specifically, "sons of God" (υιοὶ θεοῦ, 3:26). Paul's key point lies in the contrast he draws between time "under the Law"/"under a παιδαγωγός" (ὑπὸ νόμον, 3:23; ὑπὸ παιδαγωγόν, 3:25) as a period of constraint and time after the coming of faith (3:25) as a period of freedom, i.e., mature adulthood that no longer requires the supervision of a pedagogue.

Affective responses to the word "pedagogue" may have varied within Paul's audience, however. Free people in the ancient world variously conceived of the παιδαγωγός as a beloved mentor, an inept overseer, or a menacing disciplinarian.<sup>8</sup> J. Louis Martyn argues that Paul's picture of the Law as παιδαγωγός aligns most closely with the last of these options: within Paul's specific metaphor in Galatians 3, the Law is "a distinctly unfriendly and confining custodian, different in no significant way from an

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<sup>6</sup> Norman H. Young, "'Paidagogos': The Social Setting of a Pauline Metaphor," *NovT* 29 (1987): 150-176, 150.

<sup>7</sup> Keith R. Bradley, "Child Care at Rome: The Role of Men," *Historical Reflections/Réflexions Historiques* 12 (1985): 485-523, 497; Sandra R. Joshel, *Work, Identity, and Legal Status at Rome: A Study of the Occupational Inscriptions* (Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 1992), 147.

<sup>8</sup> Young, 150-166.

imprisoning jailer.”<sup>9</sup> Martyn reasons that since the phrase “we are no longer under a pedagogue” (οὐκέτι ὑπὸ παιδαγωγόν ἐσμεν, 3:25) so closely mirrors Paul’s repeated description of other cosmic powers under which (ὑπὸ) humanity finds itself trapped (e.g. the “enslaving power of the Law” [i.e., ὑπὸ νόμον]), Paul must intend for the resonance of his image of a παιδαγωγός to match the authoritarian and menacing resonances of these other powers. Martyn’s picture of the παιδαγωγός in Galatians is widespread in scholarly literature, especially among “apocalyptic” interpreters of Paul. Against those who would conceive of the παιδαγωγός as “a teacher who, by training us, has prepared us for Christ,”<sup>10</sup> Douglas Campbell,<sup>11</sup> Sigurd Grindheim,<sup>12</sup> Linda Belleville,<sup>13</sup> and Martin DeBoer,<sup>14</sup> among others, agree with Martyn that Paul’s image of the παιδαγωγός is indeed intended to evoke an “image of constraint and lack of freedom.”<sup>15</sup> (At least for those “under” it—these interpreters tend not to note that pedagogues were almost always enslaved, or may they just mention their enslaved status in passing.) As a metaphorical παιδαγωγός, on this reading, the Law had a strong sense of agency that was uncontested in our spiritual minority, acting at will against our own desires and imposing itself on the free exercise of human agency.

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<sup>9</sup> Martyn, 363.

<sup>10</sup> Martyn, 362.

<sup>11</sup> Douglas A. Campbell, *The Deliverance of God* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2009), 883-884.

<sup>12</sup> Sigurd Grindheim, “Not Salvation History, but Salvation Territory: The Main Subject Matter of Galatians,” *NTS* 59 (2013): 91-108, 103.

<sup>13</sup> Linda L. Belleville, “‘Under Law’: Structural Analysis and the Pauline Concept of Law in Galatians 3.21-4.11,” *JSNT* 8 (1986): 53-78, 59.

<sup>14</sup> de Boer, 260.

<sup>15</sup> Grindheim, 103.

Certainly this picture of a παιδαγωγός as a menacing, powerful authority figure was available and utilized in the ancient world. David J. Lull points the reader of Galatians to Alciphron’s *Epistle* 3.7.3-5, in which Alciphron describes a παιδαγωγός named Simicrines as “a fierce and mean old man” (ὁ ἄγριος γέρον) who broke up a party of raucous young men “by physically subduing the youth.” Simicrines of course pays special attention to Charicles, the particular young man whom he has been assigned to supervise,<sup>16</sup> and drags him away from the scene “‘like the lowest slave’ (ὡς ἔσχατον ἀνδράποδον).” Conceived as this kind of παιδαγωγός, the Law indeed appears fearsome, powerful, and able to enslave—at least metaphorically.

But this menacing portrait of a παιδαγωγός is not universal in Greek and Roman literature. Elite writers often speak affectionately about their pedagogues. Cicero describes *paedagogi*, along with enslaved nurses, as intimate companions of free boys (*Amicit.* 20.74).<sup>17</sup> Augustus manumitted his παιδαγωγός Sphaerus and gave him a public funeral.<sup>18</sup> Pedagogues, as Keith Bradley suggests, may have been some of the most stable authority figures in their charges’ lives. High maternal mortality rates, fathers who traveled often for political or economic reasons, and frequent remarriages meant that pedagogues and other enslaved child-rearers could be an elite child’s most intimate parental figure, one to whom they might turn first for nurture and protection. “The pedagogue,” Bradley argues, “can be set alongside the nurse and mother as a person

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<sup>16</sup> Although he evidently reserved his harshest treatment for Charicles’s friends, whom he imprisoned “in the stockade (εἰς τὸ δεσμωτήριον ἀπέθετο), intending to have them sent off to ‘the public executioner!’” (David J. Lull, “‘The Law Was Our Pedagogue’: A Study in Galatians 3:19-25,” *JBL* 105 [1986]: 481-498, 490).

<sup>17</sup> Bradley, “Child Care at Rome,” 505.

<sup>18</sup> Bradley, “Child Care at Rome,” 505.



devoted to the child's best interests, as one prepared to defend the child against physical attack, as a servant faithful till his master's death."<sup>19</sup> Pedagogues were also expected to have a positive moral influence on their free charges—one of the many contradictions within elite understandings of enslaved persons' potential for virtue, since Aristotle's idea that slaves could not attain (nor, presumably, model!) the virtue of free men was influential in these circles. Seneca advises fathers selecting a pedagogue to choose carefully, since "every young thing attaches itself to what is nearest and grows to be like it: the character of their nurses (*nutrices*) and tutors (*paedagogi*) is presently reproduced in that of the young men" (*Ira*. 2.21.9).<sup>20</sup> Plutarch describes the pedagogue's job as "train[ing] the child's character to take a first step, as it were, on the path of virtue" (*Moral*. 439F).<sup>21</sup>

Of course, as Bradley points out, the intimacy and trust elite children and parents bestowed upon their pedagogues did not erase the "social distance between child and pedagogue."<sup>22</sup> Cicero, for example, who readily acknowledges the close ties between boys and their pedagogues, finds the idea that grown men can maintain friendships with their former pedagogues absurd (*Amicit*. 20.74).<sup>23</sup> No matter how fondly their former charges regarded them, and no matter how much their owners entrusted their children's development in virtue to their care, pedagogues remained enslaved. Or, in cases like Augustus's above, pedagogues were freed later in life—and freedpersons in Rome

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<sup>19</sup> Bradley, "Child Care at Rome," 505.

<sup>20</sup> Bradley, "Child Care at Rome," 504.

<sup>21</sup> Bradley, "Child Care at Rome," 503-4.

<sup>22</sup> Bradley, "Child Care at Rome," 505.

<sup>23</sup> Bradley, "Child Care at Rome," 505.

retained legal obligations to their former owners and were not considered their social equals. And so, no matter how idyllically some elite writers portrayed the relationship between child and pedagogue, a pedagogue's position within a household was delicate and could even be dangerous. For all the influence a pedagogue *might* have over his charges, he remained a man under authority, subject to the whims and abuses of his master.

We see, in fact, some elite authors treating pedagogues primarily with derision, rather than fear or affection—a reminder that a pedagogue could not reliably expect to be respected or beloved by either his free charge or that charge's father, the pedagogue's master. In Greek literature the παιδαγωγός is usually considered an οικήτης—a common house slave. As such, as Norman H. Young explains, his position may have been considered even more dishonorable than that of other kinds of enslaved managers.<sup>24</sup> In fact, since many considered the “physical and mental powers” required of a παιδαγωγός to be comparable to those of a mere “door-keeper,” the role of a παιδαγωγός was often reserved for enslaved men judged too old or too unfit for more demanding tasks.<sup>25</sup> Tacitus even called the παιδαγωγός “quite frequently the most worthless member” of the slave-holding estate.<sup>26</sup> Far from being seen as a powerful force of enslavement or a beloved mentor, the pedagogue could be seen by free elites as weak, even pitiable.

The very real threat of physical violence against pedagogues may be the best indicator of their vulnerability. As enslaved persons, their bodies were vulnerable to

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<sup>24</sup> Young, 151, citing Plutarch, *Lyc.* 16.4.

<sup>25</sup> Young, 152.

<sup>26</sup> Young, 152, citing Tacitus, *Dial.* 29.

abuse, much of which was permissible by law. Suetonius, for example, thinks he can convincingly describe Augustus as “gracious and merciful” towards his “slaves.” The contemporary reader is not easily convinced by Suetonius’s description, however, because Suetonius also recounts the emperor’s decision to have his enslaved secretary’s legs broken. What happens to Augustus’s adoptive son’s *paedagogus* makes Augustus seem even less gracious and merciful. As Suetonius tells the story, when the *paedagogus* acts “arrogant” and “greedy” after the death of Augustus’s son, Augustus has him “thrown into a river with heavy weights around [his] neck” (*Aug.* 67 [Rolfe, LCL]).

In less extreme cases, the body of a pedagogue was often used as a kind of surrogate for his charge’s body, absorbing the physical punishment deemed appropriate for the child’s misbehavior. Plato, for example, suggested that “any free person, on seeing a child doing something wrong, punish both the child and the pedagogue or teacher” (*Leg.* 7.808E).<sup>27</sup> Diogenes, according to Young, “is reported to have cuffed the pedagogue when he saw a child eating a sweet-meat, for he held the failure to be the pedagogue’s rather than the pupil’s” (Plutarch, *Mor.* 439D-E).<sup>28</sup> The decision of a pedagogue to punish his charge was a “somewhat hazardous undertaking;” he would face the very real risk that the child would “fight back” and “cuff” his pedagogue.<sup>29</sup> Given the fact that many pedagogues were somewhat elderly (or otherwise physically

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<sup>27</sup> Lull, 491.

<sup>28</sup> Young, 160.

<sup>29</sup> Young, 162-163.

incapacitated),<sup>30</sup> this threat of violence from their charges (who were often older boys)<sup>31</sup> rendered them much more vulnerable to serious bodily harm than their charges.

At the end of the day, ancient elite authors understood that the pedagogue—whether benevolent or threatening toward his charge—was enslaved, charged by a higher, free authority to supervise a free child who would grow up and surpass his pedagogue in honor and authority. Ancient authors often complain that the charge under a pedagogue is *like* a “slave,” but this comparison usually functions to point out the ridiculous irony of the ward’s situation: he is the literally free one, but he remains for a time subject to the authority of a literally enslaved overseer under the authority of the ward’s literally free father. (Paul himself will employ this trope—though using different kinds of enslaved managers [ἐπίτροποι and οἰκονόμοι]—at the beginning of Galatians 4, as we will see in Chapter 3.)

Take, for example, Plato’s fictional dialogue between Socrates and Lysis, a free child whom Socrates seeks to instruct about the nature of freedom. Socrates begins by asking Lysis if his parents want him to be “perfectly happy” (Οὐκοῦν βούλοιντο ἄν σε ὡς εὐδαιμονέστατον εἶναι;), to which Lysis answers, “Yes.” Socrates continues: but is it possible for a person to be “happy” if he is “in the condition of a slave (δουλεύων), and... cannot do what he likes?” “I should think not indeed!” Lysis responds; he knows enslaved persons are in the unenviable position of having their freedom forcibly constrained. Socrates then points out the apparent contradiction between Lysis’s two

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<sup>30</sup> Young, 152.

<sup>31</sup> Young, 161.

answers: how can Lysis's parents want him to be perfectly happy if they do not let him do whatever he wants? After all, Socrates reasons, Lysis cannot take out his father's chariot whenever he wants, or play with his mother's sewing tools, or disobey his teachers. In fact, Lysis has even *less* freedom than the enslaved workers in his parents' household: the enslaved chariot driver is allowed to drive that chariot Lysis has his eyes on. Even more ironic: Lysis is subject to the authority of his enslaved pedagogue and other overseers, whom his parents "inflict" (ἐφίστημι) upon him as "lords and masters" (δεσπότης καὶ ἄρχοντας) to restrain his freedom! What a "dreadful thing" (δεινός) Socrates observes, for a "free person [to] be ruled by a slave" (ἐλεύθερον ὄντα ὑπὸ δούλου ἄρχεσθαι). Of course, Socrates makes this observation with a twinkle in his eye. He knows that Lysis's pedagogue isn't *literally* his "lord and master"; the pedagogue is just following orders. It is Lysis's *parents* that ultimately "hinder [him]... from doing a great many things," using enslaved persons as proxies to enforce their decisions regarding Lysis's upbringing (*Lys.* 207-208).<sup>32</sup> Lydis's pedagogue, on Socrates's account, has no power or will of his own; he is merely an extension of his masters' power and will.

## ***2.2 Pedagogues, Work, and Agency***

### **2.2.1 Lydus the Pedagogue in Plautus's *Bacchides***

Thus far we have considered perspectives on a pedagogue's agency that tend to be all-or-nothing. From the perspective of contemporary apocalyptic interpreters of Paul

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<sup>32</sup> Plato, *Lysis, or Friendship*, trans. Benjamin Jowett (Sydney: Minerva Publishing, 2018).

who downplay the reality of a pedagogue's enslavement, a pedagogue's agency seems robustly *free*, unqualified by the constraints placed upon him by his enslavement. This reading seems too simple—too unaware of the constraining realities of enslaved life to which Paul refers—and it results in too simplistic an understanding of the role of the Law in Galatians 3:19-25. The Law becomes a menacing tyrant: only enslaving, not itself enslaved.

Nonetheless, a reading of the Law as a pitiful and powerless παιδαγωγός, which might result from considering only the perspective of elite Greek and Roman writers, is also too simplistic. While these free elites may have had varied levels of affection for their own (or others') pedagogues—and while they may recall with a chuckle the fear with which they regarded their pedagogues as children—they are engaged, whether consciously or not, in projects that discount the agency of enslaved pedagogues, asserting free persons' success in overriding a pedagogue's wishes to bend them to the will of a master. Contemporary readers of Galatians who consider only these elite free sources might shift their sympathies from the writers of these sources to the enslaved pedagogues they claim to dominate: they would likely pity, rather than deride, these abused and apparently agentless pedagogues. But these contemporary readers would still be doing so on the basis of these elite writers' own assessments of the power dynamics between enslaved pedagogue and free charge and master.

As we saw in Chapter 1, neither of these readings does justice to the complexity of the lives of enslaved persons generally, which, in Walter Johnson's words, are

“powerfully conditioned by, though not reducible to, their slavery.”<sup>33</sup> As we will see in this chapter, these two readings are also insufficient for describing the particular complexity of the Law’s enslaved agency in Gal 3:19-25. As a παιδαγωγός, the Law operates within the constraints imposed upon it by another—in this metaphor, God. It is not, contra Martyn and others, a freestanding tyrant that imposes unchecked power on its inferiors until it is defeated by the superior power of God in Christ. But neither is the Law simply agentless: within the constraints imposed upon it, the Law *acts*. We have noted that the free members of Paul’s audience in Galatia may have had various affective responses to Paul’s introduction of the Law-as-παιδαγωγός metaphor, based on their own or other free persons’ experiences “under a pedagogue.” But surely there were enslaved members of Paul’s audience, too (3:28), who better understood what life was like *for* an enslaved pedagogue. Here again Plautus may help us better understand their perspective and better recognize the complexity of agency involved in Paul’s παιδαγωγός metaphor.

Plautus’s *Bacchides* dramatizes precisely the situation Paul describes in Gal 3:19-25: the relationship between an enslaved pedagogue and a free charge who is on the brink of outgrowing his authority. *Bacchides* introduces Plautus’s audience to Lydus, an enslaved pedagogue (*paedagogus*) in a tricky situation. For years Lydus has helped to raise Pistoclerus, a free and foolish young man. Now, with Pistoclerus on the brink of adulthood, Lydus despairs of his charge’s maturity and prudence. Pistoclerus thinks he is in love with an enslaved woman named Bacchis—one of two title characters who share the name—and lavishes her with gifts whenever he can. Lydus finds this behavior

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<sup>33</sup> Johnson, 115.

deplorable. He tries to stop Pistoclus from obsessing over his lover, following Pistoclus to his lover's house and lecturing him on the dangers of serving "such harmful gods" as "Love, Pleasure, Charm, Grace, Joy, Wit, Playfulness, Chit-chat, Sweetkiss" (*Bacch.* 115-17 [de Melo, LCL]). But this scolding prompts a confrontation that reveals the fraught dynamics of Lydus's attempt to exert authority over his free charge.

Pistoclus, convinced that he is too old for a pedagogue, shrugs off Lydus's advice. "Not every age is fit for the school," he retorts, ordering Lydus by his name (and not by the title "*paedagogus*," to Lydus's dismay) to "shut up and follow me" (*Bacch.* 130-37). Lydus again warns Pistoclus not to enter his lover's house, and Pistoclus again insists, "I'm too old now for having a tutorship/guardianship (*magisterium*)" (*Bacch.* 148). Now Lydus is despondent over his charge's insubordination, and afraid of how he might use his adult strength to harm him. "O pit, where art thou now?" Lydus cries out. "Now it would be far better to have lived than to go on living. Is it possible that any pupil is threatening his tutor (*magister*)? I don't care for having such full-blooded pupils: a strong one is bullying me, a man devoid of strength" (*Bacch.* 149-54). And Pistoclus fuels his pedagogue's fears by responding with a veiled threat: "I'll become Hercules," he tells Lydus, "and you Linus"—that is, Hercules's teacher who "died at his hands" (*Bacch.* 155). When Lydus continues to protest Pistoclus's poor decision-making, Pistoclus finally silences him by reminding him of how things stand legally between the two of them: "Am I your slave," he taunts Lydus, "or are you mine?"



(*Bacch.* 162). So Lydus reluctantly follows Pistoclus into his lover's house to help him deliver her gifts.

But Lydus will not entirely concede the authority he is accustomed to exercising over Pistoclus. Pistoclus eventually leaves Lydus alone in his lover's house so he can attend to other business, which gives Lydus an opportunity to speak to the audience without being overheard. Pretending to address Pistoclus, Lydus voices his frustration with being caught between Pistoclus's desires to woo his lover and his father's desires for Lydus to train Pistoclus to be a responsible young man. "Should I carry this around shut up within me, in secret? Pistoclus, should I conceal your shameful deeds, your financial losses, or your indolent [retorts]? With this behavior you strive to drive your father, me, yourself, and all your friends to shame, loss, and disgrace together, and to ruin us" (*Bacch.* 375-78). Lydus can see how Pistoclus's actions will affect everyone else around him, and he vows to take action to stop them. "I've decided to tell your father instantly," he declares to this imaginary Pistoclus, turning to explain to the audience, "I'll clear myself from blame in this matter now and reveal it all to the old man, so that he gets him out of here from this filthy dirt-hole quickly" (*Bacch.* 382-84). Lydus leaves the house to find Philoxenus, Pistoclus's father, expecting Philoxenus to be grateful for his report on Pistoclus's behavior.

Philoxenus, however, does not turn out to be the grateful ally Lydus expects to find. When Lydus reports on Pistoclus's philandering, Philoxenus is unconcerned, willing to "let boys be boys." "It's less of a surprise if a man of that age does some of those things than if he doesn't," he tells Lydus. "I too did this in my youth" (*Bacch.* 409-

10). Lydus should just “humor him,” as long as Pistoclerus “doesn’t go over the top” (*Bacch.* 417-18). At this disregard for Pistoclerus’s behavior Lydus is incensed, and he delivers a fiery monologue to Philoxenus that is remarkable for the way it exposes the double-bind placed upon a pedagogue: he must have genuine authority over his charge if he is to mold the charge’s character effectively, but he is also enslaved to that charge and to the charge’s father, who naturally sides with his son in any dispute the son has with his pedagogue. Lydus senses that fathers have become more permissive with their sons in recent years. “In the olden days a man would hold an office by popular vote before ceasing to obey his tutor (*magister*)” (*Bacch.* 439). At least on Lydus’s nostalgic recollection it used to be easier for a pedagogue to navigate his peculiar position of enslaved authority. But now, especially, a pedagogue’s charge is willing to rebel against the pedagogue with his father’s backing. Say a pedagogue complains to a father about his son “crack[ing] the tutor’s (*paedagogus*) head with his tablet” (*Bacch.* 441). The father, Lydus expects, is more likely to encourage his son to “defend [himself] against abuse” (*Bacch.* 443). and to reprimand the pedagogue: “You worthless old fogey, don’t you touch the boy for this!” (*Bacch.* 444-45). Lydus is exasperated. “Can a tutor (*magister*) exert authority here under such conditions, if he himself is the first to get a thrashing?” (*Bacch.* 447-48). And, watching Lydus’s outburst from the wings, Pistoclerus’s friend Mnesilochus confirms to the audience that Lydus’s fear of physical abuse is not unfounded: “This is a harsh complaint. Judging from his words, I’d be surprised if Pistoclerus hasn’t punched Lydus with his fists” (*Bacch.* 449-50). Lydus’s position seems impossible. He is caught between the demands of a role assigned to him by his master

and his master's indulgence towards his son, and in that crossfire he faces the threat of abuse from both father and son.

And yet Lydus is not entirely without power and influence. He addresses this damning monologue to Philoxenus, his master, after all, claiming for himself moral and rational superiority. When he spots Mnesilochus in the wings he compares him to Pistoclerus in front of Philoxenus, insisting that Mnesilochus was raised correctly and “has a maturity that’s more than thirty years above that of the other (i.e., Pistoclerus)” (*Bacch.* 462). At this point Philoxenus finally stands up for his son, warning Lydus, “Watch out for trouble and stop maligning him” (*Bacch.* 463). Lydus fires back, “Be quiet, it’s stupid of you to find it hard to bear that someone is talked about badly who behaves badly,” and insists that he is not afraid of whatever punishment might come from his speech (*Bacch.* 464-66). And this straight-talking to his master works: Philoxenus is persuaded that he must do something about Pistoclerus’s behavior (*Bacch.* 494-95). Philoxenus even seems to grow more convicted by Lydus’s words as the play progresses. He later reflects to himself, “The more I ponder in my heart what trouble my son’s stirring up, what sort of life and what sort of habits he’s throwing himself into without thinking, the more worried I am and the more I fear that he might perish or go astray” (*Bacch.* 1076-79). Of course, Plautus’s plays are not morality plays. Eventually Philoxenus and Mnesilochus’s father are themselves seduced by the two Bacchides. But this embarrassing end to the story only serves to validate Lydus’s assessment of his foolish and morally inconsistent master. As the play’s troupe steps in to conclude the play, they make this assessment plain: “If these old men hadn’t been worthless already

from their youth onwards, they wouldn't have committed such a great offence now that their heads are grey" (*Bacch.* 1208-09). These words heark back to Lydus's own warning: it is a grave mistake not to take the raising of young men seriously.

Assessing Lydus's agency is complicated here. Ironically, he *wants* to fulfill the duties that Philoxenus, his master, initially imposed upon him: he *wants* to train Pistoclerus to be a prudent and responsible young man, using disciplinary tactics when necessary. But by indulging his son's wanton behavior Philoxenus impedes precisely the duties he enjoined upon Lydus. Lydus is successful in his efforts, in a way. By causing Philoxenus to doubt Pistoclerus's character he sets in motion a series of events that *does* prevent Pistoclerus from being with his lover—ironically because of the weakness of Philoxenus's own will with regards to that lover himself. Lydus has carried out the duties his master imposed upon him—against his master's own inconsistent and ineffective will.

### **2.2.2 Work and Agency**

What should we make of Lydus's attachment to the role and duties forced upon him, even in the face of opposition from the one who forced them upon him? Recall the importance Lydus attaches to the title *paedagogus*: he is insulted when Pistoclerus stops using it and instead addresses him by his name. Lydus wants to be known for his work as a pedagogue. In her detailed and sensitive analysis of 1,470 epitaphs for workers in the Roman Empire—most, though not all, enslaved or freedpersons—Sandra Joshel suggests that this attachment to a job title might not have been uncommon for enslaved workers in the Roman world. Joshel, borrowing terminology from British sociologist Paul Willis,

distinguishes between “what was given” to enslaved workers by Roman society and what these workers did with what they were given. In his study of working class boys at a school in 1970s England, Willis uses “what is given” to refer to the boys’ socioeconomic class: it was given to them at birth, they did not choose it, and it fundamentally shapes “the material circumstances, cultural contexts, and structured possibilities in which [they] live and frame their identities.”<sup>34</sup> But Willis does not find “what is given” to be fully determinative for these boys’ lives; he is interested in how the boys use their work to “re-form... and re-apply... what is given.”<sup>35</sup> Joshel applies Willis’s insights to the lives of enslaved workers in the Roman Empire, specifically those who included their job title in their epitaphs.<sup>36</sup> Enslaved workers in a Roman household did not choose their work, nor their job titles; they were given to them by masters who imposed their will upon them. But they could use what they were given to forge an understanding of themselves as workers that was not neatly tied to the will and whims of the masters who assigned them that work. “The very use of job titles” among enslaved workers, Joshel argues, “claims a specific type of work, not the general function of pleasing” a master.<sup>37</sup> Joshel notes that the job titles that appear on enslaved workers’ epitaphs often appear by themselves, not tied to the master who ordered that their work be carried out. An epitaph might simply

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<sup>34</sup> Joshel, *Work, Identity, and Legal Status*, 5, citing Paul Willis, *Learning to Labour: How Working-Class Kids Get Working-Class Jobs* (Farnham: Ashgate, 1977).

<sup>35</sup> Joshel, *Work, Identity, and Legal Status*, 5.

<sup>36</sup> Joshel also includes working freedpersons—those who were formerly enslaved but still bore obligations to their former owners—and lower-class working free people, though she is careful to maintain distinctions between them. All workers in the Roman Empire were subject to disdain for their working status; only enslaved workers were subject to the particular hardships afforded by slavery, while freedpersons labored under obligations not imposed upon the free born.

<sup>37</sup> Joshel, *Work, Identity, and Legal Status*, 154.

read, “Zena, cook,”<sup>38</sup> rather than, “Zena, cook to X.” In fact, these masterless inscriptions constitute the majority of the epitaphs Joshel examines: at death, enslaved (and freed, and lower-class freeborn) workers frequently laid claim to their jobs without reinforcing the claims their owners made on them as property. Their “identities at death,” in Joshel’s words, “distinguish work from the property relationship that defined their submission to an owner or ex-master.”<sup>39</sup>

Titles like *paedagogus* were given to enslaved workers, Joshel explains, by wealthy free persons who disdained these kinds of jobs and assigned to them negative moral valence: “the cook, for instance, becomes a subservient pleaser, the tradesman a servile flatterer.”<sup>40</sup> But Joshel argues that these epitaphs with job titles suggest that these workers resisted such disdain by laying claim to their titles at death, giving the jobs they performed enduring value. And even free writers sometimes display a begrudging admiration for the skills of workers they otherwise deride. Joshel is worth quoting at length on this point, summarizing attitudes towards workers in elite literature: “The steward (*dispensator*) and manager (*procurator*) had to be literate and in wealthy households needed the acumen to handle considerable property and funds. All are depicted in literature with certain *capacities*.”<sup>41</sup> She continues by referencing moral stereotypes assigned to (sometimes enslaved) doctors and teachers:

The [free elite] complaints about doctors killing their patients and teachers corrupting their students do not belittle these professionals; quite the reverse, they indicate some fear about what the doctor or teacher could do. The fear of the

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<sup>38</sup> As recounted in Joshel, *Work, Identity, and Legal Status*, 62.

<sup>39</sup> Joshel, *Work, Identity, and Legal Status*, 154.

<sup>40</sup> Joshel, *Work, Identity, and Legal Status*, 63.

<sup>41</sup> Joshel, *Work, Identity, and Legal Status*, 86-87, emphasis mine.

pompous steward (*dispensator*) who controls his master's purse reflects an apprehension about the position in which a job placed its practitioner.<sup>42</sup>

It would certainly be wrong to suggest that all enslaved (or freeborn, or freedperson) workers had high levels of job satisfaction, always taking pride in their particular capacities and contributions to a household. It would also be wrong to suggest that even mitigated joys of labor compensated for the abusive and coercive conditions under which these enslaved workers labored. Life for an enslaved worker was difficult and dangerous. Lydus the pedagogue, as we have seen, complains of the frequent beatings that accompany his work. Masters had little regard for family relationships among the enslaved and would often separate enslaved family members and spouses through sale.<sup>43</sup> But work, at least for some enslaved workers, *could* provide these workers with something to call their own, a way to exercise their agency amidst the constraints their enslavement imposed upon them. Joshel is again worth quoting at length as she concludes her project:

Slaves, of course, neither chose their work nor controlled its products. Yet it was more difficult to divide men and women from their labor than to separate them from their kin; it accompanied the body and person who was sold, given, or lent to another. . . . [On their epitaphs] slaves or those close to them, often slaves themselves, claimed their labor. Very importantly, the claim asserts that which was lost—physicality and an active connection with the world. Work in various ways put the slave in motion in the world, inside a household or outside: job title makes its bearer a “doer,” not a passive extension of another’s existence.<sup>44</sup>

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<sup>42</sup> Joshel, *Work, Identity, and Legal Status*, 87.

<sup>43</sup> Enslaved persons seem also to have resisted their masters' attempts to isolate them from family relationships, even as these masters could make those relationships precarious through sale. Joshel notes that while enslaved persons could not legally marry in the Roman Empire, nor were children of enslaved persons legally recognized as their heirs, we do find epitaphs of enslaved persons that nevertheless include “family relations, especially those with spouses” (*Work, Identity, and Legal Status*, 163-64).

<sup>44</sup> Joshel, *Work, Identity, and Legal Status*, 163-164.

## 2.3 *The Works of the Enslaved Law*

### 2.3.1 Paul's Perspective on (Enslaved) Work

How does this account of enslaved labor help us better read Paul's παιδαγωγός metaphor in Galatians? It is important to pause briefly to separate Paul's project from Joshel's. Paul is not a twenty-first century historian out to uncover and to privilege the voices of the subaltern. The master in his metaphor is, after all, *God*, and it is difficult to imagine Paul—in Galatians, especially!—privileging the experience of the enslaved *Law* over the work and will of its divine master. But Joshel's project can still be helpful for understanding Paul's attention to the enslaved Law's work and his assessment of what this work can and cannot accomplish. Ironically, in a letter that is so dismissive of the “works of the Law” (ἔργα νόμου, Gal 2:16; 3:2, 5, 10), Paul introduces a slavery metaphor to show how the Law *could* work effectively: it (as ἡ γραφή, see below) productively confined “us”<sup>45</sup> so that the things God promised could be given to those who believe (3:22).

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<sup>45</sup> The antecedent of the first-person plural pronouns and the subject of first person plural verbs in this passage has been the subject of much debate: does Paul have in mind here the people of Israel only, or all of humanity, including the Gentile Galatians? Just whose pedagogue *was* the Law? Were the Galatians themselves in any way “under the Law” (ὕπὸ νόμον) *before* the coming of Christ—i.e., subject to its authority, even if they weren't actually practicing its particular demands—or are they venturing into dangerous *new* territory in their present flirtation with circumcision? Douglas J. Moo summarizes this debate helpfully: “The people that Paul has in mind when he uses these first-person plural forms is unclear. Paul uses his pronouns so flexibly and with so many contextually related considerations that it is impossible to establish any general rule. The first-person plural form could naturally refer to Paul and the Galatians, and thus by extension to Christians generally, or even to all humans (van Dülmen 1968: 46; Bruce 1982b: 182; Hübner 1984: 33; Mussner 1988: 256; Martyn 1997: 362; de Boer 2011: 238; Dalton 1990: 39-40). But Paul's explicit reference to ‘we who are by nature Jews’ in 2:15 also sets up the possibility that he has mainly or even exclusively Jews in view (Dunn 1993a: 198; R. Longenecker 1990: 145; Garlington 2003: 165; Matera 1992: 143-44; Witherington 1998: 267).” Moo finds this latter possibility “likely here [in 3:24] because of the focus on historical experience with the law—which in Paul usually refers to the Mosaic law, the body of commandments that God handed down to Israel at Sinai ....



Joshel draws a bright line between lower class—whether enslaved, freed, or freeborn—and elite free perspectives on work. The elite derided work as coarse and demeaning; the lower class could use it to create meaning and identity. And although Paul is free, he is not elite.<sup>46</sup> Acts, at least, knows of a tradition that Paul himself was a tradesman who made tents (Acts 18:3). And, contrary to views of Paul and the Law that see Paul deriding always “work” as a general category opposed to faith,<sup>47</sup> Paul can treat labor neutrally to positively and enjoin it upon his congregations in his epistles, even in Galatians. In 1 Cor 4:12 Paul shames the Corinthians for their arrogance by reminding them that he and Apollos are “weary from the works of [their] own hands” (κοπιῶμεν ἐργαζόμενοι ταῖς ἰδίαις χερσίν). Later in the letter Paul will argue that they have the right to be paid by the churches instead of having to work for their income (9:6), though they also refuse to exercise this right (9:15). But why do Paul and Apollos deserve to be paid by the churches? Presumably because Paul understands the work he does for them to be *work*: earlier in the letter he compares himself to a “skilled master builder” (σοφὸς ἀρχιτέκτων, 1 Cor 3:10) whose work (ἔργον) will be tested with fire (3:13-15). In

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Nevertheless,” he concedes, “the sequence of Paul’s argument, as he applies this salvation-historical sequence to the situation of the Galatians (see esp. 4:4-9), reveals that he somehow views this salvation-historical sequence as relating to and even in some sense including the Galatians (Räsänen 1983:20-21)” (Moo, *Galatians*, 241). I tend to lean towards the former option—the “we” in 3:23-25 includes all humanity—primarily because of the argument I make in Chapter 3 that Paul’s invocation the involvement of the στοιχεῖα with the Law in 4:3 and 9 both adopts and responds to the view that God uses the στοιχεῖα to reward those who follow the Law and to punish the Lawless, both inside and outside Israel. As important as this debate is for understanding Paul’s view of “Judaism” and the Law, however, we need not concern ourselves too much with resolving it in the present study. Regardless of whose παιδαγωγός the Law was, its mere identity as an enslaved παιδαγωγός is instructive for understanding its function before the coming of Christ.

<sup>46</sup>Dale B. Martin’s *The Corinthian Body* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995), for example, argues that Paul’s understanding of threats to the human body (and to the body politic, as displayed in 1 Corinthians) align much more precisely with lower class conceptions of pollution and invasion than with upper class notions of imbalance.

<sup>47</sup> E.g., Moo, 176.

Philippians Paul can describe his preference to live or to die as a dilemma because living means he gets to receive the “fruit/wages of work” (καρπὸς ἔργου)—clearly an attractive option for Paul, since he cannot decide whether it is better to live and to work or to die and to “be with Christ” (Phil 1:22-24). Paul can use “work” as a metaphor for Christian discipleship, instructing the Philippians to “work out [their] own salvation with fear and trembling” (μετὰ φόβου καὶ τρόμου τὴν ἑαυτῶν σωτηρίαν κατεργάζεσθε, Phil 2:12). At the end of Galatians itself Paul insists that “faith *working* (ἐνεργουμένη) through love” matters far more than either circumcision or uncircumcision (Gal 5:6),<sup>48</sup> and he insists that each person in the congregation must “test their own work” (τὸ ἔργον ἑαυτοῦ δοκιμάζετω), rather than boasting in their neighbor’s work (6:4).<sup>49</sup> Paul is not averse to work. It both provides materially for his ministry and furnishes him with helpful metaphors for the Christian life.

Paul can even speak neutrally to positively about the specific work of a παιδαγωγός. The only other time Paul uses this word is in 1 Corinthians 4:15, where Paul asserts his authority as the Corinthians’ “father” by comparing himself to their “ten thousand παιδαγωγοί,” i.e., the other Christian leaders in their orbit, around whom the Corinthians seem to have been developing competing factions (1:10-17, 3:1-9). Paul walks a fine line here. On the one hand, he does not want the Corinthians to base their Christian identity on his specific leadership. He is horrified to find that some among the Corinthians are boasting about being “of Paul” (ἐγώ... εἰμι Παύλου, 1:12), and so he

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<sup>48</sup> David A. deSilva, *The Letter to the Galatians*, NICNT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2018), 225.

<sup>49</sup> See also 1 Thess 2:9; 4:11; 5:13.

makes sure to credit other Christian leaders like Apollos and Cephas—his fellow “co-workers of God” (θεοῦ... συνεργοί, 3:9)—for their particular contributions to the work of God (3:22). On the other hand, Paul wants to assert his own particular authority among the Corinthians, who he thinks have become “arrogant” in his absence (4:18), and so he claims for himself the title of “father,” relegating to all other leaders the title “παιδαγωγός.”

Paul seems not to take issue here with the behavior of Apollos and Cephas, who are presumably among the “ten thousand” παιδαγωγοί of the Corinthians.<sup>50</sup> Although Paul distinguishes himself with a unique position of authority as the Corinthians’ “father” in 4:15, he has also just relativized his influence in the Corinthian church by grouping himself with Apollos and Cephas as mere “servants” (ὑπηρέται) of Christ and οικονόμοι of God’s mysteries (4:1).<sup>51</sup> All three of them, among others, are “servants” (διάκονοι) through whom the Corinthians have believed, each one assigned by God to a particular task (3:5-9). And all three of them appear to be good and faithful servants: through them God has given growth to the Corinthian church (3:6). The problem is the immaturity of

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<sup>50</sup> 2 Cor 10-13 shows that, at least at some point, other unnamed Christian leaders were trying to disparage Paul as a leader in the Corinthian church. Perhaps the seeds of this conflict had already been planted by the writing of 1 Corinthians, but in 1 Corinthians Paul seems less concerned about the behavior of particular leaders and more worried about the Corinthians’ willingness to pledge undue allegiance to any one of them.

<sup>51</sup> See Chapter 3 for an analysis of how Paul also uses the word οικονόμος to describe the Law in Gal 4:2. Only in Gal 3-4 and 1 Cor 4 does Paul use the words παιδαγωγός and οικονόμος metaphorically (in Rom 16:23 he sends greetings to the church from Erastus, a literal οικονόμος τῆς πόλεως). It is interesting that Paul only uses these metaphors together and that he uses this same pairing of metaphors to describe the Law in Galatians and ministers of Christ in 1 Corinthians, especially given Paul’s overall more positive stance towards the Law in 1 Corinthians. (The Law provides justification for Paul and his fellow ministers to receive financial support from the Corinthians [9:8-10]; Paul is willing to become “as [one] under the Law [ὡς ὑπὸ νόμον]” in order to win “those under the Law [τοῖς ὑπὸ νόμον]” (9:20); Paul says explicitly that stories written in the Law about Israel in the wilderness were “written for our instruction [ἐγράφη δὲ πρὸς νοουθεσίαν ἡμῶν]” [10:11]; etc.) This confluence of metaphors deserves further scholarly attention.

the Corinthians themselves, still “infants in Christ” (3:1) who should have given up their undue attachment to individual παιδαγωγοί—along with their milk (3:2)—a long time ago.

### 2.3.2 Ἔργα Νόμου: An Ineffective Partnership between the Law and Human Beings

Paul is not ashamed of work in general, or of enslaved work more specifically. But what about the particular “works of the Law” (ἔργα νόμου)—the ones so famously opposed to “faith” in Galatians? Paul uses the phrase ἔργα νόμου six times in Galatians (2:16 [three times]; 3:2, 5, 10) and twice in Romans (3:20, 28).<sup>52</sup> In Galatians this genitive construction always follows the preposition ἐκ; Paul is concerned with the results that emerge from ἔργα νόμου. Each time Paul uses ἔργα νόμου in Galatians he directly opposes it to another genitive construction: in 2:16a, b, and c he opposes ἔργα νόμου to πίστις (Ἰησοῦ) Χριστοῦ,<sup>53</sup> in 3:2 and 3:5 to ἀκοή πίστεως, and in 3:10 he contrasts ὅσοι ... ἐξ ἔργων νόμου with οἱ ἐκ πίστεως (3:9). The Galatians (or Cephas and Paul, depending on how far Paul’s quotation extends from 2:14b) “know that a person is

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<sup>52</sup> A couple of notable similar constructions in Romans: Paul uses the singular τὸ ἔργον τοῦ νόμου in 2:15—it is “written on their [i.e., Gentiles who instinctively do the Law] hearts”—and also reverses the genitive phrase once in Romans 3:27, asking hypothetically if boasting is excluded by the implied “Law of works” (διὰ ποίου νόμου; τῶν ἔργων;).

<sup>53</sup> Some “New Perspective” interpreters understand ἐὰν μὴ (“except”/“but only”) to introduce an exception to the whole phrase οὐ δικαιούται ἄνθρωπος ἐξ ἔργων νόμου in 2:16; so J. D. G. Dunn’s translation: “a person is justified not by the works of the law *except* through faith in Jesus Christ” (“The New Perspective on Paul,” *BJRL* 65 [1983]: 95-122). The implication of Dunn’s translation would be that ἔργα νόμου and πίστις Χριστοῦ are *not* directly opposed in Gal 2:16. In A. Andrew Das’s summary of Dunn’s position, “the law *would* justify as long as one also had faith in Christ” (“Another Look at ἐὰν μὴ in Galatians 2:16,” *JBL* 119 [2000]: 529-539, 529; see Das’s article for a more comprehensive discussion of this translation issue). The vast majority of interpreters, however, understand the ἐὰν μὴ (“except”/“but only”) in 2:16 to refer back to δικαιούται; in R. Longenecker’s translation (cf. the NRSV, NIV, NASB, ESV): “A person is not justified by the works of the law *but only* by the faithfulness of Jesus Christ” (81, emphasis mine).

justified *not* ἐξ ἔργων νόμου *but rather* διὰ πίστεως Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ, and we have believed in Christ Jesus so that we might be justified ἐκ πίστεως Χριστοῦ and *not* ἐξ ἔργων νόμου” (2:16a-b). And so Paul can ask them rhetorically at the beginning of chapter 3 whether they received the Spirit ἐξ ἔργων νόμου or ἐξ ἀκοῆς πίστεως (3:2) and whether God currently supplies them with the Spirit and works miracles among them ἐξ ἔργων νόμου or ἐξ ἀκοῆς πίστεως (3:5)—and count on them choosing the latter answer to both questions. And ἔργα νόμου are not only ineffective, Paul continues. They are also dangerous: οἱ ἐκ πίστεως are blessed with πίστις Abraham (3:9), but ὅσοι . . . ἐξ ἔργων νόμου are under a curse (3:10).

Interpreters of Galatians typically read ἔργα νόμου as a reference to the activity of exclusively human agents each time Paul uses the phrase: these are works—related to the Law—that people do on their own. So the NRSV, for example, often translates the phrase ἐξ ἔργων νόμου “by (your) *doing* the works of the law” (Gal 2:16b, 3:2, 3:5). Precisely how these human works pertain to the Law is debated.<sup>54</sup> Perhaps they are all human works<sup>55</sup>; perhaps they constitute all the ethical demands of Israel’s Law<sup>56</sup>; perhaps they are human attempts to “win . . . God’s favor by a merit-amassing observance of Torah”<sup>57</sup>; perhaps they are only those “boundary marking” commandments of the Law—like circumcision or Sabbath keeping—that mark off Israel as ethnically distinct.<sup>58</sup> In any

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<sup>54</sup> I am grateful to Dr. Wesley Olmstead, who shared with me his teaching notes, for bibliographical help in this section.

<sup>55</sup> E.g., Moo, 176.

<sup>56</sup> E.g., Martyn, 250; de Boer, 145.

<sup>57</sup> E.g., Longenecker, 86.

<sup>58</sup> E.g., James D. G. Dunn, *A Commentary on the Epistle to the Galatians*, BNTC (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1993), 135; N.T. Wright, *Paul and the Faithfulness of God*, vol. 4, *Christian Origins and the Question of God* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2013), 112.

case, ἔργα νόμου are understood to be entirely human activities that are better replaced—depending on how these interpreters read the accompanying genitive phrase πίστις (Ἰησοῦ) Χριστοῦ—by either human faith or Christ’s own faithfulness.

