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PAUL AND DIVERSITY

A NEW PERSPECTIVE ON Σάρξ AND RESILIENCE IN GALATIANS

Linda Joelsson

Paul and Diversity

This book investigates attitudes toward diversity as expressed in Paul's letter to the Galatians and proposes a renewed understanding of the term σάρξ as used in this letter. Σάρξ (sarx) is usually translated as "flesh" and has often been perceived in theological studies as a complicated and highly polysemous term. It is also a word whose interpretations have had far-reaching social, political, and religious consequences throughout history. The author argues in this volume that for Paul the term σάρξ is commonly adopted with reference to the collective group, and in light of a sense of collective identity in particular. A key assertion is that Paul was and remained a Jew and also continued to be deeply concerned with the prospects for the peaceful co-existence of Jews and Gentiles in the assemblies of God. The chapters draw on perspectives from classical rhetoric, modern linguistics, and social systems theory in order to describe the communicative structure of the letter, the construct of collective identity as described within this setting, and the potential for resilience in this construct. Offering a more coherent reading of Galatians, the book contributes positively to current discussions in Pauline studies and will be of interest to scholars of biblical studies and theology.

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Linda Joelsson
Barnvik
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1 Introduction

A New Perspective on Σάρξ and Reslience in Galatians

In all Paul's letters, perhaps no word has generated as much controversy as *sarx* (σάρξ). With its complex and perhaps confusing meanings, the term σάρξ—often translated as *flesh*—has long been a source of debate within Pauline studies.[1] It is also a word whose interpretations have had far-reaching social, political, and religious consequences throughout this history. To put it bluntly: the stakes are high. What we talk about when we talk about σάρξ matters.

However, pinning down exactly what we are talking about—or ideally, what Paul was talking about when he used the term—is easier said than done. One of the scholar who embraces a polysemous approach, Ceslaus Spicq claims that σάρξ in Paul "changes meaning from verse to verse."[2] James Dunn contends that the term is "ambiguous" and "problematic" for Paul.[3] The confusion these utterances highlight is indicative of a lack of transparency, or at least clarity, with regard to hermeneutic and exegetic method. Given how important the word is for our understanding of Paul, it is worth asking how Pauline scholars reach their conclusions about the interpretation of σάρξ. A consensus over the meaning of the term has thus far proved evasive.

While many early scholars were working under the assumption that Paul moved the designation of the "chosen people" from the Jews to the Christians, this study embraces the approach inaugurated by Krister Stendahl, E. P. Sanders, and others, which asserts that Paul was and remained a Jew—and he also continued to be deeply concerned with the prospects for the peaceful coexistence of Jews and Gentiles in the assemblies of God.[4] Implementing and developing that perspective, this study takes the meaning and interpretation of σάρξ as a starting point for a reassessment of Paul's attitude to diversity and differentiation as seen from the perspective of social systems theory (Murray Bowen). In Galatians, for instance, Paul depicts his strivings to protect the inclusion of the Galatians in-Christ in terms of defending the "truth of the Gospel."[5] In this and other ways, Paul proposes certain modes of thinking and acting that can be described as an attempt

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to increase the extent of diversity in the social body. Notwithstanding, as indicated by his letter, such transition in the social system can be contested.

As have scholars noted, Paul lived in a collectively oriented society where honor and group recognition were highly esteemed.[6] Nevertheless, Paul was also critical toward the way collective identity was perceived by many of his contemporaries, including those within the Jesus movement. In his letters—particularly Galatians—he devotes considerable attention to questions of diversity, inclusion, and resilience. As Paul describes the situation of his addressees, the attempts to enforce conformity around identity markers cause them to "bite and devour" one another to the point of complete ruin.[7] While the "works of the flesh [σάρξ]" are described as abusive and harmful to society, the "fruit of the Spirit" promotes resilience.[8]

In this study, I hope to restore what can be perceived as the collectively oriented aspects of the term σάρξ by testing the semantic componential structure denoting *collective identity* and the *collective group* (or "the collective body") as a vital option in Galatians. Perspectives from classical rhetoric (Quintilian); modern linguistics (Holmstrand); and social systems theory (Bowen) are all employed to describe the communicative structure of the letter together with its errand.[9] While each of these perspectives will be introduced in due time, the explorations of a more monosemous approach to σάρξ—in contrast to more polysemous ones—undergird the entire study.