There are good reasons to read ἔργα νόμου as referring only to the activity of human agents. Paul is not entirely enthusiastic about human works, especially when he understands them to be an attempt to justify oneself before God. Several times in Romans Paul uses ἔργα on its own—without the genitive modifier νόμου—to contrast human effort with God’s calling of human beings through faith. Abraham, for example, was not justified (δικαιώω) ἐξ ἔργων (Rom 4:2). He was not a worker (ἐργαζόμενος) who deserved justification as wages for his labor (4:4). Rather, because he was a not-worker (μὴ ἐργαζόμενος), Abraham trusted God, and his faith was *reckoned* as justification (λογίζεται... εἰς δικαιοσύνην, 4:5). David corroborates Abraham’s experience: those whom God reckons just (λογίζεται δικαιοσύνην) apart from works (χωρὶς ἔργων) are blessed (4:6).<sup>59</sup> Later Paul will reflect on Israel’s contrasting (and failed) attempt to attain the “Law of justification” (νόμος δικαιοσύνης) as if ἐξ ἔργων, rather than ἐκ πίστεως (9:31-32), but will find comfort in God preserving a remnant of Israel—elected through grace, no longer ἐξ ἔργων (11:5-6). In Romans, at least, Paul can speak negatively about clearly *human* ἔργα and oppose them to God’s action to justify human beings.

But ἔργα never appears in Galatians without a genitive modifier, usually νόμου, but also σαρκός in 5:19. Paul never constructs and then opposes a general category of

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<sup>59</sup> See also Rom 9:12, where Paul argues that Jacob was elected (and Esau was not) before the twins’ birth, and therefore not ἐξ ἔργων but “from his call” (ἐκ τοῦ καλοῦντος).

human action in this letter. And, as scholarly readers of Galatians know all too well, there is more than one way to read a genitive. I am referring, of course, to the lengthy debate around how to translate the phrase πίστις (Ἰησοῦ) Χριστοῦ, one of the genitive phrases Paul opposes to ἔργα νόμου (Gal 2:16). (The other, ἀκοὴ πίστεως, has received less but still considerable attention.<sup>60</sup>) This debate has long centered on a question of agency: who is the primary agent of the activity Paul describes with the phrase πίστις Χριστοῦ? And so this well-established debate can be instructive for our understanding of the agent(s) involved in the parallel genitive construction ἔργα νόμου.

To lay out briefly the general contours of the πίστις Χριστοῦ debate: those who read the phrase as an objective genitive understand it to refer to human faith that has something to do with Christ, as in the common translation of the phrase “faith in Christ.”<sup>61</sup> These interpreters are sometimes labeled “anthropological” readers of Paul because on this reading Paul seems to provide a human solution to humanity’s plight: human beings cannot be justified by their ἔργα (or by ἔργα νόμου), but they can exercise justifying faith in Christ.<sup>62</sup> Those who read πίστις Χριστοῦ as a subjective genitive—sometimes called “Christological” readers—understand it to designate Christ’s own faithful action.<sup>63</sup> Human faith is not the solution to the inadequacy of human ἔργα (νόμου—here also read as an objective genitive!). Instead, human beings need entirely

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<sup>60</sup> See de Boer, 174-75, for a concise overview of the interpretive questions raised by the phrase ἐξ ἀκοῆς πίστεως.

<sup>61</sup> E.g., Ernest DeWitt Burton, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Galatians* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1956), 121; Betz, *Galatians*, 118; Moo, 160-61.

<sup>62</sup> Cf. Richard B. Hays, *The Faith of Jesus Christ: The Narrative Substructure of Galatians 3:1-4:11* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002), 277.

<sup>63</sup> E.g., Hays; Martyn, 251; de Boer, 148-50; R. Longenecker, 87.

outside intervention to be justified: Christ's own faithfulness, often understood to be a metonym for his faithful and obedient life, death, and resurrection.

But many readers of Paul have not been satisfied with the neat schema of agency implicit in this rendering of the debate. In an important note Susan Eastman criticizes “discussions of faith as either ‘in’ or ‘of’ Christ” for “frequently presum[ing] a notion of the believer as an individual, deciding agent” who either makes an autonomous decision to have faith in Christ (on the “anthropological” reading) or passively receives the effects of Christ's own faith/faithfulness (on the “Christological” reading).<sup>64</sup> The very terms of the debate, Eastman argues, create a false “antinomy between human activity and God's action in Christ.”<sup>65</sup> And Paul, as we saw in Chapter 1, does not understand human persons to be autonomous individuals. Rather, as Eastman argues, Paul's persons are constituted in relationship with other agents. In Galatians 2—in fact, right in the midst of Paul's theologically dense introduction of πίστις Χριστοῦ as a concept—Paul gives the

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<sup>64</sup> Eastman, *Paul and the Person*, 138, endnote 29.

<sup>65</sup> de Boer, 150, cited in Eastman, *Paul and the Person*, 138, endnote 29. To be fair, “anthropological” and “Christological” interpreters are not equally guilty of Eastman's charge. These two terms—which together imply a competitive account of agency in the term πίστις Χριστοῦ—were coined by interpretive opponents of the “anthropological” position, and they function as something of a theological slight against this position: reading πίστις Χριστοῦ as an objective genitive, so the caricature goes, makes “faith” another kind of *merely human work*. “Faith in Christ” is (unfairly) portrayed as individual persons mustering up their own ability to believe or trust in Christ. But proponents of reading πίστις Χριστοῦ as an objective genitive actually tend to provide much more nuanced accounts of how divine and human agency combine and cooperate in the act of “faith.” As Moo insists, “A concern with human believing need not contradict Paul's obvious emphasis on God's sovereignty in salvation—particularly since Paul traces human believing in some fashion to God's initiative. Indeed, some kind of balance between divine initiative and human response seems necessary to preserve the typical biblical tension between the two” (42). On Moo's account, Paul *assumes* that “God has taken the initiative in salvation” throughout Galatians, but when he uses the phrase πίστις Χριστοῦ he “focus[es] [the reader's] attention on the human reception of this gift of God in Christ” (48). The emphasis in the phrase πίστις Χριστοῦ is on the human activity of faith, but this human activity is always subsequent to and dependent on the prior act of God in Christ. Human faith is not an *autonomous* exercise of the human will; it requires God to act first—both chronologically and logically. But faith is still a *significant* exercise of the human will, and one that Paul urgently enjoins upon the Galatian Christians.



reader a description of his own self as a “self-in-relation-to-Christ.” After sharing in Christ’s crucifixion it is no longer (only) Paul who lives, but Christ living in him (2:19-20). This “newly constituted” self is the “I” who lives “by faith in/of the Son of God” (ἐν πίστει... τῆ τοῦ υἱοῦ τοῦ θεοῦ, 2:20).<sup>66</sup> Given the “overlay of subjects” described in this section of the letter, Eastman suggests, it is better to understand the subject of πίστις Χριστοῦ as “both the believer and Christ,” precisely because the believer and Christ are not competitive agents.<sup>67</sup> “The believer as indwelt by Christ is structured by trust that is extrinsically sourced, as well as directed to Christ as divine ‘other.’”<sup>68</sup>

Eastman is not alone in trying to find more complex ways to talk about the agent(s) of πίστις Χριστοῦ in Galatians. Other scholars have offered similarly synergistic accounts of the agency involved in this “faith,” whether they sympathize with one side of the subjective/objective debate or find it largely irrelevant.<sup>69</sup> Morna Hooker, for example, who leans in the direction of interpreting πίστις Χριστοῦ as Christ’s own faith, nonetheless finds it significant that “all the πίστις Χριστοῦ passages [in Paul’s letters]

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<sup>66</sup> Eastman, *Paul and the Person*, 127.

<sup>67</sup> Eastman, *Paul and the Person*, 127, emphasis mine.

<sup>68</sup> Eastman, *Paul and the Person*, 127.

<sup>69</sup> I am not here referring to proponents of a so-called “third view” of πίστις Χριστοῦ in Paul. According to Preston M. Sprinkle’s 2009 survey of scholars who have proposed various “third views” on (including Ernst Lohmeyer, Fritz Neugebauer, Hermann Binder, Wolfgang Schenk, David Hay, Charles H. Cosgrove, Shuji Ota, Karl Friedrich Ulrichs, and Benjamin Schließer), all these accounts share the following two commitments: “(1) they all view πίστις Χριστοῦ as a *singular* entity rather than focusing on the individual lexemes πίστις and Χριστοῦ; and (2) they all view πίστις Χριστοῦ as something objective—that is, something that is outside (though not wholly unrelated to) the realm of a person’s response to God—whether that person be a believer of Jesus” (“Πίστις Χριστοῦ as an Eschatological Event,” in *The Faith of Jesus Christ: Exegetical, Biblical, and Theological Studies*, ed. Michael F. Bird and Preston M. Sprinkle [Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2010], 174). This second commitment tends to exclude *both* the agency of the human believer *and* the agency of Christ from the action of πίστις Χριστοῦ. Sprinkle’s own account, for example, understands πίστις Χριστοῦ to be an “eschatological event”—neither an attitude of faith or trust on the part of a human agent, nor Christ’s own faith or faithfulness, but a defining moment in salvation history that was initiated by God.

refer also to the faith of the believer.”<sup>70</sup> Building off her understanding of the salvific “interchange” between Christ and humanity, Hooker encourages readers of Paul’s letters to understand πίστις Χριστοῦ “not as a polarized expression, which suggests antithesis, but as a *concentric* expression, which begins, always, from the faith of Christ himself, but which includes, necessarily, the answering faith of believers, who claim that faith as their own.”<sup>71</sup> This movement between Christ’s faith and the believer’s, Hooker suggests, may well be what Paul has in mind in Rom 1:17, where the δικαιοσύνη θεοῦ is revealed “from faith to faith (ἐκ πίστεως εἰς πίστιν).” Peter Oakes argues for a similarly reciprocal view of agency in Paul’s use of πίστις Χριστοῦ. Building off of Teresa Morgan’s understanding of “πίστις [as] a relationship,”<sup>72</sup> Oakes defines πίστις as “a way of life of current trust, loyalty and/or reliability between Christ and people (and God), whether the focus is on the attitudes and actions of Christ (in the ‘subjective’ view) or of people (in the ‘objective’ view) or both.”<sup>73</sup> Oakes’s use of the word “current” is not entirely clear in the previous sentence—I would suggest replacing it with “ongoing”—but it is important for understanding one of the key features of his proposal: πίστις Χριστοῦ is not a one-time event, enacted at a punctiliar moment by either the believer (in professing faith) or Christ (in dying a faithful death). Rather, it is an ongoing relationship characterized by

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<sup>70</sup> Morna D. Hooker, “ΠΙΣΤΙΣ ΧΡΙΣΤΟΥ,” *NTS* 35 (1989): 321-342, 339.

<sup>71</sup> Hooker, 341, emphasis original.

<sup>72</sup> Teresa Morgan, *Roman Faith and Christian Faith: Pistis and Fides in the Early Roman Empire and Early Churches* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015).

<sup>73</sup> Peter Oakes, “*Pistis* as a Relational Way of Life in Galatians,” *JSNT* 40 (2018): 255-275, 257.

mutual fidelity.<sup>74</sup> For Eastman, Hooker, and Oakes, what is crucial is to recognize that, for Paul, both Christ *and* believers are active in the faith that justifies.

I raise the πίστις Χριστοῦ debate not to spend time litigating it myself, but to harness its implications for our understanding of the phrase ἔργα νόμου in Galatians. At stake is the agency of the subject in each phrase. Who is it that *enacts* the πίστις Χριστοῦ: human beings, Christ himself, or some synergy of the two agents? Correspondingly, who is it that *enacts* the ἔργα νόμου: human beings, or the Law itself, or some synergy of the two agents? Paul twice relies on grammatical parallelism to make his point about ἔργα νόμου and πίστις Χριστοῦ when he introduces both phrases in Gal 2:16. Both times Paul constructs contrasting options for justification using a preposition followed by a noun modified by a genitive: “a person is justified *not* ἐξ ἔργων νόμου *but rather* διὰ πίστεως Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ” (2:16a); “so that we might be justified ἐκ πίστεως Χριστοῦ and *not* ἐξ ἔργων νόμου” (2:16b). In fact, proponents of reading πίστις Χριστοῦ as an objective genitive have appealed precisely to this parallelism to make their argument: if ἔργα νόμου is an objective genitive—as almost all interpreters believe it is—its argumentative counterpoint must be, too. “If works of law is the antagonist,” as Matthew C. Easter puts it in his summary of the “anthropological” position, “then the protagonist *pistis Christou* must be of the same general conceptual framework to answer the shortcomings of the antagonist.”<sup>75</sup> If ἔργα νόμου are human activities, why would Paul use the same

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<sup>74</sup> Oakes, 263. Oakes credits Karl Friedrich Ulrichs, *Christusglaube: Studien zum Syntagma pistis Christou und zum paulinischen Verständnis von Glaube und Rechtfertigung*, WUNT 2.227 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2007), 251 with this particular insight.

<sup>75</sup> Matthew C. Easter, “The *Pistis Christou* Debate: Main Arguments and Responses in Summary,” *CurBR* 9 (2010): 33-47, 37. See also Stephen Westerholm, *Justification Reconsidered: Rethinking a Pauline Theme* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2013), 54, fn 15.

grammatical structure in the same sentence to talk about Christ's own πίστις? Paul must be drawing a contrast between two kinds of human activity: doing the Law, and having faith in Christ.

“Christological” interpreters tend to readily concede that ἔργα νόμου is an objective genitive denoting human activity, but they insist that the contrast Paul draws between ἔργα νόμου and πίστις Χριστοῦ lies precisely in the agent involved in each genitive construction. While human beings try to achieve justification through their own works of the Law, only Christ can effectively perform some kind of faithful action that *actually* achieves justification for humanity.<sup>76</sup> Based in part on the parallelism Paul constructs between πίστις Χριστοῦ and ἔργα νόμου, however, a minority of scholars who read πίστις Χριστοῦ as a subjective genitive also read ἔργα νόμου as a subjective genitive denoting the Law's own actions. Lloyd Gaston, for example, situates ἔργα νόμου within the context of the Law's other activity in Galatians and Romans: the Law is an active agent in its service as a παιδαγωγός, for example, and it actively “works” (κατεργάζεται) wrath in Rom 4:15.<sup>77</sup> The reader of Galatians should not be surprised to find Paul talking about the things the Law does, because she is accustomed to Paul depicting the Law

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<sup>76</sup> Neither side, of course, can make its case for the meaning of πίστις Χριστοῦ on the basis of this clause's grammar alone; each must appeal to the context of Paul's larger arguments, in Galatians and elsewhere. “Christological” readers of πίστις Χριστοῦ point to the many places in Galatians where Paul contrast the futility of human activity with the power of God's action. So Martyn, for example, claims that the “antinomy” Paul sets up between ἔργα νόμου and πίστις Χριστοῦ in Gal 2:16 “is like all of the antinomies of the new creation [that Paul describes in Galatians]: It does not set over against one another two human alternatives, to observe the Law or to have faith in Christ. The opposites... are an act of God, [i.e.,] Christ's faithful death, and an act of the human being, [i.e.,] observance of the Law” (271).

<sup>77</sup> Lloyd Gaston, “Works of law as a subjective genitive,” *SR* 13 (1984): 39-46, 44.

doing things.<sup>78</sup> Gaston also draws the reader’s attention to Paul’s discourse on τὰ ἔργα τῆς σαρκός (“the works of the flesh,” Gal 5:19) and ὁ καρπὸς τοῦ πνεύματος (“the fruit of the Spirit,” 5:22). Gaston understands these genitive phrases to denote the activity of “a power called the flesh” and “a power called the Spirit,” respectively (rather than results produced by two parts of a human subject), and understands τὰ ἔργα τῆς σαρκός to be a “direct parallel to *erga nomou*.”<sup>79</sup> If the flesh is the agent that works “sexual immorality, impurity, indecent behavior,” and the like (5:19-21), why can’t the Law be the agent whose work is insufficient for bringing justification and the Spirit to humanity (cf. 3:21; Rom 8:3)?

Gaston’s proposal is intriguing for the way it takes seriously the Law as an agent in Galatians (and Romans). It recognizes that the Law is not just a passive body of texts and commands in Galatians, but something that can exercise active influence over others. But Gaston’s reading of ἔργα νόμου as a subjective genitive that refers *only* to the Law’s own activity is difficult to sustain exegetically in light of the evidence we examined earlier that Paul understands ἔργα νόμου to be also (at least partially) human activities.

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<sup>78</sup> For other interpreters who read ἔργα νόμου as a subjective genitive, see Paul L. Owen, “The ‘Works of the Law’ in Romans and Galatians: A New Defense of the Subjective Genitive,” *JBL* 126 (2007): 553-577; Le Chih Hsieh, “The Works of the Law as the Functions of Law,” *Sino-Christian Studies* 25 (2018): 7-46.

<sup>79</sup> Gaston, 44. Gaston seems to assume that his reading of τὰ ἔργα τῆς σαρκός is obvious and does not need to be argued, even though it does seem possible to read this genitive clause as simply descriptive, and even though Paul himself warns his readers—human agents—that “those who do such things will not inherit the kingdom of God” and presumably considers these human agents capable of such activity (5:21). Nevertheless, Gaston is in good company among New Testament scholars: it is increasingly common to understand Paul’s use of “flesh” (σάρξ) to denote an external, anti-God power, and even more common to understand “S/spirit” (πνεῦμα) as the Holy Spirit, rather than a person’s (good) inner substance that battles their sinful tendencies. See Martyn, who describes the Spirit as “the Spirit of God’s Son, the Spirit that God has sent invasively into the human orb” and the Flesh as “an alien, occupying power” to which “the human orb has been [made] subject” (530), and de Boer, who calls the Flesh “a malevolent cosmic power” that “inhabits and destroys human existence ‘in the flesh’” (388).

Paul clearly understands human agency to be at least *involved* in the activity of ἔργα νόμου. He warns the one (person) who *does* these works (ὁ ποιήσας αὐτά), for example, that attempting to live by them will bring a curse upon themselves (Gal 3:12). Moreover, according to Paul, the one who is circumcised obligates himself to *do* the whole Law (5:3; cf. 3:10). Clearly Paul cares about the Galatians' choices to observe the commandments contained within the Law—most notably the Galatian men's flirtation with circumcision! This human action would be weighty and fraught, tantamount to these men "cutting themselves off from Christ" (5:4).

It appears, then, that both the Law and human beings are at work in the activity Paul calls ἔργα νόμου. Consequently, it is probably best to understand ἔργα νόμου, like the parallel phrase πίστις Χριστοῦ, to refer to a kind of synergistic agency. In this case, the synergy emerges from the joint activity of human beings and the *Law*. In addition to the syntactical parallels between ἔργα νόμου and πίστις Χριστοῦ in Gal 2:16, Eastman notes an important thematic parallel between the Law and Christ in the larger pericope (2:15-21): both the Law and Christ seem—at different times—to be involved in the constitution of Paul's self. Christ now lives in Paul, who still understands himself to be an agent event while he is inhabited by Christ (2:19-20). But there are other "inhabiting agents" who have lived in Paul: famously, in Romans 7, Sin and Death "work" in Paul (and also, we might note tangentially, in the Law; Rom 7:7-25).<sup>80</sup> Here in Galatians 2, Eastman suggests, the reader glimpses Paul's past "nomistic self"—that is, Paul as he

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<sup>80</sup> Eastman, *Paul and the Person*, 91-103.

once “depended on and drew his identity from law observance” (cf. 1:13-14).<sup>81</sup> Paul was once, in a sense, inhabited by the Law, though in his co-crucifixion with Christ (and somehow “through the Law”!) he “died to the Law” (2:19) and was reconstituted as a co-agent with Christ.

Likewise, when Paul chastises the Galatians for being tempted to perform ἔργα νόμου he understands that if they *did* do these “works” another agent would be “at work in their members” (to borrow a phrase from Romans 7): namely, the Law. The Galatians would put themselves “under the Law” (ὑπὸ νόμον, 4:21, 5:18), setting themselves up in a relationship of enslavement to the Law (4:9, 5:1) in which the Law’s “curse” compromises all who are “ἐξ ἔργων νόμου” (3:10)<sup>82</sup> and further entangles them with the Flesh (3:3, 5:16-18). Both the Law and those who try to keep its commandments are at work in ἔργα νόμου, but, on Paul’s account, this is an ineffective partnership. Neither partner achieves what it intends to achieve: the Galatians want to be “justified” through Law-observance (3:11) but end up thereby “fall[ing] away from grace” (5:4). The Law (Paul implies) wants to play its part in God’s giving of life to humanity (3:21),<sup>83</sup> but those

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<sup>81</sup> Eastman, *Paul and the Person*, 131.

<sup>82</sup> Is the Law the one who enacts this curse? Paul identifies the agent of the curse only circumspectly, if at all: “all who are ἐξ ἔργων νόμου are under a curse (ὑπὸ κατάραν)” (3:10a). Paul does not say, “The Law curses those who are ἐξ ἔργων νόμου.” Perhaps the “written” threat that follows—“for it is written, ‘Cursed is everyone...’” (3:10b)—functions as the Law’s own promise to curse those who do not observe and obey everything written in it. The threat, after all, is a citation from the Law itself. If so, perhaps 3:10-14 is Paul’s first pass at describing the Law’s disciplinary function—which he will do again in a more measured, even positive, way starting in 3:19. Or perhaps this threat is simply the Law’s warning that someone or something *else* will curse its adherents. After all, it can *also* report to its readers that “the one justified through faith will live (ὁ δίκαιος ἐκ πίστεως ζήσεται)” (3:12, as the Law speaks in Hab 2:4).

<sup>83</sup> Its purpose is not set against (κατά) God’s promises (3:21); indeed, as we will soon see, the Law ultimately cooperates with God’s purposes in order that (ἵνα, 3:22) God’s promise of life might be fulfilled.

who try and fail to do the Law's works end up cursed (to death? cf. 3:13) instead (3:10-14).

All of these ineffective ἔργα νόμου are ineffective precisely because they involve the wrong partnership, trying to achieve the wrong end at the wrong time. Every time Paul uses the phrase ἔργα νόμου in Galatians (2:16; 3:2, 5, 10) he refers to a partnership that 1) forms between human beings and the Law, 2) tries to achieve human justification and/or its reception of the Spirit, and 3) makes this attempt *after* the coming of Christ/Faith. All this activity is fruitless, Paul insists, because 1) Christ has reconstituted the effective human agent through union with himself, not the Law (2:19-20), 2) it is πίστις Χριστοῦ that justifies (2:16) and ἀκοή πίστεως that delivers the Spirit (3:2, 5); ἔργα νόμου can do neither, and 3) in this scheme there is nothing left for ἔργα νόμου to do anyway, even if it could! Πίστις Χριστοῦ has already accomplished human justification (2:21, 3:25), and, as the Galatians have personally experienced, ἀκοή πίστεως has already delivered the Spirit (3:2-5). In its union with human beings the Law cannot supplant the covenant God made with Abraham four hundred thirty years before the Law was given; it cannot function as a shortcut to the inheritance Abraham and his offspring were promised (3:17-18). But just when the Law (in its shared work with human beings) seems most ineffective, Paul introduces his metaphor for the Law as an enslaved παιδαγωγός to show that the Law *can* effectively accomplish its intentions when it works with the right partner to achieve the right end at the right time. The Law was effective when it served as a παιδαγωγός, working with God to guard humanity before the coming of Faith.



### 2.3.3 “The Law was Our Παιδαγωγός”: An Effective Partnership between the Law and God

One might think that Paul introduces slavery metaphors for the Law precisely to drive home his point about the Law’s *inability*: the Law is an ultimately impotent entity whose power is precarious and penultimate, vulnerable to the whims and abuses of those who are free. Paul certainly considers the Law weak, especially compared to God’s powerful intervention into humanity’s plight by sending his son (cf. Rom 8:3). As we will see in the next chapter, Paul associates the Law with the “weak and beggarly” (ἀσθενῆ καὶ πτωχά) στοιχεῖα to which Paul accuses the Galatians of wanting to return through their Law-observance (Gal 4:9). But it is not adequate to maintain that Paul thinks slavery means absolute weakness. As we saw in our examination of 1 Cor 3-4, for example, Paul can easily use slavery imagery to talk about the effective work of ministry. And with his introduction of the Law as a παιδαγωγός Paul seems to be doing something similar. Paul’s introduction of this slavery metaphor is a change in direction, a backing up from the argumentative ledge he seemed to be approaching with his earlier comments about the inability of ἔργα νόμου (2:16, 21; 3:2, 5, 21). Thus far Paul *has* written about the Law’s particular weakness, i.e., its inability to justify and to bring the Spirit to the Galatians. But now he concedes that the Law cannot be entirely weak, entirely devoid of agency. Otherwise, Paul himself asks rhetorically, why would God give the Law in the first place (3:19a)?

Paul begins to answer this question by describing the work of a παιδαγωγός before he even introduces the metaphor—the Law was added “for transgressions” (τῶν

παραβάσεων χάριν προσετέθη, 3:19b). Readers of Galatians have found this initial answer to be frustratingly compact and opaque: what, exactly, does Paul mean to communicate by using the preposition *χάριν*? *Χάριν* can mean either “because of” (in which case the Law is a *response* to the problem of *παραβάσεις*) or “for the sake of” (in which case the Law *prompts* *παραβάσεις*), and translating it either way still requires the reader to fill in some gaps in Paul’s argument. Douglas Moo lays out the four most common interpretive options<sup>84</sup>: 1) *χάριν* means “because of,” and the way the Law responds to the problem of *παραβάσεις* is to make human beings aware of their sinfulness.<sup>85</sup> 2) *Χάριν* means “because of,” but the Law’s specific response is more general: in Longenecker’s translation, “The Law was given because of the need to deal with sins.”<sup>86</sup> The Law itself is an effective means of dealing with *παραβάσεις*, rather than just the means by which human beings can become aware enough to realize these *παραβάσεις* are a problem. How does the Law deal with *παραβάσεις*? Either negatively, by punishing those who commit them,<sup>87</sup> or positively, by “providing a means of keeping those sins in check” or acting as a “remedy for them (in the sacrificial system).”<sup>88</sup> 3) *Χάριν* means “for the sake of,” and indicates simply (and startlingly!) that the Law was

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<sup>84</sup> Moo, 233-34.

<sup>85</sup> E.g., in Moo’s summary (233), John Calvin, *Commentaries on the Epistles of Paul to the Galatians and Ephesians*, trans. William Pringle (Edinburgh: Thomas Clark, 1854), 64.

<sup>86</sup> E.g., in Moo’s summary (233), Longenecker, 138.

<sup>87</sup> E.g., in Moo’s summary, Frank Thielman, *From Plight to Solution: A Jewish Framework for Understanding Paul’s View of the Law in Galatians and Romans*, Novum Testamentum Supplement 61 (Leiden: Brill, 1989), 74-75.

<sup>88</sup> Moo, 233, citing Dunn, 189-90; Don Garlington, *An Exposition of Galatians: A New Perspective/Reformational Reading* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2003), 161.

intended to provoke human beings to commit παραβάσεις.<sup>89</sup> 4) Χάριν means “for the sake of,” and “the phrase may refer to the law’s function of exacerbating the seriousness of sin and thereby uncovering its ultimate nature,” as in, Moo suggests, Rom 4:15 and 5:20.<sup>90</sup>

Moo opts for this last reading, arguing that Paul uses παράβασις instead of ἁμαρτία specifically to refer to “the violation of a known law”; ἁμαρτία becomes the (much worse!) παράβασις that “evokes greater punishment because it involves conscious violation of a known law of God.”<sup>91</sup> To my mind, however, option 2 makes the most sense of Paul’s fuller explanation of the Law’s purpose that follows, especially once he brings in his παιδαγωγός metaphor: the Law was added so that it could *do something to control* παραβάσεις. Just as a pedagogue was assigned to keep moral watch over his charge—just as Lydus tried to restrain Pistoclerus from acting wantonly and unwisely with his lover—so the Law “imprisoned and guarded [‘us’] until the coming of Faith (3:23). The Law, Paul asserts, played an active and effective role in God’s dealings with humanity.

Paul gets more specific about the Law’s role in verse 22: “the Scripture imprisoned all things under Sin so that the promise from [the] faith of Jesus Christ might

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<sup>89</sup> E.g., in Moo’s summary, Betz, 164-64; Thomas R. Schreiner, *The Law and Its Fulfillment: A Pauline Theology of Law* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1993), 74; Heikki Räisänen, *Paul and the Law* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1983), 14-48.

<sup>90</sup> Moo, 234, citing Franz Mussner, *Der Galaterbrief*, Herders theologischer Kommentar zum Neuen Testament 9 (Freiburg: Herder, 1988), 245-46; Heinrich Schlier, *Der Brief an die Galater*, Kristisch-exegetischer Kommentar über das Neue Testament (Meyer-Kommentar) 7 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Reprecht, 1989), 152-53; Ben Witherington III, *Grace in Galatia: A Commentary on Paul’s Letter to the Galatians* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), 255-56; Herman Nicolaas Ridderbos, *Paul: An Outline of His Theology* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1975), 150-51.

<sup>91</sup> Moo, 234.

be given to those who believe” (συνέκλεισεν ἡ γραφή τὰ πάντα ὑπὸ ἀμαρτίαν ἵνα ἡ ἐπαγγελία ἐκ πίστεως Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ δοθῇ τοῖς πιστεύουσιν). Because it has been the subject of much scholarly debate, we should pause here to consider Paul’s use of the word γραφή—rather than νόμος—as the subject of this sentence. Is Paul still talking about the Law’s activity in 3:22, or has he introduced another character named “Scripture”? Many interpreters understand γραφή and νόμος to be synonyms in this passage.<sup>92</sup> Others consider them to designate different agents, and offer various proposals for the identity of ἡ γραφή: is it Scripture as a whole?<sup>93</sup> A “metonymy for God himself”?<sup>94</sup> A particular piece of Scripture that fits Paul’s purposes here?<sup>95</sup> Martinus de Boer perhaps goes furthest in separating out the activity of ὁ νόμος and ἡ γραφή: on his account Gal 3:22 depicts the subject ἡ γραφή imprisoning an “all things” (πάντα),

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<sup>92</sup> E.g., in Longenecker’s summary (144), Albrecht Oepke, *Der Brief des Paulus an die Galater* (Berlin: Evangelische Verlagsanstalt, 1957), 119; F.F. Bruce, *The Epistle to the Galatians: A Commentary on the Biblical Text*, WBC (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1982), 180; de Boer (234) lists Hays, “Galatians,” 268; Calvin, 64. Moo agrees that Paul uses γραφή and νόμος synonymously here, and raises the possibility that he may have switched terms “because he has in view a single verse from within the law, such as Deut. 27:26, which he has quoted in verse 10” (cf. 4:30, where ἡ γραφή speaks the words of Gen 21:10) (239). (Ultimately, however, Moo finds it most likely that Paul here uses γραφή as shorthand for “the OT as a whole,” which “functions, via the law, to bring everything under sin’s power” [239].)

<sup>93</sup> E.g., in Longenecker’s summary (144), George S. Duncan, *The Epistle of Paul to the Galatians* (Harper: New York, 1934), 118; R. A. Cole, *The Letter of Paul to the Galatians: An Introduction and Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1989), 106; JB, NEB, NIV.

<sup>94</sup> Longenecker, 144, citing B. B. Warfield, *The Inspiration and Authority of the Bible* (Philadelphia: Presbyterian & Reformed, 1948), 299-348. Martyn speaks of “scripture” as God’s two hands, accomplishing related but distinct tasks: “As God’s right hand the scripture preached the gospel ahead of time to Abraham (v 8); as God’s left hand it then locked up the entire world until the gospel itself should occur in God’s giving of the promised Spirit [v 22]” (373).

<sup>95</sup> E.g., in Longenecker’s summary (144), J. B. Lightfoot, *Saint Paul’s Epistle to the Galatians: A Revised Text with Introduction, Notes and Dissertations* (London: Macmillan and Co., 1905), 147-48; Burton, 195-96. Longenecker himself holds to this view, arguing that “Paul’s normal use of the singular γραφή... and the presence of the article ἡ... suggest that he had a particular passage in mind, probably the more immediate antecedent of 3:10, i.e., Deut 27:26—a passage he probably learned from his rabbinic training but one also probably vividly impressed on him from his synagogal beatings.”

*including the Law*.<sup>96</sup> The Law not only does not act in this clause; it is vigorously acted upon by a different agent.

Without foreclosing the possibility that Paul elsewhere distinguishes between νόμος and γραφή (even, perhaps, in Gal 3:8?), however, it seems to me that here in 3:22 Paul does use νόμος and γραφή synonymously: when he restates his point in the next verse he makes νόμος at least one of the agents involved in the “imprisoning” (συγκλείω): “we were guarded under the Law, shut up for [or ‘until’] the revealing of the coming Faith” (ὕπὸ νόμον ἐφρουρούμεθα συγκλειόμενοι εἰς τὴν μέλλουσαν πίστιν ἀποκαλυφθῆναι, 3:23).<sup>97</sup> If ἡ γραφή is separable from ὁ νόμος, the two entities at least cooperate in the same process. But it is more likely that they here refer to the same entity, the one Law/Scripture that is not opposed to the promises of God (3:21), but carries out an active role in the guarding and disciplining of humanity until the coming of Faith.

And Paul places a surprising amount of confidence in the Law/Scripture’s ability to carry out that role competently. Here a sideways glance at Romans 11:32 is illuminating: συνέκλεισεν γὰρ ὁ θεὸς τοὺς πάντας εἰς ἀπειθειαν ἵνα τοὺς πάντας ἐλέησῃ (“For God imprisoned all into/for disobedience, so that he might have mercy on all.”). Susan Eastman has shown how this verse helps to establish one thematic link between Galatians and Romans: Rom 11:32 helps the reader of Galatians to recognize Gal 6:16 as God’s promise of mercy for non-Christian Israel, rather than as a redefinition of “Israel”

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<sup>96</sup> De Boer, 236.

<sup>97</sup> As we will see, the agency of both ἐφρουρούμεθα and συγκλειόμενοι is somewhat obscured by the passive voice of these verbs; they could both be divine passives, making God the ultimate agent of the action here. But the Law is still obviously *involved* in the action; in fact, it is the one that directly carries out.

as “those who follow the ‘rule’ [κανόνι]” that “neither circumcision nor uncircumcision is anything” (6:15-16).<sup>98</sup> But Rom 11:32 is also, as other interpreters have noticed,<sup>99</sup> a helpful touchpoint for Gal 3:22-23, where Paul twice uses the verb συγκλείω to describe the activity of the *Law*: ἀλλὰ **συνέκλεισεν** ἡ γραφή τὰ πάντα ὑπὸ ἀμαρτίαν ἵνα ἡ ἐπαγγελία ἐκ πίστεως Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ δοθῇ τοῖς πιστεύουσιν. Πρὸ τοῦ δὲ ἐλθεῖν τὴν πίστιν ὑπὸ νόμον ἐφρουρούμεθα **συγκλειόμενοι** εἰς τὴν μέλλουσαν πίστιν ἀποκαλυφθῆναι. (These three instances of συγκλείω—in Rom 11:32, Gal 3:22, and Gal 3:23—are Paul’s only uses of the verb, and he never uses the non-prefixed κλείω.) The congruence between God’s activity in Rom 11:32 and the Law’s activity in 3:22-23 is striking, as is the difference in voice in each verse’s purpose clause. In each verse the subject “imprisons” (or “shuts up,” συνέκλεισεν) “all” (all *people* in Rom 11:32: πάντας in the masculine; all *things* in Gal 3:22: πάντα in the neuter) “to” (εἰς, Rom 11:32) or “under” (ὑπὸ, Gal 3:22) something negative (ἀπειθειαν [“disobedience”] in Rom 11:32, ἀμαρτίαν [“sin”] in Gal 3:22) “so that” (ἵνα) something good might happen: in Rom 11:32 so that God himself might have mercy on all, in Gal 3:22 so that the promise ἐκ πίστεως Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ might be given (by whom?) “to those who believe/the faithful” (τοῖς πιστεύουσιν). A chart will make these comparisons clearer:

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<sup>98</sup> Susan Grove Eastman, “Israel and the Mercy of God: A Re-reading of Galatians 6.16 and Romans 9-11,” *NTS* 56 (2010): 367-395.

<sup>99</sup> Moo, 239; Martyn uses this parallel to distance ἡ γραφή from ὁ νόμος, since, on his reading, “nothing in the preceding part of [Paul’s] argument would suggest that the Law as such was God’s ally” (372-73).

	Rom 11:32	Gal 3:22
συνέκλεισεν + subject	συνέκλεισεν γὰρ ὁ θεὸς	ἀλλὰ συνέκλεισεν ἡ γραφὴ
πᾶς as object	τοὺς πάντα	τὰ πάντα
preposition + negative power	εἰς ἀπειθειαν	ὑπὸ ἀμαρτίαν
ἵνα clause (note difference in voice in each subjunctive verb)	ἵνα τοὺς πάντας ἐλεήσῃ.	ἵνα ἡ ἐπαγγελία ἐκ πίστεως Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ δοθῇ τοῖς πιστεύουσιν.

Reading Romans 11:32 and Galatians 3:22 intertextually reveals something surprising: the Law (as ἡ γραφὴ) does in Gal 3:22 what God does in Rom 11:32. The parallel is so close that it is easily appropriated by interpreters who read ἡ γραφὴ as a metonym for God in Gal 3:22: ἡ γραφὴ seems to be performing a literal act of God.<sup>100</sup> Both actors are deliberate and effective: Paul explicitly lays out their purposes with ἵνα clauses that make clear their ultimately good reasons for imprisoning “all.” The parallels between these verses are not perfect; we should note especially the passive voice of δοθῆ in Gal 3:22 that suggests—in line with Paul’s earlier comments about the ἔργα νόμου and the promises of God (3:10-14)—that the Law is not the *only*, or even *primary*, actor at work in the giving of the promise to those who believe. God is certainly the ultimate agent behind this promise, as Paul makes clear in 3:18. Paul continues to use passive verbs with ambiguous subjects in the following verse: before the coming of Faith—and “under the Law (ὑπὸ νόμον)” —“we were imprisoned (ἐφρουρούμεθα), being guarded

<sup>100</sup> E.g., Martyn, 373; Warfield, 299-348. Moo does not understand ἡ γραφὴ as a metonym for God, but he does think that “behind ‘the Scripture’ in verse 22a stands God himself, who has worked through the imprisoning and condemning effect of Scripture to accomplish his ultimate purpose” (240).

(συγκλειόμενοι) until Faith would be revealed” (3:23). Some interpreters understand these to be divine passives, with God as their implied subject.<sup>101</sup> But the Law is certainly at least *involved* in this action, at least a co-agent with God.<sup>102</sup> As humanity’s supervisory παιδαγωγός (3:24-25), its role was to be the one who actually carried out the imprisoning and guarding, even if God is ultimately the one who assigned the Law to do so.

The Law alone could not provide an inheritance to Abraham’s offspring, but it could work with God, who delivered that inheritance through his promise (cf. 3:18). The Law did not nullify God’s promise (3:17, 21). Rather, together with God, the Law played an important, purposeful, and effective preparatory role in the giving of the promise.<sup>103</sup> As humanity’s παιδαγωγός, metaphorically enslaved to God, the Law successfully carried out the job it was given: to guard the free children of a free father. The Law’s enslavement *to God* as a παιδαγωγός pushes back against those who would see the Law’s exercise of authority in Gal 3:19-25 as only “restrictive and oppressive.”<sup>104</sup>

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<sup>101</sup> E.g., J. Ross Wagner, (“When the Commandment Came,”: The Giving of the Law in Galatians and Romans,” in *Paul and Moses: The Exodus and Sinai Traditions in the Letters of Paul*, ed. Florian Wilk, vol. 11 of *Studies in Education and Religion in Ancient and Pre-Modern History in the Mediterranean and Its Environs* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2021), 73, fn 24), who also reads ἡ γραφή in 3:22 as a metonymy for God, and thus the co-agent of ἐφρουρούμεθα and συγκλειόμενοι. Contra de Boer, who argues that the Law—and *not* God—malevolently confined humanity, which needed to be *liberated* from this captivity (238-42). Martyn makes a similar move, as seen in his paraphrase of Gal 3:23: “Before faith came, we were confined under the Law’s power, imprisoned during the period that lasted until, as God intended, faith was invasively revealed” (361).

<sup>102</sup> So Lull, 486-88.

<sup>103</sup> The purposefulness of the Law’s activity in 3:22 may also encourage us to read a sense of purpose into the preposition εἰς in 3:23 and 3:24, as Paul continues to clarify his explanation of why the Law was given. Many contemporary interpreters—rightfully wary of readings of Paul’s παιδαγωγός metaphor that understand the παιδαγωγός to be an instructor, rather than a guardian—prefer to read εἰς here as temporal: the Law was simply our παιδαγωγός until Christ came (cf. de Boer, 240-42). Paul does not here mean (as many earlier Christians, like Luther and Calvin, assumed he does [de Boer, 240]) that the Law contains instructional material that prepares its readers to understand the coming Messiah. But the Law-as-pαιδαγωγός can still work purposefully without being pedagogical: its imprisoning activity is productive, and helps to accomplish God’s ends, and its own (cf. Moo, 242-43).

<sup>104</sup> De Boer, 241.



But, curiously—as in the epitaphs Sandra Joshel examines where enslaved workers claim a job title but do not indicate whom their work served—God the metaphorical master is de-centered throughout Gal 3:19-25, even as God’s activity is implied alongside the Law’s. Again, Paul likely indicates God’s activity when he writes in the passive voice that the Law “was added because of transgressions” (τῶν παραβάσεων χάριν προσετέθη, 3:19a): God is likely the one who did the “adding.” But this indication is indirect, and Paul follows it by speaking directly about other agents involved in the giving of the Law: angels, who appointed it by the hand of a mediator (Moses?) (διαταγείς δι’ ἀγγέλων ἐν χειρὶ μεσίτου, 3:19c). Paul references God’s prior action when he speaks about “the promises” with which the Law’s activity is consistent (3:19, 21, 22, cf. 3:18), and certainly would not dispute God’s involvement with the revealing of Faith (3:23) and coming of Christ (3:24). The coming of Faith/Christ, after all, makes the Galatians all children of God (3:26). But, again, Paul refers to all this divine activity obliquely.<sup>105</sup> He is circumspect enough that J. Louis Martyn can plausibly argue that Paul intends his reader to be shocked by the complete *absence* of God in the giving of the Law, which was instead instituted by evil angels acting contrary to God’s wishes.<sup>106</sup>

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<sup>105</sup> Wagner, ““When the Commandment Came,”” 70-71. Wagner, it should be noted, argues that with reference to the giving of the Law God’s agency is downplayed, but not with reference to the promises.

<sup>106</sup> Martyn, 364-70. Martyn notes that Paul can easily use active verbs that have God as the subject to narrate God’s promise to Abraham, but only speaks passively about the coming/giving of the Law. “On the basis of these linguistic observations alone,” Martyn hypothesizes, “one could ask whether in writing Galatians Paul anticipates Marcion by suggesting that the Law did not come from the Father of Jesus Christ” (365)! Martyn ultimately rejects this hypothesis when he argues that Paul “attributes two voices to the Law, the promissory voice of the original, Abrahamic Law that speaks for God, and the cursing and enslaving voice of the later-arriving Sinaitic Law that does not speak for God” (368). See also de Boer, 226-34: “Paul’s theological and rhetorical purpose in this passage is precisely to dissociate God from the law” (232). As Moo remarks, however, the question Paul poses and answer he gives in 3:21 (“Is the Law

Based on my above reading of Gal 3:22 with Rom 11:32 I think Martyn is wrong to say that the Law's activity *counters* God's activity here. Even if Paul focuses the reader's attention squarely on the Law's own activity in Gal 3:19-25—to the point that God's activity is veiled—he still presents the Law's agency as aligned with God's. But this curious combination—the Law accomplishing God's work while God's own activity is obscured—suggests something interesting about how God and the Law work non-competitively to accomplish the same end. It is almost an inverse relationship to the relationship Plautus depicts between Lydus the pedagogue and his master Philoxenus. Philoxenus assigns Lydus a task—to guard and to develop his son's character—and then actively impedes it by interfering with Lydus's disciplinary instincts. God assigns the Law a task—to imprison and to guard humanity in preparation for the coming of Faith/Christ—and then helps facilitate its fulfillment by allowing the Law to exercise its role unimpeded. As a metaphorical master God is both less meddlesome and more helpful than Philoxenus precisely because God trusts the Law to act effectively and with integrity of purpose. Contra Martyn, Gal 3:19-25 does not depict a power struggle between the Law-as-παιδαγωγός and God. Instead, the Law shares in God's work and purpose as the Law effectively performs its role as a παιδαγωγός, restraining and disciplining its charge.

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against the promises? Absolutely not!") “are very hard to explain if Paul has just claimed that the law did not come from God” (237).

## 2.4 Conclusion

In Galatians, Paul delineates many things the Law cannot do. But these specific inabilities do not entirely erase the Law's agency. As Paul concedes with his παιδαγωγός metaphor, the Law *can* do other things, and do them effectively and well. Paul may make broader claims about the Law's weakness: if a Law had been given that could do the things Faith did, Faith would not have needed to come (3:21)! But, at least with the παιδαγωγός metaphor we have examined this chapter, Paul does not use slavery imagery to make this broader point about the Law's weakness. Rather, Paul's introduction of a slavery metaphor here helps him to depict the Law's unique *ability*. The Law cannot do the ultimate: it cannot make human beings come alive (ζωοποιῆσαι, 3:21).<sup>107</sup> But it *can*, in cooperation with God, effectively (and temporarily) "imprison" humanity for the purpose of realizing God's promise.

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<sup>107</sup> On Betz's reading, this statement removes the Law's agency altogether! Paul renders the Law "no longer... a subject but only... an object in the process of salvation. It can no longer be taken as God's agent of salvation" (175). But, as we have seen, just because the Law cannot do *one* thing—albeit an important thing—does not mean it is entirely powerless.

### 3. Under Ἐπίτροποι and Οἰκονόμοι

Λέγω δε, ἐφ' ὅσον χρόνον ὁ κληρονόμος νήπιός ἐστιν, οὐδὲν διαφέρει δούλου κύριος πάντων ὄν, ἀλλὰ ὑπὸ ἐπιτρόπους ἐστὶ καὶ οἰκονόμους ἄχρι τῆς προθεσμίας τοῦ πατρός

“What I mean is that heirs, as long as they are minors, are no better than slaves, even though they are masters of all, but they remain under [enslaved] ἐπίτροποι and οἰκονόμοι until the date set by the father” (Galatians 4:1-2).

Paul at first seems to set up Galatians 4:1-11 as a straightforward companion to the section that has come before: he creates a metaphorical scenario that involves the authority of enslaved household managers—this time, ἐπίτροποι and οἰκονόμοι—over free minors. But at the beginning of chapter 4 Paul does not merely *repeat* the point he makes at the end of chapter 3, he modifies it to be more precise about the history of the relationship between the Law and humanity. Like the παιδαγωγός of Gal 3:24-25, the ἐπίτροποι and οἰκονόμοι of 4:2 are depicted as enslaved guardians over free children whose role becomes (or should become) obsolete at a date set by the children’s father: in 3:25, when Faith arrived (ἐλθούσης... τῆς πίστεως); in 4:4, when the “fullness of time” arrived (ἦλθεν τὸ πλήρωμα τοῦ χρόνου). But unlike the singular παιδαγωγός, the ἐπίτροποι and οἰκονόμοι are plural. And unlike the παιδαγωγός, which has the Law as its clear metaphorical referent, the ἐπίτροποι and οἰκονόμοι are more difficult to identify: they include—in some relation to the Law (4:4)—a mysterious new set of characters called τὰ στοιχεῖα τοῦ κόσμου (4:3, 9).

The relationship between humanity and these ἐπίτροποι and οἰκονόμοι is also more complex than the relationship Paul sketches between humanity and the Law-as-παιδαγωγός, involving more complicated dynamics of power. As a παιδαγωγός, the Law,

acting as God’s agent, has clear and divinely sanctioned control over humanity until it appropriately relinquishes this authority at the coming of Faith. But the power of the ἐπίτροποι and οἰκονόμοι over humanity is more ambiguous. The metaphor shifts and cracks along fault lines of power as it develops: humanity begins the metaphor as free heirs under the supervision of ἐπίτροποι and οἰκονόμοι—so far, so expected for readers who have just encountered the παιδαγωγός metaphor. But soon Paul will describe this position ὑπὸ ἐπιτρόπους... καὶ οἰκονόμους (4:2) as itself a kind of enslavement (4:3) from which humanity needed to be redeemed (ἐξαγοράζω) through the coming of Christ (4:5). This is a more dramatic power struggle than Paul depicts at the end of chapter 3, where the παιδαγωγός seems to give up control of humanity without protest or payment. And it produces more dramatic results: by the end of the metaphor humanity is revealed *not* to have been heirs after all, *not* to have been children of the father, but to have been both enslaved and in need of adoption (4:5).<sup>1</sup> And the drama continues, even after the Son and the Spirit have freed enslaved humanity and made us children and heirs of God (4:6-7). The Galatians, as Paul is aghast to discover, are now *returning* to the στοιχεῖα from which Christ has freed them. By wanting to have their men circumcised they seem to “*want* to be enslaved to [the στοιχεῖα] again” (4:9b)! These ἐπίτροποι and οἰκονόμοι are not as eager as the παιδαγωγός to give up control of their charges, and they continue to lure the Galatians back to their grip after Christ has torn them away. Paul insists that

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<sup>1</sup> As many commentators have noted, in fact, while the word ἐπίτροπος can refer to the “guardian of a minor” (e.g., “the tyrant Trypho, ἐπίτροπος of the young Antiochus” in Josephus’s *J.W.* 1.49), there is “no certain instance of the use of οἰκονόμος in the literature of antiquity for one who has charge of the person or estate of a minor” (Longenecker, 162-63). Οἰκονόμοι were typically placed in charge of their master’s *estate*—including, as we will see, other enslaved workers.

these ἐπίτροποι and οἰκονόμοι are ultimately “weak” (ἀσθενῆ) and “pitiful” (πτωχά, 4:9), but their appearance of strength remains enticing to the Galatians—and enough of a real threat that Paul needs to write the letter!

In this chapter I will argue that the social position of enslaved ἐπίτροποι and οἰκονόμοι provides Paul with an appropriately flexible image for depicting the shifting function and power of both the Law and the στοιχεῖα: within a household ἐπίτροποι and οἰκονόμοι were seen as more powerful than παιδαγωγοί, but on Paul’s account the coming of Christ makes these stronger enslaved managers weak. Before I make this argument I will need to account for the addition of the στοιχεῖα to the Law in this slavery metaphor: just how does Paul understand the Law and the στοιχεῖα to be related? Then I will proceed to examine the historical backdrop of the ἐπίτροποι and οἰκονόμοι metaphor Paul uses to characterize the Law and the στοιχεῖα: how did enslaved household managers figure in the imaginations of both the elite and the enslaved? I contend that for both groups these managers were seen to occupy a kind of middle ground between enslaved and free—a position that gave them authority over enslaved subordinates but left them vulnerable to the same kind of punishments they meted out. So, too, the Law and the στοιχεῖα—as enslaved ἐπίτροποι and οἰκονόμοι—have the power to enslave, but they remain weak compared to the God who liberates their enslaved subordinates.

### ***3.1 Enslaved to the Στοιχεῖα, Under the Law***

#### **3.1.1 Introduction to the Law and the Στοιχεῖα**

I have set for myself two major tasks when examining each of the slavery metaphors Paul uses to talk about the Law: 1) to establish that each metaphor *does*, in fact, refer to the Law, and 2) to examine the historical background of each specific slavery metaphor to shed light on how Paul uses each one to make his argument(s) about the Law’s agency. The first of these tasks was easy enough for Paul’s παιδαγωγός metaphor in Gal 3:24-25. Paul straightforwardly tells the reader, “The Law was our παιδαγωγός” (ὁ νόμος παιδαγωγὸς ἡμῶν γέγονεν, 3:24). But it is more difficult in this chapter and will need considerably more space to accomplish. Paul’s use of metaphor takes a surprising turn here. Instead of clearly referring to the *Law* when he brings in the image of ἐπίτροποι and οἰκονόμοι as temporary guardians over humanity, Paul instead explains to the reader: “so also (οὕτως καί) we, when we were children, were enslaved under τὰ στοιχεῖα τοῦ κόσμου” (4:3). What has happened here? Has Paul’s argument turned away from the Law and toward new ruling entities called the στοιχεῖα? Some interpreters would say yes: Paul sets up a kind of two-track system in Gal 3 and 4 in which—before the coming of Christ—Jews were guarded/imprisoned under the Law and Gentiles were guarded/imprisoned under these στοιχεῖα.<sup>2</sup> The Law, on this reading, was Israel’s παιδαγωγός; the στοιχεῖα were the nations’ ἐπίτροποι and οἰκονόμοι. On the contrary, I maintain that the ἐπίτροποι and οἰκονόμοι image need not exclude the Law,

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<sup>2</sup> Matthew Thiessen, *Paul and the Gentile Problem* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2016), 155-56; Eduard Schweizer, “Slaves of the Elements and Worshipers of Angels: Gal 4:3, 9 and Col 2:8, 18, 20,” *JBL* 107 (1988): 455-468, 466.

even if it also includes the στοιχεῖα in a way that the παιδαγωγός image does not. The Law, after all, has not entirely disappeared from sight in 4:1-11. To explain how Christ free those who were once under the στοιχεῖα, Paul tells the reader that “God sent his Son, born of a woman, born *under the Law* (ὑπὸ νόμον), in order to redeem *those under the Law* (τοὺς ὑπὸ νόμον)” (4:4-5). The Law is clearly not the *only* thing Paul represents with his ἐπίτροποι καὶ οἰκονόμοι metaphor—this is an image of plurality, after all. But it still seems to be numbered among this plurality of enslaved guardians, along with the στοιχεῖα.<sup>3</sup>

Who or what are these στοιχεῖα? The word στοιχεῖον can mean many different things: numbers, the letters in the alphabet, anything rudimentary or elementary.<sup>4</sup> Historically many readers of Galatians have understood Paul to be using στοιχεῖα as a shorthand for “the fundamental components of pre-Christian living as it contrasts to fullness of life in Christ,”<sup>5</sup> as Neil Martin puts it. But there is something of an emerging consensus in NT scholarship that Paul actually uses the phrase τὰ στοιχεῖα τοῦ κόσμου to refer to the four classical elements of the physical world: earth, water, air, and fire.<sup>6</sup> The

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<sup>3</sup> So also de Boer, *Galatians*, 256-61; Martyn, 387-89, *Galatians*; Ronald Y. K. Fung, *The Epistle to the Galatians*, NICNT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1988), 181; Hays, “Galatians,” 282; Moo, *Galatians*, 258; Longenecker, *Galatians*, 165.

<sup>4</sup> BAGD, 946.

<sup>5</sup> Neil Martin, “Returning to the *stoicheia tou kosmou*: Enslavement to the Physical Elements in Galatians 4.3 and 9?,” *JSNT* 40 (2018): 434-452, 449. See also Belleville, 64-69; Matera, *Galatians*, 149-50. Longenecker (*Galatians*, 165-66) and Fung (181, 190) understand the στοιχεῖα to denote specifically the “elemental teachings” of the *Law*.

<sup>6</sup> Moo agrees that this understanding of τὰ στοιχεῖα τοῦ κόσμου as the four elements has become the predominant reading of the phrase in Galatians, largely for lexical reasons: “This was by far the dominant meaning of the word στοιχεῖα in Paul’s day” (*Galatians*, 262). Examples of studies that either argue or assume τὰ στοιχεῖα τοῦ κόσμου refers to the four elements include: Martinus C. de Boer, “The Meaning of the Phrase τὰ στοιχεῖα τοῦ κόσμου in Galatians,” *NTS* 53 (2007): 204-224; de Boer, *Galatians*, 252-56; Martyn, *Galatians*, 393-406; Schweizer, “Slaves of the Elements,” 466-67; Moo, *Galatians*, 262; Hays, “Galatians,” 282-83; Thielman, *From Plight to Solution*, 80-83; Josef Blinzler, “Lexikalisches zu dem



identification of the στοιχεῖα as such in Paul is certainly not settled,<sup>7</sup> but for the purposes of this chapter we will assume that τὰ στοιχεῖα τοῦ κόσμου in Galatians 4 does, in fact, refer to the four elements.

A significant problem arises as soon as when we make this assumption, however. Paul draws close connections between the στοιχεῖα and the Law in Galatians, and it seems strange that he would link the Law with earth, water, air, and fire. Martinus de Boer, who agrees that Paul here uses τὰ στοιχεῖα τοῦ κόσμου to refer to the four elements, lays out these connections between the Law and the στοιχεῖα clearly: in two sequential and parallel passages Paul describes life under the Law (ὑπὸ νόμον, 3:23) and life under the στοιχεῖα (ὑπὸ τὰ στοιχεῖα τοῦ κόσμου, 4:3) as a kind of imprisonment or slavery in which “we” were once held captive. Paul uses similar images to describe this enslavement: both the Law (as παιδαγωγός, 3:24, 25) and the στοιχεῖα (as ἐπίτροποι and οἰκονόμοι, 4:2) acted like guardians over minor children, restricting their freedom until their time of maturity.<sup>8</sup> But neither the Law nor the στοιχεῖα could do what Christ does: the Law was unable to deliver life or righteousness (3:21); the στοιχεῖα are “weak and

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Terminus τὰ στοιχεῖα τοῦ κόσμου bei Paulus,” *Studiorum Paulinorum Congressus Internationalis Catholicus* (Rome: Pontifical Biblical Institute, 1961), 429-43.

<sup>7</sup> Other studies that dissent from the predominant reading include Clinton E. Arnold, “Returning to the Domain of the Powers: *Stoicheia* as Evil Spirits in Galatians 4:3, 9,” *NovT* 38 (1996): 55-76; and Emma Wasserman, *Apocalypse as Holy War: Divine Politics and Polemics in the Letters of Paul*, AYBRL (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2018). Wasserman is sympathetic to those who read τὰ στοιχεῖα τοῦ κόσμου as the four elements in Gal 4, but ultimately concludes that Paul uses the phrase to refer to “parts or lesser components of the cosmos”—specifically, the “heavenly bodies” that the Galatians once worshipped as “gentile gods,” and which control the movement of the “days, months, seasons, and years” that the Galatians are currently tempted to observe through keeping the Law (4:10, 152-54). Here Wasserman, as we will see, agrees with de Boer that it is precisely at the point of calendrical observances that Paul connects the Galatians’ idolatrous, pagan past with their potential future under the Jewish Law.

<sup>8</sup> De Boer, “The Meaning of the Phrase τὰ στοιχεῖα τοῦ κόσμου in Galatians,” 209-213.

pitiful (ἀσθενῆ καὶ πτωχά)” (4:9).<sup>9</sup> In Galatians the Law and the στοιχεῖα are bound together. Their connection is so close that de Boer can plausibly insist that for Paul “existence ὑπὸ τὰ στοιχεῖα τοῦ κόσμου was tantamount to existence ὑπὸ νόμον.”<sup>10</sup> Paul can even substitute one for the other, as in Gal 4:3 and 5: “we” were *enslaved* under the στοιχεῖα, but *redeemed* from under the Law. Paul seems to use the Law and the στοιχεῖα almost synonymously here.

Indeed, as de Boer explains, “it is precisely the equation of being ὑπὸ τὰ στοιχεῖα with being ὑπὸ νόμον that makes Paul’s introduction of τὰ στοιχεῖα τοῦ κόσμου into his argument peculiar and perplexing.”<sup>11</sup> If Neil Martin is right—if Paul uses τὰ στοιχεῖα τοῦ κόσμου to refer to the fundamental features of life before Christ—it becomes easier to draw Paul’s line between the Law and the στοιχεῖα: Paul’s reference to the στοιχεῖα becomes “a reference to the ‘nuts and bolts’ of religious belief and practice outside Christ for both Jews and pagans.”<sup>12</sup> But if de Boer and others are right—if Paul uses τὰ στοιχεῖα τοῦ κόσμου to refer to the four classical elements—then what is the connection between them and the Law? To try to answer this question, according to de Boer, is to tackle “*the crucial exegetical issue presented by the introduction of the reference to the [sic] τὰ στοιχεῖα τοῦ κόσμου.*”<sup>13</sup> Let us briefly survey two important attempts to trace the line in Paul’s logic between the Law and the στοιχεῖα, both of which agree that Paul uses τὰ στοιχεῖα τοῦ κόσμου to refer to the four classical elements.

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<sup>9</sup> De Boer, “The Meaning of the Phrase τὰ στοιχεῖα τοῦ κόσμου in Galatians,” 215.

<sup>10</sup> De Boer, “The Meaning of the Phrase τὰ στοιχεῖα τοῦ κόσμου in Galatians,” 213.

<sup>11</sup> De Boer, “The Meaning of the Phrase τὰ στοιχεῖα τοῦ κόσμου in Galatians,” 213.

<sup>12</sup> N. Martin, “Returning to the *stoicheia tou kosμου*,” 449.

<sup>13</sup> De Boer, “The Meaning of the Phrase τὰ στοιχεῖα τοῦ κόσμου in Galatians,” 213, emphasis original.

J. Louis Martyn agrees with De Boer that the στοιχεῖα and the Law are “at the minimum ... functionally parallel entities: both enslaved,<sup>14</sup> and God’s sending of Christ has effected liberation from both.”<sup>15</sup> But Martyn goes further: on his account, Paul identifies the Law *as one of* the στοιχεῖα.<sup>16</sup> Martyn, as usual, situates Paul’s argument within a detailed reconstruction of the three-way conversation between the Galatians, the Jewish-Christian “Teachers,” and Paul. Martyn suggests that these Teachers were preaching to the Galatians “the Jewish view of Gentiles as people who ignorantly worship the visible parts of creation, and they may have spoken in this connection of the Gentile tendency to confuse the elements with God.”<sup>17</sup> Wisdom of Solomon, for example, calls foolish those idolaters who identify as gods “either fire or wind or swift air, or the circle of the stars, or turbulent water, or the luminaries of heaven” (13:2).<sup>18</sup> Martyn uses this passage from Wisdom of Solomon to broaden the category of στοιχεῖα to include the stars and other heavenly bodies in addition to the four classical elements. And so, on Martyn’s account, Philo and Josephus also condemn Gentile worship of the στοιχεῖα when they praise Abraham for rising above the astrological worship of the Chaldeans to declare that “God, the creator of the universe, is one” (*Ant.* 1.155-156).<sup>19</sup> Martyn suggests that this strand of Jewish apologetic centers specifically on the role of the στοιχεῖα in the

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<sup>14</sup> Martyn’s wording is tantalizingly ambiguous here: “enslaved” could either be an active indicative verb that describes what the Law did (i.e., it *enslaved* someone or something else), or a passive participle that functions as an adjective to describe the Law (i.e., it *is enslaved*). In the context of Martyn’s larger argument he clearly intends the former; I, of course, argue that *both* senses of the word “enslaved” apply to the Law in Galatians 3-4.

<sup>15</sup> Martyn, *Galatians*, 393.

<sup>16</sup> Martyn, 393-4.

<sup>17</sup> Martyn, 399.

<sup>18</sup> Martyn, 397. Wisdom of Solomon does not use the *word* στοιχεῖα to name the elements in this passage, although, as Martyn notes, the word does appear in Wis 7:17 and 19:18.

<sup>19</sup> Martyn, 399; see also *Abr.* 69-70 (Martyn 398-9).

changing of the seasons: the “astral elements” are revered by the Gentiles for “signaling the seasons [they] celebrate ... as holy,” but they should really be understood as “servants of the God of Israel who made them and who gave them a role in relation to his holy Law.”<sup>20</sup> That is, the astral elements “shift the seasons” in obedience to God, who established “the true feasts” in the calendar laid out in the Law (cf. Gal 4:10, where Paul chastises the Galatians for observing “special days and months and seasons and years”).<sup>21</sup> The “Teachers” in Galatia, on Martyn’s account, think that Paul has failed to orient the Galatians to the στοιχεῖα correctly because he has excluded from his proclamation the feasts prescribed by the Law, leaving the Galatians in a “tragic” state of idolatry.<sup>22</sup>

In Martyn’s reconstruction, Paul agrees with the Teachers that “in their past life the Galatians worshiped the στοιχεῖα as gods.”<sup>23</sup> But when Paul responds to the Teachers in Galatians he clarifies and doubles down on his insistence that the Gentile Galatians should *not* take up acts of Law observance like the celebration of feasts according to Israel’s calendar. Idolatrous veneration of the στοιχεῖα is a problem, but it is not a problem limited to Gentiles, nor can it be solved by taking up the Law as a sign of devotion to the God who created the στοιχεῖα. “On the contrary,” according to Martyn, Paul “says that prior to Christ’s advent all human beings”—both Jew and Gentile—“revered the elements.” Following the Law does not guard against idolatry of the στοιχεῖα; rather, it *facilitates* idolatry of the στοιχεῖα since Paul “somehow” includes the

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<sup>20</sup> Martyn, 399.

<sup>21</sup> Martyn, 399. See also Wasserman, *Apocalypse as Holy War*, 154.

<sup>22</sup> Martyn, 399-400.

<sup>23</sup> Martyn, 396.

Law among the elements.<sup>24</sup> Martyn teases out this “somehow” by suggesting that if they read the letter with “patience” and “extreme care” the Galatians will realize that Paul understands τὰ στοιχεῖα τοῦ κόσμου to be representative “pairs of opposites.” According to Philo, who draws on Pythagorean tradition, the four elements can be arranged in various opposing pairs: air opposes earth in density; water opposes earth in wetness (*Her.* 134-135, 146).<sup>25</sup> In Galatians, Paul (on Martyn’s account) applies this tradition of reasoning about the physical elements to “the elements of religious distinction.”<sup>26</sup> Air opposes fire, water opposes earth; so also Jew opposes Greek, slave opposes free, male opposes female (cf. Gal 3:28). But in Christ these and other distinctions—like the distinction between “Law” and “Not-Law”—are nullified. The κόσμος and all of its pairs of opposites have been crucified (cf. Gal 6:14).<sup>27</sup>

De Boer’s own solution, building on Martyn’s, also assumes that the στοιχεῖα are the “beings not gods by nature (τοῖς φύσει μὴ οὐσι θεοῖς)” to which the Galatians are “returning” (4:8-9). That is, de Boer suggests, Paul uses τὰ στοιχεῖα τοῦ κόσμου as a metonym for the Galatians’ pre-Christian religious practices.<sup>28</sup> So how can Paul claim that “turn[ing] to the observance of the Law is to *return* (ἐπιστρέφετε πάλιν) to the veneration of the στοιχεῖα and thus to the gods they had previous worshiped”?<sup>29</sup> De Boer argues that “the *only* relevant point of contact in [Gal 4:1-11] between the observance of the Law and the veneration of τὰ στοιχεῖα τοῦ κόσμου... is in the *calendrical*

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<sup>24</sup> Martyn, 400-401.

<sup>25</sup> Martyn, 403-404.

<sup>26</sup> Martyn, 405-406.

<sup>27</sup> Martyn, 405-406.

<sup>28</sup> De Boer, “The Meaning of the Phrase τὰ στοιχεῖα τοῦ κόσμου in Galatians,” 221.

<sup>29</sup> De Boer, 215, emphasis original.

observances mentioned in 4.10.”<sup>30</sup> De Boer, that is, agrees with Martyn that the Teachers in Galatia understand the στοιχεῖα to be involved in directing religious calendars, but de Boer differs in suggesting that through his use of the phrase τὰ στοιχεῖα τοῦ κόσμου Paul takes the Teachers on at precisely this point. According to de Boer, Paul insists that any time-keeping of this sort—whether Jewish or Gentile—effectively ends the time-keeper’s relationship to Christ.<sup>31</sup> The coming of Christ was also the coming of the “fullness of time” (Gal 4:4), and the “revelation of Christ” (cf. 1:12) was accompanied by the revelation of “God’s own (apocalyptic) ‘time-keeping scheme.’”<sup>32</sup> Ultimately de Boer agrees with Martyn’s larger reading of Galatians. He concludes his article by amplifying “Martyn’s insight into ‘the central question of the Galatian letter: What time is it?’”<sup>33</sup> But de Boer’s specific proposal to connect the Law to the στοιχεῖα in Gal 4:1-11 has an advantage of simplicity that Martyn’s lacks: everyone in Christian Galatia is having the same, narrower conversation about calendrical observances in the Law.

Both of these proposals, among others,<sup>34</sup> assume that the phrase τὰ στοιχεῖα τοῦ κόσμου carries a negative connotation among everyone involved in the Galatian

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<sup>30</sup> De Boer, 222, emphasis original. De Boer also includes in a footnote here: “There may have been other [points of contact], but Paul ignores them,” fn 68.

<sup>31</sup> De Boer, 222.

<sup>32</sup> De Boer, 224.

<sup>33</sup> De Boer, 224, citing Martyn, *Galatians*, 23.

<sup>34</sup> Other interpreters who argue that, 1) the στοιχεῖα are the four elements, and 2) everyone in Christian Galatia negatively associates the στοιχεῖα with gentile idolatry, include Johannes Woyke, “Nochmals zu den ‘schwachen und unfähigen Elementen’ (Gal 4.9): Paulus, Philo und die στοιχεῖα τοῦ κόσμου,” *NTS* 54 (2008): 221-234; John M. G. Barclay, *Paul and the Gift* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2015), 408-10; Moo, *Galatians*, 271. Betz perhaps goes furthest in his speculation about the negative connotations of the στοιχεῖα for Paul’s audience. He suggests that Hellenistic Jews in the first century would have understood the στοιχεῖα as “demonic entities of cosmic proportions and astral powers which were hostile towards man [sic] .... The common understanding was that man [sic] is hopelessly and helplessly engulfed and oppressed by these forces.” Even gentiles, Betz argues, would have understood that “under these conditions [i.e., under the oppressive reign of the στοιχεῖα] life is not life at all but a daily death,” and so they developed “cultic measures... to soothe and pacify [these] demonic forces” (*Galatians*, 205).

churches: the so-called “agitators,” the Galatians themselves, and Paul. Specifically, they assume that the agitators in Galatia have been echoing to the Galatians a common Second Temple Jewish apologetic that condemns Gentiles for worshiping the created elements instead of their creator, and that these agitators have presented Law-observance as a way to turn away from the στοιχεῖα and toward God. We find especially good evidence for this view in two sources: 1) Wisdom of Solomon 13, which calls “foolish” those people who suppose that “either fire or wind or swift air, or the circle of the stars, or turbulent water, or the luminaries of heaven were the gods that rule the world” (13:1-2), and 2) Philo’s *On the Contemplative Life*, which links members of the Greek pantheon to specific elements through similarities in their names: fire is called “Hephaestus” (Ἡφαιστος) because “it is kindled (ἐξάπτω),” air is called “Hera” (Ἥρα) because “it is lifted up (αἴρω),” etc. (*Contempl.* 3-4 [Colson, LCL]).<sup>35</sup> If the agitators in Galatia are teaching the Galatians similar things, so the argument goes, the Galatians seem to have acknowledged that their previous religious practices involved the worship of the στοιχεῖα, and they have agreed to adopt practices of the Law in order to rid themselves completely of idolatry. Paul’s response is then shocking to all of them. He insists that the Law does not relieve the problem of στοιχεῖα-worship; it exacerbates it! Somehow, following the Law makes the Galatians idolaters of the elements again.

This reading, while attractive, has two major difficulties. First, as de Boer himself admits, it makes Paul’s response to the Galatians somewhat unconvincing. How could

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<sup>35</sup> This idea that the names of the Greek gods correspond to the names of the four στοιχεῖα is not unique to Philo. As Emma Wasserman points out, it probably originated in the fifth century BCE with Empedocles’s *Fragment B6* (“Philosophical Cosmology and Religious Polemic: The ‘Worship of Creation’ in the Writings of Philo of Alexandria and the Wisdom of Solomon,” *JSP* 31 [2021]: 6-28, 10).

observing the Law lead to idolatry of the elements? De Boer's own argument is carefully limited in scope. He finds "the *only* relevant point of contact in the passage between the observance of the Law and the veneration of τὰ στοιχεῖα τοῦ κόσμου" to be at the point of calendrical observances, which Paul mentions in 4:10. The Law prescribes its own calendrical observances, and the στοιχεῖα are linked to changing seasons and pagan festivals.<sup>36</sup> But it does not seem likely that this argument—brief as it is—would be convincing either to the Galatians or to their agitators. Paul mentions these calendrical observances almost in passing and never brings them up again in the letter. If they are the only link between the Law and the στοιχεῖα, they seem to be a flimsy one, and they are unlikely to persuade the Galatian men to avoid circumcision, a practice of the Law with which Paul is far more concerned in the letter.<sup>37</sup>

Second, this reading ignores the many times Philo and Wisdom of Solomon portray the four elements positively as God's servants, used both to reward those who follow God's commands and to punish the lawless. Philo and Wisdom of Solomon are clear: no one should worship the elements as gods. But there is a great deal of distance between idolatry and disregard or outright rejection. Philo and Wisdom of Solomon encourage a healthy respect for the elements as instruments of a good and powerful God. What is more, they set up a triangular relationship between the στοιχεῖα, the Law, and

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<sup>36</sup> De Boer, "The Meaning of the Phrase τὰ στοιχεῖα τοῦ κόσμου in Galatians," 217, 222.

<sup>37</sup> Woyke agrees with this criticism of de Boer's proposal: "Überdies wird eine Interpretation von Gal 4.3, 9, die den Fokus fast ausschließlich auf den kontingenten Bereich praktischer Frömmigkeitsausprägung wie eben Kalenderfragen legt, kaum der grundsätzlichen theologischen Art und Weise gerecht, in der Paulus dort von den στοιχεῖα redet" ("Nochmals zu den 'schwachen und unfähigen Elementen,'" 224).



God: God reveals his will through the Law, and those who follow or transgress the Law are rewarded or punished through the activity of the στοιχεῖα.

Taking into account this fuller evidence from Philo and Wisdom of Solomon, we need to imagine a different conversation about the Law and the στοιχεῖα between the Galatians, their agitators, and Paul. It is entirely possible to imagine that the agitators in Galatia are not teaching the Galatians to renounce their previous idolatry of the στοιχεῖα—they have, after all, already turned to Christ!—but instructing them about a broader, more elementary connection between the Law and the στοιχεῖα and encouraging them to adopt Law-observance so that their everyday dealings with nature’s elements might go well. If so, Paul’s intervention into the conversation is not to reconfigure this relationship between the Law and the elements, but to insist that the coming of Christ has brought about a new creation (6:15) in which God no longer subjects humanity to the joint guardianship of the Law and the elements.

### **3.1.2 The Law and the Στοιχεῖα in Wisdom of Solomon**

Many interpreters of Galatians cite Wisdom of Solomon 13 as evidence that Second Temple Jews linked the στοιχεῖα to Gentile idolatry: Wisdom here mocks the “foolish” (μάταιοι) who “supposed that either fire or wind or swift air, or the circle of the stars, or turbulent waters, or the luminaries of heaven were the gods that rule the world” (ἢ πῦρ ἢ πνεῦμα ἢ ταχινὸν ἀέρα ἢ κύκλον ἄστρον ἢ βίαιον ὕδωρ ἢ φωστῆρας οὐρανοῦ

πρυτάνεις κόσμου θεοῦς ἐνόμισαν, 13:1-2).<sup>38</sup> But among interpreters of Galatians less attention has been paid to the *positive* function of the στοιχεῖα in Wisdom, and specifically to the way in which Wisdom links the activity of the στοιχεῖα to knowledge of God. Even in Wis 13 the στοιχεῖα are fundamentally good: they are the creation of God the “artisan” (τεκνίτης), whose beauty and power is reflected in the (lesser) beauty and power of the στοιχεῖα (13:1, 3). The Gentiles’ temptation to worship the στοιχεῖα is understandable, though still inexcusable (13:8), *because* the στοιχεῖα are the Lord’s delightful masterpieces (cf. 13:3). Wisdom 13 argues from the lesser to the greater: the στοιχεῖα, which are great and beautiful, are signposts pointing to their even greater and more beautiful creator (13:5). Idolatry occurs when people fix their gaze on these signs and refuse to follow them to God. And idolatry, according to Wisdom, is “the beginning and cause and end of every evil” (παντὸς ἀρχὴ κακοῦ καὶ αἰτία καὶ πέρας ἐστίν, 14:27). Those who are to blame for this great evil, however, are the *people* who idolize, not the things that are idolized, like the στοιχεῖα. Furthermore, idolatry of the στοιχεῖα, while foolish, is not as bad as idolatry that involves worship of “the works of human hands” (13:10), i.e., statues of idols with human or animal likenesses (13:10-15). Those who idolize the στοιχεῖα, Wisdom concedes, “are little to be blamed” (ὅμως ἐπὶ τούτοις

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<sup>38</sup> E.g., Martyn, *Galatians*, 397-98; de Boer, “The Meaning of the Phrase τὰ στοιχεῖα τοῦ κόσμου in Galatians,” 219; Hays, “Galatians,” 283. The anonymous author of Wisdom of Solomon was probably, like Philo, a Hellenized Jew living in Alexandria, who seems to have shared with Philo an impulse to make Israel’s traditions intelligible within a Hellenistic philosophical worldview. Both share an interest in “binding together creation and Sinai, and so cosmos and Mosaic Law, cosmos and revelation” (Luca Mazinghi, *Wisdom*, trans. Michael Tate, IECOT [Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 2019], 57). Philo takes great pains to show how the Mosaic Law is in harmony with what Mazinghi labels the “Stoic” concept of natural law, but, in fact, represents this natural law better than any other human legal code could. Wisdom of Solomon is less interested in this apologetic approach; it is addressed to fellow Jews who do not need to be convinced of the superiority of the Mosaic Law.

μέμψις ἐστὶν ὀλίγη) for their idolatry (13:6), even if they should not be excused of it (13:8). The στοιχεῖα, after all, were created directly by *God*. They are living and active, encouraging human beings to worship their common creator. But human-crafted idols are “lifeless thing[s]” (ἀψύχος, 13:17), “weak” (ἀσθενής, 3:17) and “dead” (νεκρός, 13:18), making their worshippers “miserable” (ταλαίπωρος, 13:10). Wisdom reserves its harshest vitriol for people who worship their own creation; it sympathizes—up to a point—with those who worship God’s.

In fact, according to Wisdom, the στοιχεῖα do more than just point human beings to the worship of God. When we examine the whole of the book, not just chapter 13, we find that Wisdom considers God’s creation—and specifically the στοιχεῖα—to be a key means by which God acts to save his wise, Law-observant people. The author claims that “wisdom”—a possible metonym for the Law (cf. Sir 24:23-29)<sup>39</sup>—has given him “unerring knowledge of what exists, to know the structure of the world and the activity of the στοιχεῖα (ἐνέργεια στοιχείων)” (7:17-22). And throughout the book he shares with the reader his insights into the providential workings of the στοιχεῖα in Israel’s past and future. Consider Wisdom 5, which depicts the scene of God’s final judgment. To avenge the righteous, Wisdom claims, God “will arm all creation (κτίσις) to repel his enemies” (5:17). Lightning, hailstones, the raging of the sea, “a mighty wind”—all these elements (although not here specifically *named* “στοιχεῖα”) “will join with [the Lord] to fight against his frenzied foes” (5:20-23).

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<sup>39</sup> See also Luca Mazzinghi, “Law of Nature and Light of the Law in the Book of Wisdom (Wis 18:4c),” in *Studies in the Book of Wisdom*, ed. Géza G. Xeravits and József Zsengellér (Leiden: Brill, 2010), 37-59.

Curiously, Wisdom ascribes a kind of shared agency to this promised “lay[ing] waste” of “the whole earth.” “Lawlessness” (ἀνομία) and “evildoing” (κακοπραγία) are also agents of destruction; it is because of them that God will use the elements of creation (5:23) to punish the earth. To avoid being caught up in this destruction, Wisdom warns, the kings and judges of the earth must consider themselves “servants of [God’s] kingdom” and “keep the Law” (6:4),<sup>40</sup> humbling themselves before the God who rules creation.

Wisdom also argues that creation dramatically joined in God’s judgment and salvation once before: in the Exodus, the story of which occupies the entire second half of this treatise (chapters 10-19). Wisdom understands the ten plagues brought upon Egypt to be the unusual activity of the elements in service of God. The author of Wisdom notices, for example, that in the seventh plague God sent a storm of thunder, hail, and *fire* (16:16, cf. Ex 9:23-24). The element fire does not usually accompany the element water in a storm; water, as Wisdom reminds the reader, usually “quenches all things,” and especially fire (Wis 16:17). In the seventh plague, however, “the fire had still greater effect” when it mingled with water (16:17), terrifying the “ungodly” (ἀσεβής, 16:16) and “Lawless” (ἄνομος, 17:2) Egyptians so that “they might know that they were being pursued by the judgment of God” (16:18).

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<sup>40</sup> Maurice Gilbert (“‘La vostra sovranità viene dal Signore’ (Sap 6,3): ambivalenza del potere politico nella tradizione sapienziale,” *RStB* 18 [2006]: 117-132) suggests that Wis 6:4 must refer *only* to a kind of natural law if it expects gentile kings to abide by this law. Mazzinghi however, argues that the “Law” (νόμος) in 6:4 must at least *also* allude to the “Mosaic Law” because “the Book of Wisdom is wholly addressed to those within the Jewish community of Alexandria” (“Law of Nature and Light of the Law,” 40).

Each time it narrates a plague against Egypt, Wisdom sets up a corresponding antithesis to show how God protected and provided for the people of Israel with the same means he used to punish Egypt. The antithesis of fire’s unusual activity in the seventh plague, according to Wisdom, was fire’s unusual activity in the cooking and eating of manna in the wilderness. Wisdom understands manna, which fell with dew in the night (cf. Ex 16:13-14 Num 11:9), to be similar to “snow and ice” (Wis 16:22, cf. Ex 16:14): easy to melt in the heat of the sun (Wis 16:27, cf. Ex 16:21). But Wisdom also notices that the Israelites are able to cook—presumably with fire—this frail, icy manna: the manna can be boiled and baked (Ex 16:23, Num 11:8) and made into cakes (Num 11:8). How can “snow and ice with[stand] fire without melting” (Wis 16:22)? To feed “the righteous” (16:23), and to remind them of how God destroyed the crops of their enemies in the seventh plague (16:22), the element fire “forgot its native power” (16:23). In the ordinary course of the elements’ activity, water beats fire, and fire beats ice. But to punish Egypt and to save Israel the elements interrupt their cosmic game of “rock, paper, scissors” and change the rules: fire becomes even stronger when mixed with the waters of Egypt’s storms, and it becomes weak to protect the icy manna that feeds Israel in the wilderness. Or, as Wisdom puts it, “creation, serving [God] who made it, exerts itself to punish the unrighteous, and in kindness relaxes on behalf of those who trust in [God]” (ἡ γὰρ κτίσις σοὶ τῷ ποιήσαντι ὑπηρετοῦσα ἐπιτείνεται εἰς κόλασιν κατὰ τῶν ἀδίκων καὶ ἀνίεται εἰς εὐεργεσίαν ὑπὲρ τῶν ἐπὶ σοὶ πεποιθότων, 16:24).

Thus far—outside of chapter 13, at least—Wisdom of Solomon has narrated the activity of the στοιχεῖα in the Exodus without using the *word* στοιχεῖα (or στοιχεῖον). But

at its conclusion Wisdom summarizes the story of the Exodus as follows: “For the στοιχεῖα changed places with one another, as on a harp the notes vary the nature of the rhythm, while each note remains the same” (δι’ ἑαυτῶν γὰρ τὰ στοιχεῖα μεθαρμοζόμενα, ὥσπερ ἐν ψαλτηρίῳ φθόγγοι τοῦ ῥυθμοῦ τὸ ὄνομα διαλλάσσουσιν, πάντοτε μένοντα ἤχῳ, 19:18). This musical analogy is difficult to follow. Luca Mazzinghi suggests one plausible option for understanding it: perhaps the contraction and expansion of the στοιχεῖα (as in 16:24) is like the varying length of notes in a musical piece: a C is a C, whether it is held for the length of an eighth note or a whole note. But the length of that note determines its particular impact, and contributes to the shape of the musical piece as a whole.<sup>41</sup> So fire is always fire, but it varies in its intensity and strength, becoming strong to punish Egypt, and weak to preserve Israel. Or perhaps, as David Winston and Thomas H. Tobin suggest, the image refers to transposition: when a song changes key, each note within it becomes a different absolute pitch, but the intervals between each note remain the same, and the shape of the melody as a whole is preserved. Move a song up a whole step and a C becomes a D, but it retains its same function within the transposed melody.<sup>42</sup> So fire becomes like water when it rains down from the Egyptian sky, but it retains its constant function, within the providence of God, to punish the wicked. In any event, the image here seems to involve the relationship of parts to a whole: the στοιχεῖα can each move and morph in dramatic ways to bring about the whole of God’s judgment and salvation. In the hands of God they can be played as God wills: fire, while remaining

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<sup>41</sup> Mazzinghi, *Wisdom*, 477.

<sup>42</sup> David Winston, “Wisdom of Solomon,” rev. Thomas H. Tobin, *The HarperCollins Study Bible Fully Revised and Updated: New Revised Standard Version, with the Apocryphal/Deuterocanonical Books*, ed. Harold W. Attridge et al. (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 2006), 1377.

fire, can “retain its normal power, even in water” (πῦρ ἴσχυεν ἐν ὕδατι τῆς ἰδίας δυνάμεως); water, while remaining water, can “forg[e]t its fire-quenching nature” (ὕδωρ τῆς σβεστικῆς φύσεως ἐπελανθάνετο, 19:20). All things—and especially the στοιχεῖα—work together to “exalt” and “glorify” God’s people, a people “through whom the imperishable light of the Law [is] to be given to the world” (δι’ ὧν ἤμελλεν τὸ ἄφθαρτον νόμου φῶς τῷ αἰῶνι δίδοσθαι, 18:4).

### 3.1.3 The Law and the Στοιχεῖα in Philo

Philo, like Wisdom of Solomon, links together Law and κόσμος and considers the στοιχεῖα to be fundamental pieces of the κόσμος. Philo often slides between talking about observance of the Law and virtue more generally when he describes the reaction of the στοιχεῖα to human behavior. As we will see, for example, God uses the στοιχεῖα to punish both the “impious (ἀσεβεῖς)” in Sodom and Gomorrah (*Mos.* 2.57 [Colson, LCL]) and those who commit “crimes against the Law (παρὰ νόμῳ)” by rebelling against Moses in the wilderness (*Mos.* 2.277). Scholars of Philo often point out that Philo seems both to depend on and to modify Stoic ideas of natural law<sup>43</sup>—or, more precisely, according to Ellen Birnbaum and John Dillon, ideas of natural law that had emerged from “a blending of Platonic, Stoic, and Pythagorean ideas” into an “intellectual conglomeration [that] has come to be known as Middle Platonism.”<sup>44</sup> Philo agrees with

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<sup>43</sup> Mazzinghi, “Law of Nature and Light of the Law,” 48-57; John W. Martens, *One God, One Law: Philo of Alexandria on the Mosaic and Greco-Roman Law* (Leiden: Brill, 2003), 75-98; Samuel Sandmel, *Philo’s Place in Judaism: A Study of Conceptions of Abraham in Jewish Literature* (Cincinnati: Hebrew Union College Press, 1956), 225-228.

<sup>44</sup> Ellen Birnbaum and John Dillon, *Philo of Alexandria: On the Life of Abraham: Introduction, Translation, and Commentary*, PACS 6 (Leiden: Brill, 2021), 63.

Stoic/Middle Platonic thinkers that nature’s law is the ultimate guide to prudent living: understanding how one’s own nature fits into the “cosmic order” of nature writ large “guides people into reasonable and virtuous lives.”<sup>45</sup> But, as John W. Martens argues, Philo’s understanding of God’s involvement in nature’s law sets him apart from other Stoic/Middle Platonic thinkers. Philo insists that a transcendent God orders nature’s law and continues to intervene in human history to teach human beings how to live in harmony with the natural order he created and directs. According to Philo this divine instruction in nature’s law happens primarily through the Law of Moses. The same God both designed the cosmos and delivered to humanity “an actual copy of the law of nature” in the Law of Moses.<sup>46</sup> This optimism about the revelatory ability of a particular legal code sets Philo apart from proponents of natural law theory like Cicero, who “complained that the Roman civil law was only an outline sketch of the law of nature.”<sup>47</sup> Philo’s understanding of the Law of Moses is both particularistic and universal: it stands alone among all other legal codes in its unique revelation of the universal law of nature.

So Moses chose to begin the Law with the story of creation, on Philo’s account, to show that “the κόσμος is in harmony with the Law, and the Law with the κόσμος, and that the man who observes the Law is constituted thereby a κοσμοπολίτης (‘loyal citizen of the world,’ *Opif.* 3 [Colson and Whitaker, LCL]).”<sup>48</sup> God’s ordering of the στοιχεῖα is

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<sup>45</sup> Martens, *One God, One Law*, 75.