Translations Talking Back

In the interpretation of texts with well-established traditions of translation, the translations themselves can become powerful factors in new interpretations—and further translations—of the source text. With σάρξ, there has been a tendency among translators to borrow a term from the semantic domain of anatomy (Eng. *flesh*; Ger. *Fleisch*; No. *kjøtt*; Swe. *kött*) in order to transfer the meaning of a term belonging to the domain of anthropology, sociology, or even cosmology. A potential source of misunderstanding, the target term is thereby used in ways that it is normally *not* used in this language. The reluctance among scholars to identify the semantic componential structure of the source term deepens the mystery: What is then translated? How should one understand the passages in which the term occurs? In what settings are those passages intended to communicate? The questions do not stop there, though. As the interpretation and translation of culturally significant texts continues, as with the Bible, earlier translations come to exert influence not only on the interpretation and translation of the source texts but also on the target language. Within long-established lines of interpretation and commentary, it can even be difficult to interpret the interpreters. What did the terms and modes of expression mean, for example, in German or English, when the translations and comments were made? What political, religious, or historical background was brought to bear on the translation? In a process of convergence, the terminology and even grammar of one language may take

on similarities to the terminology and grammar of languages with which it is in contact.[10] If the translator is aware of earlier translations and interpretations of a text, such awareness influences both subsequent interpretations of the source text and also the interpretation of the terms of the target language.

In the case of σάρξ, the number of Biblical phrases that have turned into idioms in a target language indicates the impact of such target texts (i.e., translations) on the target language.[11] But what happens with that idiom when the reader returns to the Bible as a translator now perceiving the text as a source text? Does the source text still mean the same? When certain idioms in the target language influence how the source text is conceived, what is the nature of that impact? Is the impact from the idiom restricted to certain odd uses of language? Or have more foundational constructs of meaning been transformed? And if so, how? George Lakoff and Elisabeth Wehling note that human cognition involves mental constructs that both take some effort to build and even more effort to change.[12] When encountering a word that is used in a strange way, or in a meaning that is alien, the initial response is commonly to try to interpret the phrase within existing mental constructs, rather than building new ones. Nevertheless, when something is deemed to be important and touching upon deeper understandings of meaning, that perception might be a motivating force in building new frames of reference and mental constructs—or in adapting existing ones.

Nevertheless, adapting existing meanings of σάρξ might be easier said than done. As Richard J. Erickson notes, "there can be no consistent correlation between the various applications of the English term flesh and those of the Greek term *sarx* as Paul used it."[13] But if there can be no consistent correlation, why is *flesh* still used in translation? And what, more precisely, is the correlation? Where do the semantic structures of the terms align and where do they part? Tellingly, the same inconsistent correlation can be noted in the relation between σάρξ and the Hebrew term בָּשָׂר (*basar*), a term that can be translated in English into kinship terminology or *flesh*, and it lies behind borrowed idioms such as *flesh and blood* or *bone and flesh*.[14] In the ancient Greek translation of the Hebrew Bible (LXX), בָּשָׂר is most often translated into σάρξ, but it is also translated otherwise, most prominently as κρέας. In the Hebrew Bible, the term בָּשָׂר appears 270 times. About half of these occurrences are translated into σάρξ in the LXX, and about a third are translated as κρέας. The remaining instances are mostly translated as ἄνθρωπος/ἀνήρ, χρώς, and σῶμα. In Isaiah 58:7, for instance, בָּשָׂר is translated as "τῶν οἰκείων τοῦ σπέρματός" ("the houses of the seed"). In Job 10:4, the translators employed βροτὸς ὁρᾷ ("eye of a mortal"). What is more, a few times in the LXX the term σάρξ is used to translate other Hebrew words than בָּשָׂר.[15]

As John Barclay remarks, the endeavor of comparing one occurrence with another must be done carefully. For instance, evidence from the Qumran scrolls "must be handled cautiously and with sensitivity to the context of Qumran theology."[16] Karl Kuhn suggests that the Hebrew term בָּשָׂר played a central role in sectarian thought as "almost synonymous with evil" and was

identified as "the realm where ungodliness and sin have effective power."[17] However, as Barclay writes, "when the term appears with negative associations it is always in the context of general indictment of *mankind*."[18] In the book of Joel, conversely, God as the giver of visions, dreams, hope, and renewal promises to pour out the spirit upon all בָּשָׂר—on all people.[19] In can be noted, however, that in both literature from Qumran and the prophecy in Joel, the term בָּשָׂר deals explicitly with collective identities and, across these texts, the term can be used to describe men and women, slaves and free, young and old, and even humanity.

Clearly, the meaning of a term must be understood within the context in which it is used. Paul suggests an apocalyptic outlook, albeit not necessarily the same one as represented in Qumran.[20] In Galatians, he repeatedly refers to markers of collective identity (cf. male circumcision), which indicates that he deals with the construct of collective identity in this letter. Could this be a point of positive correlation between σάρξ and בָּשָׂר—and *flesh*? As Paul notes in the introduction to Romans, Jesus belonged to the tribe of David according to the σάρξ. Moreover, Paul attests that he cares about the Israelites: they are his brothers and sisters (ἀδελφοί) and thus his relatives κατὰ σάρκα.[21] In English, however, the term *flesh* is inadequate for describing collective identity. In settings where that semantic component is obviously included, the term *flesh* appears as superfluous and redundant in the target text: a reference to the Israelites as his kinsfolk seems clear enough—without "according to his flesh." On the other hand, when the semantic component of collective identity is not explicitly foregrounded in the setting of the term, this aspect of meaning easily disappears from the minds of its interpreters.[22] A general approach of this study is therefore to emphasize the *collective aspects* in σάρξ and to pay close attention to the communicative setting in which this term is used.

When σάρξ is translated into the term *flesh*, that translation strategy can be described as a *translation loan*: a target term is borrowed from another semantic domain within the target language and used in a context in which it is normally *not* used.[23] While possibly preserving some elements of the semantical componential structure from its original use, translation loans can be confusing—and innovative—mixes of old and new componential structures, sometimes relying on different and even disparate mental constructs. And, as the target term is *not* equivalent to the source term, the meaning of the source term is assumed to be, at least partially, transferred to the target term, which is thereby loaded with an alien or transformed meaning.[24] Even if the new semantic componential structure in the target term is repeatedly explained to its audience, the interpreters may still reach quite disparate understandings of the meaning of the term in its new context. The result is a new term in the target language which almost inevitably comes across as complex and confusing.[25]

In short, old mental constructs die hard. Therefore, the text in translation can become a space open for ideological projections, an aspect that will be given more attention in the following.

Nationalism, Development Optimism, Idealism, Individualism

Any interpretation opens a space for ideological projections that are connected to the author's rhetoric, argumentation, and communicative goals to a higher or lesser degree: to read is to interpret. Often, it is easier in hindsight to see how ideological assumptions have influenced interpretation. For instance, within the conceptual frameworks of nationalism, the term σάρξ was assumed to have *either* Hellenistic *or* Jewish precedents. Moreover, Hellenism and Judaism were assumed to be opposed to each other—an assumption since proven both simplistic and false, despite its ongoing purchase in some circles.[26] Within an anti-Semitic paradigm, the term σάρξ was identified particularly with Judaism, which was then associated with inferiority and stagnation, and therefore assumed to be *surpassed* by later, so-called salvation-historical phases. This view was characterized by arrogance together with a sense of *development optimism*, which is quite different from the apocalyptic outlook of Paul.[27]