<sup>46</sup> Martens, 96, citing *Opif.* 3.69, 71; *Abr.* 3; *Mos.* 2.11, 13, 48.

<sup>47</sup> Martens, 96, citing *De Off.* 3.69.

<sup>48</sup> See also *Mos.* 2.48: by starting the Law with the creation account, Moses “wished to shew two most essential things: first that the Father and Maker of the κόσμος was in the truest sense also its Lawgiver, secondly that he who would observe the laws will accept gladly the duty of following nature and live in accordance with the ordering of the universe, so that his deeds are attuned to harmony with his words and his words with his deeds.”



a crucial part of the creation of the κόσμος, providing good things for plants, animals, and people. The third day of creation, for example, began with water and earth—two of the four στοιχεῖα—mingled together as a “single στοιχείον without shape or distinction of its parts.” This muddy, briny swamp covering the earth would not enable plant or animal life to flourish, so God “bid all the briny water, which would have been the cause of barrenness to crops and trees, to be gathered together by flowing to the same point from the pores of the whole earth, and the dry land to appear” (*Opif.* 38).

The στοιχεῖα are good in their distinctiveness; it is good for the water to be separated from the land, and it is also good for each στοιχείον to be internally divided between that which is suitable for creaturely use and that which is not. During the process of creation water was divided into “drinkable and undrinkable,” and “fire into the merely useful variety, which is also voracious and destructive, and... the preservative variety which was set apart to form the heaven,” presumably the sun, moon, and stars (*Her.* 136 [Colson and Whitaker, LCL]). Philo, following Genesis, describes all these elemental divisions as the responses of the στοιχεῖα to the command of God, who then orders and directs each of them to produce “creatures all differing in build and in the varying strength and capacity to hurt or to serve that was inherent in them” (*Opif.* 64). Like these creatures in all their varied array, the στοιχεῖα each cooperate with God’s creative acts in a manner appropriate to their particularity: first the “water and air” receive “as a sort of lot of their own the living creatures appropriate to them,” then God “call[s] upon the earth for the production of the portion that had been left out” (*Opif.* 64). Elsewhere, reciting again a list of the στοιχεῖα and their respective inhabitants, Philo also notes the existence

of “fire-born” creatures, “which are said to be found especially in Macedonia” (*Gig.* 7-8 [Colson and Whitaker, LCL]).<sup>49</sup> Each of these στοιχεῖα did “as it was bidden” (*Opif.* 64) by God, dividing and dividing again to provide hospitable homes for each of God’s unique creatures.

In both his *Life of Moses* and *Who is the Heir* Philo takes great care to show that the goodness of God’s creation is in harmony with priestly features of the Law. Through their religious practices, on Philo’s account, the people of Israel express gratitude for God’s gracious provision of the στοιχεῖα. The tabernacle was even constructed *out of* the στοιχεῖα. When Moses chose materials for its woven veil “he selected as the best out of a vast number possible four, as equal in number to the στοιχεῖα—earth, water, air, fire—out of which the world was made, and with a definite relation to those elements”: the white fabric corresponds to the earth, the purple to water, the red to air, and the scarlet to fire (*Mos.* 2.88). The altar expressed to God “thanksgiving for the στοιχεῖα” and was itself made up of all four στοιχεῖα: “its wood is of earth, the incense offered on it of water... while the perfume is of air and the part which is ignited of fire,” and because the incense was made up of four distinct spices it could also function on its own as “a symbol of the στοιχεῖα” (*Her.* 226-227).<sup>50</sup> As a kind of microcosm of creation, Philo argues, it was theologically fitting, even “necessary,” for the tabernacle to be constructed from the

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<sup>49</sup> Here, as he sometimes does elsewhere, Philo also names “heaven” as a fifth στοιχείον, or as a substitute for one of the original four (cf. Gert J. Steyn, “Elements of the Universe in Philo’s *De Vita Mosis*: Cosmological Theology or Theological Cosmology?,” *IDS* 47 [2013]: 1-9, 4).

<sup>50</sup> See also *Her.* 197: “Now these four [i.e., “sweet spices, oil drop of cinnamon, cloves and galbanum of sweetening and clear gum of frankincense”], of which the incense is composed, are, I hold, a symbol (σύμβολα) of the στοιχεῖα, out of which the whole world was brought to its completion. Moses is likening the oil drop to water, the cloves to earth, the galbanum to air, and the clear gum to fire.”

στοιχεῖα: “a temple of man’s making, dedicated to the Father and Ruler of All,” should be made up of “substances like those with whom the Ruler made the All” (*Mos.* 2.88). The tabernacle used the στοιχεῖα to offer God praise for graciously ordering the στοιχεῖα to provide for the needs of God’s creatures. And so Aaron’s first act of sacrifice in the tabernacle was, fittingly, “a whole burnt offering in thanksgiving for [God’s] ordering of the κόσμος, that gift which each of us shares according to the part allotted through the benefits which he receives from the στοιχεῖα”: food from the earth, water “for drinking and cleansing and voyaging,” air “for breathing and perception through the senses,” fire “for cooking and heating” (*Mos.* 2.147-148).

This congruence between the Law and the στοιχεῖα is good news for those who follow the Law. In *On the Creation* Philo suggests that all those who successfully master “the unmeasured impulses of [their] passions” will be rewarded by God with “good things all coming forth spontaneously and in all readiness.” Specifically, Philo explains, God rewards those who are virtuous with favor from two of the στοιχεῖα: water and air, whose direction of the weather can make crops either “fruitful” or “barren” (*Opif.* 80). Moses—to whom Philo often refers with the title “Lawgiver” (νομοθέτης)—is rewarded for his faithfulness by God with “the greatest and most perfect wealth,” i.e., “the wealth of the whole earth and sea and rivers, and of all the other στοιχεῖα and the combinations which they form.” God deems Moses worthy to inherit the στοιχεῖα “as a portion well fitted for His heir,” which gives Moses the ability to command the στοιχεῖα himself: “Each element obeyed him as its master (ὑπήκουεν ὡς δεσπότη τῶν στοιχείων ἕκαστον),”

even “chang[ing] its natural properties (ἀλλάττον ἦν εἶχε δύναμιν)” when necessary to accomplish Moses’s aims (*Mos.* 1.155-156).

And Moses’s mastery of the στοιχεῖα is good for the rest of the people of God, too. At the Red Sea, for example, when it seemed as if Israel were trapped between the Egyptians and the “στοιχεῖα of nature” (*Mos.* 2.251), Moses (with God’s help) effectively changed water into earth by splitting the sea for the people of Israel to walk across “as on a dry path or a stone-paved causeway” (*Mos.* 2.254). When Israel was hungry in the wilderness God “called up plenty,” i.e., manna and quail, by “changing round (μεταβαλὼν) the στοιχεῖα to meet the pressing need of the occasion, so that instead of the earth the air bore food for their nourishment” (*Mos.* 2.267). Through Moses, God continued to order and to re-order the στοιχεῖα, intervening into their usual activities when one of them was needed to provide for the special needs of God’s people. The tabernacle celebrated God’s establishment of the ordinary operations of the στοιχεῖα that sustain human life: water for drinking, air for breathing. The story of the Exodus celebrated God’s willingness to suspend the ordinary operations of the στοιχεῖα when God’s people face extraordinary circumstances: water parting to allow the people of Israel to walk on dry earth, air producing food in the wilderness. The congruence between the Law and the στοιχεῖα is good news for God’s people.

But this congruence is bad news for the Lawless, for those who oppress God’s people. If the “particular enactments” in the Law are “in agreement with the principles of eternal nature”—if following them both puts one in harmony with the ordinary functions of the στοιχεῖα and inclines God to intervene in those functions in extraordinary

circumstances—then those who disobey the Law’s commandments are “enemies not of men but of the whole heaven and universe (κόσμος)” (*Mos.* 2.52-53). As enemies of the κόσμος, on Philo’s account, they suffer “not the ordinary, but strange and unexampled punishments wrought by the might of justice” (τὰς ἐν ἔθει τιμωρίας οὐ φησιν ὑπομείναι, ἀλλὰ καινοτάτας καὶ παρηλλαγμένας): they are punished by “the most forceful στοιχεῖα of the universe (τοῦ παντός).” Here Philo names fire and water specifically, though he will also provide examples of earth and air punishing the Lawless (*Mos.* 2.53). So when the inhabitants of Sodom and Gomorrah committed “deeds of license and followed eager still more grievous practices,” God sent the στοιχεῖον fire from heaven to punish the “impious,” even as he saved “those who stood out in excellence of conduct,” i.e., Lot’s family (*Mos.* 2.55-58). And so while the “good man” Noah escaped “the great deluge” because he had followed “God’s commands” to build an ark, God turned “the wild uprising of the στοιχεῖα” into a “weapon” to punish unrighteous humanity (*Mos.* 2.59-65). Just as God intervenes into the ordinary functions of the στοιχεῖα to reward and to protect the virtuous, so God intervenes into the ordinary functions of the στοιχεῖα’s to punish the unrighteous.

In his *Life of Moses* Philo finds his best and most extended support for this claim in the plagues inflicted upon Egypt for Pharaoh’s refusal to release the people of Israel from slavery.<sup>51</sup> On Philo’s account God directed “the στοιχεῖα τοῦ πάντος (‘στοιχεῖα of

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<sup>51</sup> Hans Dieter Betz (“On the Problem of the Religio-Historical Understanding of Apocalypticism,” *JTC* 6 [1969]: 134-156) also notices that when they retell the story of the Egyptian plagues, both Wisdom of Solomon and Philo’s *De Vita Mosis* understand that “the four elements, which have been used in a beneficial way (σωτηρίως) at the creation of the world, can at any time be transformed by God for the purpose of punishing the godless” (141). Betz argues that this *positive* understanding of the functions of the στοιχεῖα (at least for the godly!) underlies the prayer of the “angel of the waters” in Rev 16:5-7, and all the

the universe’))” to “carr[y] out the assault” God intended to chastise the land of Egypt (*Mos.* 1.96). “God’s judgment,” Philo claims, “was that the materials which had served to produce the world should serve also to destroy the land of the impious,” and so God turned the στοιχεῖα, which “He shaped in His saving goodness to create the universe,” into “instruments for the perdition of the impious” (*Mos.* 1.97). If God can interrupt the ordinary functions of the στοιχεῖα to make miraculous provision for his own people, he can also interrupt them to punish those who oppress his people. For the first plague, for example, God “summon[ed] water” to change into undrinkable blood. God, that is, commanded the στοιχεῖον water to give up its ordinary, providential function of satiating human thirst, with the result that “a great multitude of people” in Egypt were “killed by thirst” (*Mos.* 1.98-101).<sup>52</sup> The thunder and hail in the seventh plague were God’s interruption of the ordinary function of the στοιχεῖον air, which ordinarily—as Philo explains in great detail—prevents dramatic winter weather from affecting Egypt (*Mos.* 1.113-118). In the seventh plague the ordinarily gentle Egyptian air, which graciously restrains the rain because Egypt’s crops are sufficiently watered by the Nile, was, at God’s command, “complete[ly] change[d],” producing instead “all the visitations which

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punishments of the elements poured out of the “bowls of God’s wrath” (Rev 16:1) throughout Rev 16. Those who worship the beast are punished with sores when the first angel “pour[s] his bowl on the *earth*” (16:1); the sun scorches the unrepentant with *fire* (16:8-9); “flashes of lightning,” “peals of thunder,” and “huge hailstones” come from the *air* (here “heaven,” οὐρανός) because of God’s judgment on “great Babylon” (16:18-21).

<sup>52</sup> Also note Philo’s comments on why the first plagues involved the στοιχεῖον water: “[God] began by bringing into play first the plagues of water; for, since the Egyptians had paid a specially high homage to water, which they believed to be the original source of the creation of the All, He thought well to summon water first to reprove and admonish its votaries.” Philo here repeats the claim that gentiles worship the στοιχεῖα as idols, but he does not dismiss the στοιχεῖα as evil or useless for this reason. Rather, he re-situates the στοιχεῖον water within its proper order: it is an instrument of God. It should not be worshipped, but God can be worshipped for his providential use of this στοιχεῖον.

belong to severe winter” (*Mos.* 1.118). Rather than facilitating the growth of crops and the raising of animals, during this plague the air destroyed them both. And the Egyptians correctly surmised that “divine wrath had brought about these novel happenings; that the air in a way unknown before had conspired to ruin and destroy the trees and fruits, while at the same time many animals perished, some through excessive cold, others stoned to death... through the weight of the falling hail” (*Mos.* 1.119). God’s judgment on Egypt—as was clear to those both within and without the people of God—was a kind of undoing of the orderliness of creation, a rent in the providential ordering of the *στοιχεῖα* that ordinarily enables human flourishing.

This punitive function of the *στοιχεῖα* should also serve as a warning to those within the people of Israel who might be tempted to disobey the precepts of the Law. The Law and the *στοιχεῖα* work together as God’s agents of order, so breaking the Law can disrupt the *στοιχεῖα* with deadly consequences. This is how Philo reads the rebellion led by Korah in Numbers 16. To summarize the story, Korah, a Levite, along with Dathan and Abiram, leads two hundred fifty other Levite leaders within Israel to confront Moses and Aaron for setting themselves up as especially holy priestly leaders. Moses becomes angry with Korah’s company and challenges them each to present incense before the Lord at the entrance to the tabernacle. When they do so, Moses declares that the rebels’ untimely deaths will prove the Lord is on Moses’s and Aaron’s side—and Korah, Dathan, and Abiram, along with their families and everything they own, are immediately swallowed by the earth. The rest of the two hundred and fifty Levites are killed by fire “from the Lord” (Num 16:35).

This dramatic activity of two of the στοιχεῖα—although the LXX itself does not label them as such—provides Philo with an excellent example of how the στοιχεῖα will turn on those who violate the Law they claim to uphold. On Philo’s retelling of Numbers 16 the unlawful wrongdoing of the priests who followed Korah—what he calls their twofold παρανόμημα—was their attempted disruption of the orderly system of priestly leadership prescribed by the Law: they tried “on the one hand to bring low the superior, on the other to exalt the inferior” (*Mos.* 2.277). They were unruly, unstable agents of chaos, bent on “confound[ing] that most excellent promoter of the common weal, order” (*Mos.* 2.277). And so their punishments, which involve interruptions of the orderly, providential functions of the στοιχεῖα, fit the crime. As Moses prophesies when he burns with “lawful (νόμιμος) indignation,” these rebels’ deaths are not “κατὰ φύσιν” (“in keeping with nature”); they are “of a new and different kind,” a terrifying aberration in God’s usual ordering of the στοιχεῖα (*Mos.* 2.280-281). At God’s direction creation itself turns against Korah’s company; “the work of chastising the impious was shared by earth and heaven, the fundamental [or ‘originating’] parts of the universe (αἱ τοῦ παντὸς ἀρχαί)” (*Mos.* 2.285). “Each of the two στοιχεῖα”—that is, earth and heaven (οὐρανός), which Philo sometimes uses as a synonym for “air” (ἀήρ) and sometimes includes as a fifth στοιχεῖον—“supplied its punishment: earth burst and parted asunder to drag down and swallow up those who had then become a burden to it; heaven poured down the strangest of rainstorms, a great stream of fire to blast them in its flames” (*Mos.* 2.286). Philo has no pity for these rebels. Their attempt to disrupt the Law’s order was met with a fitting consequence: the disruption of nature’s order. And so it ever is with all those who



violate the Law. As Philo argues in *On the Creation*, those who “have flung themselves unrestrainedly into the indulgence of their passions and left uncontrolled their guilty cravings” continue to incur a “fitting penalty” brought about by the στοιχεῖα: their crops are “ravaged by recurring rainfalls, or beaten down in masses by the weight of hail that [falls] on them, or half frozen in snow, or torn up roots and all by violent winds; for water and air can in many ways change the fruitfulness of crops into barrenness” (*Opif.* 80).

### 3.1.4 The Law and the Στοιχεῖα in Galatia?

Wisdom of Solomon and Philo are clear: κόσμος, creation, στοιχεῖα, Law—all work together, under God, in a cohesive cosmic order. To live in step with the Law is to live in step with the στοιχεῖα, whom God directs to provide for his people. With this background in mind it is easier to imagine that the agitators in Galatia may have been preaching to the Gentile Christians in the Galatian churches something like this:<sup>53</sup>

“It’s time to take the next step in your Christian maturity: you should, like our ancestor Abraham, be circumcised as a sign of your entry into the people of God. What’s more, keeping the Law will keep you truly in harmony with the elements of the natural world. The elements are not gods, but they are gifts from God. And we know that God works all things for the good of those who virtuously keep his Law. He directs the elements to preserve the righteous and to protect them from their oppressors. Just remember the story of Israel’s exodus from Egypt: God brought plagues of the elements

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<sup>53</sup> I borrow this rhetorical device—an imaginative reconstruction of the message of Paul’s opponents—from J. Louis Martyn’s Galatians commentary.

upon the Lawless Egyptians, and directed the elements to do extraordinary things on behalf of his people—providing food from the sky and water from a rock. God continues to reward those who keep his commandments this way—with abundant crops nurtured by the earth, with favorable weather from the air, with protection from floods and fires. Meditate on the Law of the Lord day and night, so that you will be like prosperous trees fed by streams of water, not like the wicked chaff blown away by the air (cf. Ps 1:3-4).”

This preaching seems to have been persuasive among the Galatians, at least according to Paul. They seem eager to be “subject to the Law” (4:21), to “return again to the στοιχεῖα” (4:9). The thought of the στοιχεῖα dealing kindly with them in their everyday lives—protecting their crops, providing good weather—was probably quite attractive, well worth adopting practices of the Law to secure. The Galatians may agree with Paul that the στοιχεῖα are “not gods” (4:8), and they may acknowledge the folly of having once worshipped them as if they were. But they may also hope that the Law can facilitate a new, properly-ordered relationship with the στοιχεῖα—this time not as gods, but as instruments of Israel’s one God. How does Paul respond to this apparently persuasive argument about the Law and the στοιχεῖα? He does so by casting *both* the Law and the στοιχεῖα as enslaved ἐπίτροποι and οἰκονόμοι, titles that both acknowledge the outsized influence of the Law and the στοιχεῖα in the metaphorical household of the κόσμος *and* relativize that influence under the authority of a master who decides when these enslaved managers should exercise authority, and when they should not. Indeed, Paul insists that everything has changed after the coming of Christ. Now neither the Law nor the στοιχεῖα have dominion in the new creation brought into being by the cross.

## 3.2 *The Law and the Στοιχεῖα as Ἐπίτροποι and Οἰκονόμοι*

### 3.2.1 Defining the Terms

Recall the images Philo uses in his *Life of Moses* to describe how God rewarded Moses with control over the στοιχεῖα: because God considered Moses “worthy to appear as a partner of His own possessions, He gave into his hands the whole world as a portion well fitted for His heir (πάντα τὸν κόσμον ὡς κληρονόμῳ κτήσιν ἀρμόζουσας). Therefore,” Philo continues, “each element obeyed [Moses] as its master (ὕπηκουεν ὡς δεσπότη τῶν στοιχείων ἕκαστον), changed its natural properties and submitted to his command” (*Mos.* 155-156). Philo here narrates the *enslavement* of the στοιχεῖα to Moses, who can take ownership of them because he is the heir of the God who created them. Moses functions as something of a bridge figure between God and the Law for Philo. As the “friend of God” (cf. Ex 33:11), Moses shares in God’s “possessions,” including the στοιχεῖα (*Mos.* 1.156-157). And, as the one who beheld God’s glory on Mt. Sinai (cf. Ex 22:21ff), Moses is uniquely “a piece of work beautiful and godlike” (*Mos.* 1.158). Moses, the great Lawgiver (νομοθέτης), is also so closely linked to the Law that Philo can call him “a living and reasonable Law (νόμος ἔμψυχός τε καὶ λογικός)” (*Mos.* 1.162).<sup>54</sup> It is as this bridge figure—a picture of God and the embodiment of the Law—that Moses is given mastery over the elements, using them judiciously and benevolently to guide and to protect the people of God.

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<sup>54</sup> Philo also gives this title to Abraham, *Abr.* 3-5.

Paul may or may not have been familiar with this idea in Philo that the στοιχεῖα were metaphorically enslaved to Moses. Either way, what he does with a similar slavery image is remarkably different. For his part, Philo may well have appreciated the way Paul calls the στοιχεῖα ἐπίτροποι and οἰκονόμοι at the beginning of the passage; so far, this image accords with Philo's depiction of the στοιχεῖα as enslaved to Moses. And, as we shall soon see, the particular titles of “ἐπίτροπος” and “οἰκονόμος” suggest that the enslaved στοιχεῖα occupied a position of relative power in the metaphorical household, at least until the coming of Christ. But Paul diverges from Philo sharply when he inserts the Law into this hierarchy. In Paul's metaphor the Law does not stand over the στοιχεῖα as their master; instead, the Law labors *alongside* the στοιχεῖα as their co-ἐπίτροπος/οἰκονόμος. What is more, the Law, along with the στοιχεῖα, is neither God's friend nor God's heir; it is God's rival, exercising undue influence over God's true heirs: “us.”

Who are these ἐπίτροποι and οἰκονόμοι? What kind of people does Paul want his reader to picture when he uses these terms? Here it is more difficult for the interpreter to be precise than when she assessed the role of a παιδαγωγός in Gal 3:19-25, because both “ἐπίτροπος” and “οἰκονόμος” could be used in the ancient world as titles for people with a range of occupational and social statuses. Generally, both ἐπίτροποι and οἰκονόμοι occupied positions of management, in a household or at a municipal level. Both ἐπίτροποι and οἰκονόμοι could be free, and they could even occupy high political positions that afforded them wealth and influence. So Chuza, the ἐπίτροπος of Herod in Luke 8:3, can

be married—a legal status not afforded to the enslaved<sup>55</sup>—and his wife Joanna can financially support Jesus and the twelve out of the couple’s (presumably considerable) wealth. And so Erastus, the “οικονόμος τῆς πόλεως” who sends greetings to the church in Rome in Rom 16:23, has long been presumed to have occupied a “prestigious administrative office” in Corinth,<sup>56</sup> perhaps the position of *quaestor*, or “high-ranking, honourable” administrator of the city’s treasury.<sup>57</sup>

But quite often ἐπίτροποι and οἰκονόμοι were enslaved. Dale Martin, among others, argues that “in the early Roman imperial period the word *oikonomos* almost always points to someone of servile status”;<sup>58</sup> Fabian E. Udoh argues the same for the word ἐπίτροπος.<sup>59</sup> This certainly seems to be the case elsewhere in the New Testament, at least with the term οἰκονόμος.<sup>60</sup> Paul himself uses the term οἰκονόμος as a metaphor for his own leadership within the Corinthian church; in 1 Cor 4:1 he asks the Corinthians to consider him and his fellow leaders οἰκονόμοι of God’s mysteries. Later in the letter Paul clarifies that he intends this position to be understood as a kind of slavery to God. Paul is “obligated” (ἀνάγκη γάρ μοι ἐπίκειται) to preach the Gospel (9:16); it is something he

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<sup>55</sup> Glancy, *Slavery in Early Christianity*, 28. Glancy notes that enslaved persons did “form family bonds, including marriages,” but that “such marriages existed at the whim of the slaveholder and had no legal status.”

<sup>56</sup> John K. Goodrich, “Erastus, *Quaestor* of Corinth: The Administrative Rank of ὁ οἰκονόμος τῆς πόλεως (Rom 16.23) in an Achaean Colony,” *NTS* 56 (2010): 90-115, 92. Goodrich is here summarizing the influential thesis of Gerd Theissen’s “Soziale Schichtung in der korinthische Gemeinde: Ein Beitrag zur Soziologie des hellenistischen Urchristentums,” *ZNW* 65 (1974): 232-272.

<sup>57</sup> Goodrich, 114.

<sup>58</sup> D. Martin, *Slavery as Salvation*, 74. See also Peter Garnsey, “Slaves in ‘Business,’” *Opus* 1 (1981): 105-108.

<sup>59</sup> Fabian E. Udoh, “The Tale of an Unrighteous Slave (Luke 16:1-8 [13]),” *JBL* 128 (2009): 311-335.

<sup>60</sup> Examples drawn from Rene A. Baergen, “Servant, Manager or Slave? Reading the Parable of the Rich Man and His Steward (Luke 16:1-8a) through the Lens of Ancient Slavery,” *SR* 35 (2006): 25-38.

does “involuntarily” (ἄκων, 9:17).<sup>61</sup> Paul explains that the fact that this kind of work is work done under compulsion—as a master would command an enslaved person—means that it qualifies as an οἰκονομία (“stewardship,” v. 17), a cognate of “οἰκονόμος” that denotes the kind of work done by an οἰκονόμος.

Luke 12:41-48 gives us an example of an unambiguously enslaved οἰκονόμος who holds power over his fellow enslaved members of the household, and it also provides a stark assessment of the dangers that attend holding this position of power while also being enslaved. This parable functions as the sequel to the previous parable (12:35-40), in which Jesus compares menial “slaves” (δοῦλοι, 12:37) who diligently anticipate their master’s return from a wedding banquet to those who wait for the Son of Man’s return. After Jesus finishes telling this first parable Peter asks if it applies to “us” (presumably the twelve disciples, cf. 12:1) or to “everyone” (12:41). Jesus then introduces the image of an οἰκονόμος both to acknowledge the disciples’ unique position of authority *among* their fellow “slaves” and to relativize this authority under his own. The disciples are like an οἰκονόμος who has been “put in charge of [the master’s] slaves [θεραπείαι], to give them their allowance of food at the proper time” (12:42). They are responsible for managing these θεραπείαι well, always remembering that their shared master will return at an unspecified time to inspect the managerial work of the οἰκονόμος. While the master is away the οἰκονόμος appears to have free reign with the household. He dispenses food (12:42), which means he can also eat and drink at his leisure (12:45).

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<sup>61</sup> D. Martin, *Slavery as Salvation*, 76.

He is given charge over the enslaved workforce of the household (12:42), which means he can also “beat the other male and female slaves” (“παῖδες” and “παιδίσκαι,” 12:45).<sup>62</sup>

But because the οἰκονόμος is enslaved his authority is limited. The master is coming back, and if he finds that the οἰκονόμος has mismanaged his household in his absence the οἰκονόμος will face consequences. It is worth noting that the word οἰκονόμος only occurs once in this parable, at the character’s introduction (12:42). Every other time Jesus refers to the οἰκονόμος he calls him “that slave” (ὁ δοῦλος ἐκεῖνος, 12:43, 45, 46, 47), driving home both the enslaved status of the οἰκονόμος and the qualified nature of the disciples’ authority. “That slave” is still subject to the harsh corporeal punishment that threatens any enslaved person who crosses his or her master: the οἰκονόμος, the parable warns, could be given a “light” (12:48) or “severe” (12:47) beating, or could even be “cut into pieces” (12:46). In fact, the οἰκονόμος faces even greater disciplinary threats than the enslaved workers he manages. As the parable concludes, “From everyone to whom much [authority] has been given, much will be required; and from the one to whom much has been entrusted, even more will be demanded” (12:48). This unambiguously enslaved οἰκονόμος may hold a position of relative power over those with whom he is enslaved. But he is still enslaved, still under the master’s authority to discipline, and perhaps even more vulnerable to harsh punishment than the enslaved members of his household who do not hold his position of influence.<sup>63</sup>

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<sup>62</sup> We will return to this point in chapter 4, but notice that the word Luke here uses to refer to enslaved women under the authority of an enslaved οἰκονόμος—and thereby vulnerable to the threat of a beating from that οἰκονόμος—is the same word Paul uses to describe Hagar in Gal 4:21-5:1. As παιδίσκαι, both Hagar and these fictional women are at the very bottom of the household chain of authority.

<sup>63</sup> Though the Gospel of Matthew never uses word the οἰκονόμος, Jennifer Glancy’s comments on parabolic slaves in Matthew are also helpful here. Attending to Matthew’s “parable of the unmerciful

Although it is clear that the fictional οἰκονόμος in Luke 12 is enslaved, and that Paul depicts himself as an enslaved οἰκονόμος in 1 Cor 4 and 9, it is sometimes difficult to parse the legal status of particular ἐπίτροποι or οἰκονόμοι in Greek literature. Steven J. Friesen, for example, has challenged Gerd Theissen’s influential thesis that the Erastus of Rom 16:23 was a free, high-status *quaestor*, arguing instead that Erastus was probably “a low to mid level functionary in the city’s financial administration, not a Roman citizen, and probably a slave.”<sup>64</sup> And even John Goodrich, who argues that Erastus was free and high-status, admits that “significant data exist for reading the title οἰκονόμος τῆς πόλεως as either a servile position or a magistracy.”<sup>65</sup> The same debate takes place over the status of the unnamed οἰκονόμος in Luke’s parable of the dishonest “manager” (i.e., “οἰκονόμος,” Luke 16:1-13): does Luke expect his audience to read this fictional οἰκονόμος as free or enslaved? Mary Ann Beavis argues that this οἰκονόμος is enslaved, partly because his clever scheme to avoid financial destitution resembles the clever—and characteristically “slavish”—behavior of enslaved characters in Plautus’s plays.<sup>66</sup>

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slave” (Matt 18:23-35), “parable of the talents” (25:14-36), and “parable of the overseer” (24:45-51), Glancy finds that “all three parables are predicated on the widespread trope of the slave as a body awaiting discipline, even, or perhaps especially, when that slave has been a trusted manager” (*Slavery in Early Christianity*, 112). In Matthew, as in Luke, higher ranking slaves (like an οἰκονόμος or a ἐπίτροπος) are not exempt from the threat of violence from those in authority over them; in fact, they may be even more vulnerable to it. As Steven J. Friesen notes, owners of estates were incentivized to use enslaved (rather than free) managers to handle their wealth; having an enslaved manager “gave his owner greater control over financial transactions because the owner had the right to torture him for information about serious discrepancies in the accounts” (“The Wrong Erastus,” in *Corinth in Context: Comparative Studies on Religion and Society*, ed. Steven J. Friesen, Daniel N. Schowalter, and James C. Walters [Boston: Brill, 2010], 248).

<sup>64</sup> Friesen, “The Wrong Erastus,” 245.

<sup>65</sup> Goodrich, “Erastus, *Quaestor* of Corinth,” 93.

<sup>66</sup> Mary Ann Beavis, “Ancient Slavery as an Interpretive Context for the New Testament Servant Parables with Special Reference to the Unjust Steward (Luke 16:1-8),” *JBL* 111 (1992): 37-54. Beavis’s reading of the moral reasoning of the οἰκονόμος is worth noting for its complex portrayal of enslaved agency in the parable: the parable, she argues, “represent[s] slaves as moral agents, capable of making ethical choices over and above simple obedience to their masters... a status seldom accorded to slaves in other ancient



Jennifer Glancy, however, finds Beavis's reading unconvincing because it "underplays the steward's expectation that he will be dismissed and have to find his own employment and lodging" (Luke 16:3-4).<sup>67</sup> If the οἰκονόμος were enslaved, Glancy suggests, he would not need to fear that his master would leave him homeless and unemployed; manumission was not a common *punishment* for the enslaved! Rather, an enslaved οἰκονόμος "would more likely fear corporeal punishment, imprisonment, demotion within the household to menial tasks, or sale into a harsher slavery or away from loved ones."<sup>68</sup> The fears of the οἰκονόμος in Luke 16, Glancy concludes, reveal him to be either free or a freedperson, not enslaved.<sup>69</sup>

Bearing in mind the need for caution when assuming that any particular ἐπίτροπος or οἰκονόμος is enslaved, however, it seems reasonable to understand the ἐπίτροποι and οἰκονόμοι in Galatians 4:2 as enslaved, rather than free. Why? First, for historical reasons. As Martin and others argue, in the first century most sources that mention ἐπίτροποι or οἰκονόμοι depict them as enslaved. Second, for literary reasons. As Udoh points out, the irony of the situation Paul describes in Gal 4:1-2 depends on the

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literature" (54). J. Albert Harrill finds Beavis's study illuminating but critiques her decisions to "[insist] on the manager's being a literal [clever] slave" (*Slaves in the New Testament*, 78). Instead, Harrill argues, the οἰκονόμος in Luke 16:1-8 finds more direct parallels with the stock figure of the (free) "parasite *playing* the clever slave" (78, emphasis original).

<sup>67</sup> Glancy, *Slavery in Early Christianity*, 109.

<sup>68</sup> Glancy, 109.

<sup>69</sup> For a response to Glancy, see Fergus J. King, "A Funny Thing Happened on the Way to the Parable: The Steward, Tricksters, and (Non)sense in Luke 16:1-8," *BTB* 48 (2018): 18-25. As King points out, in the Roman world "slaves might be manumitted so that their masters no longer had to support them. The practice did not always give some desirable or beneficial freedom: it could be as much an act of cruelty as kindness (Beavis 49; Hopkins 117-20). Slaves were manumitted for the economic benefit of the owner, who was freed from financial obligation to support them, with no other means of support given" (20). For another defense of reading the οἰκονόμος of Luke 16 as enslaved, see Baergen, "Servant, Manager or Slave?"

enslavement of the ἐπίτροποι and οἰκονόμοι: heirs are “no better than slaves” even though they are under the authority of (enslaved) managers.<sup>70</sup> The free heirs are like slaves; the enslaved managers exercise authority like free persons. Moreover, as we have already noted, the image of ἐπίτροποι and οἰκονόμοι enters the letter as both a repetition and an elucidation of Paul’s παιδαγωγός metaphor in 3:24-25, and παιδαγωγοί were almost always enslaved. Paul’s παιδαγωγός is not identical to his ἐπίτροποι and οἰκονόμοι; they serve slightly different argumentative ends. But understanding them all to be enslaved makes literary sense of the comparisons and contrasts Paul draws between the two metaphors: they are parallel images of enslaved overseers. It also anticipates the explicit and emphatic enslavement of Hagar that will conclude chapter 4.

Before continuing to explore the historical resonance and literary function of this image of enslaved ἐπίτροποι and οἰκονόμοι, we should pause to briefly consider Paul’s use of these two titles together. Paul’s combination of terms for enslaved household managers—ἐπίτροποι *and* οἰκονόμοι—strikes many commentators as odd. As J. Louis Martyn points out, no other extant sources link these two terms so closely together.<sup>71</sup> Does Paul mean for us to distinguish between the particular roles of ἐπίτροπος and οἰκονόμος? Does each word contribute something unique to the image Paul crafts, or should we see the two of them as a collective image that represents a plurality of enslaved guardians or managers? Richard N. Longenecker raises and then dismisses the possibility that Paul uses these two terms to refer precisely to a specific Roman, Greek, or Semitic

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<sup>70</sup> Udoh, “The Tale of an Unrighteous Slave,” 315.

<sup>71</sup> Martyn, *Galatians*, 387. See also de Boer, *Galatians*, 259; Richard N. Longenecker, “The Pedagogical Nature of the Law in Galatians 3:19-4:7,” *JETS* 25 (1982): 53-61, 56; Fung, *Galatians*, 180.

inheritance law that would have stipulated the two-stage guardianship of an orphaned minor heir; for example, the Roman law *tutela testamentaria* (guardianship established by testament) required an heir to be “under the supervision of a tutor nominated by his father until fourteen years old and then under a curator appointed by the *praetor urbanus* until twenty-five.”<sup>72</sup> Longenecker finds this argument unconvincing because inheritance laws like the *tutela testamentaria* only took effect after the death of a father; Longenecker assumes that the father in Paul’s metaphor refers to God, and Paul obviously does not think the coming of Christ was preceded by the death of God!<sup>73</sup> In fact, Longenecker is wary of trying to establish too precise a legal precedent for Paul’s combined use of ἐπίτροποι and οἰκονόμοι, or of trying to parse out too specifically any distinction at all

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<sup>72</sup> Longenecker, *Galatians*, 163, citing Justinian, *Inst.* 1.22-23; cf. Betz, *Galatians*, 202, fn 6.

<sup>73</sup> Longenecker, *Galatians*, 163. It should be noted that the identity of the “father” in 4:2 is not quite as obvious as Longenecker makes it seem. There are good reasons to associate this “father” with God: the father “sets the date” of his heirs’ majority (4:2), and God sends his Son at “the fullness of time” (4:4); the Spirit enables “us” to cry “Abba, Father” to God (4:6). But the middle of the metaphor makes the identity of the “father” in 4:2 murkier: in 4:5 God sends his Son so that “we” can receive *adoption* as children (υἰοθεσία). Why would “we” need to be adopted if “we” were already God’s children? And why could “we” not cry out to our father God in “our” time of spiritual minority? It is possible—though I think unlikely—that Paul casts two fathers in the metaphor: one that sets guardians over a group of minor heirs, another that rescues those heirs from their virtual “slavery” to those guardians (4:7) through adoption. James M. Scott attempts to solve this problem by suggesting that Gal 4:1-7 is a narrative about the coming of Christ that casts it as a “second Exodus”: God—the “father” throughout the metaphor—providentially ordained “four hundred thirty” years for Abraham’s offspring (cf. 3:17) under taskmasters in Egypt (i.e., on Scott’s account, the ἐπίτροποι and οἰκονόμοι in 4:2), and then “adopted” them in both the first Exodus and in the new “messianic time” (cf. 2 Sam 7:14) (*Adoption as Sons of God: An Exegetical Investigation into the Background of ΥΙΟΘΕΣΙΑ in the Pauline Corpus*, WUNT 48 [Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1992], 143, 186). Erin M. Heim notes, however, that there is no evidence that first-century Jews used the terms ἐπίτροπος or οἰκονόμος to refer to the Egyptian taskmasters in Exodus, and that Scott’s argument relies on understanding the adopted sons in both 2 Samuel and Galatians to refer to “collective Israel,” when Paul’s point throughout Galatians is that gentiles are κληρονόμοι through Christ (*Adoption in Galatians and Romans: Contemporary Metaphor Theories and the Pauline Huiothesia Metaphor*, BibInt 153 [Leiden: Brill, 2017], 168-69). Heim’s own solution seems more attractive: “a key component to Paul’s argument throughout [Galatians, cf. 3:26-29] seems to be that sonship is bestowed through Christ, not inherited through natural descent or obtained through keeping the law. If this is the case, then despite the incongruity with the earlier part of his example, Paul’s υἰοθεσία fits quite well with his overall presentation of sonship” (172).

between the roles of the ἐπίτροποι and οἰκονόμοι in Gal 4:2, partially because other Greek authors can use multiple titles to refer to the same person or job. In *Against Nausimachus*, for example, Demosthenes “used the double title ἐπίτροπος καὶ κηδεμών (‘guardian and caretaker’) for the one man Aristaechnus” (*Naus.* 12.988).<sup>74</sup> Philo does something similar—with at least cognates of the terms Paul chooses—when he describes Joseph’s enslavement in Egypt. Potiphar appoints Joseph “ἐπίτροπος of his household,” which Philo takes to be providential because Joseph needed to be trained in οἰκονομία—i.e., the work performed by an οἰκονόμος<sup>75</sup>—to prepare him for “the command of whole cities and a nation and a great country” (*Ios.* 37-38).

Ronald Y. K. Fung suggests that Paul adds the term οἰκονόμοι “to amplify and elucidate” his use of the word ἐπίτροποι, piling synonym on top of synonym to reiterate his point that minor heirs are under the authority of supervisors.<sup>76</sup> I find this reading most convincing, and I would also draw the reader’s attention to the double plurality of Paul’s image: in his minority, an heir remains under *multiple* ἐπίτροποι *and multiple* οἰκονόμοι. This multiplicity of guardians—as opposed to the single παιδαγωγός in Gal 3:24-25—enables Paul to draw in the στοιχεῖα to the web of enslavement he has already spun for the Law. As Paul develops his argument in chapter 4 the Law is no longer acting alone; it

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<sup>74</sup> Longenecker, *Galatians*, 164.

<sup>75</sup> Philo is here playing on the range and scope of an οἰκονομία. This word can be used to designate the management of particular households, but it can also be used more expansively to describe the administration of a kingdom, or even the order and function of the world as a whole. So Joseph, as an enslaved household manager, was given charge of the narrow οἰκονομία of Potiphar’s household, and this experience managing a small οἰκονομία prepared him to manage the οἰκονομία of Egypt as a whole once he had risen in status.

<sup>76</sup> Fung, *Galatians*, 180. Longenecker also assumes Paul uses “the terms ἐπίτροπος and οἰκονόμος synonymously” (*Galatians*, 164).

is joined by the στοιχεῖα, themselves a collective grouping of four. What seems important to Paul here is not that ἐπίτροποι do one thing and οἰκονόμοι do another, perhaps mapping on to distinct roles for the Law and the στοιχεῖα. As we noted earlier, after all, Paul treats the Law and the στοιχεῖα interchangeably in this passage; they perform the same functions. Rather, Paul's combination of the terms ἐπίτροποι and οἰκονόμοι expands the reader's imagination to see the Law and the στοιχεῖα working together both to guard and to enslave the Galatians. I will treat these two terms as synonyms that work in tandem to create a combined image of enslaved guardians or managers over the Galatians.

### **3.2.2 Ἐπίτροποι and Οἰκονόμοι in the Imagination of Free Elites**

In the imagination of the free elite, enslaved ἐπίτροποι and οἰκονόμοι seem to have occupied a kind of middle ground between enslaved and free. They could be purchased and sold, commanded and punished, but they were also considered capable of representing their free masters in their absence by making reasoned and prudent decisions about household management. The *Oeconomica* attributed to Aristotle, for example, advises young landowners to treat the purchase of “human chattel” as a first priority, but to distinguish between “two kinds of slaves (δούλων δὲ εἶδη δύο): ἐπίτροπος and worker (ἐργάτης).” Ἐπίτροποι, the *Oeconomica* continues, are charged with “tasks befitting the free (τὰ ἐλευθέρια τῶν ἔργων),” and so they require extra training to be able to do their duties ([*Oec.*] I.v.1 [Tredennick and Armstrong, LCL]). Additionally, “a share of honor should be given to those who are doing more of a freeman's work (τοῖς μὲν

ἐλευθεριωτέροις τιμῆς μεταδιδόναι)”—that is, to ἐπίτροποι ([*Oec.*] I.v.2). The *Oeconomica* recommends this giving of honor not as a kindness to an ἐπίτροπος, but as a material condition that is necessary for the ἐπίτροπος to function effectively as an enslaved person performing work that is better suited to free persons. An ἐπίτροπος needs honor like an enslaved laborer needs “an abundance of food”; the *Oeconomica* mentions both in the same sentence, as necessary supplies that make enslaved labor effective ([*Oec.*] I.v.2). An enslaved ἐπίτροπος needs to share in something ordinarily reserved for the free, or else he cannot represent his free master well.

Xenophon’s *Oeconomicus*, a Socratic dialogue that deals with household management, likewise dwells at length on how a “gentleman” (ἀνὴρ καλός, *Oec.* 12.2 [Marchant, Todd, and Henderson, LCL]) ought to purchase and train an enslaved ἐπίτροπος to manage his estate.<sup>77</sup> Socrates and his dialogue partner Ischomachus agree that at the point of purchase an ἐπίτροπος need not be fully qualified for the duties he will perform on the estate. It is far more important that a prospective ἐπίτροπος be loyal to his master and his master’s family, so that the master can train him to “tak[e] charge in [his] absence” (*Oec.* 12.4-5). An ἐπίτροπος should “act attentively” (ἐπιμελέομαι) to the work his master sets for him. He should not be a “drunkard” or a “sluggard,” nor should he be someone who tends to “fall desperately in love”; otherwise, these temptations will

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<sup>77</sup> See also Udoh’s discussion of the enslaved ἐπίτροπος in Xenophon’s *Oeconomicus*. Udoh briefly addresses “the suggestion (on the basis of *Oec.* 1.3-4) that the ἐπίτροπος could also have been a free (propertyless) man hired for a wage” with three counterpoints: “(1) The discussion in *Oec.* 1.3-4 is certainly speculative. (2) Socrates’ intimation here is as ‘radical’ as his idea that freeborn women could make a living by working (Xenophon *Mem.* 2.7). (3) The actual prevalent view is expressed in *Mem.* 2.8-1-4 by the free but impoverished Eutherus, whom Socrates advises to take a paid job as an ἐπίτροπος: ‘I shouldn’t like to make myself a slave, Socrates’ (Pomeroy, *Oeconomicus*, 316-17)” (“The Tale of an Unrighteous Slave,” 313, fn 13).

distract him from the work he has been assigned (*Oec.* 12.12, 14). Ischomachus will, however, purchase someone who has “a passion for making money (οἴτινες αὖ ἐρωτικῶς ἔχουσι τοῦ κερδαίνειν)” to train him as an ἐπίτροπος. Why? Because that “passion” can be channeled into attentiveness to his work: Ischomachus can simply “point out to [him] that attentiveness (ἐπιμέλεια) is profitable” (*Oec.* 12.15).<sup>78</sup> The promise of financial reward even serves to deter an ἐπίτροπος from theft, according to Ischomachus. Ischomachus believes in both punishing wrongdoing and rewarding “upright” behavior among his enslaved managers; he will sometimes reward his honest managers with money so that others will see the reward and be inspired to behave similarly. “I treat them *like free men* (ὡσπερ ἐλευθέρους) by making them rich,” he explains to Socrates, “and not only that, I also honor them *like gentlemen* (τιμῶν ὡς καλοῦς τε κάγαθούς)” (*Oec.* 14.9). Note this comparison: the best way to manage an ἐπίτροπος, according to Ischomachus, is to treat him *like* a free man, even *like* a high-status free man. But also note that this is only a comparison: the ἐπίτροπος is still enslaved, and the purpose of treating him *as if he were* free is to persuade him to perform compulsory labor more effectively.