When operating from within a racist or sexist paradigm, interpreters tend to mistake caricatures for reality: as every trait is transformed to the advantage of the in-group, interrelationships, complexity, and mutual influences are either denied or ignored. Words of self-praise are uncritically taken as accurate historical descriptions, rather than subjective accounts of *his-story*, and slander is similarly taken as accurate description.[28] When such approaches are applied, a person can be assumed to incorporate certain traits (e.g., lazy, ignorant, and inferior) regardless of the person's actual behavior.[29] Rather than paying attention to lived reality in specific settings, the impression is given that the interpreter already knows "what it is all about." In ways similar to such attitude to *persons*, the embeddedness of every *discourse* may be neglected, and local claims assumed to have universal and unchanging meaning. As William Klein and others have noted, a "text without a context may be pretext"—to say whatever one likes.[30] Rather than being understood as making sense in a specific setting, a term or discourse can be assumed to have the capacity to be abstracted from its settings while still "making sense" on its own. In every-day interpretation of discourses, such cluelessness is mostly legitimate. We do not reconsider the meaning of words unless strongly motivated to do so. But the *Shoah* (or *Holocaust*) provided a motivation to reconsider "knowledge" previously taken for granted.[31] Moreover, the way in which women have been disadvantaged by being associated with "flesh" similarly motivates a thoroughly investigation of σάρξ in Paul. And, today, climate changes present another such motivation to reassess the way we perceive lived reality and the material world.

In this setting, Ferdinand Baur's work merits more attention. In his application of Hegel's dialectics to the history of religions, Baur suggested a type of development optimism that was based on the perception that a *thesis* (Judaism) had met its *antithesis* (Hellenism) and the result was a *synthesis*

(Christianity).[32] While this could have been conceived of as two groups meeting each other and both learning something, for Baur the dominant party was also the "future." However, here is where history curiously ends; Christianity is not assumed to be replaced by a new synthesis (say, for example Islam). The wind may blow—but not where it wishes, as it were. Unsurprisingly, Baur's notions about Christian superiority had extremely detrimental effects on his followers' attitudes toward every minority or marginalized perspective that these persons did not associate with progress.[33] As operating within the paradigm of nationalism, different groups or identities were also treated as monolithic entities and the prevailing reality of nested identities was therefore denied or neglected.[34]

With regard to σάρξ, Baur suggested that the concept could be identified as the "*Prinzip der Sünde*" (the principle of sin).[35] Within this interpretive paradigm, the term σάρξ is assumed to operate as the ectypical and substantive—in contrast to his almost insubstantive conceptualization of "spirit"—while σάρξ at the same time was removed from every trait of complexity and capacity: the σάρξ indeed became irredeemable—or sacrificed on the altar of progress. As he excised the term from its historical and linguistic context, Baur effectively ignored Paul's comments concerning his unwavering loyalty to his σάρξ (as his own people) and Paul's statement that it would be beneficial to the Philippians if he could remain in the σάρξ.[36] Hence, by understanding the term σάρξ as referring to material reality, but simultaneously making σάρξ into a principle, Baur made the term fit into his theological system. In an attempt to describe the multifaceted ideological viewpoint of idealism, Frederick Beiser suggests that "[t]he two versions of idealism correspond to two senses of the term 'ideal': the ideal can be the mental in contrast to the physical, the spiritual rather than the material; or it can be the archetypical in contrast to the ectypical, the normative rather than the substantive."[37] As the constructs of an ideal can be a tool for the systematization of privilege and marginalization of the "other," any ideal establishes boundaries and requires its margins or opposites in order to take the form of being *ideal*.[38] Paul's descriptions of the "truth of the Gospel" as the open-table fellowship suggest an alternative conceptualization—lived reality by definition—that addresses racism, sexism, and other systems for marginalization.[39]

While the σάρξ was assumed to operate as the ectypical and substantive, the conceptualization of spirit (πνεῦμα) seems to be correspondingly *deprived* of mystery, dynamic, and volition. Sometimes this conceptualization of spirit seems to amount to little more than the human intellect—even if the human intellect *is* corporeal—and, in this interpretive paradigm, that conceptualization of intellect could be attributed to particular groups of people. If acknowledging the expertise or deeper insight in marginalized groups, the emphasis on knowledge could have been highly subversive.[40] But if instead incorporating contempt for persons or groups that are perceived as uneducated and ineducable, the emphasis on knowledge or ideas as having

potentially salvific capacity can take the form of elitist perceptions (cf. racism, sexism, ableism, and so on). German idealism was almost exclusively connected to highly educated, economically and culturally privileged, unracialized males.[41] Unfortunately, the ideological positions included in the historical current of *idealism* were connected to nationalism and development optimism, together with contempt for material reality, rather than being creative and subversive.[42] Every interpreter has his or her motives and assumptions and interprets from within a specific, historical setting.

In the mid nineteenth-century, August Tholuck suggested that σάρξ refers to "material sensuality," which in keeping with idealistic conceptualizations associates σάρξ with *corporeality* in general, and *sexuality* more particularly. This move again ignores every positive or neutral reference to actual people and to collective identities in Paul.[43] In Carl Holsten's work, the opinion that there are different and even contradictory strands within Paul's anthropology was accentuated and further established.[44] Also operating within the nationalistic paradigm, Otto Pfleiderer similarly argued that Paul's Hellenistic dualism stood in conflict with Jewish cosmology.[45] This view—but not the polarization of Jew and Hellenist behind it—was opposed by Pfleiderer's contemporary, William Dickson, who proposed that Paul had a "Jewish" and holistic view of humans (while, however, also suggesting that Paul had a peculiar and even unique way of using his language).[46] About a century later, during the second wave of Pauline scholarship on σάρξ, the perception of the so-called Jewish holistic view in Paul was developed by John Robinson and David Stacey.[47] These and other scholars emphasized the continuity between Paul's use of σάρξ and the Hebrew scriptures' use of the term *basar* (בָּשָׂר), while, nevertheless, largely upholding the general idea of a divide between Jewish and Hellenistic worlds and words.

Albert Schweitzer developed the so-called Hellenistic trajectory by suggesting that being "in the Spirit" meant no longer "being in the flesh"—in contrast, for instance, with Paul's comment that it would be *profitable* to his audience if he could remain in the σάρξ.[48] In its literary context, Paul's comment that the addressees are "no longer in the σάρξ" refers back to the phrase "τὸ φρόνημα τῆς σαρκὸς," that is, they are no longer in the *understanding* or *mind-set* of the σάρξ.[49] Rudolf Bultmann argued that σάρξ could be used in Paul with reference to the person him- or herself.[50] Given the individualistic paradigm of existentialism, however, Bultmann did not develop the collective aspects of the term.[51] But two decades later, Ernst Käsemann noted that σάρξ could speak about human existence as characterized by "being open towards all sides and […] always set in a structure of solidarity," thereby opening for a collective understanding of Paul's anthropology.[52] As far as I am aware, Käsemann did not pursue the matter further by applying this interpretation of σάρξ as a monosemous approach to the term in Paul's letters, but his contribution to a more collectively oriented reading of Paul is noteworthy. Nevertheless, in more recent scholarship, the individually oriented interpretations again dominate.