For a more extended elite treatment of a particular enslaved ἐπίτροπος—and one that provides particularly useful points of convergence and divergence with Galatians 4—it is helpful to return to Philo. In his *On Joseph* Philo dwells at length on Joseph the

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<sup>78</sup> Contemporary readers are not accustomed to thinking of enslaved persons amassing money, but it was possible, though difficult, for enslaved workers in the Greco-Roman world to do so, especially if they held a position of influence like that of an ἐπίτροπος. Enslaved persons could save for their own manumission in a *peculium*: a fund that could only be used for the purchase of manumission (and which legally remained the property of the master); see Glancy, *Slavery in Early Christianity*, 133. And there were very rare cases when an enslaved person in a particularly high position of influence could amass large amounts of wealth, owning estates, businesses, and even other enslaved persons themselves. This is probably not the situation Xenophon has in mind here; he likely refers to an ordinary *peculium*.

patriarch's agency as an ἐπίτροπος in Egypt. Within the scheme of ancient views of enslaved agency laid out in Chapter 1, Philo falls somewhere between Aristotle and Epictetus. In his youth he published an essay called *Every Good Man is Free (EGM)*, which begins by referring to a previous work of his—lost to history—called *Every Bad Man is a Slave (Prob. 1 [Colson])*. As these titles suggest, *EGM* is an exploration of the belief, common in Stoicism, that physical enslavement (δουλεία... ἢ... σωμαίων, *Prob. 17*) need not correspond to a deficiency of character or will in the enslaved. Every good man—i.e., every man with a “mind at liberty from the dominion of the passions” (ἢ ... διανοίας ἐκεχειρίαν ἀπὸ τῆς τῶν παθῶν δυναστείας, *Prob. 17*)—is free in the way that matters most, whether he is legally free or legally enslaved: he does not fall “under the yoke of desire, or fear, or pleasure, or grief” (*Prob. 18 [Colson, LCL]*).

Philo anticipates all kinds of objections to this claim, including the objection that the kind of work a man performs corresponds both to his legal status as enslaved or free and to his character. Philo responds to this objection by pointing out that in times of war free soldiers perform all sorts of menial work: “not only carrying all their weapons, but also laden like beasts with every necessary requirement,” “cutting trenches or building walls or constructing triremes” (*Prob. 32-33*). Likewise, some enslaved persons “pursue the occupations of the free” (τὰ τῶν ἐλευθέρων, *Prob. 35*). Here Philo uses enslaved ἐπίτροποι as his key example of this point: ἐπίτροποι “receive the stewardship of houses and landed estates and great properties; sometimes too they become the rulers of their fellow slaves .... Still all the same they are slaves though they lend, purchase, collect revenues and are much courted” (*Prob. 35*). The arbitrary nature of work, the fact that it



does not correspond in kind to a person's legal status, is evidence for Philo of the arbitrary nature of slavery. If an enslaved ἐπίτροπος performs work that everyone—including Xenophon and Aristotle, as we saw above—agrees befits a free person, what distinguishes him in any meaningful way from a free person?

Philo will find this argument difficult to sustain, both within *EGM* and elsewhere in his writing. As Peter Garnsey argues, because Philo is forced to account for biblical examples of enslavement that seem appropriate to the moral deficiency of the enslaved (i.e., Ham and Esau), he can sometimes slip into a kind of Aristotelian “natural slave” theory.<sup>79</sup> In the case of Esau, Philo insists, referencing Gen 27:40, “slavery, which men think the worst of evils, was the best possible boon to the fool, because the loss of independence would prevent him from transgressing without fear of punishment, and his character would be improved under the control of the authority set above him” (*Prob.* 57). But there is one famous biblical enslavement that does nicely support Philo's larger point that physical enslavement need not correspond with moral deficiency: Joseph's enslavement as an ἐπίτροπος in Egypt, which Philo describes in detail in his *On Joseph*. The LXX never uses the title “ἐπίτροπος” for Joseph, but it does, of course, relate that “Joseph found favor with his master (εὗρεν Ἰωσηφ χάριν ἐναντίον τοῦ κυρίου αὐτοῦ),” i.e., Potiphar, and that Potiphar “established [Joseph] over his house and all his things (κατέστησεν αὐτὸν ἐπὶ τοῦ οἴκου αὐτοῦ καὶ πάντα)” (Gen 39:4). These piece of data lead Philo reasonably to assume that Joseph held the position of ἐπίτροπος in Potiphar's household (*Ios.* 38). Joseph functions for Philo as a particularly good example of the

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<sup>79</sup> Peter Garnsey, “Philo Judaeus and Slave Theory,” *Scripta Classica Israelica* 13 (1994): 30-45.

arbitrariness of enslavement because he was enslaved through capture—he was born free—and because his position as ἐπίτροπος means he performs talented work that befits a free person. But even with Joseph Philo is not entirely effective in his attempt to sever any ties between physical enslavement and the character and efficacy of the will. Philo, too, assumes that the particular enslaved position of ἐπίτροπος moves Joseph closer to the character of a free person, *and* that this resemblance to freedom is only approximate.

Philo has Joseph himself acknowledge the free-like character of his enslavement as Potiphar’s ἐπίτροπος when he rebuffs the advances of Potiphar’s wife. Among the many reasons he gives for refusing her, Joseph names Potiphar’s kindness in entrusting him with the management of his household. Joseph feels obligated to honor Potiphar “not only as a master but further as a benefactor.” To sleep with the wife of this benefactor would be a “fine gift,” he retorts sarcastically, “a suitable return for preceding favours!” (*Ios.* 46 [Colson, LCL]). As he continues to speak “long and wisely” (*Ios.* 49) about why it would be foolish to give in to Potiphar’s wife Joseph strikingly expresses the strange “freedom” of his enslavement:

On the one hand, the master found me a **captive and an alien** and made me by his kindnesses a free man and a citizen as far as he can do it. On the other hand, shall I, the slave, deal with the master as though he were an **alien and a captive**?

ὁ μὲν δεσπότης **αἰχμάλωτον** ὄντα με **καὶ ξένον** ταῖς εὐεργεσίαις ἐλεύθερον καὶ ἄστυν τὸ γούν ἐπ’ αὐτὸν ἤκον μέρος ἀπειργάσατο, ἐγὼ δ’ ὁ δοῦλος ὡς **ξένῳ καὶ αἰχμαλώτῳ** προσενεχθήσομαι τῷ δεσπότη; (*Ios.* 47, emphasis mine).

The form of this sentence is noteworthy on two counts. First, its μέν... δέ construction depicts well the paradoxical position in which Joseph finds himself as an enslaved ἐπίτροπος. On the one hand, Potiphar treats him as “freely” as it is possible for a

master to treat someone he has purchased for enslaved labor. Philo's Joseph, like Aristotle and Xenophon, understands his position as an ἐπίτροπος to approximate freedom. On the other hand, this is only an approximation. Joseph recognizes that he is still enslaved. In keeping with his Stoic-like understanding of enslaved agency, Philo will be quick to show that Joseph's choice to refuse Potiphar's wife does not rely solely on the constraints of his physical enslavement. Just a few lines later Joseph declares that even if Potiphar never found out about this encounter he would "turn informer against myself through my colour, my look, my voice, convicted ... by my conscience (ὕπὸ τοῦ συνειδότος)" (*Ios.* 48). Joseph's enslavement is not the single determining factor in his rebuff of Potiphar's wife. He makes this choice on moral grounds and in keeping with Jewish "laws and customs" (*Ios.* 42). But his enslavement is not nothing. Philo still has Joseph recognize that there would be something particularly inappropriate about an enslaved person sleeping with his master's wife. And when Potiphar's wife falsely accuses Joseph of assaulting her Joseph faces punishment that can only be applied to an enslaved person: his master can immediately and extrajudicially "order... him to be carried away to prison" (*Ios.* 52).

Second, the chiasmus that structures the above sentence highlights the fluidity and uncertainty of the power dynamics between the enslaved ἐπίτροπος Joseph and his master Potiphar. As his master, Potiphar had the power to raise up Joseph from the most demeaning kind of slavery as "a captive and an alien (αἰχμάλωτον... καὶ ξένον)." Now Joseph senses that he possesses a similar kind of power over Potiphar: if he were to sleep with Potiphar's wife he would effectively reduce Potiphar himself to being "an alien and

a captive (ξένω καὶ αἰχμαλώτῳ).” As do the enslaved ἐπίτροποι in Galatians 4:1-11, Joseph the enslaved ἐπίτροπος somehow wields the power to reduce a free person in his sphere of influence to enslavement—at least metaphorically. Potiphar’s promotion of Joseph to a position that resembles freedom brings with it the danger that Joseph could place Potiphar in a position that resembles enslavement.

Philo will pick this dynamic back up and amplify it when he turns from narrating the story of Joseph and Potiphar’s wife to expound on it allegorically. In Philo’s allegorical reading Joseph represents the consummate statesman, Potiphar the democratic crowd (ὄχλος) that “owns” the statesman, and Potiphar’s wife the desires of the crowd. The steps in this three-way dance of power are nimble and intricate; power passes from one to another as Philo unfolds the dynamics of politics in a democracy. The statesman, who is wiser and more principled than the foolish and flighty crowd, is tempted to give in to the crowd’s desires (*Ios.* 66). When he resists these desires, as Joseph resisted Potiphar’s wife, the personified desires remind him of the power they have over him: “I will collect any number of charges against you to produce before my husband, the multitude (ὄχλος), your master. For hitherto you have seemed to me to act as if at liberty and you are quite unaware that you have become the slave of a despotic master” (*Ios.* 66). Philo’s treatment of Joseph/the statesman’s enslavement takes an interesting twist here. In Philo’s first narration of the story it is Joseph himself that appeals to his enslavement as a reason *not* to sleep with his master’s wife. But here it is Potiphar’s wife/the crowd’s desires that appeals to Joseph/the statesman’s enslavement as a reason *to* sleep with her, and thereby (oddly) to “secure [his master’s] favour” (*Ios.* 66)!

And here Joseph/the statesman will resist this line of reasoning, refusing to “admit that he is a slave, but regard[ing] himself as a free man [who] shapes his activities to please his own soul” (*Ios.* 67). Here Philo returns more fully to a Stoic understanding of enslaved agency. No longer is Joseph constrained by the limitations of physical slavery. He considers himself “as highly-born (εὐπατρίδης) as any,” and “claims enrolment among the citizens of that best and greatest state, this world” (*Ios.* 69). No longer is Joseph grateful to his master for making him *like* a free citizen; now he *is* one *despite* his master’s claim to ownership. As a representative of the good statesman, who is unswayed by the crowd’s demands, threats, and bribes, Joseph finds himself unafraid of any “domination” (δεσποτεία, “mastership,” *Ios.* 70). People may try to “assume sovereignty (κυρείαν)” over his body, but they “are not sovereigns of the real I” (οὐ τὴν [κυρείαν] κατ’ ἐμέ, *Ios.* 71). So the statesman can serve impartially on a jury, for example, favoring neither “the rich because of his abundant wealth” nor “the poor through pity of his misfortunes” (*Ios.* 72); he governs only from his own sense of rightness, not as someone who is enslaved either to the rich or to the poor among the people. The people, like Potiphar, may punish the statesman’s body when he refuses to give in to their desires. But ultimately, Philo warns, the people ends up punishing not its (ostensibly) enslaved ruler, but “lays upon itself rather than on its victim the greatest of punishments, indiscipline” (*Ios.* 79). The statesman, out of his inner freedom, knows best how to govern the people for the good of the whole, even if that governance goes against the immediate desires of the people.

Philo’s foray into the dynamics of power in the Joseph/Potiphar/Potiphar’s wife triangle is long and meandering, at turns giving power to Joseph/the statesman as an enslaved ἐπίτροπος and taking it away from him. It is worth tracing this progression of power in a chart so that we can compare it to Paul’s treatment of the power of the Law and the στοιχεῖα (as οἰκονόμοι and ἐπίτροποι) in Galatians 4. In the following chart the arrows show how Philo and Paul each depict the flow of power in the lives of their respective enslaved managers, sometimes elevating them and sometimes showing how their position can be precarious:

**Joseph/the statesman as ἐπίτροπος:**

↑ Rules over immature ὄχλος (54)  
 ↓ while enslaved to the ὄχλος (58),  
 ↑ but as a managerial ἐπίτροπος (68) (4:2)  
 ↑ who, in fact, is not *really* enslaved (69), but rules the people from a position of inner freedom,  
↑ being effectively “highly born” (69). (4:9).

**The Law & στοιχεῖα as οἰκονόμοι and ἐπίτροποι:**

↑ Ruled over immature νήπιος (4:1)  
 ↓ while enslaved to the πατήρ (4:2),  
 ↑ but as managerial ἐπίτροποι and οἰκονόμοι  
 ↑ who once actually *enslaved* the Galatians, and threaten to enslave them again (4:9),  
↓ even though they are ἀσθενῆ and πτωχά

Both *On Joseph* and Galatians 4 treat their enslaved ἐπίτροποι (and, in the case of Galatians, οἰκονόμοι) as unusually powerful within the system of slavery. They may be enslaved (the first down arrow in both columns), but they officially rule over other enslaved members of the household and even, in effect, rule over some of its free members too. For Philo this is a good thing, a fitting position for the wise and benevolent patriarch Joseph. If ancient writers tended to see ἐπίτροποι fitting somewhere in between slave and free in the social order, Philo tilts Joseph the “good man” towards the free, so

much so that Joseph “refuse[s] to admit that he [is] a slave” (*Ios.* 67). But for Paul the relatively elevated position of the Law and στοιχεῖα as ἐπίτροποι and οἰκονόμοι is a cause for concern as well as a power relation undone by the coming of Christ. The Law and the στοιχεῖα exercise frightening power over the Galatians, who at least by the end of the metaphor are cast as enslaved workers under the rulership of ἐπίτροποι and οἰκονόμοι. But Paul does not continue along a path of upward mobility for these ἐπίτροποι and οἰκονόμοι the way Philo does for Joseph. Instead, Paul raises them up so he can bring them low. God intervenes into the enslaved Galatians’ bondage, setting them free (4:5) and showing the Law and the στοιχεῖα (as ἐπίτροποι and οἰκονόμοι) to be “weak and pitiful” (ἀσθενῆ καὶ πτωχά, 4:9) in comparison.

### **3.2.3 Ἐπίτροποι and Οἰκονόμοι in the Imagination of their Enslaved Subordinates**

In this way the perspective in Galatians 4 is closer to the perspective of the enslaved protagonists in the plays of Plautus, especially once Paul twists the metaphor to cast the Galatians as “slaves” to the ἐπίτροποι and οἰκονόμοι, rather than as minor sons under their care. Paul starts the metaphor from the vantage point of privileged, free heirs under the (benevolent?) rule of enslaved guardians. But by the end of the metaphor his vantage point has switched to that of enslaved workers under the management and discipline of their enslaved overseers. In the plays of Plautus, as in Galatians 4, these enslaved managers are not heralded as noble or sympathetic because of their proximity to freedom; rather, they are feared and derided by other enslaved characters for their powerful complicity in the system that binds them all. Plautine enslaved managers are

both insiders and outsiders to the experience of enslavement. They are unambiguously enslaved, but they also exercise enslaving power over the other enslaved characters in the play, assigning them tasks and enforcing their obedience. Enslaved managers are never the protagonist of the play; the audience rarely gains access to their subjectivities or finds reason to sympathize with them. In fact, enslaved managers more often function as literarily “flat” antagonists who threaten to foil the plots of the “clever slaves” around whom Plautus’s plays tend to revolve. Amy Richlin describes them as “bogeymen” whose primary literary function is to create the threat of corporal punishment for the enslaved protagonists in the plays.<sup>80</sup> The *vilicus*, for example, “is never a sympathetic character (with Olympio in *Casina* and Collybiscus in *Poenulus*, compare Grumio in *Mostellaria*, with his fondness for threats and the imperative mood, 1-5, 20-24, 63-65). In the opening of *Casina*, Olympio threatens to get his slave rival down on the farm and drive him, beat him, and starve him (120-30).”<sup>81</sup> Like the ἐπίτροποι and οἰκονόμοι of Galatians 4, Plautine enslaved managers uphold the structures of enslavement that hold in bondage enslaved workers further down in the household hierarchy.

Plautus provides a particularly interesting point of comparison to Galatians in his *Asinaria*, in which an enslaved *atriensis* (household manager) named Saurea functions as a foil to the schemes of the play’s enslaved protagonist, Libanus. Libanus, along with his enslaved compatriot Leonida, are charged by their master Demaenetus to procure a large sum of money to support his son’s affair with a beloved prostitute. Libanus is not sure

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<sup>80</sup> Amy Richlin, “Talking to Slaves in the Plautine Audience,” *ClAnt* 33 (2014): 174-226, 183.

<sup>81</sup> Richlin, “Talking to Slaves in the Plautine Audience,” 183.



where the money will come from because his master is broke. As Libanus reminds Demaenetus, “Your wife brought the slave Saurea as part of her dowry; even he might well have more in his pocket than you” (*Asin.* 85-86 [de Melo, LCL]). This statement is probably a comedic exaggeration, but it plays off the possibility, raised above, that enslaved managers could amass some wealth. At the very least, Saurea has money in his pocket because he is entrusted with managing the estate’s finances. Demaenetus is not insulted by Libanus’s retort; he agrees, and instructs Libanus to “cheat” Saurea out of a sum of the household’s money. Curiously, here too, as in Galatians 4, the master sides with the enslaved persons further down in his household hierarchy! Of course, here this dynamic functions to make the ostensibly powerful *paterfamilias* look foolish as he resorts to subterfuge around his enslaved but powerful *atriensis* in order to gain access to his own finances.<sup>82</sup>

Libanus and Leonida decide that Leonida will impersonate Saurea in front of a traveling merchant who owes Saurea for the purchase of a set of donkeys, pocket the money, and hand it off to Demaenetus. And how does one imitate an *atriensis*? In the world of *Asinaria*, by being as domineering as possible. Performing as “Saurea” in front of the merchant, Leonida repeatedly threatens Libanus with beatings he describes so

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<sup>82</sup> See Laura K. Hickey, “The ‘Sordid’ Occupations and Attitudes Towards them in the Late Roman Republic: Some Studies in the Literary Evidence” (Masters Thesis, Macquarie University, 2016) on shifting attitudes towards *atrienses* in Roman history: “The evidence suggests that *atrienses* held a significant role in Roman elite households in Plautus’s time[,] with power over other slaves and proximity to their masters. However[,] by the first century BC[E], the *atriensis* seems to have lost its rank in the hierarchy[,] with the *dispensator* taking on the role of the most honorable (*honestissimus*), trusted and vital slave in the household. From the little evidence available, Cicero’s attitude towards *atrienses* seems to be one of condescension[;] he recognised there was a ranking system among household slaves but he also insinuated that the position is equally ‘lowly’ since he discusses it in the same breath as cooks and other slaves” (27).

violently that the merchant feels compelled to intervene on Libanus's behalf. "I wish I had a cattle-prod in my hand right now," Libanus/"Saurea" begins—interrupted by the merchant telling him to "calm down"—"so that I could pound your ribs to pieces with it, the skin of which has become so thick with blows" (*Asin.* 418-419). Leonida's portrayal of Saurea is a caricature; Libanus privately tells him to tone it down to be convincing (*Asin.* 448-449). But it is off-putting to the merchant—and funny to the audience—only because of its exaggerated scale. Everyone expects an *atriensis* to lord his relative power over the enslaved workers he has been assigned to supervise.

But even if we are not encouraged by the play to sympathize with this enslaved *atriensis*, it is still striking to contemporary readers how regularly he himself faces threats of physical violence. Early on in the play Libanus delivers a monologue in which he deliberates about how best to accomplish his master's request. As he speaks he hears a woodpecker tapping an elm tree and interprets it as an omen: "rods are certainly in store either for me or for the steward (*atriensis*) Saurea" (*Asin.* 264-265). Libanus knows that if he succeeds in cheating Saurea, Saurea will fail in his management of the household's finances—and face a beating for doing so. Later on, when Leonida delivers his exaggerated impersonation of Saurea, the merchant tries to protect Libanus by threatening to report Leonida's/"Saurea's" overly violent behavior to his master. Leonida/"Saurea" will "[get] beaten," the merchant promises, "as soon as I set eyes on Demaenetus today" (*Asin.* 479-480). Saurea may be an *atriensis*; he may have real power over the other enslaved characters in the play. But he is still enslaved himself, and subject to the same threats of violence he doles out. The *real* Saurea, we should note, is deprived

of voice and action altogether by the play. He never appears onstage; he is only discussed and impersonated. He is easily and effectively cheated by Libanus and Leonida, and so, if Libanus's omen comes to pass, we can assume the real Saurea will really face a beating in the near future. According to the comedic logic of the play Saurea—the relatively powerful enslaved *atriensis*—is undone by the clever scheming of his enslaved underlings. He, like the Law and the στοιχεῖα, turns out to be weak and pitiful, utterly unaware of Libanus's plot and utterly incapable of preventing its success.

### **3.3 Conclusion: Freedom in the New Creation**

Plautus's cast of enslaved characters, like Paul's, is diverse and socially complex. In the previous chapter we encountered the capable and sympathetic pedagogue Lydus; in this one we hear about the threatening, though ultimately powerless, *atriensis* Saurea and the enslaved subordinates who cheat him out of the money he manages. So, too, with Galatians: In Galatians 3 Paul's παιδαγωγός metaphor shows the Law to have been a capable agent of God before the coming of Faith. In Galatians 4 Paul's ἐπίτροποι and οἰκονόμοι metaphor shows the Law, along with the στοιχεῖα, to be both more threatening and less capable when it tries to wield authority over its enslaved subordinates beyond the time allotted to it by God.

Paul's slavery metaphors for the Law are not static. They are live, flexible, twisting and turning to accommodate the argument Paul needs to make about the Law in any particular moment. Paul's παιδαγωγός metaphor in Gal 3:24-25 is a retreat from an argumentative line he refuses to cross. Paul refuses to pit the Law directly against the

promises of God (3:21), and so he is compelled to explain how the Law cooperates with God in the fulfillment of the promises cooperate: under God, the Law, as humanity's παιδαγωγός, imprisoned humanity “so that what was promised ἐκ πίστεως Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ might be given to those who believe (τοῖς πιστεύουσιν)” (3:22). Paul refuses to slide all the way into antinomianism. As he will affirm more strongly in Romans, the Law is “holy and just and good” (Rom 7:12). It is precisely the slavery metaphor Paul introduces—the Law was our παιδαγωγός—that makes this point in Gal 3. But something changes in Gal 4:1 because Paul still has an argument to make about the Law to a group of churches that is far from antinomianism, whose temptation is to think too *highly* of the Law and its correspondence to the workings of the elements. Paul’s argument about the sufficiency of Christ is still urgent, driving, even if he can catch himself before he goes too far and repudiates the Law and its work altogether. To continue to make this argument he modifies the metaphor of the enslaved Law at the beginning of chapter 4 in order to make its agency both more powerful and weaker. That is to say, he promotes the enslaved Law to a more influential position than παιδαγωγός even as he writes more explicitly about its weakness. The Law becomes more threatening at this point in the letter because it holds a more powerful position within the metaphorical household. Ἐπίτροποι and οἰκονόμοι, as we have seen, were regarded by free elites with more favor and trust than παιδαγωγοί; their positions approximated freedom. But when the Law is strong, on Paul’s account, it is actually weak: its power to enslave is no match for the contrary will of God in Christ to set humanity free from its oversight.

Paul may well agree with the agitators in Galatia that before the coming of Christ the Law and the στοιχεῖα ruled together. He may even allude to this joint rulership earlier in chapter three when he makes cryptic reference to the “curse of the Law” in Deut 27:26 (Gal 3:10-14). Deuteronomy 27 and 28 describe in great detail what will befall those who do not “observe and obey all the things written in the book of the Law,” and many of these curses involve the elements conspiring to ruin the lives and livelihoods of the Lawless. “The sky over your head shall be bronze for you,” Deuteronomy warns, “and the earth under you iron. May the Lord render the rain of your land as powder, and dust from the sky shall come down upon you until it wipes you out and until it destroys you” (Deut 28:23-24, NETS). When Israel’s enemies attack, Deuteronomy continues, “your corpses will be food for the birds of the sky and for the wild animals of the earth” (28:26). The Lawless in Israel may even themselves fall victim to the “plagues” of Egypt (28:59-61, 4x)—plagues that Philo and Wisdom of Solomon, at least, interpret as the terrifying activity of the στοιχεῖα. But, Paul insists, Christ has redeemed us from this curse of the Law that uses the elements as a threat (3:13). The Galatians have been redeemed—unexpectedly!—from something that at least seemed to be good: a created order that appropriately rewards righteousness and punishes Lawlessness.

This is the note on which Paul will conclude the letter to the Galatians: the Law and τὰ στοιχεῖα τοῦ κόσμου ruled together, but the crucifixion has radically reordered their relationship to humanity. Paul refuses to “boast about anything except the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by which the world (κόσμος) has been crucified to me, and I to the world (κόσμῳ)” (6:14). This undoing of the κόσμος through the cross of Christ is what

makes both circumcision and uncircumcision ultimately meaningless (6:15). The Galatians need not worry about how their compliance with the Law will affect their relationship to the elements of the κόσμος, because Christ has inaugurated an entirely “new creation” (καινή κτίσις, 6:15) that plays by different rules.<sup>83</sup>

When the enslaved Leonida impersonates the enslaved *atriensis* Saurea in *Asinaria* he asserts his authority over his enslaved partner Libanus with a sarcastic taunt: “Did I give greetings to the freedman Libanus today? Have you already been set free?” (*Asin.* 411). The implied answer here, of course, is “no”—Libanus has not been set free, and he should respect Saurea’s rule accordingly. But if the Law and the στοιχεῖα were to ask the Galatians the same question Paul would want them to respond with an emphatic “yes!”—Christ has set them free from these ἐπίτροποι and οἰκονόμοι, no matter how much the Galatians want to return to enslavement under and with them.

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<sup>83</sup> Just as he will more sympathetically defend the Law as a prisoner of Sin in Romans 7, Paul will more sympathetically flesh out the created order’s own plight under Sin and Death in Romans 8. The creation itself, Paul will explain in Romans, is in “slavery to decay” (Rom 8:21), “groaning in labor pains” (8:22) until the coming “revealing of the children of God” (8:19). But even in Romans Paul refuses to concede that this creation has *authority* over humanity. Note his reversal of the logic that human beings are under the sway of creation’s activity. The groaning creation of Romans 8 does not threaten bad human behavior or reward good human behavior. Instead, it is dependent on human activity—or, better, God’s activity in human beings—for its own future flourishing!

## 4. Children of Hagar the Παιδίσκη

Γέγραπται γὰρ ὅτι Ἀβραὰμ δύο υἱοὺς ἔσχεν, ἓνα ἐκ τῆς παιδίσκης καὶ ἓνα ἐκ τῆς ἐλευθέρης .... ἅτινά ἐστιν ἀλληγορούμενα· αὗται γάρ εἰσιν δύο διαθήκαι, μία μὲν ἀπὸ ὄρους Σινᾶ, εἰς δουλείαν γεννῶσα, ἥτις ἐστὶν Ἀγάρ.

“For it is written that Abraham had two sons, one from an enslaved woman and one from a free woman ... These things are allegorized, for they are two covenants. One of them is Hagar, from Mount Sinai, bearing children into slavery.” (Galatians 4:22, 24).

Paul concludes his collection of enslavement images for the Law in Galatians with an “allegorical” appeal to the stories of Sarah and Hagar in Genesis 16 and 21 (ἅτινα ἐστὶν ἀλληγορούμενα, 4:24a). This brief remark has created much scholarly debate. Does Paul mean that Genesis was *written* “allegorically,” i.e., that an allegorical meaning is latent in the text of Genesis itself?<sup>1</sup> Or does he mean that mean that he is using a hermeneutical tool he calls “allegory” to interpret a non-allegorical text?<sup>2</sup> If the latter, does Paul refer to the specific, technical practice of allegorical reading used by Alexandrian interpreters of Scripture, or does he “simply refer... to an interpretation that would today be called ‘figurative’”<sup>3</sup>? Whatever else he means by the term

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<sup>1</sup> Martyn, *Galatians*, 436; Gerhard Sellin, “Hagar und Sara: Religionsgeschichtliche Hintergründe der Schriftallegorese Gal 4,21-31,” in *Das Urchristentum in seiner literarischen Geschichte: Festschrift für Jürgen Becker zum 65. Geburtstag*, ed. U. Mell and U. B. Müller, BZNW (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1999), 59-84, 67.

<sup>2</sup> Moo, *Galatians*, 295-96, 299; Longenecker, *Galatians*, 209-10; de Boer, *Galatians*, 295; Betz, *Galatians*, 243; Hays, “Galatians,” 301.

<sup>3</sup> Moo, *Galatians*, 295. At stake for many interpreters is whether Paul *also* understands the stories of Sarah and Hagar to be in any sense “historical,” or if he reads from “the Alexandrian propensity to interpret narratives as coded vehicles of timeless philosophical truths” (Hays, “Galatians,” 301). Some interpreters are squeamish about the word “allegory” because it implies the latter. Hays, however, argues that Paul’s use of the term ἀλληγορέω (which Hays translates “to interpret allegorically”) “simply suggests that the narrative is to be read as having a latent sense, a figurative meaning that is to be distinguished from its overt literal sense” (301). Betz agrees: he calls Paul’s practice here a “mixture of what we would call allegory and typology” (Betz, *Galatians*, 239). See also de Boer’s discussion of this question (*Galatians*, 295-96).

ἀλληγορούμενα, Paul uses it to signal that his treatment of enslavement and freedom in this passage both involves and extends beyond the plain sense of the stories of Hagar, Sarah, and Abraham in Genesis 16 and 21.

As he interprets these stories allegorically (4:24), Paul creates two conceptual categories: one that includes Hagar and enslavement, and one that includes Sarah and freedom. This enslaved-free distinction drives Paul's project of comparison in the allegory as a whole. Paul introduces the mothers of Abraham's sons as ἡ παιδίσκη and ἡ ἐλευθέρα, respectively (4:22), and their sons as ὁ... ἐκ τῆς παιδίσκης and ὁ... ἐκ τῆς ἐλευθέρας (4:23). He never provides proper names for Sarah or Ishmael, and he only names Isaac once (4:28). In this retelling of the Genesis story a character's enslavement or freedom is the most important part of their identity, even more important than their name.

Out of all of his epistles, Paul only uses the term παιδίσκη here in Galatians to refer to Hagar (4:22, 23, 30, 31); he likely lifts it directly from the LXX of Gen 16 and 21. Luke's use of the word tells us something about the vulnerability of a παιδίσκη in the ancient world. To return to Jesus' Parable of the Overseer, for example, a managerial δοῦλος (himself vulnerable to corporeal violence, see Chapter 3's discussion of Luke 12:46-48) is put into a position of power that allows him to beat both enslaved men and παιδίσκαι (Luke 12:45). These παιδίσκαι are in an even more vulnerable position than their enslaved overseer. In Acts 16:16 Paul and Silas meet (and exorcise) a παιδίσκη whose owners have been using her presumably oppressive "spirit of divination" to make money for themselves. Glancy, citing Susan Treggiari, also names two basic kinds of



sexual vulnerability that were particular to all enslaved women, whether referred to as παιδίσκαι or with other slavery terms: 1) sex with an enslaved woman was considered morally neutral for a male slave-owner, and so enslaved women were often subject to unwanted sexual attention, and 2) the wives of slave-owners would often retaliate against enslaved women with whom their husbands had had sexual contact.<sup>4</sup> Both of these kinds of vulnerability become manifest in Paul's description of Hagar: Abraham (oddly, acting according to Sarah's instructions) is the one who decides to have sex with Hagar so that she will bear his child, and Sarah the free wife subsequently compels Abraham to drive her out of the household.

Paul ostensibly sets up Sarah and Hagar as foils for each other: Sarah is free, Hagar is enslaved, and the Galatians must recognize that they are children of the free woman *rather than* children of the enslaved woman (Gal 4:31). But, as we will see, the dissimilarities between Sarah and Hagar begin to break down precisely at the point of their captivity and freedom, especially when Paul introduces yet another Scriptural intertext, Isaiah 54:1, which depicts the plight and redemption of Jerusalem as a woman who experiences *both* enslavement *and* freedom. Paul uses this movement between enslavement and freedom in the lives of the paired figures of Sarah and Hagar, along with the woman who personifies Jerusalem in Isaiah, to focus the Galatians' attention on the very real threat that their temptation to adopt practices of the Law will result in their metaphorical enslavement. The Galatians may have been set free once before, but they can become enslaved again (cf. 4:9) if they do not stand firm in their freedom (5:1).

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<sup>4</sup> Glancy, *Slavery in Early Christianity*, 51.

To make this argument, I first examine a road *not* traveled by Paul: Philo of Alexandria's extended allegorical treatment of Sarah and Hagar, perhaps the only other extant first-century example of a Sarah-Hagar allegory. Philo's work is instructive for understanding Paul's primarily at their points of difference, and especially at the points of Sarah's enduring freedom and Hagar's enduring enslavement. I explore at length three main points of difference: 1) unlike Philo's, Paul's allegory is much more spare and cryptic, enabling him to blur lines between Sarah and Hagar that Philo draws much more sharply; 2) Paul identifies the Law with Hagar, while Philo identifies it with Sarah; 3) Philo is much more confident than Paul that those who engage with these allegorical women (in his case, students of virtue) will securely progress from one to the other, with no opportunity to move backwards. Paul writes the letter to the Galatians precisely to address his fear that the Galatians *cannot* maintain this kind of motion, and he exploits status instabilities in the stories of Sarah, Hagar, and the Isaianic woman to warn them that their freedom is not enduring. To contextualize this particular anxiety of Paul's within a larger cultural anxiety about the permeability between categories of free and enslaved—particularly for women and children—I then closely examine this anxiety in two literary examples that are relatively contemporary with Paul: the Greek novel *Chaereas and Callirhoe*, and the Jewish book of Judith. Finally, I examine the continued movement between freedom and enslavement that Paul enjoins upon the Galatians at the end of the letter, where Paul instructs the Galatians to “serve one another as slaves” (δουλεύω, 5:13), and I consider how the Galatians' own exercise of enslaved agency relates to that of the Law.

## 4.1 Philo's Sarah-Hagar Allegories

To understand what Paul *does* do with his Sarah-Hagar allegory in Gal 4:21-5:1 it is helpful to look at an example of what he *could* do—but does not. Perhaps the most intriguing parallel to Gal 4:21-5:1 in extant Greek literature is Philo of Alexandria's extended allegorical treatment of the stories about Abraham, Sarah, and Hagar.<sup>5</sup> These stories prove incredibly fruitful for Philo's work: they form the entire basis for his paired works *On the Preliminary Studies* and *Of Flight and Finding*, and Sarah and Hagar also make notable appearances in *On the Cherubim*, *On the Sacrifices of Cain and Abel*, *On the Posterity of Cain*, *On the Change of Names*, and *On the Life of Abraham*.<sup>6</sup>

*On the Preliminary Studies* is an extended allegorical treatment of the stories of Abraham, Sarah, and Hagar that teaches the reader about the appropriate function of

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<sup>5</sup> Francis Watson's *Paul and the Hermeneutics of Faith* (London: Bloomsbury, 2015) provides an in-depth rationale for placing Paul in a hypothetical "three-way conversation" with both Israel's scriptures and other Second Temple Jewish interpretations of these scriptures. Neither Watson nor I argue that Paul's letters are textually dependent on Philo's treatises (or *vice versa*). Galatians should not be read as a direct response to Philo! Rather, reading these two independent (and incongruous) interpretations of the stories of Sarah and Hagar in Genesis allows the reader of all three conversation partners—Paul, Philo, and Genesis—to see the divergent ways the "semantic potential" of Genesis could be realized by Jewish commentators in the first century CE and thus what is particularly striking about Paul's interpretation (Watson, 4). See also John M.G. Barclay's comparative approach in *Paul and the Gift*.

<sup>6</sup> For important studies of Philo's biblical interpretation, see Samuel Sandmel, *Philo's Place in Judaism: A Study of Conceptions of Abraham in Jewish Literature* (Cincinnati: Hebrew Union College Press, 1956); Jean Danielou, SJ, *Philo of Alexandria*, trans. James G. Colbert (Eugene, OR: Cascade, 2014); Marcela Coria, "Paideía y Sophía en el itinerario del alma hacia Dios: Abraham, Sara y Agar en la exégesis filónica," *Circe de Clásicos y Modernos* 13 (2018): 93-106; Hent de Vries, "Philosophia Ancilla Theologiae: Allegory and Ascension in Philo's *On Mating with the Preliminary Studies* (*De Congressu Quaerendae Eruditionis Gratia*)," *The Bible and Critical Theory* 5 (2009): 1-19; Mireille Hadas-Lebel, *Philo of Alexandria: A Thinker in the Jewish Diaspora*, trans. Robyn Frechet (Leiden: Brill, 2012); Adam Kamesar, "Biblical Interpretation in Philo," in *The Cambridge Companion to Philo*, ed. Adam Kamesar (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 65-91; Jason M. Zurawski, "Mosaic Torah as Encyclical Paideia: Reading Paul's Allegory of Hagar and Sarah in Light of Philo of Alexandria," in *Pedagogy in Ancient Judaism and Early Christianity*, ed. Karina Martin Hogan, Matthew Goff, and Emma Wasserman, EJL 41 (Atlanta: SBL Press, 2017), 293-307.

elementary education in the pursuit of virtue. Philo's primary concern in this treatise is to clarify the proper sequence and role of education, so when he employs Abraham, Sarah, and Hagar to make his points he gives them clear, bounded roles: Philo casts Abraham as the human soul (*ψυχή*) or mind (*νοῦς*), Sarah as virtue (*ἀρετή*), and Hagar as "the preliminary learning of the school course" (*τὰ προπαίδευμα ἐγκύκλιος μουσική*) that prepares the way for virtue (*Congr.* 9-10 [Colson and Whitaker, LCL]).

Most people, Philo explains, cannot acquire virtue immediately and at a young age, just as Abraham could not immediately bear children with Sarah. Philo notices that Genesis 16 introduces the problem of Sarah and Abraham's childlessness by specifying that "Sarah was not giving birth *for him*," i.e., for Abraham (Gen 16:1). "Moses does not say that Sarah did not bear," Philo points out, "but only that she did not bear for some particular person" (*Congr.* 9). The problem is not with Sarah/virtue; she constantly bears her offspring—"wisdom, justice, [and] piety"—for God (*Congr.* 6). The problem is Abraham/the mind, who is not yet prepared to receive them for himself. Because virtue "deals with... the whole life of man" its disciples must first be trained in a wide range of human knowledge: "grammar, geometry, astronomy, rhetoric, music, and all the other branches of intellectual study" (*Congr.* 11). This training is virtue's enslaved handmaid (*θεραπεινίς*, a synonym of *παιδίσκη*<sup>7</sup>), given by virtue to humankind as Sarah gave Hagar to Abraham. Philo considers Sarah's/virtue's actions here to be entirely admirable, a kindness to those who are not yet prepared to receive her. She refrains from shaming

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<sup>7</sup> Philo, as we will see below, recognizes that the LXX uses the term *παιδίσκη* to refer to Hagar. He largely seems to understand the two terms as synonymous, though he will also exploit the specific double valence of the word *παιδίσκη* to label Hagar both a "slave" and a "child" (*Congr.*, 154).

Abraham for his inability to receive her children. Instead, she gently and discreetly directs him, “Go in, then, ...to my handmaid (θεραπαίνις), the lower instruction..., that first you may have children by her” (*Congr.* 14). Only after receiving the handmaid’s children can the mind “avail [it]self of the mistress’s [δέσποινα] company to beget children of higher birth” (*Congr.* 14).

How does this lower instruction prepare the mind to receive virtue’s offspring? It trains its students incrementally to love this offspring. Geometry, for example, “will sow in the soul that loves to learn the seeds of equality and proportion, and by charm of its logical continuity will raise from those seeds a zeal for justice” (*Congr.* 16). The study of music, with its attention to rhythms and harmonies, will “reduce discord to concord” in the souls of its students (*Congr.* 16). Most students of virtue need this lower instruction to prepare them to receive virtue. They need “the simple and milky foods of infancy” before they can receive “grown-up food” (*Congr.* 19).<sup>8</sup> It would be unwise to “reject Hagar”—at least at the beginning of a young man’s education. She effectively trains a young man for “the weary contest in which virtue is the prize” (*Congr.* 24).<sup>9</sup>

But this young man must never mistake the means for the end: he must never fall prey to “the love lures of the handmaids and spurn the mistress” (*Congr.* 77). Note, Philo

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<sup>8</sup> Cf., of course, 1 Cor 3:2.

<sup>9</sup> Philo also provides his reader with other examples of men in Israel’s lineage who have both “free-born legitimate (ἐλευθέραι καὶ ἄσται) wives” and handmaids who are “slaves and concubines (δούλαι καὶ παλλακίδες)”: Jacob, with both his wives Rachel and Leah (Gen 29:14-30) and their handmaids Zilpah and Bilhah (Gen 30:1-12, *Congr.*, 30-33), and Abraham’s brother Nahor, with his wife Milcah and concubine Reumah (Gen 22:23-24, *Congr.*, 43). In these cases, too, Philo insists that Moses did not intend to provide his readers with a mere “historical pedigree”; instead, these lists of wives and concubines are “a revelation through symbols of facts which may be profitable to the soul” (*Congr.*, 44). Jacob and Nahor, too, teach the man who wishes to receive virtue that he must first accept easier instruction.

warns his reader, that Sarah supervises Abraham’s encounter with Hagar at every turn. Sarah “carr[ies] out the wooing and preside[s] over the bridal rites,” and her presence reminds Abraham that he is having sex with Hagar only to prepare him to receive *Sarah’s* children (*Congr.* 72-73). So the student of the “lower instruction” must remember that he is only studying these preliminary subjects en route to something greater: the acquisition of virtue and her “offspring.” There is danger in loving the lower instruction too much and for too long, growing old “doting on poetry” or “geometric figures” or “the blending of musical ‘colours’” and neglecting “the lawful wife [ἀσπὴ γυνή],” virtue (*Congr.* 77).<sup>10</sup> Elsewhere Philo derides those students too devoted to Hagar/the lower instruction as “sophists.”<sup>11</sup>

As he does elsewhere, in *On the Preliminary Studies* Philo can conflate wisdom, virtue, and Israel’s Law.<sup>12</sup> In this treatise they combine in the person of Sarah, especially when she “afflicts” (ἐκάκωσεν) Hagar after discovering her pregnancy (Gen 16:6). On Philo’s account this is a beneficent affliction—not, as some might suppose, “one of the usual accompaniments of women’s jealousy” (*Congr.* 180)—because it is “profitable,” directed towards the mind’s improvement (*Congr.* 158).<sup>13</sup> In this way, Philo continues, Sarah’s chastisement of Hagar is like that of the Law, which also afflicts (κακῶ) its

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<sup>10</sup> *Congr.*, 77. Note *Congr.* 31, where it is clear from Philo’s discussion of Jacob’s marriages to Rachel, Leah, Zilpah, and Bilhah that he understands “lawful wives” (ἀσπῆ) to be “free” (ἐλευθέραι).