According to George Zemek, σάρξ is to be understood as a synecdoche standing for "the totality of all that is essential to manhood."[53] It can be noted that the reference to "totality" and the descriptor "essential" makes "manhood" abstract but in this sense also biased. While, in this study, collective identity is conspicuously missing, traits such as weakness, fragility, transience, egoism, the locus of passions, and covetousness are explicitly mentioned.[54] The "totality" is not that total, since there might be a few other, perhaps positive traits to this "manhood"—complexity is lacking. Some years later, Lorenzo Scornaienchi published a study that elaborates on σάρξ and σῶμα in terms of human capacity for destructive and constructive deeds and inclinations. Scornaienchi suggests that there is a dualism between σάρξ and σῶμα, but he seems to extend the differences too far. Even though σῶμα often refers to the social body in terms of *social functioning*, while σάρξ tends to highlight the identity or *distinction*, such differences do not warrant the designation of dualism.[55]

Scholars, such as Frank Matera, Martinus de Boer, and others, describe σάρξ as referring to a cosmological power or principle (cf. Baur) and combines this approach with a less-than-the-individual interpretation—i.e., σάρξ as a part or aspect of the human individual (cf. Tholuck, Holsten, Pledderer).[56] While most scholars perhaps mention that σάρξ can be applied to collective identity and/or a collective group (such as a *nation*, *lineage*, or *people*), this interpretation is often mentioned only in passing.[57] But this avenue deserves to be explored further. As an abstraction of a term can be emphasized at the expense of its functioning and behavior in actual discourse, the challenge is now to return to the term or phrase in its embeddedness. The aim of this study is to treat the term σάρξ as an individual and—if possible—monosemous term, but the task is to pay close attention to the way it functions in its actual use in specific settings.

The Question of the Rhetorical Composition of Galatians

Given that the term has been investigated so many times, what is the avenue for researching Paul's use of σάρξ again? While exploring the term anew in Galatians, my intent is to avoid racist perceptions, together with sexist, ableist, and other systems for marginalization, and to avoid development-optimistic notions—since these were alien to Paul—while trying to interpret the term in its literary settings as incorporated into specific rhetorical contexts.[58] In Galatians, the question about (enforced) male circumcision belongs to larger questions of how collective identity is constructed and in-group boundaries, which is brought up repeatedly and explicitly—even in the opening of the passage dealing with the desire of the σάρξ. Therefore, while searching for a more coherent meaning in the term, the collective aspects in σάρξ provide an avenue for further investigation. The basic conviction is that, since the understanding of σάρξ is crucial to the understanding of Paul's message in Galatians, this term needs to be understood within the context of the letter.

As sketched out briefly earlier, the meaning of the σάρξ remains obscure even after centuries of interpretation and translation. Many scholarly descriptions of the meaning of term are available, but the actual occurrences of the term are often treated briefly and eclectically. As a word can have different semantic structures depending on the setting in which it is used, the characteristics of such settings should then be possible to identify. It is reasonable to try a more monosemous approach before resorting to highly polysemous ones. Besides, the descriptions of the rhetorical composition of the letter leave important questions unanswered. For instance, regarding the passage that deals with the desire of the σάρξ: Does Paul address a particular group—or certain individuals—among the assemblies in Galatia as having a problem with irregular sexual behavior (cf. "libertinists")?[59] Or does the so-called "desire of the flesh" refer to the desire for conformity within the collective group? In contrast to the English idiom, Paul has *desire* in its singular. Suffice it to say that *if* this passage is firmly integrated into the larger communicative project of the letter—rather than more-or-less disconnected from the surrounding passages—that would mean much for the understanding of the rhetorical composition of the letter as a whole, and for the interpretation of that passage in particular. Moreover, *if* the meaning of σάρξ is oriented primarily toward the collective instead of the individual, that could be the first step toward a more monosemous and coherent understanding of the term in the settings in which it occurs in Galatians.