<sup>11</sup> Cf. *Sobr.*, 9; *Fug.*, 209, 211; *Cher.*, 8-10; *Post.*, 130-31. Philo mixes the metaphor across his body of work: he elsewhere associates these sophists with Ishmael—Hagar’s son—while here in *Congr.* he calls the various branches of elementary education Hagar’s children.

<sup>12</sup> See John W. Martens, *One God, One Law*, 96-98.

<sup>13</sup> Throughout this treatise Philo switches between identifying Hagar with the school subjects that train the mind/soul (e.g., *Congr.* 14) and identifying her, as he does here, with the mind/soul when it trains in elementary education.

adherents in order to produce in them “a perfect good, that most admirable thing, admonition” (*Congr.* 160). Philo reminds his reader that the Law’s first “ordinances and judgements” were fittingly “given in a place whose name is bitterness”—that is, at Marah (Ex 15:23-25), where God, through Moses, both miraculously sweetened bitter water and delivered the first teachings of the Law (*Congr.* 163). The Law is both bitter and sweet: bitter to those who are too lazy or cowardly to submit themselves to the Law’s strenuous training, sweet to those who understand that the point of this training is “the yearning, the desire, the fervour, in fact the love of the good” (*Congr.* 166). So Moses can call the unleavened bread of Passover—a festival that “produce[s] cheerfulness and gladness”—the “bread of affliction” (ἄρτος κακώσεως, cf. Deut 16:3), “for the most numerous and most important of goods are wont to result from repeated strenuous contention and keen toiling, and the soul’s ardour for the best, and the consummation of toil” (*Congr.* 162). According to Philo, Sarah’s affliction of Hagar, like the Law’s affliction of its adherents, is a temporary and productive pain, working within those who submit to it to lead to their ultimate good. “The work of justice and the power of the Law... chastens by reproof” (τὴν ... δικαιοσύνης καὶ νομοθετικῆς ἔργον οὕσαν—ἐπιπλήξει γὰρ σωφρονίζει—μάλιστα θαυμάζω, *Congr.* 179).

Throughout Philo’s allegorical work “Hagar” and “Sarah” never break character; their roles are never confused or conflated. The soul’s acquisition of virtue is only successful, in fact, when the soul successfully preserves the women’s *distinctive* roles. “Hagar” must come first, teaching a young man the subjects he needs to learn to progress onward to virtue, and then she must permanently give way to “Sarah.” On Philo’s

account “Hagar” and “Sarah” do not have *conflicting* roles; they work together, each in her turn, to incrementally develop a young man’s capacity for virtue. But they do not do the *same* work. Their collective task is accomplished only when the young man in pursuit of virtue can keep them separate and in the proper order.

One of the primary ways Philo preserves the distinction between Hagar and Sarah is to highlight Hagar’s enslavement and Sarah’s freedom. As I argued in Chapter 3, Philo’s understanding of the “naturalness” of slavery falls somewhere in between Aristotle’s and Epictetus’s. There are times when Philo assumes slavery is *ontologically* fitting for those who are enslaved and times when he assumes slavery is an unfortunate accident that befalls people who are otherwise suited to freedom. Joseph’s enslavement in Egypt, as we saw, falls into this latter category. Although Philo recognizes the constraints Joseph’s enslavement places upon him, he also has Joseph refuse to “admit that he is a slave, but regard himself as a free man [who] shapes his activities to please his own soul” (*Ios.* 67). Philo *can* treat Hagar’s enslavement in a similar way—although in a much more restrained manner, and primarily in defense of *Sarah’s* suggestion that Abraham procure offspring through sex with Hagar. When Philo eulogizes Sarah near the end of his *Life of Abraham* he uses this story as the example *par excellence* of Sarah’s selflessness and nobility of character (*Abr.* 247).<sup>14</sup> Philo has unreserved praise for Sarah’s

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<sup>14</sup> Given Philo’s sustained attention to the Hagar stories in other works, it is surprising that Hagar’s only appearance in the biographical *On Abraham* comes at the very end of the treatise. Earlier Philo narrates the miracle of Isaac’s birth without any mention of either Hagar or Ishmael (168ff). Perhaps Philo is reluctant to discuss Hagar at the narrative level because narrating Abraham’s sexual encounter with her might threaten to impugn him morally; Hagar proves quite useful for Philo’s allegorical work, but *only* for his allegorical work. In *On the Preliminary Studies*, for example, Philo insists that those who discuss Hagar’s encounter with Abraham “must eliminate all bodily unions or intercourse which has pleasure as its object. What is meant”—and the *only* thing that is meant—“is a mating of mind with virtue” (*Congr.*, 12). Here, at



scheme to impregnate Hagar; she undertakes it out of laudable fear that “the house beloved of God should be left entirely desolate” (*Abr.* 247). But Sarah, like Joseph in Potiphar’s house, must walk a fine line in her proposal. On the one hand, to assure Abraham that she will not be jealous of his prospective sexual partner, she must select a woman who is her social inferior: her “handmaiden” (θεραπαίνις), who is at least “outwardly a slave (τὸ... σῶμα δούλην).” On the other hand, this woman will bear Abraham’s heir, and so Sarah feels compelled to select for him a woman who is “inwardly of free and noble race (ἐλευθέραν... καὶ εὐγενῆ τὴν διάνοιαν)” (*Abr.* 251). Hagar fits the bill: like Joseph, her “inward nobility” *approximates* freedom, even though she remains physically enslaved. In fact, Sarah continues, although Hagar is “an Egyptian by birth (γένος μὲν Αἰγυπτίαν)” she has proved herself to be “a Hebrew by her rule of life (τὴν δὲ προαίρεσιν Ἑβραίαν)” (*Abr.* 251).

But within the context of his *allegorical* work—especially in *On the Preliminary Studies* and *Of Flight and Finding*—Philo is much more inclined to treat Hagar’s enslavement as inherent to her character, an ontological distinction that preserves her allegorical distance from the free Sarah. At times this enslaved-free distinction makes Philo almost dismissive towards Hagar, even though he generally values her preliminary contributions to the development of virtue. For example, when Moses calls her a παιδίσκη, Philo suggests, “he makes a double admission, that she is a slave (δούλη) and that she is childish (τὸ νηπίαν), for the name suits both of these” (*Congr.* 154). Philo here

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the end of *On Abraham*, Philo has Sarah clarify in her speech to Abraham that she knows he will have sex with Hagar “not for unreasoning lust but [only!] in fulfilment of nature’s inevitable law” (*Abr.*, 249).

exploits the double valence of words in the παῖς family, which can sometimes refer to children, sometimes to the enslaved, and sometimes to both.<sup>15</sup> As Jennifer Glancy explains, enslaved people in the Roman world were never considered adults—a social construct which perhaps helps explain both Philo’s and Paul’s association of enslaved figures with the period of immaturity.<sup>16</sup> As a παιδίσκη, according to Philo, Hagar is inherently suited to childhood: she is childish herself, and she is useful only for the elementary stages of a boy’s education.

Philo becomes even more dismissive of Hagar when he returns to the stories of Abraham, Sarah, and Hagar in *On Flight and Finding*, which follows directly from *On the Preliminary Studies*. Here Hagar’s enslavement functions, according to Philo, as a kind of epistemic impediment that causes her to mistake the angel that appears to her in the wilderness for God himself. As the story is told in Genesis 16, Philo notices, the narrator usually specifies that it is God’s *angel* that speaks to Hagar when she flees Abraham and Sarah’s household (16:7, 8, 9, 10, 11). But Hagar herself identifies the angel’s voice as God’s voice. She names God “You-are-the-God-who-looks-upon-me” (Σὺ ὁ θεὸς ὁ ἐπιδὼν με) and claims that she “truly... saw him face to face when he appeared to me” (16:13, NETS). The narrative itself is ambivalent about the identity of this divine comforter. In 16:13 it simply asserts that Hagar named “the name of the Lord who was speaking to her (ἐκάλεσεν Αγαρ τὸ ὄνομα κυρίου τοῦ λαλοῦντος πρὸς αὐτήν),” implying that she was correct to identify him as the Lord.

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<sup>15</sup> Mark Golden, “Pais, ‘Child’ and ‘Slave,’” *L’Antiquité Classique* 54 (1985): 91-104.

<sup>16</sup> Glancy, *Slavery in Early Christianity*, 24-26.

Just whom did Hagar encounter? The text of Genesis is ambiguous,<sup>17</sup> but Philo assumes that Hagar was simply wrong: this was an angel, not God. Philo explains her “mistake” with recourse to her enslavement. When Hagar names the angel “the-God-who-looks-upon me,” Philo explains, what she really means is that this angel is “the Maker of my wishes and offspring” (σὺ ποιητῆς εἶ τῶν ἐμῶν βουλημάτων καὶ ἐγγόνων, *Fug.* 211 [Colson and Whitaker, LCL]). In a sense, according to Philo, Hagar is right,

for of free and really high-born souls He who is free and sets free is the Creator, while slaves are creators of slaves (ἐλευθέρων μὲν γὰρ καὶ ἀστῶν ὡς ἀληθῶς ψυχῶν ὁ ἐλεύθερος καὶ ἐλευθεροποιὸς δημιουργός, δούλων δὲ δούλοι): and angels are God’s household slaves (οικέται), and are deemed gods by those by those whose existence is still one of toil and bondage (νομιζόμενοι πρὸς τῶν ἔτ’ ἐν πόνοις καὶ δουλείαις ὑπαρχόντων θεοί, *Fug.* 212).

Here Philo is somewhat ambiguous himself. Does he mean to say that enslaved people (or allegorically enslaved souls) only mistakenly *think* that enslaved angels are gods, or that enslaved angels are actually the creators of enslaved people/souls? Regardless, Philo here draws a strong distinction between those who are free and those who are enslaved, relying on the created order to do so.

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<sup>17</sup> This ambiguity is even more pronounced in Hagar’s second wilderness experience in Genesis 21. After Hagar leaves behind a dying Ishmael in despair, “*God* listened to the voice of the child from the place where he was, and *God’s angel* called Hagar from the sky and said to her, ‘What is it, Hagar? Do not be afraid, for *God* has given ear to the voice of your child from the place where he is. Rise, take the child, and hold it fast with your hand, for *I* [presumably God, not the angel, even though the angel is speaking in the first person singular] will make him into a great nation.’ And *God* opened her eyes, and she saw a well of living water...” (Gen 21:17-19a, NETS). Commenting on the MT, which contains the same ambiguity as the LXX, Victor P. Hamilton (*The Book of Genesis Chapters 1-17*, NICOT [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990]) agrees with Hagar: he calls this angel “a visible manifestation... of [YHWH] that is essentially indistinguishable from [YHWH] himself” (451). See also E. A. Speiser, *Genesis: Introduction, Translation, and Notes*, AB (New York: Doubleday, 1962), 118. Claus Westermann (*Genesis 12-36*, trans. John J. Scullion S.J., CC [Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1995]) is reluctant to identify this “messenger” too closely with God, but he does argue that “God is present... in the message” of this messenger (244).

## ***4.2 Paul's Sarah-Hagar Allegory: Key Features***

How does Philo's allegorical treatment of Hagar and Sarah help us better read Paul's? As I acknowledged in Chapter 3, it is highly unlikely that Paul's allegory is directly responding to Philo's; I am not making a claim about direct literary dependence. However, Philo shows the reader of Galatians one path it was *possible* for a first-century Jewish author to take to discuss Hagar and Sarah allegorically and how different that path is from Paul's. Three differences between Philo's and Paul's allegories are particularly instructive for thinking about what *Paul* does with his own distinctive treatment of these stories.

### **4.2.1 Who's Who in Paul's Allegory?**

First, as its history of interpretation has shown, Paul's allegory is not nearly as neatly and thoroughly worked out as Philo's. Philo assigns allegorical referents to Sarah and Hagar with remarkable clarity and consistency across his body of work: Sarah is very clearly virtue (though also linked with wisdom and the Law), and Hagar is very clearly the elementary education that prepares a boy to develop virtue. But for all the work Paul does in Gal 4:21-5:1 to distinguish between Sarah and Hagar, he does not as clearly instruct his reader about these women's allegorical correspondents. Paul never says, as Philo does, "Hagar is x [in Philo's case, elementary education]." Instead he provides a confusing string of predicates for her and only tersely explains what he means what he means by them: Hagar is one of "two covenants (διαθηκαι)" (4:24); she is "from Mount Sinai" (4:24-25); she is "bearing children into/for slavery (εις δουλειαν γεννωσα)" (4:24);

she is a “mountain in Arabia”<sup>18</sup> (4:25); she “corresponds to the present Jerusalem” (4:25); she is “enslaved with her children (δουλεύει... μετὰ τῶν τέκνων αὐτῆς)” (4:25); her child was “begotten according to the flesh” (4:23, 29); she is not “our” mother (4:26, 31). It is also not entirely clear how Paul intends all these details he associates with Hagar to work together allegorically. When he calls her “Mount Sinai in Arabia” (4:25), for example, he cannot mean she simply corresponds to the literal mountain, because he then explains that she/the mountain further corresponds (συστοιχεῖ) to “the now Jerusalem” (τῆ νῦν Ἱερουσαλήμ)—itself a somewhat cryptic title! Add in yet another Scriptural allusion—as he does when he cites Isaiah 54 at length in Gal 4:27—and Paul ends up creating something less like Philo’s sustained and sequential reflection on pedagogy and more like, in Susan Eastman’s words, an “endlessly reverberating echo chamber, or to change the metaphor, a hall of mirrors.”<sup>19</sup>

Just who *is* Hagar in Galatians? To what or to whom in the Galatians’ experience does she correspond? These are important questions to consider carefully, not just because Paul makes them harder to answer than Philo does, but because our answers have important ramifications for understanding what Paul teaches the Galatians about Israel and its Law. Christians have a long history of linking Paul’s portrayal of Hagar to Jews as

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<sup>18</sup> Or perhaps not: there is a notable text critical issue at this point. Does the text say that “*Hagar* is a mountain in Arabia” (τὸ δὲ Ἄγαρ Σινᾶ ὄρος ἐστὶν ἐν τῇ Ἀραβίᾳ, so the NA28), or simply explain that “Sinai is a mountain in Arabia” (τὸ γὰρ Σινᾶ ὄρος ἐστὶν ἐν τῇ Ἀραβίᾳ, so Stephen C. Carlson’s argument in *The Text of Galatians and Its History*, WUNT 2.385 [Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2015], 163-69)? (Carlson also argues that the phrase is a marginal gloss.) The manuscript evidence is divided enough to merit a footnote in the NRSV of 4:25. Either way, however, Paul *associates* Hagar with Mount Sinai (4:24) in Arabia.

<sup>19</sup> Susan Grove Eastman, *Recovering Paul’s Mother Tongue: Language and Theology in Galatians* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2007), 128.

a people, often with disastrous results.<sup>20</sup> Hans Dieter Betz (in)famously reproduces this reading of the allegory in his *Hermeneia* commentary—though, of course, not as a prescription for contemporary Christians to mistreat contemporary Jews! Betz finds Paul’s intentions “easy to detect”: Paul, on Betz’s account, “wants to create a dualistic polarity between ‘Judaism’ and ‘Christianity,’ in order to discredit his Jewish-Christian opposition.”<sup>21</sup> And so in the person of Hagar Paul links one “covenant” (διαθήκη) with Mount Sinai, clearly (on Betz’s reading) referring to the enslaving “Torah covenant of Judaism.”<sup>22</sup> Sarah straightforwardly represents the “new covenant” of “Christianity.”<sup>23</sup> The “present Jerusalem” is a metonym for “the political-religious institution of Judaism” and its association with “the ‘world,’ ‘Law,’ ‘sin,’ and ‘death.’”<sup>24</sup> The “above Jerusalem” is “virtually identical with the ‘new age,’” linked in Paul’s thought to “God, Christ,

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<sup>20</sup> See Deena Klepper’s “Historicizing Allegory: The Jew as Hagar in Medieval Christian Text and Image” (*CH* 84 [2015]: 308-344) for the sobering reception history of Gal 4:21-5:1 among medieval Christians in western Europe. Klepper reports, for example, that in letters “to King Philip Augustus of France... and then to the archbishop of Sens and the bishop of Paris in 1205,” Pope Innocent III invoked Gal 4:21-5:1 to discourage Christians from serving as domestic servants in wealthier Jewish homes. The text, declared Innocent, relegated Jews to “perpetual servitude,” and it was not fitting that “children of the freewoman (i.e., Christians)” should serve “the children of the bondwoman (i.e., Jews)” (309). A century later, Oldradus de Ponte, “a master of law” in Avignon, used the same text to argue that it was appropriate for Christian princes to expel Jews who did not “maintain a peaceful presence” in Christian lands. “All this,” Oldradus wrote, invoking the larger narrative context of Paul’s source material in Genesis, “seems clearly prefigured in that slave woman [Hagar] from whom they descend since, because she conducted herself haughtily and ungratefully to the free woman [Sarah], who signifies the Church, she was expelled” (310). Klepper argues that both “the centrality of Paul’s Galatians allegory in western Christian liturgical and exegetical traditions” and “the malleability of the allegory in Christian interpretation” made this text particularly (and disturbingly) *useful* for these medieval Christian exegetes and translated easily into justifications for social policies that oppressed Jews living in Christian lands (310-11). It is precisely the “complexity of the counterpoints of Sarah-Hagar, Isaac-Ishmael, free-slave, miraculous motherhood-natural motherhood,” Klepper finds, that “made the narrative a particularly fruitful one for exploration, interpretation, expansion, and adaptation” (311). For earlier historical appropriation of Paul’s Sarah-Hagar allegory along these lines, see Wendy Elgersma Helleman’s “Casting Out Hagar: Anti-Judaism in the Sermons of Augustine,” *CTJ* 51 (2016): 20-35.

<sup>21</sup> Betz, *Galatians*, 246.

<sup>22</sup> Betz, 244.

<sup>23</sup> Betz, 245.

<sup>24</sup> Betz, 246-47.

Spirit, and all the benefits of salvation.”<sup>25</sup> When Paul tells the Galatians (through the voice of “Scripture”) to cast out the παιδίσκη and her son he is sternly warning them that they must renounce “observation of the Torah,” lest they, like all other Jews, become “excluded from salvation altogether.”<sup>26</sup>

But the cryptic nature of Paul’s “allegory”—along with a drive to avoid readings of the allegory that have led to anti-Judaism—has produced in contemporary scholarship many other competing interpretations of its figures. Perhaps most creatively, Brigitte Kahl has argued that the difference between Sarah and Hagar in Galatians lies not in their religious or ethnic differences, but in their orientation towards the Roman Empire.<sup>27</sup> *Both Sarah and Hagar*, on Kahl’s account, represent “Israel as a whole,” but in “two contrasting political and theological conditions.”<sup>28</sup> Kahl leaves aside the question of whether or not Gal 4:21-31 can be properly identified with any formal literary category of allegory. But she finds it significant that Paul uses the word ἀλληγορούμενα—on her account, simply to flag that he is “speaking [ἀγορεύειν] in an *other* [ἄλλος] mode.”<sup>29</sup> “Hagar” is not Hagar *the person* in Galatians. She represents *something* (not *someone*) else; namely, “the national enslavement [by Rome] that is the reality of Jerusalem and Judaism in Paul’s time.”<sup>30</sup> Kahl speculates that Paul’s opponents in Galatia were urging

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<sup>25</sup> Betz, 247.

<sup>26</sup> Betz, 251. Note that Betz thinks Paul revised this position by the time he wrote Romans. “At this point there is a decisive difference between Galatians and Romans: in Galatians there is no room or possibility for an eschatological salvation of Judaism as in Rom 11:25-32” (251).

<sup>27</sup> Brigitte Kahl, “Hagar’s Babylonian Captivity: A Roman Re-imagination of Galatians 4:21-31,” *Int* 68 (2014): 257-269.

<sup>28</sup> Kahl, 262.

<sup>29</sup> Kahl, 262, emphasis original.

<sup>30</sup> Kahl, 262.

the Galatian men to become circumcised because doing so would grant them protected legal status as Jews, thereby exempting them from the “civic and imperial worship” prescribed by their Roman overlords. But this tactic, Kahl argues, would play right into Rome’s strategy of encouraging “hostile and violent” ethnic polarization among the people groups they conquered.<sup>31</sup> Paul, Kahl suggests, disparages his opponents as “slaves and puppets of Roman law,” and uses “Hagar” to condemn “the perpetuation of slavery and idolatry through practices of separation that appear to conform to God’s law, but in reality comply with the Roman master order.”<sup>32</sup> (Sarah, by contrast, “becomes the embodiment of a collective liberation movement.”<sup>33</sup>) The Jewish Law, on this reading, is never itself a problem for Paul. Rather, Paul decries his opponents’ co-opting of God’s good Law for political expediency. Kahl’s reading attempts to alleviate the anxiety she raises about Gal 4:21-31 being used as a text of exclusion. If Hagar does not stand for any person—or any type of person—but rather for an *imperial posture of ethnic exclusion* itself, the text becomes a resource for resisting religious, cultural, or racial violence rather than a justification for perpetrating it.

But scholars need not go as far as Kahl does—entirely dissociating Hagar from the Law in Galatians—to read Paul’s allegory in a way that does not dangerously (and anachronistically) malign “Judaism” as a religion. J. Louis Martyn, for example, famously identifies Sarah and Hagar not with Christians and Jews, or Christianity and Judaism, but with two competing *Christian* missionary efforts: one that encourages

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<sup>31</sup> Kahl, 269.

<sup>32</sup> Kahl, 269.

<sup>33</sup> Kahl, 262.



observance of the Law, and one that does not. Martyn draws the reader's attention to Paul's three uses of the verb γεννάω in his "allegory," all of which are innovations into the story in the LXX, which uses τίκτω to talk about Sarah and Hagar's childbearing (Gen 16:1, 2, 11, 15, 16; 21:2, 3, 7). In Gal 4:23 "the son of the παιδίσκη *was begotten* (γεγέννηται) according to the flesh"; in 4:24 Hagar is "*begetting* (γεννώσα) into slavery"; and in 4:29 "the one *begotten* (γεννηθείς) according to the flesh persecuted the one [begotten] according to the Spirit." Martyn notes that elsewhere in his letters Paul tends to use γεννάω as "mission-oriented verb," to designate "the genesis of Christians and of Christian churches through the power of the gospel entrusted to him by God."<sup>34</sup> So in Philemon 10 Paul can describe Onesimus as the child whom he *begot* (ἐγέννησα) in his imprisonment, and in 1 Cor 4:14-15 can insist to the Corinthians that though they have many παιδαγογοί only he *begat* (ἐγέννησα) them as a father.<sup>35</sup> Martyn connects this imagery to Paul's own metaphorical childbearing in the pericope immediately preceding the Sarah-Hagar "allegory": Paul writes with anguish about "laboring" (ᾠδίνω) with the Galatians until Christ is formed in them (4:19).<sup>36</sup> It is Paul's particular Christian mission—in contrast only to the Agitators' *own* particular Christian mission—that Paul allegorizes in Gal 4:21-5:1. In fact, Israel proper, on Martyn's account, is nowhere in view in Galatians.<sup>37</sup> The "present Jerusalem" is not a metonym for institutional Judaism, but for the Christian church in Jerusalem, which Martyn hypothesizes was supporting the

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<sup>34</sup> Martyn, *Galatians*, 451.

<sup>35</sup> Martyn, 451.

<sup>36</sup> Martyn, 451. See also Gaventa's *Our Mother Saint Paul*, particularly her essay "The Maternity of Paul" (29-40), for a fuller treatment of this strikingly feminine self-description of Paul.

<sup>37</sup> Martyn, *Galatians*, 574-77.

Agitators in Galatia financially.<sup>38</sup> Still, though, Martyn is reluctant to identify Hagar too closely with the Law itself. On Martyn's reading, it would make little sense to say that the Law "beget[s] children into slavery" (4:24), since, whatever else the Law did or does, it does not beget individual Christians or Christian communities. Paul must mean instead that Hagar corresponds to the Agitators' mission, which encourages improper veneration of the Law.

But the Law *in itself*—not just in the hands of rival Christian missionaries—need not be entirely excluded from the allegory to avoid charges of anti-Judaism. Christian interpreters of Galatians 4:21-5:1 are often anxious to avoid supersessionism, i.e., in Jewish theologian David Novak's words, "the theological conviction that the Christian church has superseded the Jewish people, assuming their role as God's covenanted people, Israel."<sup>39</sup> Novak, however, distinguishes between "hard supersessionism"—i.e., the assertion that "God has elected Christians to displace the Jews in the covenant between God and His people"<sup>40</sup>—and "soft supersessionism"—i.e., the view that "Christianity brings something new (a *novum testamentum* [c.f. 2 Cor 3:6]) to the covenant between God and Israel," but not that "Jews [are] set aside or replaced."<sup>41</sup> Betz reads Paul as a "hard" supersessionist who thinks the coming of Christ excludes non-Christian Jews from salvation. Novak, like most Jews and Christians today, would find

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<sup>38</sup> Paul, after all, takes a wary stance towards the church in Jerusalem at the beginning of the letter, and repeated conflicts with members of the Jerusalem church like the one in Antioch [Gal 2:11-14] may have sown in Paul "the sort of distrust that can grow into theological fury" (Martyn, "A Tale of Two Churches," 32).

<sup>39</sup> David Novak, "Supersessionism Hard and Soft," *First Things* 290 (2019): 1-9, 1.

<sup>40</sup> Novak, 1.

<sup>41</sup> Novak, 3-4.

this reading harmful. But, in Novak’s view, “a complete denial of supersessionism”—as we find in both Kahl’s and Martyn’s readings of Gal 4:21-5:1—is neither honest nor helpful. It “leaves Christians unable to affirm that Christianity has brought something new and fuller to the ancient covenant between God and Israel,”<sup>42</sup> and thus reduces both Christianity and Judaism to “syncretism.”<sup>43</sup> Paul, on Novak’s account, can and must affirm the superiority of the “new covenant” in Christ over the Law in order to make a compelling argument for the necessity and sufficiency of God’s promise fulfilled in Christ (cf. Gal 3:15-18).<sup>44</sup>

In fact, many contemporary scholars of Galatians do continue to understand Hagar and Sarah as the Law and Promise/Gospel, respectively—for good exegetical reasons, and without reproducing the kind of hard supersessionism of Betz’s reading.<sup>45</sup> It is notable that Paul refers to both women as διαθήκαι, a word he uses in chapter 3 to describe the promise to Abraham (3:17) and in 2 Cor 3 to distinguish between the new and old covenants (3:6, 14).<sup>46</sup> Paul also specifies that Hagar is “from Mount Sinai”

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<sup>42</sup> Novak, 3.

<sup>43</sup> Novak, 7.

<sup>44</sup> Furthermore, as Novak points out, Paul’s understanding that the Promise/Gospel supersedes the Law need not imply, for Christian readers, that Christianity supersedes contemporary Judaism. “In truth,” Novak argues, “both Christianity and Rabbinic Judaism come out of, and supersede, a religion based on the Hebrew Bible, plus some developments coming from the elaborative interpretations of Second Temple Jewish theology” (6).

<sup>45</sup> E.g., de Boer, *Galatians*, 287; Longenecker, *Galatians*, 211; Brendan Byrne, SJ, “Jerusalems Above and Below: A Critique of J. L. Martyn’s Interpretation of the Hagar-Sarah Allegory in Gal 4.21-5.1,” *NTS* 60 (2014): 215-231; Tedder, *Children of Laughter*.

<sup>46</sup> Martyn argues that in Galatians (as opposed to, say, 2 Corinthians) Paul seems to want to use the word διαθήκη only to refer to God’s promise to Abraham (cf. 3:15-18)—not also to refer to the Law—but that 1) the Agitators introduced this term to describe the Law among the Galatians, so Paul must take it up when he responds directly to their exegesis of Genesis 15-21, and 2) in the course of reckoning with the Agitators’ identification of the Law as a “covenant” Paul “is forced to conclude that the Teachers’ work has split the [one] covenant into two” (Martyn, *Galatians*, 455). Martyn has often been criticized for basing his exegesis too much on a detailed and speculative reconstruction of the arguments of Paul’s opponents; this

(4:25), a clear allusion to the giving of the Law in Exodus 19 (see also Acts 7:38). And he insists that Hagar’s children are “begotten according to the *flesh*” (κατὰ σάρκα, 4:23, 29), a term he directly associates with the “works of the Law” in Gal 3:2-3. Eastman also notes that Paul identifies the free woman as “*our* mother,” not “*your* mother” (4:26), and points out that “the apostle cannot very well be a child of his own law-free mission to the Gentiles.”<sup>47</sup> Furthermore, Paul talks about the *son* “begotten according to the flesh” persecuting (διώκω) the *son* “begotten according to the Spirit”—both in Genesis and “now” (4:29). In 5:11 he recounts his *own* persecution (διώκω), presumably at the hands of those who “preach circumcision.” If Paul maintains consistency between the allegory and his own experience of persecution, he would likely identify himself as the *son* of Sarah, and the Teachers as *sons* of Hagar (=sons of the Law, not of their own Law-observant mission). As this dissertation has shown, Paul also uses imagery for Hagar that is consistent with the slavery images for the Law he has used thus far. She, too, is both enslaved *and* “enslaves” (through “bearing children for slavery,” 4:24).<sup>48</sup> Hagar’s congruence with Paul’s other images for the Law as an enslaved “enslaver” strongly suggests that Paul uses her, at least in part, to represent the Law.

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is a case where his reconstruction is particularly detailed, and probably too speculative to justify his conclusions.

<sup>47</sup> Susan G. Eastman, “‘Cast Out the Slave Woman and her Son’: The Dynamics of Exclusion and Inclusion in Galatians 4.30,” *JSNT* 28 (2006): 309-336, 317.

<sup>48</sup> This is precisely the argument that Samuel J. Tedder uses to identify Hagar as the Law in Gal 4:21-5:1—the only time I have seen another scholar of Galatians note this collection of images of the Law as enslaved. “Paul emphasizes Hagar’s status as a ‘slave woman’ (*paidiskē*), and, likewise, he also refers to the Law as a ‘slave’ custodian (*paidagōgos*; a function of a slave) (Gal 3:24). As Hagar was ‘enslaved,’ so also is the Law implicated in the condition of slavery for Paul. Thus, the Law not only leads to slavery, but it is also itself ‘enslaved’” (Tedder, 199).

It is probably not possible to identify Hagar too neatly with the Law in Paul's allegory. Paul introduces the allegory as something that the Law itself speaks: "Tell me, you who want to be under the Law, *do you not hear the Law? For it is written, 'Abraham had two sons...'*" (4:21-22). And he finishes the allegory by again asking rhetorically, "What does Scripture (ἡ γραφή<sup>49</sup>) say? 'Cast out the παιδίσκη and her child...'" (4:30). If Paul intends Hagar to directly correspond to the Law itself it would be odd for the Law (as "Scripture") to adopt Sarah's voice to order its own expulsion. But, as we will soon see, it is difficult to draw *any* straight line from allegorical figure to referent in Gal 4:21-5:1. In the complex allegory Paul constructs it at least seems right to say that Paul *associates* the Law with Hagar, the enslaved woman who bears enslaved children. And, as Brendan Byrne argues, this association between Hagar and the Law need not "impl[y] a return to the kind of language—the 'deathknell of Judaism', for example—that older commentators employed with respect to this passage." Instead, it

does not go beyond what [Paul] has been implying from the beginning of Galatians 3 onwards: that the Sinai covenant, focused upon the Law, is one that involves slavery (4.1-4, 7), and that it is a temporary dispensation, over which the covenant spoken in promise to Abraham (3.16-18) leapfrogs, so to speak, to become the 'new covenant' inaugurated by Christ and appropriated by faith (3.19, 22, 23-5).<sup>50</sup>

#### 4.2.2 Hagar and the Law

The second key difference between Paul's allegory and Philo's is precisely this association between the Law and Hagar. Paul's allegorical grouping of the Law with

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<sup>49</sup> See footnote 63 below for a defense of reading νόμος and γραφή as synonyms here.

<sup>50</sup> Byrne, "Jerusalem Above and Below," 231.

Hagar, foreignness, and slavery is striking, especially in a Jewish context that can produce readings of the Sarah-Hagar story like Philo's. Paul's readers would likely expect him to do as Philo does: to group the Law—especially its commandment to circumcise (cf. Gen 17:9-14)—with Sarah, through whom God creates a covenant people marked by their observance of a graciously given Law. Perhaps the Agitators in Galatia themselves are preaching a similar message, using Sarah, as Philo does, to point to Law observance as a more advanced and virtuous way of life.

In some ways, in fact, Philo's allegorical treatment of Hagar is strikingly similar to Paul's earlier treatment of the Law as a παιδαγωγός (Gal 3:19-25) and (with the στοιχεῖα) as ἐπίτροποι and οἰκονόμοι (Gal 4:1-11). Both Hagar (according to Philo) and the Law (according to Paul) are good and useful for a time, preparing the immature for something better: Hagar is like the elementary education that prepares a boy for wisdom; the Law is like an enslaved overseer that guards and protects the master's minor children.<sup>51</sup> But neither's authority is intended to be permanent; neither is expected to exert their authority over the mature. And so those who continually treat "Hagar"/elementary education or "Hagar"/the Law as their final authority remain in a state of arrested development. They are "sophist[s]... sick with the incurable sickness of folly" (*Cher.* 10), "foolish" and "bewitched" (Gal 3:1). They mistake the good for the best, the preliminary for the ultimate. To use an image Paul and Philo share, they forever

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<sup>51</sup> Although, as we noted in Chapter 3, by the time Paul moves from his image of the Law as a παιδαγωγός to his image of the Law and the στοιχεῖα as ἐπίτροποι and οἰκονόμοι his evaluation of the Law's guardianship has become more ambiguous, less certain that the Law's oversight over humanity was even appropriate to begin with.

drink the milk of infancy instead of eating the solid food appropriate to adulthood (*Congr.* 19, cf. 1 Cor 3:2).

This, largely, is the message about the Law Paul has been preaching thus far in Galatians. The Law's authority was appropriate for a time, but "now that faith has come" humanity is no longer subject to it (3:25). We might then expect Paul's narration of Sarah and Hagar's stories to be as *sequentially* clear as Philo's: Hagar's influence and authority come first, then give way, permanently, to Sarah's.<sup>52</sup> But—to his great distress—the narrative Paul traces does not resolve so easily. The Law-curious gentile Galatians are acting as if they are enslaved children of the enslaved Hagar, even *after* they have tasted freedom as the Spirit-begotten children of Sarah.

#### **4.2.3 Crossing Lines of Enslavement and Freedom**

This, then, is the third key difference between Philo's Sarah-Hagar allegory and Paul's: Philo's allegory presents the reader with a secure narrative of progress. Hagar and Sarah are neatly sorted women representing neatly defined and sequential roles for elementary education and virtue/the Law, respectively. Philo does not seem bothered by the possibility that a man who has achieved union with "Sarah" (i.e., virtue) would then revert back to union with "Hagar" (i.e., elementary education). His primary concern is that men find their way to Sarah in the first place, not becoming unduly enamored with the prerequisite Hagar. Sophists, on Philo's account, should be derided for their arrested

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<sup>52</sup> So Jason M. Zurawski, who argues that elementary education and the Law occupy essentially the same roles in Philo and Paul, respectively ("Mosaic Torah as Encyclical Paideia," 296).

development, but anyone who presses beyond the elementary subjects to attain virtue is secure in his achievement. On the other hand, Paul presents Hagar and Sarah as characters that disconcertingly continue to intertwine in the lives of the Galatians. The Galatians have *already* received the ultimate: the singular “gospel of Christ” (1:6-9), made manifest in their experience of the Spirit (3:2-5). And yet they seem to yearn for that which was preparatory: the supervision of the Law (cf. 3:19-25).

It is this real *threat* of reversal that has been the source of Paul’s anxiety throughout Galatians: his bewildered realization that the Galatians are “so quickly *deserting* the one who called [them] in the grace of Christ” (1:6) and “*turning back again*” (4:9) to the enslaved guardians who oversaw humanity’s (enslaved) minority. Philo is not worried that those who have attained virtue will revert to a prior fascination with geometry. Paul *is* worried that the Galatians who have “started with the Spirit” will “end with the flesh” (3:3).

Paul’s Sarah-Hagar allegory comes at a point in the letter that is particularly charged with this anxiety.<sup>53</sup> Just after he voices his concern that the Galatians are *returning* to enslavement under the στοιχεῖα (4:9)—and just before he introduces the

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<sup>53</sup> As Susan Eastman insists, Paul’s personal, emotional involvement with the Galatians—expressed perhaps most strongly at this point in the letter—does not prevent him from doing serious theological work in this section. “Rather,” Eastman argues, “the ‘overlay of subjects’ so evident in [Paul’s] relationship with both Christ and his converts calls into question any rigid distinction between objectivity and subjectivity. Paul’s whole way of speaking, from his claim that Christ lives in him to his designation of his scars as the stigmata of Jesus, renders such a distinction nonsensical” (Eastman, *Recovering Paul’s Mother Tongue*, 181). Interpreters of Galatians sometimes read Paul’s evident emotion as a sign of his irrationality in this letter compared to, say, Romans. See, for example, E. P. Sanders’s *Paul* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991), where Sanders’s disregards Paul’s “sudden denigration of the law in 3:19b” because he assumes it was “merely a remark in the heat of the moment” (and because it does not accord with Sanders’s reading of Paul’s “full view of the law,” 533). But “anxious”—nor any other emotion attributed to Paul in Galatians—need not be read as “unthinking.”



allegory—Paul makes an emotional appeal to the Galatians on the basis of his personal relationship with them (4:12-20). This relationship was once warm and generous: Paul first came to the Galatians in a state of physical weakness (4:13) and they welcomed him “as an angel of God, as Christ Jesus” (4:14). In the early days of this relationship the Galatians seem to have been manifesting the fruit of the Spirit (cf. 5:22-23): their willingness to “tear out [their] eyes” for Paul (4:15) was certainly loving, kind, and generous. But, having started with the Spirit, the Galatians are now being tempted *backwards* into the “works of the flesh” in their relationship with Paul (cf. 5:19, 3:3). They are making Paul into an “enemy” (4:16, cf. 5:20), they are feeding quarrelsome factionalism (cf. 5:20), and Paul accuses them of wanting to adopt practices of the Law out of the envy (cf. 5:21) that comes from being “excluded” by the Agitators (4:17-18). At the climax of this emotional appeal Paul reaches for an image to express his “perplexity” (4:20) at this turn in their relationship. He comes up with what Stephen Fowl calls a “metaphor in distress.”<sup>54</sup> Paul calls the Galatians his children with whom he is “again in the pain of childbirth, until Christ is formed in [them]” (4:19). Paul’s perplexity matches his reader’s: how can Paul be in labor with children to whom he has *already* given birth, and how can *Christ*—not the Galatians—be the one being “formed” in this metaphor?

This childbirth imagery may be an image in distress, but it is not a *nonsensical* image. Susan Eastman and Beverly Gaventa have shown that Paul’s metaphor in Gal 4:19

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<sup>54</sup> Stephen Fowl, “A Metaphor in Distress: A Reading of NEPIOI in 1 Thessalonians 2.7,” *JSNT* 80 (2000), 469-473. Fowl, of course, here refers not to this particular metaphor, but to Paul’s dual image of himself and his fellow apostles as both infants and nurses (1 Thess 2:7).

communicates “an apocalyptic vision of reality” precisely through its disjunctures with the realities of childbirth. In Eastman’s words, Paul’s “language works through the combination of, and tension between, what is familiar and what is strange.”<sup>55</sup> He uses the strangeness of the metaphor’s timing (in labor *again*?) to bring together both “punctiliar and linear motifs” in “the shared history of the apostle and his converts”: the punctiliar crucifixion, and the extended “staying power” of God’s longsuffering involvement with human history.<sup>56</sup> Gaventa largely agrees. Commenting on the oddity of *Christ* being the one formed in Paul’s apostolic labor with the *Galatians*, Gaventa suggests that this “flaw” in Paul’s metaphor occurs “not because his imagination is defective, but because he does not wish to carry the analogy through to its logical conclusion.”<sup>57</sup> It is *not* the Galatians who are born; Paul is not here primarily concerned about “the full development of the individual.” Rather, “the apocalyptic maternity is completed only when *Christ* is formed”—and, as the passive  $\mu\omicron\rho\phi\omega\theta\eta\tilde{\iota}$  implies, it is ultimately not even the laboring Paul but “God and God alone [who] brings forth Christ.”<sup>58</sup> Nevertheless, even if Paul is not primarily concerned about the development of the Galatians’ individual virtue, he is suffering the pains of labor because of the Galatians’ behavior. Their temptation to adopt practices of the Law is at odds with the work of God that has already taken place in the crucifixion of Christ (2:19-3:1); it is painful and anxiety-producing for Paul, even if, as Gaventa and Eastman stress, he has confidence in the ultimate work of God.

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<sup>55</sup> Eastman, *Recovering Paul’s Mother Tongue*, 93.

<sup>56</sup> Eastman, 125.

<sup>57</sup> Gaventa, *Our Mother Saint Paul*, 37.

<sup>58</sup> Gaventa, *Our Mother Saint Paul*, 37, emphasis mine. Of course, as this dissertation has shown, Paul frequently understands multiple agents to be at work in any one action. God’s agency in the birthing of the Galatians need not *exclude* Paul’s.

So we should not be surprised that Paul’s literary “distress” does not abate between verses 20 and 21, although in some ways Paul’s allegory is more regimented than the metaphor that has come before. As commentators often note, Paul uses the military term συστοιχέω (4:25) to organize the allegory into two conceptual columns of opposing terms.<sup>59</sup> With these conceptual columns Paul works to disambiguate Hagar/the Law and her children from Sarah/Not-Law and her children by placing them into groups with other “pairs of opposites.”<sup>60</sup> Hagar and her children are associated with slavery and the flesh, while Sarah and her children are associated with freedom and either the promise (in 4:23, 28) or the Spirit (in 4:29). The Galatian Christians, Paul insists, are “children of the promise, like Isaac” (4:28). They must resist the persecuting “child who was born according to the flesh” (4:29) and “drive out the παιδίσκη and her son” so that “the son of the παιδίσκη will not share the inheritance with the son of the ἐλευθέρα” (4:30).

But these columns are hardly hermetically sealed. In particular, the Law makes repeated appearances in both columns—right from the beginning of the pericope, when Paul asks “those wanting to be under the Law (οἱ ὑπὸ νόμον θέλοντες εἶναι)” to listen to the Law (τὸν νόμον οὐκ ἀκούετε;, 4:21).<sup>61</sup> He then immediately invokes the stories of

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<sup>59</sup> Betz, *Galatians*, 245; Eastman, *Recovering Paul’s Mother Tongue*, 137; Martyn, *Galatians*, 438-441.

<sup>60</sup> Martyn, *Galatians*, 454.

<sup>61</sup> Do Paul’s two usages of νόμος in 4:21 both refer to the same Law, i.e., to the Torah? The answer is not immediately clear. As Martyn puts the interpretive issue, “Striking is Paul’s dual reference to the Law in 4:21, once negative—‘wish to live under the power of the Law’—and once positive—‘really hear what the Law says’” (*Galatians*, 433). Can Paul be referring to the same entity negatively and positively in the same breath? Some interpreters would say no: in 4:21a Paul uses νόμος to refer to “the Sinaitic legislation with its many commandments and prohibitions” and in 4:21b he uses νόμος to refer to “the Pentateuch... in which the Sinaitic legislation is recorded” (de Boer, *Galatians*, 291; cf. Moo, *Galatians*, 297; Betz, *Galatians*, 241). But even these interpreters recognize that the two usages of νόμος are linked in 4:21: Moo and de Boer call the verse a “play on words” (Moo, 297; de Boer, 291) that uses the Pentateuch to spell out

Abraham, Sarah, and Hagar (citing the Law! “γέγραπται γάρ...,” 4:22) to demonstrate how the Galatians’ Law-observance would lead to their enslavement.<sup>62</sup> Towards the conclusion of his allegory Paul again appeals to the Law itself (here referred to as “Scripture” [ἡ γραφή]<sup>63</sup>) to encourage the Galatians to “cast out” (ἐκβάλλω) the very figures with whom he associates the Law: Hagar and her children (4:30). The Law’s own voice speaks an authoritative word against the Law (cf. Gal 2:19). Further complicating the Law’s identity in 4:30, these words Paul ascribes to the Law are—with only slight modifications<sup>64</sup>—*Sarah’s* speech in Genesis (Gen 21:10). *Sarah* tells Abraham to cast out

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the implications of the Galatians adopting the Sinaitic legislation. Other interpreters understand both usages of νόμος to refer to the Torah, including both its commandments and its narratives: the Law itself tells the Galatians that it would be inappropriate to come under its own authority (Thiessen, *Paul and the Gentile Problem*, 94, 101; Hays, “Galatians,” 300; Longenecker, *Galatians*, 207). Martyn splits the difference. On his account, “this dual reference [to the Law] is an unmistakable reflection of Paul’s conviction that with the advent of Christ the Law is revealed to be a complex entity (cf. Rom 3:21), having the voice with which it pronounces a curse (3:10), but having also the gospel voice with which it speaks God’s promise (3:8, 11; 4:27; cf. 5:14; 6:2)” (*Galatians*, 433). But whether Paul’s two usages of νόμος in 4:21 are a “play on words,” a reference to the exact same entity, or a complex expression of one entity that is internally divisible, his exasperation with the Galatians’ inconsistent reasoning is evident: they claim to want to be under the authority of something called νόμος, but refuse to listen to what either that *same* νόμος or a νόμος closely related to it actually commands.

<sup>62</sup> See also 3:10-14, where Paul uses this same citation formula to argue *from the Law* (specifically, from Deut 27:26 and 21:23) that “all who rely on the works of the Law are under a curse” (3:10).

<sup>63</sup> I argued in Chapter 2 that Paul uses νόμος and γραφή synonymously in 3:21-22; I understand him to be doing the same thing here. It is easier to find agreement among commentators on this point. Most agree that γραφή is at least synonymous with Paul’s second use of νόμος in 4:21 because they appear in parallel constructions. Paul brackets his “allegory” with two hypothetical questions, one asking if the Galatians hear (presumably the voice of) ὁ νόμος (4:21), the other asking the Galatians what ἡ γραφή “says” (4:30, cf. Moo, *Galatians*, 311; de Boer, *Galatians*, 291; Betz, *Galatians*, 241; Martyn, *Galatians*, 360, 445; Hays, “Galatians,” 306; see discussion above on the two usages of νόμος in 4:21). Hays calls Paul’s question in 4:30 a “stunning rhetorical moment” precisely because of the way his synonymous use of γραφή and νόμος recapitulates the question from 4:21 and finally answers it: “Paul had begun the passage by asking provocatively, ‘Do you not hear the Law?’ In fact, however, except for the quotation of Isa 54:1 in v. 27, we have not yet heard the voice of the Law in this passage. Paul has given summaries but not quotations. Now at last he gives the cue for Scripture to speak directly to the Galatians” (“Galatians,” 306).

<sup>64</sup> When he incorporates this quotation from the LXX Paul omits οὗτος from “τὴν παιδίσκην ταύτην” and “ὁ υἱὸς τῆς παιδίσκης ταύτης” (likely because he does not expect his allegorical “Hagar” to be in the immediate presence of his Galatian auditors?), adds an emphatic μή to “οὐ γὰρ κληρονομήσει,” and—to accommodate his shift from first to third person—changes “τοῦ υἱοῦ μου Ισαακ” to “τοῦ υἱοῦ τῆς ἐλευθέρως.” See Christopher D. Stanley, *Paul and the Language of Scripture: Citation Technique in the*

Hagar and Ishmael. At least for a moment, Sarah's voice and the voice of the Law converge. At least for a moment, Philo and Paul agree to see Sarah's affliction of Hagar as the Law's normative instruction for their respective audiences—although they would certainly disagree about the content of that instruction, because Sarah's/Scripture's words immediately undermine the Law's undue influence over the Galatians.

The difference between Paul's two columns can be even harder to see when Paul does not explicitly name the opposing term his readers might expect to find in the "pairs of opposites" he supplies in the allegory. He names Hagar, for example (4:24-25), but does not name Sarah. He does not supply any category to oppose "Mount Sinai" (4:24-25). Paul names the two Jerusalems of his allegory with terms that are not opposites: "the now Jerusalem" (ἡ νῦν Ἱερουσαλήμ, 4:25) is not paired with another temporal marker like "the later Jerusalem" or "the past Jerusalem." Instead, it is paired with a spatial marker: "the above Jerusalem" (ἡ ἄνω Ἱερουσαλήμ, 4:26). Eastman makes an astute observation about how contemporary commentators tend to treat these mismatches, especially when Paul entirely omits the second member of an expected pair: they create condensed charts that create the illusion of symmetry, filling in "antitypes that are implied but not named."<sup>65</sup> Eastman's own chart lays out the allegory "verse by verse" to expose "the lacunae in the parallel columns."<sup>66</sup> On her analysis, the careful gaps Paul

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*Pauline Epistles and Contemporary Literature*, SNTSMS 69 (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 248-51.

<sup>65</sup> Eastman, *Recovering Paul's Mother Tongue*, 138. Eastman acknowledges that there is an advantage to this approach: "it allows one to see at a glance the [general] pattern of polar opposites" that Paul *does* enlist in the allegory (138). She also acknowledges that commentators have good reason to assume that the Galatians could fill in these gaps on their own. Presumably they have heard these stories from Genesis before, likely from the "Agitators" (139).

<sup>66</sup> Eastman, *Recovering Paul's Mother Tongue*, 139.

leaves when rendering the stories of Hagar and Sarah in Genesis should steer the reader towards Paul's other intertext in this passage: Isaiah 54:1, along with what Richard Hays calls the whole "rippling pool of promise" in Isaiah into which Hays and Eastman argue Paul wades with his citation.<sup>67</sup> Just as Paul mixes and modulates his childbirth metaphor in 4:19 to draw attention to the perplexing formation of Christ among the Galatians, so he mixes and modulates his scriptural sources in 4:21-5:1 to draw attention to the Galatians' transformation.

It is in these blended interactions with Genesis and Isaiah that we find the final breakdown of the neat schema dividing Hagar and Sarah that Paul purports to construct: by invoking the larger context of Isaiah, Paul shifts his reader's focus from two competing women to *one* woman who has experienced both desolation and abundance, both abandonment and comfort, both enslavement and freedom. Scholars are increasingly noticing that Paul's engagement with Isaiah in Gal 4:21-5:1 is just as important as his Genesis source material for understanding his argument in this passage. The Isaiah text is not just a convenient summary of Paul's interpretation of Genesis that he mines at random from Israel's Scripture. As Richard Hays,<sup>68</sup> Karen Jobes,<sup>69</sup> Susan Eastman,<sup>70</sup> and Samuel Tedder<sup>71</sup> have argued, Paul's citation of Isa 54:1 further widens Paul's allusive

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<sup>67</sup> Richard B. Hays, *Echoes of Scripture in the Letters of Paul* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989), 120; Eastman, *Recovering Paul's Mother Tongue*, 143.

<sup>68</sup> Hays, *Echoes of Scripture*, 84-121.

<sup>69</sup> Karen H. Jobes, "Jerusalem, Our Mother: Metalepsis and Intertextuality in Galatians 4:21-31," *WTJ* 55, 299-320.

<sup>70</sup> Eastman, *Recovering Paul's Mother Tongue*, 127-160.

<sup>71</sup> Tedder, *Children of Laughter*, 89-133.

field, evoking the larger story of Israel’s devastation and restoration as told in the whole book of Isaiah (especially Isa 40-66).

And not just this explicit citation in Gal 4:27. Paul’s apparently odd pairing of the “now” (νῦν, 4:25) and “above” (ἄνω, 4:26) Jerusems also invokes the larger context of Isaiah. Isaiah, as Samuel Tedder characterizes it, is in part a “tale of two cities,” depicting two visions of the city of Jerusalem. The first, contemporary with Isaiah, is “desolate,” “devoured” and “overthrown by foreign peoples” (Isa 1:7, NETS). The second, future vision is of the city as restored and *elevated*—“on the top of the mountains,” “raised above the hills” (2:2).<sup>72</sup> In Isaiah there is a Jerusalem that is *now*, and a Jerusalem that is *above*. These paired images of Jerusalem persist throughout the book of Isaiah: Tedder finds them in 24:10-11, 23; 27:13; 44:26-28; 45:13; 52:9; and 60:1-22.<sup>73</sup> Perhaps most significantly for Paul’s allegory, they also appear in Isa 54—personified as the “desolate woman” who is instructed to “rejoice..., break forth, and shout” because she is about to bear so many children that she will need to “enlarge the site of her tent” and “spread out to the right and to the left” to accommodate them (54:1-3). Although this woman/city is now “humbled and unsteady,” God is preparing for her a lasting and extravagant construction: “lapis lazuli as [her] foundations,” “battlements of jasper” and “gates of crystal stones,” an “enclosure of precious stones” (54:11-12).

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<sup>72</sup> Tedder, 108-113. Tedder cites Jon D. Levenson, who connects this vision of an elevated Jerusalem to other Jewish theologies of Zion: “Zion[,] as the place from which the world was created, as the point from which the primal ray of light emanated, and as the only mountain to stand above the deluge, is also the highest point in the highest land, the center of the center, from which all the rest of reality takes its bearings” (*Sinai and Zion: An Entry into the Jewish Bible* (Minneapolis: Winston Press, 1985, 116, in Tedder, 110).

<sup>73</sup> Tedder, 111-13.

Isaiah uses two contrasting images of Jerusalem to depict the discrepancy between Jerusalem's present disarray and its future restoration. But it is important that these two images depict *one city* at different times. The woman who personifies the city, too, is *one woman*. Isaiah does not use the common biblical trope of two contrasting women who depict theological opposites (as in Proverbs or Revelation). Isaiah announces the shape of this one woman's story programmatically at the outset of the book: "faithful city Sion has become a whore" (ἐγένετο πόρνη πόλις πιστὴ Σιών, 1:21), and so the Lord will judge her, "burn[ing] [her] to bring about purity" (1:25). But after she endures this judgment, the same woman/city "shall be called the city of righteousness, the faithful mother city (μητρόπολις), Sion" (1:26).<sup>74</sup> Through the judgment of the exile the present Jerusalem is not done away with and replaced with an entirely new city/woman; instead, it *becomes* the restored Jerusalem. It is transformed, not passed over. It is precisely the city that has been "forsaken and hated" (Isa 60:15) that will "be called City of the Lord, Sion of the Holy One of Israel" (60:14). God's restoring newness will come to her: "the Lord will appear upon [her]" (60:2); her children will gather to her (60:4); the nations will bring to her camels and gold, frankincense and sheep (60:6-7). "The days of [her] mourning shall be fulfilled (LXX: ἀναπληρωθήσονται)" (60:20), and her righteous people "shall inherit (LXX: κληρονομήσουσιν) the land forever" (60:21).

Susan Eastman pays careful attention to this "promise of continuity" and transformation in Isaiah; it is central to her thesis that Paul uses his letter to the Galatians

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<sup>74</sup> As Jobes notes, this identification of restored Jerusalem as a *mother* city (μητρόπολις) appears only "in the Greek text of Isa 1:26," not in the MT. Paul likely draws on this more specific image from the LXX when he calls the "other woman" (i.e., not Hagar) both "Jerusalem above" and "our mother" (Gal 4:26) (Jobes, "Jerusalem, Our Mother," 310).



to proclaim the “staying power” of the apocalyptic Gospel the Galatians seem ready to desert.<sup>75</sup> On her account, Paul uses this continuity to interpret and to transform *Sarah’s* story into the story of Isaiah’s restored Jerusalem in order to support his “earlier claim that the Galatians are God’s children solely through the promise, not through literal descent.”<sup>76</sup> Isaiah invokes Sarah’s story explicitly in 51:2. Zion is to “look to Abraam [their] father and to Sarra who bore [them]” as evidence that God will comfort and miraculously restore Jerusalem. So Sarah is fresh in the mind of Isaiah’s reader when she hears the verse Paul cites in Gal 4:27: Jerusalem is “barren” (στεῖρα, Gen 11:30, Isa 54:1), but God promises that she will miraculously give birth to a multitude of children (Gen 15:5, Isa 54:1-3).<sup>77</sup> By linking Isaiah with Genesis, Paul can argue that the Galatians are Sarah’s children insofar as they are “children of the promise” (Gal 4:28), that is to say, God’s promise to Abraham of the Spirit (3:14) *and* God’s promise of the Isaianic “heavenly city that guarantees a future for God’s people, no matter how things look on earth.”<sup>78</sup>

It is important for Eastman that the narrative in Isaiah to which Paul alludes is both like and unlike Sarah’s story in Genesis. Paul leaves out Sarah’s name in his allegory for a reason: to avoid the kind of genealogical claims the Agitators may have been foisting upon the gentile Galatians to encourage them to become circumcised. What I find significant for understanding Paul’s anxiety about the Galatians’ “maternity,” however, is that many of the most glaring discrepancies between the Sarah of Genesis

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<sup>75</sup> Eastman, *Recovering Paul’s Mother Tongue*, 151.

<sup>76</sup> Eastman, *Recovering Paul’s Mother Tongue*, 154.

<sup>77</sup> Eastman, *Recovering Paul’s Mother Tongue*, 142-43. See also Hays, *Echoes of Scripture*, 84-121.

<sup>78</sup> Eastman, 154.

and Isaiah's Jerusalem are points at which the Isaianic city is dissimilar to Sarah precisely because it is *similar* to *Hagar*. In her original Isaianic context, at least, the woman Paul addresses in Gal 4:27 can look like both Sarah *and* Hagar. While Isaiah itself may not have Hagar in mind as it narrates the story of mother Jerusalem's desolation and restoration, Paul's pairing of Isaiah with the stories of Sarah and Hagar in Genesis 16-21 activates what Samuel Tedder calls Isaiah's latent "theological potential"<sup>79</sup> for fruitfully transforming the stories of Hagar and Sarah into a combined image of one woman who experiences significant transformation herself.

Paul's citation of Isaiah 54:1, in fact, seems at first like an odd intertext for Genesis 16-21 precisely because it appears to ascribe features of Hagar's story to this unnamed woman whom Paul links to Sarah. As Eastman briefly notes, "Unlike the anonymous woman of the Isaiah passage, Sarah has a husband . . . . Hagar is the one who is, properly speaking, without a husband, and who in the story is made desolate in the wilderness (*ἐπλανᾶτο τὴν ἔρημον*, Gen 21:14)."<sup>80</sup> And these similarities between Hagar

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<sup>79</sup> Tedder, *Children of Laughter*, 89. (Though Tedder does not make this specific connection between Isaiah and the stories of Sarah and Hagar in Gen 16-21.) Before analyzing Paul's own hermeneutical use of Isaiah 54:1 Tedder finds it necessary first to "identif[y] the themes that are present in the immediate context of Isa 54:1" so that he can "elucidate the *possibilities* Isa 54:1 offers for Paul's application" (Tedder, 92, emphasis mine). This methodology, according to Tedder, better helps the reader to see Paul as a competent reader of his source material who treats it with both fidelity and innovation. An extended exploration of Isaiah's "theological potential," on Tedder's account, prevents Paul's reader from seeing him either as 1) an overly "radical" exegete who must engage in "extraordinary hermeneutical inversion" to make his source material say what he wants it to say (citing Hays, *Echoes of Scripture*, 120), or 2) an overly "smooth" exegete who faces no "difficulties" in his source material and does nothing to "reappropriate" its potential for his own purposes (Tedder, 91).

<sup>80</sup> Eastman, *Recovering Paul's Mother Tongue*, 141. Matthew S. Harmon's comments on this "problem" in Paul's allegory (i.e., that Hagar is the woman without a husband in the source text of Genesis) are helpful here: "In the commentaries, Fung (*Galatians*, 210-11), and Martyn (*Galatians*, 443) are among the few who even attempt to determine how implying Hagar had a husband fits the Galatians context. Hays ('Galatians,' 304) simply concludes that not every detail of the citation can be pressed, admitting that this last line of Isa 54:1 does not neatly fit into Paul's argument. The same lacuna is present in most focused treatments of Gal 4:21-31 as well, Jobes ('Jerusalem,' 302, 304) and De Boer ('Paul's Quotation,' 371 n. 3,

and the Isaianic woman are not limited to the one verse Paul cites explicitly. Just after the imperatives Paul quotes from Isa 54:1 (in Gal 4:27) Isaiah reminds this “barren” and “desolate” woman why she should rejoice: the Lord is rescuing her from her “shame” and “disgrace” (Isa 54:4). She needs comfort because she has been “humbled” (ταπεινή, 54:11, cf. 40:2). She needs mercy because she has been “forsaken” (καταλελειμμένη, 54:6, 7). In some ways this description could fit Sarah in Genesis. When she finds out that Hagar is pregnant she is “dishonored” (ἠτιμάσθη, Gen 16:4, 5)—presumably because Hagar conceives when she cannot. But Sarah’s dishonor leads directly to *Hagar’s humiliation* (ταπεινώ, 16:9, 11), when she, like the woman in Isa 54, is forsaken in the wilderness. There the angel assures her that “the Lord has given heed to [her] humiliation (ταπεινώσει)” (Gen 16:11), just as the Lord promises to comfort the “humbled (ταπεινή) and unsteady” woman in Isaiah (Isa 54:11).

Even the Isaianic woman’s threatened motherhood can look more like Hagar’s than Sarah’s. Like Sarah’s, Hagar’s motherhood is also not guaranteed in Genesis 16. She does quickly—and forcibly—become pregnant when Sarah “gives” her to Abraham (16:3-4). But when she flees into the wilderness (ἔρημος, 16:7) after Sarah mistreats her she is still pregnant; she has not yet given birth. And so both Hagar’s life and the life of

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379-80) being among the few exceptions.” (*She Must and Shall Go Free: Paul’s Isaianic Gospel in Galatians*, BZNW 168 [Berlin: De Gruyter, 2010], 177, n. 168.) Harmon himself provides the plausible explanation that the LXX of Gen 16:3 seems to call Hagar Abram’s wife: Sarah “gave her [Hagar] to Abram her husband as his wife [ἔδωκεν αὐτὴν Ἀβραμ τῷ ἀνδρὶ αὐτῆς αὐτῷ γυναῖκα]” (Harmon, 180). But Harmon’s argument does not make sense of the contrast between “the desolate one” (ἡ ἐρήμος) and “the one who has a husband” (ἡ ἐχούσα τὸν ἄνδρα). Even if Hagar is *also* depicted (temporarily?) as Abram’s “wife” in Genesis, Sarah is certainly and permanently married to him—at least until the time of her death (cf. Gen 11:29, 23:19, 25:10). Hagar may be *somewhat* a wife to Abram, but Sarah is much *more* his wife in the Genesis stories. (Note that in its summary of Abraham’s life Genesis labels Sarah “his wife” (ἡ γόνη αὐτοῦ, 25:10), and labels Hagar “Sarah’s παιδίσκη” [25:12].)

her unborn child are in jeopardy in the wilderness. As Delores S. Williams puts it, “Just as the welfare of Abram’s family is insecure at this point, so is Hagar insecure.... Hagar is without the support and physical sustenance a pregnant woman needs.”<sup>81</sup> The angel of the Lord who finds Hagar in the wilderness must promise her that she will, in fact, bear the son she carries in her womb (16:11) *and* that the Lord will “multitudinously multiply [her] offspring (πληθύνων πληθυνῶ τὸ σπέρμα σου)” (16:10). This word is life-giving to Hagar. It inspires her to name the spring of water (ἡ πηγή τοῦ ὕδατος, 16:7) that has been sustaining her in the wilderness “Well-of-the-one-whom-I-saw-face-to-face” (16:14). Ishmael’s life in danger again in Gen 21, when he and Hagar once again find themselves in the threatening wilderness (ἔρημος, 21:14). This time there is no water to sustain them (21:15) and Hagar expects her son to die (21:16), along with the promise of multitudinous offspring. But God intervenes again, promising to “make [Ishmael] into a great nation” (21:18) and providing a “well of living water (φρέαρ ὕδατος ζῶντος)” (21:19).

Isaiah, too, tells the story of a woman in the wilderness who is miraculously provided with life-giving water.<sup>82</sup> Soon after this “desolate” (ἔρημος) woman is told to “rejoice,” “break forth, and shout” (54:1, cf. Gal 4:27) she is also invited to “go to water” (55:1). She is also told that the promissory word of the Lord is like “rain or snow” that “comes down from heaven and will not return until it has soaked the earth and brought

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<sup>81</sup> Delores S. Williams, *Sisters in the Wilderness: The Challenge of Womanist God-Talk* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1995), 20.

<sup>82</sup> Tedder highlights this theme of water in the wilderness in Isaiah, but he does not connect it directly to Hagar’s story in Genesis. Rather, for Tedder, the water imagery in Isaiah is important for the way it is linked to the activity of the Spirit (cf. Gal 4:29, *Children of Laughter*, 113-16).

forth and blossomed and given seed to the sower and bread for food” (55:10). Even when Isaiah explicitly mentions the promise made to Abraham and *Sarah*, in Isa 51:1-3, its parallel promise to Zion is that she will be comforted like *Hagar* was. Isaiah does not mention Hagar by name, but it does promise Zion that the Lord “will comfort all her desolate places (πάντα τὰ ἔρημα αὐτῆς), and make her wilderness (τὰ ἔρημα αὐτῆς) like Eden, her desert like the garden of the Lord” (51:3).<sup>83</sup> As in Genesis 16 and 21, God’s promise is like water in the wilderness, giving restored life to those who were languishing of thirst.

Most significantly for the purposes of this project, the anonymous woman in Isa 54:1 has also, like Hagar, experienced enslavement. Just two chapters before this verse that Paul cites explicitly is a parallel passage addressed to a woman named “Sion” (52:1-2), also called “Jerusalem” (52:1-2, cf. Gal 4:25-26)—presumably the same woman who is addressed in 54:1. As in 54:1, here in 52:1-2 Sion/Jerusalem is addressed with a series of joyful imperatives, encouraging her to embrace the new work of redemption announced by the Lord: “Awake!” “Put on your strength!” “Put on your glory!” And finally: “Take off the bond from your neck, O captive daughter Sion (ἔκδυσαι τὸν δεσμὸν τοῦ τραχήλου σου, ἡ αἰχμάλωτος θυγάτηρ Σιων)!” Why does she need to remove this bond? Because she had previously been “sold (ἐπράθητε) for nothing” (52:3; see also 50:1), recalling Israel’s “sojourn” in Egypt (i.e., enslavement) and captivity to the Assyrians (52:4). She is an enslaved woman becoming set free—one woman, whose status shifts.

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<sup>83</sup> Translation from Eastman, *Recovering Paul’s Mother Tongue*, 142.

It is notable that Paul invokes this one transformed woman in Isaiah right in the middle of his allegory that relies on the distinctions between two women and their respective children. The Galatians, Paul insists, are *not* παιδίσκης τέκνα *but rather* [τέκνα] τῆς ἐλευθέρως (4:31); they are “like Isaac” (4:28) in that they are both “begotten according to the Spirit” and “persecuted” by a different child, the one “begotten according to the flesh” (4:29). The distinctions between the free woman and the enslaved woman and their children function to encourage the Galatians not to adopt practices of the Law. But Paul’s invocation of the one Isaianic woman—who sometimes looks more like Sarah and sometimes more like Hagar—may invite the reader of all these texts into a reading of Genesis that treats both Sarah’s freedom *and* Hagar’s enslavement as mutable.

Genesis never calls Sarah enslaved, and it never calls Hagar free, at least explicitly. But many of its earliest readers have seen hints in the text of Genesis—specifically, in the stories about Sarah in the households of foreign kings (Gen 12:10-20, 20:1-18)—that both women move between freedom and *captivity* (cf. Isa 51:2, above), if not enslavement. In both of these stories Abraham fears that a king—the Egyptian Pharaoh in 12:10-20, Abimelech of Gerar in 20:1-18—will notice Sarah’s beauty and kill Abraham in an attempt to claim Sarah for himself. To protect himself, Abraham instructs Sarah to claim that she is his sister, rather than his wife. His schemes are successful, if morally ambiguous: Pharaoh and Abimelech each successively take Sarah as a wife, but then return her to Abraham when they miraculously discover her true identity. Perhaps in an effort to exonerate Abraham for his significant role in “Sarah’s abduction,” Second Temple Jewish interpreters of these stories are quick to insist that Sarah’s experiences in

these households were true experiences of captivity, forced upon her by foreign kings.<sup>84</sup> *Jubilees*, for example, makes no mention of Abraham’s scheme, but narrates Pharaoh “seizing” (לקח) Sarah (13.11, 13).<sup>85</sup> The Genesis Apocryphon has Abraham hide Sarah for five years to protect her from Pharaoh, only concocting the “sister” story as a contingency plan. When Pharaoh’s nobles discover Sarah’s beauty they seize her for Pharaoh, and Abraham “weeps bitterly” because “Sarai was taken from me by force (דבירת מני שרי באונס)” (GenAp 20:11).<sup>86</sup> Philo, too, depicts Sarah and Abraham as being “at the mercy of a licentious and cruel-hearted despot (δυνάστης)” who “determined nominally to take [Sarah] in marriage, but in reality to bring her to shame (τὸ δ’ ἀληθὲς αἰσχύνειν, *Abr.* 94-95). Sarah must be rescued by God, who “filled [Pharaoh] body and soul with all manner of scarce curable plagues” (*Abr.* 96) until he released her.

It is notable that Sarah’s two captivities in the households of foreign kings are intercalated with the two chapters of Genesis about Hagar’s captivity in Abraham and Sarah’s household. Reading Genesis synchronically (and paying attention only to stories about these two women) yields the following pattern:

Sarah’s Captivity A (12:10-20)  
 Hagar’s Captivity A (16:1-16)  
 Sarah’s Captivity B (20:1-18)  
 Hagar’s Captivity B (21:1-21)

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<sup>84</sup> Watson, *Paul and the Hermeneutics of Faith*, 236.

<sup>85</sup> Watson, 236.

<sup>86</sup> Text and translations from Daniel A. Machiela, *The Dead Sea Genesis Apocryphon: A New Text and Translation with Introduction and Special Treatment of Columns 13-17*, STDJ 79 (Leiden: Brill, 2009). See also 20:14, where Abraham prays to the Lord “concerning Pharaoh Zoan, king of Egypt, for my wife has been taken from me forcefully (די דברת אנתתי מני בתוקף).”

It is especially striking that Sarah's second captivity directly precedes the second account of Hagar's, perhaps encouraging the reader to notice the parallels between their respective plights. Both Hagar and Sarah are presumably forced to have sexual contact with their captors, since Pharaoh expresses regret for "taking [Sarah] to myself for a wife" (12:19) and Abimelech is only prevented from "touching" Sarah through divine intervention (20:6). Both Hagar and Sarah are in a position of captivity because of their foreignness: Hagar, of course, is often identified as "Hagar the Egyptian" (16:1, 3; 21:9), a detail Paul will pick up in Gal 4:24-25. But Sarah is foreign, too, when she is captured by Pharaoh and Abimelech. Genesis 12 famously begins with God instructing Abraham to "go forth from [his] country and from [his] kindred and from [his] father's house" (12:1), setting off away from his homeland in anticipation of becoming a "great nation" of his own (12:2). Sarah is captured at two points when this promise seems most distant. Before it narrates her captivity in the households of both Pharaoh and Abimelech the text sets the scene by noting that Abraham and Sarah are "resid[ing] as aliens" (παρουκέω) in another land (12:10, 20:1); in Gen 12, they are forced to emigrate to Egypt because of a famine (12:10). This "alienness" makes them vulnerable, at least according to Abraham's calculations. He assumes that the Egyptians and the people of Gerar, taking advantage of his foreignness, will kill him and "take" Sarah, so he offers up Sarah willingly by presenting her as his sister (12:12-13, 20:2).<sup>87</sup>

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<sup>87</sup> While LXX specifies Abraham's motives for presenting Sarah as his sister in Gerar ("He was afraid to say, 'She is my wife,' lest perhaps the men of the city kill him on her account," 20:2), the MT here simply reports that Abraham called Sarah his sister. The attentive reader of the MT will probably assume, however, that Abraham's motives in Gerar match his motives earlier in Egypt, where the MT does explain that Abraham presented Sarah as his sister because he was afraid of being killed (12:12-13).



Early Jewish interpreters of Genesis 16 and 21 seem to pick up on this symmetry between Sarah's captivity and Hagar's. They often assume that Hagar was Pharaoh's daughter, and that Pharaoh gave Hagar to Abraham to thank him for providing Sarah as a wife: Genesis 12 narrates the Egyptians giving Abraham "sheep and calves and donkeys, *male and female slaves* [παῖδες καὶ παιδίσκαι], mules and camels" because they and Pharaoh were pleased with Sarah (12:16). In rabbinic literature Hagar is often understood to be one of these παιδίσκαι: Targum Pseudo-Jonathan narrates Pharaoh giving his daughter Hagar directly to Abraham, while Genesis Rabbah and Pirque Rabbi Eliezer say Pharaoh gave her to Sarah.<sup>88</sup> On these readings there is a fittingness to Hagar's servitude in Abraham and Sarah's household precisely because of Sarah's captivity in Pharaoh's household. Abraham relinquishes his wife to Pharaoh; Pharaoh relinquishes his daughter to Abraham (although on some accounts indirectly, through Sarah). The two women are in parallel plights,<sup>89</sup> pawns of influential men who exchange them among themselves.<sup>90</sup> In Genesis Sarah is not ontologically free; her freedom comes under genuine threat, twice. And, at least according to some early readers of Genesis, Hagar is not ontologically enslaved; she begins the story as the free daughter of a powerful ruler. Both women move in and out of freedom and captivity.

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<sup>88</sup> Cf. *Gen. Rab.* 45.1; cf. *Tg. Ps.-J.* Gen 16:1; *Pirque R. El.* 26, as cited by Longenecker, *Galatians*, 201. (See also *GenAp* 20.30-32.)

<sup>89</sup> J. Cheryl Exum notices this parallel in the way Abraham and Sarah arrange these respective captivities: "Neither Abraham [in Gen 12] nor Sarah [in Gen 16] is concerned with what this intimate encounter might mean for the other parties involved, but only with what he or she stands to gain" ("Who's Afraid of 'The Endangered Ancestress'?" in *The New Literary Criticism and the Hebrew Bible*, JSOTSup 143, ed. J Cheryl Exum and David J.A. Clines [Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1993], 93.)

<sup>90</sup> Although note also Sarah's complicity in Hagar's plight. Sarah is the one who suggests to Abraham that he try to produce an heir through Hagar (Gen 16:2).

And for the informed reader of the Torah, of course, the enslavement of one Egyptian woman in Abraham and Sarah’s household anticipates the far more menacing reversal to come. Abraham and Sarah’s descendants, men and women, will soon all be enslaved in Egypt—for over four hundred years (Ex 1:11, 12:40).<sup>91</sup> The Torah does not treat the descendants of Sarah as ontologically different than the descendants of Hagar, at least in terms of their enslavement or freedom. Sarah’s own freedom is tenuous; she is liable to captivity in the households of foreign kings. So, too, is the freedom of her descendants. Just three generations later her great-grandson Joseph will be enslaved as an ἐπίτροπος in the household of another Pharaoh (see Chapter 3), and only a few generations after that *all* of her descendants will be enslaved under yet another Pharaoh. God will miraculously rescue them, too, when he sends yet another set of plagues on this new Pharaoh (Ex 11:1, cf. Gen 12:17<sup>92</sup>).

On the surface, Paul’s allegory is clear on one point: Hagar the παιδίσκη is enslaved, Sarah the ἐλευθέρα is free, and their children take their status from their respective mother. But with his invocation of the one woman in Isaiah who moves in and out of slavery and freedom, Paul exposes the instability in Sarah and Hagar’s stories that drives him to insist repeatedly that the former is free and the latter enslaved. It is precisely because of these allegorical women’s continuous, intersecting changes in status

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<sup>91</sup> Cf. Gordon J. Wenham, *Genesis 1-15*, WBC 1 (Waco, TX: Word Books, 1987), 291-92; Matthew Y. Emerson, “Arbitrary Allegory, Typical Typology, or Intertextual Interpretation? Paul’s Use of the Pentateuch in Galatians 4:21-31,” *BTB* 43 (2013): 14-22.

<sup>92</sup> The MT uses the same word—עֲלֵזָה—to name the plagues God brings upon the Pharaoh in retribution for seizing Sarah in Gen 12:17 and the final plague (the death of the firstborn, Ex 11:1) in the series of plagues God brings upon the Pharaoh of Exodus through Moses. The LXX uses two different words: ἔτασμός in Gen 12:17 and πληγή in Ex 11:1.

that they stand in need of disambiguation—just as the Galatians’ frustrating movement into and out of the freedom of God’s promise requires Paul to untangle the threads of Law and “Gospel” (cf. 1:6-9) the Agitators have braided together.

### ***4.3 Crossing Boundaries of Enslavement and Freedom in Other Greek Literature***

The instability in Paul’s allegory reflects another feature of the particular “slave society” in which he and his auditors are embedded: in the Greco-Roman world, lines between “slave” and “free” were *relatively* permeable. Theoretically, anyone who was free could become enslaved—through capture in warfare, economic crisis, etc. And, theoretically, anyone one was enslaved could become free—though certainly manumission was easier to gain for enslaved persons with better education and access to power, and freed persons maintained both social stigma and legal obligations to their former owners. For all the ways thinkers like Aristotle *tried* to maintain some kind of ontological distinction between the free and the enslaved, movement between freedom and slavery was common enough to disrupt general claims about the stability of one’s identity as either free or enslaved. Some (most?) enslaved persons might bear distinctive physical features that indicated their enslavement: Christy Cobb argues that enslaved women, for example, might have been identified by their shaved or cropped hair, shorter tunics, physical constraints like chains, or a general lack of cleanliness that could be attributed to their hard physical labor.<sup>93</sup> But all of these physical markers were less

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<sup>93</sup> Christy Cobb, *Slavery, Gender, Truth, and Power in Luke-Acts and Other Ancient Narratives* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2019), 199.

enduring than, say, the color of one's skin, which would have been a more permanent and reliable visual marker of enslavement in the antebellum American South.

Stoic writers often gleefully exploit the capriciousness of the Greco-Roman system of slavery to support their claims that external circumstances need not determine the course of a person's will. In his *Moral Letters to Lucilius*, for example, Seneca the Younger warns his elite, free addressee not to mistreat his "slaves." Seneca's reasoning may at first strike the reader of the New Testament as similar to (pseudo-)Paul's instructions to Christian masters in Ephesians 6:9 or Colossians 4:1: "As often as you reflect on how much power you have over a slave, remember that your master has just as much power over you." But in Seneca this master's master is not God, in a metaphorical sense. Rather, Seneca reminds Lucilius about the possibility that he could always become literally enslaved—to another human master—in the future: "'But I have no master,' you say. You are young; perhaps you will have one. Do you not know at what age Hecuba entered captivity, or Croesus, or the mother of Darius, or Plato, or Diogenes?" (*Ep.* 47.11-12 [Gummere, LCL]). Seneca here appeals to legendary figures whose stories of reversal would have been well-known to Lucilius; all of them begin their lives as free and highly elite and are enslaved in twists of fate. If even *they* could be reduced to enslavement, Seneca warns, so could *you*. Do not rely on your freedom as an enduring feature of your identity; it could be taken away in an instant.

### 4.3.1 *Chaereas and Callirhoe*

In Greek and Latin novels, plays, and even Jewish and Christian Scripture, this cultural anxiety about status instability often coalesces around female characters—and, many times, their children. Take, for example, Chariton’s first-century CE novel *Chaereas and Callirhoe*, whose plot turns on the plight of a wealthy free woman who is reduced to enslavement.<sup>94</sup> The titular Callirhoe begins the novel as the daughter of one of the most influential men in Syracuse, until she falls into a coma during a fight with her husband, is presumed dead, and is interred in a tomb. She wakes up when pirates come to rob the tomb, and the pirates capture her and sell her into slavery in faraway Miletus. The novel is ambivalent about just how enslaved Callirhoe is. On the one hand, it can offer what Christy Cobb calls a “narrative depiction of Aristotle’s ‘natural’ order of humanity”: Callirhoe is remarkably beautiful, and throughout the novel her beauty causes other characters to doubt whether she can truly be enslaved.<sup>95</sup> As her new master Dionysius puts it, “A person not freeborn cannot be beautiful” (*Chaer.* 2.1.9 [Goold]); there seems to be *something* inherently and enduringly free about Callirhoe. But Callirhoe herself pushes back against this assumption that her beauty makes her “naturally” free. When the other enslaved women in her new household bathe her upon her arrival they whisper to

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<sup>94</sup> The literary trope of a free, wealthy woman who is reduced to enslavement and then restored to freedom—what Jennifer Glancy calls the story of a “faux slave”—is common in Greek and Roman “romances and dramas” (Glancy, *Slavery in Early Christianity*, 7). For important treatments of *Chaereas and Callirhoe* (and other Greek novels) in relation to New Testament texts, see Glancy, *Slavery in Early Christianity*, 52-54; Ronald F. Hock, “A Support for His Old Age: Paul’s Plea on Behalf of Onesimus,” in *The Social World of the First Christians: Essays in Honor of Wayne A. Meeks*, ed. L. Michael White and O. Larry Yarbrough (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 1995), 67-81; Cobb, *Slavery, Gender, Truth, and Power*, 90-123.

<sup>95</sup> Cobb, *Slavery, Gender, Truth, and Power*, 99.

themselves about her beauty and bring her clothing that befits a free woman. Callirhoe is uncomfortable with their conversation and their offer of clothing. “Give me a slave’s tunic (χιτῶμα... δουλικόν),” she insists, “for even you are my superiors” (*Chaer.* 2.2.4). She recognizes not only that she is enslaved, but that she is actually further down the household hierarchy than the other enslaved women attending to her. Callirhoe, at least, does not believe that her origins or her beauty make her any less enslaved than the women around her, and she continues to insist that other characters in the novel recognize her enslavement. For Callirhoe, the line between free and enslaved is easily (and tragically) crossed.

Even more notable is the moving scene where Callirhoe discovers that she is pregnant with the child of her husband back in Syracuse. Callirhoe’s first reaction is to “burst into tears and cries of grief,” tear her hair, and accuse Fortune of “add[ing] to [her] misery that [she] should become the mother of a slave (ἵνα καὶ τέκω δοῦλον)” (*Chaer.* 2.9.7). She immediately “strick[es] her womb” to induce a miscarriage, all the while explaining herself to the child: “Poor thing, before being born you were buried and handed over to pirates! What sort of life will you face? To what future shall I bear you, without father or country, and a slave (δοῦλος)? You had better die before your birth” (*Chaer.* 2.9.7). In her moment of deepest despair Callirhoe recognizes what Paul recognizes in Galatians 4: legally, a pregnant enslaved woman will bear an enslaved child. He will be “recorded in the property register as a possession of his mother’s owner, rather than as the son of his biological father.”<sup>96</sup>

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<sup>96</sup> Glancy, *Slavery in Early Christianity*, 36.

But the possibility that her child will be enslaved forever is not a foregone conclusion. Once she regains her composure Callirhoe can envision two ways for her son to cross over the line from enslaved to free. First, Callirhoe convinces herself not to abort the child by reminding herself of “all the sons of gods and kings that we hear of that were born into slavery (ἐν δουλείᾳ γεννηθέντας) and later regained the rank of their fathers, like Zethus and Amphion and Cyrus!” (*Chaer.* 2.9.5). Her child can be born into slavery and later cross the line into freedom. This will be a difficult thing for the child to do, but, Callirhoe reasons, in her womb he has already “been saved from the tomb and from pirates” (*Chaer.* 2.9.5). Maybe he will be delivered out of his enslavement, too.

But Callirhoe does not need to wait to find out, because Plangon, the enslaved wife of Dionysius’s οἰκονόμος, presents her with a second option: Callirhoe can quickly marry her master Dionysius, who is already madly in love with her, and convince him that the child is his. This course of action will not *automatically* mean that the child is born into freedom rather than enslavement, however. As Galatians 4 makes clear, having a free father does not at all guarantee freedom for a child born to an enslaved mother; “the freeborn man, the patriarch, can choose whether or not to recognize his offspring.”<sup>97</sup> The speech Plangon delivers to Dionysius on Callirhoe’s behalf makes plain Callirhoe’s

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<sup>97</sup> Glancy, *Slavery in Early Christianity*, 36. Sandra Schwartz points out that the reverse was also true: a *paterfamilias* could choose both to reject his biological offspring—especially if the child was enslaved—and to accept the paternity of “children born into his household,” even if he had not “sired them” (“Callirhoe’s Choice: Biological vs Legal Paternity,” *GRBS* 40 [1999]: 23-52, 46-47). Schwartz shows how this dynamic plays out in *Chaereas and Callirhoe*: from the time Dionysius agrees to assume legal paternity of Callirhoe’s children, everyone in the novel recognizes Dionysius as the true father of Chaereas’s biological son—including Callirhoe, who leaves the child with Dionysius when she returns to Syracuse with Chaereas, and Chaereas himself, after Callirhoe reveals that the child is biologically his (Schwartz, 48-52).

vulnerability in this moment. Callirhoe will need to persuade Dionysius to marry her *legally*, not just to take her as an enslaved “concubine to satisfy his passion,” *and* she must persuade him to accept the child she bears as a free son and heir. If he does choose to marry her, he must do so with eyes open to the ramifications of marrying an enslaved woman and claiming her children as his own. He must consult his friends and relatives ahead of time, lest they say to him after his marriage, ““Do you intend to rear children of a bought slave (ἐκ τῆς ἀργυρωότητος) and shame your house?”” (*Chaer.* 3.1.8).

Callirhoe’s terms are clear, though she is not at all sure that Dionysius will accept them: “if [Dionysius] does not wish to become a father, let him not become a husband” (*Chaer.* 3.1.8). But, fortunately for her, Dionysius is willing to take on these specific responsibilities, so Callirhoe herself crosses the boundary between enslaved and free once again when Dionysius frees her in order to marry her. The story has a happy ending: Callirhoe is free again, and she is even eventually reunited with her first husband in Syracuse. But this ending was not at all inevitable, and it is satisfying only because Callirhoe’s return to freedom was not guaranteed.

### 4.3.2 Judith

The same narrative tension that drives the plot of *Chaereas and Callirhoe* also drives the Hellenistic Jewish book of Judith:<sup>98</sup> can the Israelite town of Bethulia—and

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<sup>98</sup> Lawrence M. Wills argues (following Martin Braun, Ruth Stiehl, Martin Hengel, Deborah Levine Gera, and Benedikt Otzen) that “Judith was part of [the] broad, developing novelistic tradition” that included “ancient Near Eastern novelistic texts, early Greek history, and the later Greek novels [including *Chaereas and Callirhoe*]” (*Judith*, Hermeneia [Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 2019], 80). Specifically, Wills connects Judith to the Greek novels at the points of their shared “humor and irony,” as well as their “moral arc[s] and... commitment to virtue and chastity” (100-101). Whether or not Judith should be technically



especially its heroine Judith—remain free in the face of an Assyrian invasion, or will its residents be reduced to slavery? At the outset of the book all the residents of Bethulia have real reason to fear their imminent enslavement. They are surrounded by the armies of Assyrian commander Holofernes—“one hundred and seventy thousand infantry and twelve thousand cavalry” (Jud 7:2)—and running out of water. They plead with their leader Uzziah to surrender to the Assyrians. The people of the town know this surrender will mean their enslavement, but, they reason, “God has [already] sold (πέπρακεν, cf. Isa 50:1, 52:3; Rom 7:14) us into their hands” (Jud 7:25). The Bethulians will “become slaves (δούλοι),” but their “souls will live,” i.e., the town’s residents will not be killed in the impending invasion, nor will they have to “see the death of [their] infants with [their] eyes, and [their] women and children quitting their spirits” (7:27). It is unlikely that the text here alludes to Hagar’s own dilemma in the wilderness, but the similarity between these two desperate situations is worth noting—Hagar believes that her (unwilling) departure from enslavement means she will have to see her child die (Gen 21:16). When the choice is between slavery and witnessing the death of children, enslavement becomes the lesser of two evils.<sup>99</sup>

Judith, however, bristles at the town’s demand for surrender. She gathers together Bethulia’s elders and delivers a rousing speech encouraging them to trust in God and in her plan to deliver the town. If Bethulia is captured by the Assyrians, Judith insists, “all

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classified as a “novel” (or, in Wills’s terminology, a “novella,” 106), it certainly shares with the Greek novels, as we will see, the same ironic status inversion of its heroine.

<sup>99</sup> Callirhoe, as we have seen, faces the same dilemma when she discovers she is pregnant, though she at least entertains the idea that the death of her unborn child would be preferable to his enslavement. For similar expressions of this dilemma between enslavement and death, see Ex 14:12, 17:3; Num 14:2-3, 20:3-5 (references from Deborah Levine Gera, *Judith*, CEJL [Berlin: De Gruyter, 2014], 247).

Judea will be captured and our sanctuary will be plundered; and [God] will make us pay for its destruction with our blood” (8:21, NRSV). God’s judgment will follow the people of Bethulia into their enslavement (δουλεία, 8:23) among the Gentiles—this enslavement, Judith warns, “will not bring us into favor, but the Lord our God will turn it to dishonor” (8:23, NRSV).

On the brink of war the boundaries between “slave” and free are especially thin. Those who were once securely free in their own land must stare down the threat of becoming enslaved foreigners under the reign of a new empire. Judith is horrified at the threat of Bethulia becoming enslaved, but, ironically, she faces this threat by playing into its fulfillment.<sup>100</sup> She approaches Holofernes with mock obeisance, introducing herself to him with two slavery terms: “Accept the words of your slave (δούλη), and let your girl (παιδίσκη) speak to your face, and I will not report falsehood to my lord (κύριος) in this night.<sup>101</sup> And should you follow the words of your girl (παιδίσκη), God will see the matter through with you entirely...” (11:5-6). Throughout her stay in Holofernes’s camp Judith will repeatedly use slavery terms for herself—often multiple times in the same sentence!—setting a trap for Holofernes with her apparent subservience: “I your slave (δούλη) ran away” (11:16), “your slave (δούλη) is devout” (11:17a), “your slave (δούλη)

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<sup>100</sup> Indeed, as Carey A. Moore argues, “few, if any, [biblical books] are as quintessentially ironic as Judith” (*Judith: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, AB 40 [Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1985], 78).

<sup>101</sup> Deborah Levine Gera points out the irony of Judith’s use of the title κύριος for Holofernes: “Naturally Holofernes understands that her intent is to please him, her new Assyrian master, but in fact she means to please God. In this fashion, Judith uses the word κύριος to refer at one and the same time to Holofernes and to God, and this deliberate ambiguity repeatedly allows her words to be understood in two diametrically opposed ways” (*Judith*, 348; see also Moore, *Judith*, 82). Moore explicitly compares Judith’s “cleverness..., wrapped in deceit” to the “shrewdness” of the (possibly) enslaved οικονόμος in Luke 16:1-8 (ibid. 83, see Chapter 3 above).

will set forth into the ravine each night” (11:17b; see also 12:4, 6).<sup>102</sup> The Assyrians in the camp follow suit: Bagoas, Holofernes’s eunuch, invites Judith to join Holofernes in his tent by calling her a “beautiful παιδίσκη” (12:13).

After Judith’s trap is sprung—after she triumphantly beheads Holofernes in his drunken sleep—the people of Bethulia know what she has done before the Assyrians do. They rejoice (14:9), and then, on Judith’s instructions, they hang the head of Holofernes on the wall of the city (14:11a) and send their army out towards the Assyrians’ camp (14:11b), confident that “fear will fall upon [the Assyrians], and they will flee from [their] presence” (14:3). When the Assyrian scouts see the Bethlian army approaching, the language they use to inform Bagoas betrays their ironic ignorance of their own precarious position: “Awaken our lord immediately, for the *slaves* (δοῦλοι) have dared to come down upon us for battle, so that they might be completely and utterly destroyed” (14:13). None of the Assyrians—including Bagoas—yet knows that Holofernes is dead, or that the easy invasion they anticipate will fail before it even starts. They are still so confident in the success of their invasion that they can pre-emptively call the Bethulians “slaves.” The reader, of course, can recognize the irony of this statement: while the Bethulians *would have* been “slaves” if they had surrendered or been defeated in battle,

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<sup>102</sup> Judith’s strategy to call herself Holofernes’s “slave” is not unprecedented in the LXX: other free women use this title in a way that does not *necessarily* indicate either their literal enslavement or the threat that they will become literally enslaved. In Samuel-Kings, for example, free women who address powerful men call themselves “your slave” (ἡ δούλη σου) almost twenty times when they want to present themselves as deferential (1 Sam 25:24, 25, 27, 28, 31, 41; 28:21, 22; 2 Sam 14:6, 7, 12, 15 (x 2), 16, 19; 1 Kgs 1:13, 17; 2 Kgs 4:2, 16). In none of these cases are these women facing the threat of literal enslavement from the men they approach with deference. The reader of Judith, however, knows that it is a very real possibility that Judith herself, like the rest of her town, could become enslaved as a result of their conflict with the Assyrians (see above on Jud 7:25-27).

Judith has actually already assured their freedom—by posturing at being enslaved herself! Bagoas will look even more ridiculous a few verses later: after discovering the headless body of Holofernes, he exclaims to his fellow Assyrians, “The slaves (δοῦλοι) have tricked us!” (14:18, NRSV). At this point it is becoming clearer to everyone in the narrative—Bethulian and Assyrian—that the Bethulians will *not* become “slaves.”

Thanks to Judith’s fluid movement in and out of (metaphorical) slavery, the Bethulians’ fragile freedom remains intact.<sup>103</sup>

#### ***4.4 Enslaved Galatians “Fulfilling” the Enslaved Law***

It is this very kind of instability, this very anxiety around the enduring freedom of women and their children, that makes Paul’s instructions to the Galatians so urgent. They *are* free. They *are* children of a free woman (τέκνα... τῆς ἐλευθέρως, 4:31). Christ has already “set [them] free for freedom (τῆ ἐλευθερίᾳ ἡμᾶς Χριστὸς ἠλευθέρωσεν)” (5:1a).

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<sup>103</sup> It is ironic that throughout the story Judith is being assisted by her own literally enslaved attendant, whom the text variously calls a ἄβρα (another term for an enslaved woman that the NETS translates “favorite slave”), a δούλη, and a παιδίσκη. This unnamed ἄβρα/δούλη/παιδίσκη accompanies Judith at every turn. She is the one who summons the elders of Bethulia to hear Judith’s initial rebuke (8:10); she travels with Judith to Holofernes’s camp, carrying all the provisions Judith will need to wait out her stay in the camp (10:5); she prepares the tent for Judith to seduce Holofernes (12:15, 19) and stands guard while Judith beheads him (13:3). This enslaved woman’s bravery does not go unrewarded, though her reward is long in coming: Judith’s final act in her long and honorable life is to set her ἄβρα free (16:23). Here, too, is a woman who moves across the line from enslaved to free. But, as Jennifer Glancy points out, this apparently gracious act—couched within the hagiographic summary of Judith’s life at the end of the book—also appears suspect within its larger canonical context. If Judith’s ἄβρα is Jewish (and Glancy has reason to believe she is, though the book is silent on the ἄβρα’s ethnicity), Judith should have set her free after six years in accordance with Deuteronomistic law (Deut 15:12, cf. Jer 34:12-22). The text does not tell us how old Judith is when she kills Holofernes, but it is reasonable to assume that she is relatively young— young enough for all the Bethulian and Assyrian men to remark on her beauty (10:7, 14). We can easily assume that more than six years have passed between our first report of the ἄβρα’s enslavement and Judith’s death at the age of 105. Under the judgment of Deuteronomy (and Jeremiah), therefore, “Judith’s lifelong use of her slave is a violation of God’s commandments” (Jennifer A. Glancy, “The Mistress-Slave Dialectic: Paradoxes of Slavery in Three LXX Narratives,” *JSOT* 21 [1996]: 71-87, 85-86).

But they must still “stand firm” and refuse to “submit again to a yoke of slavery (ζυγῶ δουλείας)” (5:1b). Their freedom is under threat. It is not an ontological given. By adopting practices of the Law the Galatians risk becoming “enslaved again” (cf. 4:9).

And so Paul’s images of women who shift between enslavement and freedom function as an effective transition to his more parenetic chapters at the end of the letter. Paul has laid out the threat by invoking a widespread anxiety about the enduring nature of freedom. Now he teaches the Galatians just how to “stand firm” in their freedom: by relying on the power of the Spirit—rather than the Law—to love one another, to “work for the good of all, and especially for those of the household of faith” (6:7-10). If the Galatians are “led by the Spirit” they will not be “under the Law” (ὕπὸ νόμον, 5:18, cf. 3:23; 4:4, 5, 21), and in their communal life they will produce the Spirit’s fruit (5:22-23) instead of the Flesh’s works (5:19-21). If they bear fruit according to the Spirit (cf. 4:23, 29), they will be enduringly free children of an enduringly free mother.

But, curiously, even in his ideal vision of a free, Spirit-empowered community Paul does not leave behind either the Law or images of enslavement. In fact, he pairs them together *positively* in 5:13-14. “Through love,” he instructs the Galatians, “serve one another *as slaves* (δουλεύσετε ἀλλήλοις), for the whole *Law* is fulfilled (πεπλήρωται) in one word: ‘You will love your neighbor as yourself.’” Paul repeats this idea that love both labors for others and fulfills the Law in 6:1-2, this time using a compound form of πληρώω: those who have “received the Spirit” should “bear one another’s burdens, and in

this way [they] will fulfill (ἀναπληρώσετε) the *Law of Christ*.”<sup>104</sup> The metaphor has shifted. No longer does Paul portray the Law *itself* as both enslaved and enslaving for those Gentile Christians who adopt its practices. Now he focuses on a *positive* image of enslavement: the Galatians are (lovingly) enslaved to *one another*. Moreover, this loving enslavement does not appear to be a departure from the Law after all; instead, it “fulfills” the Law! This shift suggests that Paul does not think of either the Law or metaphorical enslavement as *inherently* problematic.

Rather, the problem throughout Galatians has been twofold. First, the Galatian Christians, under the influence of their Agitators, are getting the order of operations

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<sup>104</sup> Interpreters of Galatians have vigorously debated what Paul means by the enigmatic phrase “the Law of Christ (ὁ νόμος τοῦ Χριστοῦ).” Some interpreters understand this phrase to refer to something entirely other than the Law (i.e., the Torah, or Law of Moses) Paul has been downplaying all throughout the letter: in Douglas Moo’s words, a “rhetorical counterpart to the law of Moses” that consists of “all those teachings and commandments set forth by Christ and his inspired apostles—including Paul” (*Galatians*, 378; see also Longenecker, *Galatians*, 275-76). As Todd A. Wilson shows in his survey of scholarship on this topic, however, “an increasing number of interpreters are persuaded that the expression... somehow refers to the law of Moses,” i.e., the same Law Paul has been discussing throughout Galatians (Wilson, “The Law of Christ and the Law of Moses: Reflections on a Recent Trend in Interpretation,” *Currents in Biblical Research* 5 [2006]: 123-144, 125). For interpreters who understand the “Law of Christ” to refer to the Law of Moses, see John M.G. Barclay, *Obeying the Truth: A Study of Paul’s Ethics in Galatians*, SNTW (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1988, 143-44; Stephen Westerholm, “On Fulfilling the Whole Law (Gal 5.14),” *SEÅ* 51-52 (1986-87): 229-37, 235; Martyn, *Galatians*, 575-87; Hays, “Galatians,” 333 (a development from Hays’s earlier thought in his article “Christology and Ethics in Galatians: The Law of Christ” [*CBQ* 49 (1987): 268-290], where he suggests that the “law of Christ” is “a structure of existence embodied paradigmatically in Jesus Christ,” 276); Eastman, *Recovering Paul’s Mother Tongue*, 173-74; Betz, *Galatians*, 301. There are good reasons to read “the Law of Christ” this way, and I find them persuasive. As Wilson synthesizes common arguments for reading “the Law of Christ” as “the Law of Moses”: first, Gal 5:13-14 clearly refers to the Law of Moses, and there are many “terminological and conceptual parallels” between these verses and 6:2; second, “the proximity of 5.13-14 and 6.2 within the epistle makes it highly unlikely that Paul would have intended to refer to something other than the law of Moses in 6.2; third, Paul consistently uses the word νόμος in Galatians to refer to the Mosaic Law; deviating from that usage of the word in the conclusion of his argument would be odd and confusing (Wilson, 135). Of course, something *has* changed in the way Paul describes the Law in 6:2; the genitive modifier τοῦ Χριστοῦ is unexpected, since Paul has spent much of the letter opposing the Law to Christ. So interpreters often speak of the Law being possessed and transformed by Christ in 6:2. Per Hays, for example, “From the point of [Christ’s] death onward, the Law can be understood anew as the Law of Christ, the Law defined by and belonging to him” (“Galatians,” 333). Or, as Martyn puts it, in his death and resurrection Christ “took possession of the Law, making it his own Law, the Law of Christ” (*Galatians*, 547).

wrong: they are being led to think that “works of the Law (ἔργα νόμου)” will “justify (δικαιώω)” them (2:16), or enable them to receive a greater fullness of the Spirit (3:1-5), or give them a more abundant life (3:21). Paul sets them straight: through the crucifixion of Christ (2:19-3:1) they have *already* been justified; they have *already* received the Spirit; they have *already* been made alive. No Law is required for such things (cf. 5:23). Second, the Galatians have misunderstood their hierarchical relation to the Law. They think of themselves as “under the Law” (ὕπὸ νόμον, 3:23; 4:4, 21; 5:18), but Paul characterizes that understanding of the Law’s authority over the Galatians as a toxic kind of enslavement for them (4:1-11, 4:21-5:1). Neither of these problems requires Paul to disparage the Law categorically—as we saw in Chapter 2, for example, he values its prior contribution to the work of God—or to leave it behind entirely after the coming of Christ. And, in fact, Paul’s comments about “fulfilling” the Law in the last two chapters of the letter suggest that he can envision a new and right relationship between the Law and the Gentile Galatian Christians, one in which, through the power of the Spirit they have already received, the Galatians act *with*, not in subordination to, the Law.

This chapter has not devoted nearly as much attention to the agency of the enslaved Law as previous chapters have. This is because when Paul depicts the Law as the enslaved woman Hagar he does not say much about what she/it *does*. Hagar/the Law only “begets children into slavery” (4:24). And in the context of Genesis, at least, Hagar does not choose this begetting; it is forced upon her by Sarah and Abraham.<sup>105</sup> Perhaps

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<sup>105</sup> On Amy Richlin’s account, Plautus’s usefulness as an authentic representative of the experience of his enslaved characters also attenuates when it comes to the enslaved *women* in his plays. Plautus and his acting troupe may have experienced enslavement themselves, but they did not know what it was like to be enslaved women: the troupe was entirely male, and any female characters in the plays would have almost

Paul places this third image of the enslaved Law last in his collection to show that the Law is ultimately incapable of doing what the Galatians want it to do (cf. 3:21), even if the Law has robustly acted (with God) to do other things. But the rest of the letter, as we have seen, shows that there are still metaphorically enslaved agents at work: the Galatians themselves. Ironically, Paul describes this reciprocal “enslaved labor” he enjoins upon the Galatians as the proper exercise of their freedom (5:13). It is also perhaps the clearest picture in the letter of what Willie Jennings calls “shared agency.”<sup>106</sup> These metaphorically enslaved agents can only “do what [they] want” if they mutually love one another through the Spirit (5:17).<sup>107</sup> Otherwise, the Flesh will impede their intentions (5:17), and they will find themselves “bit[ten],” “devour[ed],” and “consumed” (5:15). Furthermore, perhaps, the Galatians share this enslaved agency with the Law, too, helping it to accomplish what it has been trying to do all along.

It is possible that Isaiah continues to echo in Paul’s description of the Galatians as a community of enslaved actors. The enslaved Jerusalem, of course, is not the only

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certainly been played by men (Richlin, *Slave Theater in the Roman Republic*, 309). No one involved in the production of Plautus’s plays would have experienced “the double burden of being both a slave and female” (253). Plautus’s enslaved female characters may speak *some* truth about this burden, but their truth-telling is more restrained than that of their enslaved male counterparts’. Enslaved women are only ever minor characters; they are never the protagonist of the play like, for example, the enslaved Pseudolus. It is instructive, in fact, to recall the role of enslaved women in the plot of *Pseudolus*. As we saw in Chapter 1, *Pseudolus* presents its audience with a complex—even, at times, triumphant—portrait of its title character, an enslaved *man*. While enslaved, Pseudolus navigates a tangled web of power dynamics to achieve some of his own ends, pitting free characters’ interests against each other to win a drunken party and the promise that his master will never beat him again. But the play shows little concern for the silent and apparently agentless female character ensnared in the center of this web: the enslaved prostitute Phoenicium, whom Pseudolus is enlisted by his masters to procure.

<sup>106</sup> Jennings, *After Whiteness*, 50.

<sup>107</sup> As Richard Hays argues, Paul’s “counterintuitive advice” to become enslaved to one another—just after telling the Galatians to stand firm in their freedom (5:1)—“oddly transforms the meaning and context of slavery. Becoming ‘slaves to one another,’ where the acts of service are conceived as mutual, redefines the concept of slavery, which is necessarily hierarchical in character” (“Galatians,” 322). See also Barclay, *Obedying the Truth*, 109.



enslaved character in the larger story of Isaiah. Isaiah famously describes the redemptive activity of an enigmatic “Suffering Slave”—alternately δούλος (e.g. 49:3, 5) and παῖς (e.g. 52:13) in the LXX. This figure acts to help liberate the personified Jerusalem/Zion. God promises that as his “Slave” he will “set up the tribes of Iakob and turn back the dispersion of Israel” (49:6). Moreover, as Tedder argues, the “Slave’s” vicarious suffering in 52:13-53:12 is precisely what enables the barren and enslaved woman to whom Paul refers in Gal 4:27 to bear many children.<sup>108</sup> In this most well-known passage about the “Slave”—and the one most proximate to Paul’s Isaiah citation in Gal 4:27—this figure is introduced with the title ὁ παῖς μου: “my slave,” or possibly “my child” (Isa 52:13 LXX, translating the Hebrew עַבְד). But the LXX makes his enslavement explicit towards the end of the song: the righteous παῖς, though currently “well-enslaved to many” (εὖ δουλεύοντα πολλοῖς, 53:11), will be “justified” (δικαιώω, 53:11) and “inherit many” (κληρονομήσει πολλούς, 53:12).<sup>109</sup> We can begin to hear the resonance between this “Slave” and those who have received the Spirit in Galatians: they, too, are “justified” (2:16) and will receive an inheritance as children of Abraham (3:18, 29; 4:1, 7, 30).

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<sup>108</sup> Tedder, *Children of Laughter*, 116.

<sup>109</sup> The MT simply reads יְצַדִּיק צְדִיק עַבְדִּי לְרַבִּים: “the righteous one, my slave/servant, will justify the many.” There is something of a scholarly reluctance to understand this figure as enslaved, both in the MT and the LXX. The NETS, for example, translates παῖς as “servant” in 52:13 and δουλεύοντα as “subject [to]” in 53:11. In their initial comments on the figure of the “Suffering Servant” in Jewish and Christian tradition, Marc Brettler and Amy-Jill Levine compare the admittedly ambiguous title עַבְד in Isaiah to the unambiguous slavery language that Mary and Paul adopt for themselves (and Jesus) in the NT: δούλη (Luke 1:48) and δούλος (citing Rom 1:1 and Phil 2:7). Curiously, this similarity does not push Brettler and Levine to read Isaiah’s עַבְד as enslaved, but rather to remove any association with slavery from the NT’s δούλη/δούλος language. “We choose to translate both the Greek and the Hebrew with ‘servant’; these individuals are not chattel slaves of the sort described in Exod 21:2-6 or Deut 15:17. Isa 52:13 and 53:11 convey the individual’s close relationship with, and dependence on, God” (“Isaiah’s Suffering Servant: Before and After Christianity,” *Int* 73 [2019]: 158-173, 160). This move, of course, flattens out the complex social structures of slavery in the ancient world, and also disregards biblical writers’ tendency—however troubling—to use slavery metaphors precisely to describe a “close relationship with, and dependence on, God.”

And, indeed, the one “Slave” does not act alone in Isaiah.<sup>110</sup> As Tedder notes, “it is characteristic of the last section of the book of Isaiah to speak of [‘slaves’] in the plural rather than of a singular [‘Slave’].”<sup>111</sup> In Isa 56, for example, a group of “aliens” (ἀλλογενεῖς) “clings to the Lord in order to be enslaved to him (δουλεύειν αὐτῷ)” and “to be male and female slaves for him (τοῦ εἶναι αὐτῷ εἰς δούλους καὶ δούλας)” (56:6). Perhaps they are among the ἀλλογενεῖς, who, like the one “Slave,” restore the “devastated places” in Zion (61:5). As Tedder suggests, Paul could find resonance for these foreign “slaves” among the Gentile Galatians who have themselves clung to the Lord by receiving his Gospel (Gal 1:9).<sup>112</sup> And this community of “slaves” will, like the one “Slave,” *inherit*. Specifically, they will inherit God’s “holy mountain” (65:9, cf. 63:17-18; Gal 3:18, 29; 4:1, 7, 30).

Remember that Paul has at least *associated* the Law with the enslaved Zion in his earlier allegory. The Law, represented by Hagar the παιδίσκη, flickers into view when

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<sup>110</sup> J. Ross Wagner finds allusions to the larger story of Isaiah in Paul’s description of his own calling as an apostle. Paul, of course, refers to himself as a “slave of Christ” (Χριστοῦ δοῦλος) in Gal 1:10, a title that Roy Ciampa takes to be an allusion to the “Slave” in Isa 49:3 (Roy E. Ciampa, *The Presence and Function of Scripture in Galatians 1 and 2*, WUNT 2.102 [Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1998], 94; cited in Wagner, “Isaiah in Romans and Galatians,” in *Isaiah in the New Testament*, ed. Steve Moyise and Maarten J.J. Menken [London: T&T Clark, 2005], 130, fn. 53). Paul, like the “Slave,” was set apart and “called” (καλέω) “from his mother’s womb” (ἐκ κοιλίας μητρός μου; Gal 1:15, cf. Isa 49:1) to preach to the Gentiles (Gal 1:16; 2:6-10, cf. Isa 49:6, 8b) (Wagner, “Isaiah in Romans and Galatians,” 131; note that this translation of δοῦλος as “Slave,” rather than “Servant,” is mine. Wagner refers to the figure in Isaiah as “Servant.”) God is glorified in the calling and work of these two “slaves”—Paul and the Isaianic “Slave” (ἐδόξαζον ἐν ἐμοὶ τὸν θεόν, Gal 1:24; ἐν σοὶ δοξασθήσομαι, Isa 49:3; Wagner, “Isaiah in Romans and Galatians,” 131). Both Paul and the Isaianic “Slave” fear that their work will be “in vain” (κενῶς, Isa 49:4; εἰς κενόν, Gal 2:2, Isa 65:23; εἰκῆ, Gal 4:11), and compare their painful, perplexing labor to the labor of childbirth (Gal 4:19, cf. Isa 45:10, 65:23; Wagner, “Isaiah in Romans and Galatians,” 131-32). transition Wagner concludes, “Isaiah’s vision of the Servant commissioned not only to re-gather scattered Israel, but also to bring salvation to the gentiles, serves Paul as a lens with which he can bring into sharper focus both the Gospel of Christ and his own particular calling as apostle to the gentiles” (Wagner, “Isaiah in Romans and Galatians,” 132).

<sup>111</sup> Tedder, *Children of Laughter*, 122.

<sup>112</sup> Tedder, 123-31.

Isaiah personifies Zion as an enslaved, husbandless woman in the wilderness. We may ask, then, if Paul associates the metaphorically enslaved Galatians with the community of “slaves” who help to redeem Zion in Isaiah, how might he understand the Galatians to have a similarly beneficial effect on the enslaved Law when they serve one another in love? By “fulfilling” (πληρώω, 5:14; ἀναπληρώω, 6:2) it.<sup>113</sup> Paul uses the verb πληρώω (and one of its compound forms) only in these two verses in Galatians (although note also the related noun πλήρωμα in 4:4). As Stephen Westerholm has influentially argued (building on Betz’s earlier observation<sup>114</sup>), it is significant that Paul here does *not* use the verb ποιέω, which he *has* used earlier in the letter to warn the Galatians about the dangers of attempting to “do” the Law (3:10, 12; 5:3). “What Paul means by ‘doing [i.e., ποιέω] the law’ is clear enough,” Westerholm explains. “Those under the law are obligated to carry out, to perform, its individual and specific requirements (5:3).”<sup>115</sup> But *fulfilling* (πληρώω) the Law, on Westerholm’s account, “implies that the obedience” performed by the fulfiller “*completely satisfies*” the Law’s general requirements, not just individual

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<sup>113</sup> The verb is passive in 5:14: the Law “has been fulfilled (or ‘is fulfilled,’ πεπλήρωται) in one word.” The passive voice leaves the agent of the verb ambiguous: who is it that does (or has done) this fulfilling of the Law? Some interpreters take πεπλήρωται to be a divine passive: God, in Christ, fulfilled the Law through Christ’s paradigmatically loving death (cf. 2:20; Hays, “Galatians,” 323; Eastman, *Recovering Paul’s Mother Tongue*, 173; Martyn, *Galatians*, 547). Others understand the Galatians themselves to be the implied agent of the verb (de Boer, *Galatians*, 346; Westerholm, *Perspectives Old and New on Paul*, 436-37; Betz, *Galatians*, 275-76). But most interpreters tend towards understanding the agent of πεπλήρωται in 5:14 to involve what Eastman calls an “overlay of Subjects”: if Christ is the one who does the “fulfilling” in 5:14, his action “becomes the basis for Paul’s command” to the Galatians in 6:2, where they are unambiguously the subject of ἀναληρώσετε (Eastman, *Recovering Paul’s Mother Tongue*, 173). Alternatively, if the Galatians are the ones primarily doing the “fulfilling” in 5:14, their “fulfillment of the law can indeed, at a deeper level, be attributed to Christ’s redemptive work (Gal 3:13-14; 4:4-5; 5:1), itself an act of love for the other (2:20), and to the work of his Spirit (4:6-7) among them (see 5:22)” (de Boer, *Galatians*, 346).

<sup>114</sup> Betz, *Galatians*, 275-76.

<sup>115</sup> Westerholm, *Perspectives Old and New*, 436. See also his fuller argument in “On Fulfilling the Whole Law.”

commands.<sup>116</sup> That is, the verb is “specially suited... for use by an author who claims to have superior insight into what is required to satisfy the ‘true’ intention of the lawgiver or the ‘real’ demands of the law.”<sup>117</sup> By using the verb πληρόω to talk about the effect the Galatians’ loving service has on the Law, Westerholm claims, Paul suggests that “those who have believed in Christ and been filled with his love fully satisfy the ‘real’ purport of the law while allowing the ambiguity of the term to blunt the force of the objection that certain individual requirements [of the law]... have not been done.”<sup>118</sup>

Westerholm’s thesis has proven highly convincing among other readers of Galatians.<sup>119</sup> I find especially compelling Westerholm’s suggestion that the Law itself has intentions that can only be realized when the Galatians (and, presumably, other Christians) fulfill its “‘real’ purport” through Spirit-empowered love.<sup>120</sup> Westerholm clearly does not understand the Law to be the *only* agent with intentions that are realized when the Galatians fulfill the Law; he suggests that the “‘true’ intention of the lawgiver” is also in play.<sup>121</sup> But the Law is *one* agent whose purposes the Galatians help bring to fulfillment. The Law’s purposes could not find fulfillment through the Galatians’ “doing” (ποιέω) of its commands, i.e., adopting specific practices like circumcision. Such activity cannot achieve the Law’s intention to give life (3:21) but puts the doer under a curse associated with death (3:13). Nor can the Law’s purposes be achieved through the

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<sup>116</sup> Westerholm, *Perspectives Old and New*, 436.

<sup>117</sup> Westerholm, 436.

<sup>118</sup> Westerholm, 436-37.

<sup>119</sup> Interpreters who accept and build upon Westerholm’s thesis include de Boer, *Galatians*, 346; Hays, “Galatians,” 322; Longenecker, *Galatians*, 242-43; Moo, *Galatians*, 347.

<sup>120</sup> Westerholm, *Perspectives Old and New*, 436-37.

<sup>121</sup> Westerholm, 436.

Galatians' attempts to come "under the Law" (ὕπὸ νόμον, 3:23; 4:4, 5, 21; 5:18). In fact, when the Galatians position themselves under the Law's authority they ironically thwart its expressed intentions (4:21). But when the Galatians "fulfill" the Law—on Westerholm's account, when they act lovingly towards one another, empowered by Christ and his Spirit—they end up realizing the Law's own true intentions along the way. The Law (as expressed in Lev 19:18) wants the Galatians to "love [their] neighbor as [themselves]" (5:14). The Spirit enables them to do so (5:16, 22-24; 6:1). The Law wants to "give life" (ζωοποιέω) to the Galatians (3:21). The Galatians can now "live (ζάω) by the Spirit" (5:25) when they bear the loving fruit of the Spirit (5:22-24) and "reap eternal life (ζωὴ αἰώνιος) from the Spirit" (6:8) when they "work for the good of all, and especially those of the household of faith" (6:10).

This understanding of "fulfilling" the Law as helping to bring about its intentions seems to be intuitive to other interpreters of Galatians, whether they see the primary agent of this fulfillment as Christ or the Galatians themselves.<sup>122</sup> While commentators on Gal 5:14 and 6:2 rarely make explicit arguments about the Law being an agent, they often (on their way to making other arguments) imply that it is one. So Tedder can talk about "the *intention of the Law* to produce righteousness" being "fulfilled by its 'death and resurrection' with Christ."<sup>123</sup> Barclay suggests that Paul uses "the rare language of 'fulfillment' to [describe] what happens when the Christian command to love is carried out (it actually fulfills *what the Torah envisaged*, 5:13)."<sup>124</sup> Eastman insists that it is

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<sup>122</sup> See footnote 113.

<sup>123</sup> Tedder, *Children of Laughter*, 227, emphasis mine.

<sup>124</sup> Barclay, *Paul and the Gift*, 317, emphasis mine.

Christ “who has perfectly fulfilled *the intent of the law of Moses*.”<sup>125</sup> Martyn speaks of Christ having “enacted—and [currently] enacting—*the promise of the Law’s original voice*,” i.e., what it intended to carry out.<sup>126</sup> The Galatians may no longer be “under the Law,” but Paul seems to expect the Law to be pleased with the results that come from their reception of the Spirit through Christ’s faithful death.

Will the Galatians’ mutual, loving service set the enslaved Law *free*, as the many “slaves” in Isaiah help to free the enslaved Zion? It is tempting to follow Samuel Tedder into this conclusion. Tedder briefly ties together the images of enslavement I have discussed in this dissertation to bolster his argument that Paul uses the enslaved Hagar to represent the Law. We should not be surprised to find Paul linking Hagar the παιδίσκη with the Law because he has already linked the Law with the figure of an enslaved παιδαγωγός (3:24-25) and has depicted the Law and the στοιχεῖα in a “condition of slavery... under the corruption of sin” (4:3-5, 9).<sup>127</sup> In a somewhat speculative conclusion to his project, Tedder asserts that the Galatians’ own “loving service,” empowered by the Spirit (5:17) and modelled after Christ’s loving death (2:20), “sets the Law free from its own bondage.”<sup>128</sup> The Law, like the Galatians themselves, dies and is resurrected with Christ into a freedom that allows its “intention... to produce righteousness” to be fulfilled.<sup>129</sup>

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<sup>125</sup> Eastman, *Recovering Paul’s Mother Tongue*, 173, emphasis mine.

<sup>126</sup> Martyn, *Galatians*, 510, emphasis mine.

<sup>127</sup> Tedder, *Children of Laughter*, 199-200. Tedder does not note that the combined image of ἐπίτροποι and οἰκονόμοι is itself a picture of enslaved overseers (see Chapter 3). He comes to the conclusion that the Law and the στοιχεῖα are enslaved because they are linked to the κόσμος, i.e., the “present evil age” (cf. 1:4), which, along with everything else, was “imprisoned under sin” by Scripture (3:22).

<sup>128</sup> Tedder, 227.

<sup>129</sup> Tedder, 227.

Tedder's proclamation of the Law's emancipation provides a satisfying conclusion to the narrative of the Law's enslavement he finds undergirding Galatians. But Tedder provides scant exegetical support for this conclusion, relying on a tenuous connection between the Law's "fulfillment" (πληρώω, ἀναπληρώω) and its freedom. I find instead that Paul remains silent about the Law's emancipation, even as he hints at the way the metaphorically enslaved Galatians can help the Law to fulfill its intentions.

Tedder seems to be driven to the conclusion that the *fulfilled* Law is a *free* Law in part because his own implicit account of enslaved agency does not allow an enslaved Law to effectively carry out any of its intentions. In a fuller declaration of the enslaved Law's freedom, he tellingly uses "impotence" as a synonym for "bondage": the Galatians' loving service "sets the Law free from its own bondage, or impotence, due to the power of sin over humanity."<sup>130</sup> However, it has been a central contention of this dissertation that "enslavement" and "impotence" are usually *not* synonymous for Paul. Throughout Galatians Paul has depicted the Law as enslaved, even as it imprisons (3:22, 3), guards (3:23), facilitates humanity's righteousness through faith (3:24), and (with the στοιχεῖα) supervises and enslaves humanity in its minority (4:2-3, 9). And, as Tedder acknowledges, at the end of the letter Paul depicts the Galatians' own Spirit-empowered activity as itself a kind of metaphorical enslavement (5:13). Paul may use his Hagar-Sarah allegory to highlight the constraints placed upon the enslaved Law. But it is crucial to recognize that the enslaved Law is not *only* constrained. It is also an effective actor, especially when it works in tandem with Christ, the Spirit, and the Galatians themselves.

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<sup>130</sup> Tedder, 227.

## ***4.5 Conclusion***

Paul's Hagar-Sarah allegory in Galatians 4:21-5:1 uses the possibility that women and their children can move between enslavement and freedom to warn the Galatians about the dangers of placing themselves under the Law's enslaving influence. Unlike Philo's own Hagar-Sarah allegory, Paul's reflects and exploits a cultural anxiety—seen in Isaiah, Genesis, *Chaereas and Callirhoe*, and Judith—that freedom is not enduring, especially for women and the children they bear. But immediately after concluding his most pessimistic appraisal of the enslaved Law's own agency, along with the agency of the enslaved children it bears, Paul enjoins upon the Galatians a new kind of metaphorical enslavement. This new enslavement *strengthens* the agency of the Galatians, and, along the way, strengthens the agency of the enslaved Law whose intentions they fulfill. The Galatians should not adopt practices of the Law that would place them under the Law's authority; to do so would be agency-depleting both for them and for the Law. But the Galatians *should* act lovingly towards one another, under the influence of the Spirit, so that both they and the Law can effectively “work for the good of all” (cf. 6:10).



## Conclusions

### *Synthesis of the Study*

This study has examined Paul's depiction of the Law as three different enslaved members of a household in Galatians, a collection of Paul's slavery images that has gone largely unnoticed in New Testament scholarship. Attending to these metaphors for the Law challenges interpretations of Galatians that see the Law only as a powerful, menacing, and enslaving force. The Law's own enslavement constrains it, but this enslaved Law is not entirely powerless. Against understandings of Paul's slavery language that cast enslaved persons as entirely at the mercy of another's will, the enslaved Law also acts meaningfully as an agent in its own right. To be sure, the enslaved Law is never autonomous in Galatians. It never acts alone, but, like other enslaved agents, is always bound up in a complex network of relationships. God is the Law's master. The *στοιχεῖα* are the Law's co-managers. The Galatians are alternately the Law's charges (Gal 3:19-25; 4:1-3), underlings (4:4-11), children (4:21-5:1), and helpers (5:14; 6:2). Paul depicts the enslaved Law navigating this network of relationships more or less successfully throughout the letter.

Paul first represents the enslaved Law as a *παιδαγωγός* in Galatians 3:19-25. In the Greco-Roman world, a *παιδαγωγός*—who was almost always enslaved—occupied a precarious middle ground between a free father and his minor son. Assigned by the father to supervise a son who could also fight back against his *παιδαγωγός*, the *παιδαγωγός* had to navigate between competing demands from the free persons in his household. (This situation is dramatized perhaps most vividly in Plautus's *Bacchides*.) In its own

temporary role as a παιδαγωγός in Gal 3:19-25, the Law once navigated these dynamics well. It effectively carried out the assignment given to it by the metaphorical father in the household, God. The Law shared in God's productive "imprisoning and guarding" of humanity before the arrival of Faith (3:23), preparing the way for God's justifying inheritance to be given to his people through the promise (3:18). This partnership between God and the Law, Paul insists, was a successful one, with the enslaved Law playing an important role in realizing God's and its own ends. The Law's work was so important, in fact, that Paul foregrounds its own activity in Gal 3:19-25 and only obliquely refers to God as the ultimate agent behind it. This effective partnership between God and the Law, however, stands in contrast to an *ineffective* partnership with which Paul is concerned throughout Galatians: a partnership between the Law and the Galatians themselves, who once occupied the role of the minor sons under the watchful eye of a παιδαγωγός. But while the Galatians, like the rest of humanity, may have been appropriately guarded under the Law before the coming of Faith, they are now trying to return to its guardianship inappropriately, after they should have already outgrown it. Now is not the time for the Galatians to try to join in the works of the Law (ἔργα νόμου, 2:16; 3:2, 5, 10). To do so, Paul explains, would be agency-depleting for both the Galatians and the Law. It would put the Galatians under a curse (3:10-14) and prevent the Law from playing its proper role in God's plan that leads to life (cf. 3:21).

In Galatians 4:1-11 Paul shifts tactics, assigning to the Law a new role as an enslaved ἐπίτροπος and οἰκονόμος. That is, he now casts the Law as an enslaved household manager who has authority over his master's property (including other

enslaved workers in the household) until the master's minor heirs come of age. In many ways these new images for the Law repeat the point Paul has made with his image of the Law as a παιδαγωγός in 3:19-25: like παιδαγωγοί, ἐπίτροποι and οἰκονόμοι were enslaved to the head of a household who entrusted them with temporary authority over his free heirs. But the metaphor bends as it progresses to incorporate a new kind of relationship that the ἐπίτροπος/οἰκονόμος image makes possible to imagine. The Galatians begin Gal 4 in the role of free children under the supervision of enslaved custodians, but by 4:11 Paul pictures them as enslaved workers under the supervision of enslaved overseers. What is more, the Law is not the only one of these overseers. Now it is joined by τὰ στοιχεῖα τοῦ κόσμου, the “elements of the world” that thinkers like Philo and the author of Wisdom of Solomon understand to reward those who follow the Law and punish those who break it. In this relationship with the Galatians, the enslaved Law is both more powerful and weaker. It exercises its authority more menacingly over those even lower down in the household pecking order: the Galatians, in the role of menial enslaved laborers. But it is here that Paul also pronounces the Law, in its partnership with the στοιχεῖα, as itself “weak” (4:9).

Finally, in Galatians 4:21-5:1, Paul casts the Law as the enslaved woman (παιδίσκη) Hagar. As Hagar, the enslaved Law's agency is most constrained. In Paul's allegorical rendering of the stories of Genesis 16 and 21—set in conversation with Isaiah 54—Hagar (like Sarah, and the Isaianic woman who shares characteristics with both Hagar and Sarah) is at the mercy of external forces that push her into (and, potentially, out of) slavery. And in her enslavement, all Hagar/the Law can do is “bear children for

slavery” (4:24). The Galatians, Paul insists, should stand firm in their own freedom (5:1) and resist becoming enslaved children of an enslaved woman again. And yet, this imperative does not end either the Galatians’ relationship with the Law or their metaphorical enslavement. Instead, Paul tells them to “serve one another as slaves” through love (5:13), and in this very way to fulfill the Law (5:14; cf. 6:2)! The Galatians should not place themselves under the Law’s authority (ὕπὸ νόμον, 3:10, 23, 25; 4:4, 5, 21; 5:18) or think of themselves as the Law’s children (4:31). But, as they lovingly serve one another through the Spirit, the Galatians both achieve their own ends (5:17) *and*, along the way, fulfill the Law’s own intentions for humanity.

### ***Avenues for Future Research***

I hope that this study will invite further research, particularly in two specific areas of inquiry. First, what becomes of the enslaved Law in Romans? While no *obvious* slavery metaphors for the Law occur in Romans, perhaps Paul’s sustained attention to them in Galatians should prompt the reader of Romans to listen for their echoes.<sup>1</sup> Several times throughout the end of Romans 7 and the beginning of Rom 8, for example, Paul uses various νόμος + genitive constructions to describe what most interpreters hold to be either the Law’s variegated qualities or functions, or even the existence of *different* Laws: Paul can talk about the “Law of God” (νόμος τοῦ θεοῦ, 7:22, 25), the “Law of my mind”

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<sup>1</sup> To speak of the Law as enslaved in Romans may already be an instinctive thing for scholars to do, even if Paul himself might not use explicit slavery language to describe the Law in Romans. See the suggestive conclusion to Richard B. Hays’s “Three Dramatic Roles: The Law in Romans 3-4” (*The Conversion of the Imagination* [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2005], 100): “In each act [of Romans 3-4] the Law is God’s servant, playing a different role—serving, as it were, as Ariel to God’s Prospero. (And perhaps—like Ariel—finally being dismissed to join ‘the elements’ when his service is completed).”

(νόμος τοῦ νοῦς μου, 7:23), the “Law of Sin” (νόμος τῆς ἁμαρτίας, 7:23, 25), the “Law of the Spirit of Life” (νόμος τοῦ πνεύματος τῆς ζωῆς, 8:2), and the “Law of Sin and Death” (νόμος τῆς ἁμαρτίας καὶ τοῦ θανάτου, 8:2). Prompted by the presence of Paul’s slavery metaphors for the Law in Galatians, perhaps it is possible to read these genitive constructions as indicating simple possession—like the possession of a master over an enslaved person (cf. 1 Cor 1:11, where οἱ Χλόης are likely enslaved to Chloe<sup>2</sup>). If so, perhaps Paul identifies something of a contest over the Law’s ownership, between God/the Spirit on the one and Sin and Death on the other. We know that (metaphorical) masters matter when Paul makes *humanity-as-slave* metaphors in Romans: slavery to Sin and Death is suffocating, agency-destroying, while slavery to God is paradoxically liberating (see Rom 6:18, where Paul uses both ideas in one sentence!). Perhaps the same is true for the Law, caught in a crisis of agency that comes from being pulled in two directions by its warring masters.

Or perhaps it would be grasping at straws to try to import Paul’s Law-as-slave metaphors from Galatians to Romans. Perhaps the metaphor drops away entirely! If so, why? What does Paul stand to gain by giving up these metaphors, especially in a letter so concerned with Israel and the Law? Might Paul push beyond the Law’s enslavement to suggest something about its liberation through Christ and the Spirit? These questions deserve further scholarly attention.

Second, this study invites closer attention to dynamics of enslaved agency in other New Testament texts that use slavery imagery. How, for example, does Paul characterize

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<sup>2</sup> Glancy, *Slavery in Early Christianity*, 49.

Jesus as an agent when he narrates his taking the “form of a slave” (μορφήν δούλου λαβών, Phil 2:7) in his so-called “Christ Hymn” (Phil 2:5-11)?<sup>3</sup> What does Luke communicate about Mary’s ability to choose whether or not to bear Jesus when she calls herself the “παιδίσκη of the Lord” (Luke 1:38)?<sup>4</sup> I hope the more general account of enslaved agency I have traced in Chapter 1 of this study can prove useful for analyzing these and other NT texts.

### *Parting Words*

In his letter to the Galatians, Paul leaves the fate of the enslaved Law in the Galatians’ hands. Will they fulfill the Law’s intentions by loving one another (5:13-14), or will they “bite and devour one another” (5:15)? Will they fulfill the Law’s intentions by “bearing one another’s burdens” (6:2), or will they act pridefully (6:3-5)? Will they exercise their own enslaved agency to restore the Law’s, or will their “fleshly” desires to become *subject* to the Law reduce both their agency and the Law’s (cf. 5:17-18)? The contemporary reader does not know what became of the Law in Galatia. In his later letter to other churches, Paul provides no update on the situation in the Galatian churches. He would rather continue to “boast of ... the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ,” which inaugurated a “new creation” in which “neither circumcision nor uncircumcision” means anything (6:14-15). But Galatians ends on a note of hope for the Law: the hope that

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<sup>3</sup> Nijay K. Gupta has begun to take on this question with his “To Whom Was Christ a Slave (Phil 2:7)? Double Agency and the Specters of Sin and Death in Philippians,” *HBT* 32 (2010): 1-16.

<sup>4</sup> For concerns about Mary’s consent in Luke 1, see Natalie Webb, “Overcoming Fear with Mary of Nazareth: Women’s Experience Alongside Luke 1:26-56,” *RevExp* 115 (2018): 96-103.

God's peace, mercy, and grace might abound among the Galatians (6:16, 18), making them capable to lovingly fulfill the Law.

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