An underlying problem with many studies is that σάρξ is presumed to be a very complicated and polysemous term. As previously discussed, in translation, a term from the semantic domain of anatomy was transferred into the semantic domain of anthropology, psychology, sociology, or cosmology. Besides, the combination of the English terms *desire* and *flesh* (cf. corresponding German terms) triggers a particular chain of associations in popular discourse with strong connotations to *sexual desire*.[60] *If* the term σάρξ consistently belongs to the domain of social systems, the collective group and collective identity, what would such rendering mean for the understanding of this term in Galatians and for the understanding of the relations between various passages of this letter? This book endeavors to answer those questions. If Paul's attitude to difference and diversity allows for a high level of diversity in the social system, that would also have important implications for the resilience in the system. As social systems theory describes, the greater extent of individual variation that is supported within the system, the greater the capacity to handle change and stress in the system without losing its identity and systemic functioning.[61]

The Aim and Outline of the Study

The purpose of this study is to investigate the attitude(s) toward diversity, together with its implications for resilience, as expressed in Paul's letter to the Galatians, and to test the hypothesis of a collective orientation in the term

σάρξ as used in this letter. Implementing and further developing the perspectives suggested by Krister Stendahl and others, this study understands the constructs of collective identity to be central issues of the letter.[62] This will be clear from the extensive discussion about the relative significance of identity markers (cf. male circumcision/foreskin) and a reassessment of the letter's composition will be made from this perspective.

A more monosemous approach to σάρξ will be developed and tested. It can be noted that the description of the term's semantic componential structure is an abstraction of the term in use—not to be confused with the term as such—and the goal is therefore to find a description that is sufficiently precise to be meaningful in the interpretation (and translation) of the term. As every discourse always takes on different nuances depending on the settings in which it is used, no description of the semantic componential structure can ever be exhaustive. But, on the other hand, no term means everything: there are always delimitations as the term can be expected to cover a specific *semantic field* and have a specific *semantic componential structure*. A term can consist of more than one word—and a word can be included in one or several terms—but the meaning of language is to make meaning. It does not mean just anything.

In the first part, scrutiny is applied particularly to Galatians 5:11–24, the passage in which phrases such as the "desire of the σάρξ" and the "Spirit [desires] against the σάρξ" occur. As the letter is intended for oral delivery, focus is directed toward what is heard rather than on what, in translations and critical editions, is seen. Naturally, the location of demarcations between supposed subparagraphs influences the interpretation of the passages, but such divisions cannot be taken for granted. In this part of the study, perspectives from modern linguistics are applied and, in particular, the analysis and identification of the *transition markers* in the text, such as conjunctive particles (e.g., γάρ, δέ), phrases for direct address (ἀδελφοί; sisters and brothers), metacommunicative clauses (e.g., λέγω; I tell you), or statements of metapropositional bases.[63] Special attention is devoted to the structure of the section comprising verses 4:21–6:10. The reason for this selection of text is that, within an individualistically oriented paradigm, the passage including verses 5:13–26 has often been perceived as disconnected from the rhetoric and argumentation of the rest of the letter. Translations commonly introduce a line break—and even a subheading—at the opening of verse 5:13, and the verses dealing with the "desire of the σάρξ" have therefore often been treated separately, but, notably, verse 5:13 begins with the conjunctive particle γάρ, which is not a strong transition marker.

The book continues by the introductory narrative being read as describing—in narrative form—the location of the case that is the letter's communicative project. Quintilian called this type of narrative introduction the "heart of persuasion," since it is assumed to provide the interpretive keys that are necessary to correctly understand the forthcoming argumentation.[64] I do not propose any direct link between Paul and Quintilian, even if

Quintilian's description of the function of the *narratio* is suggested. Rather, Quintilian identifies and describes a more general phenomenon in human communication; namely, the advantages of introducing the case before offering the arguments (cf. the *abstract* in scholarly discourse). It is worth noting that both Paul and Quintilian worked within orally oriented cultural settings. As the *narratio* can take the form of a short story, no points are argued within the *narratio*, but both the overall structure and the main points can be indicated as a table of content for the ears. In this part of the study, the term σάρξ is assumed to have a semantic componential structure comprising *collective identity* and/or [a] *collective group*, that is, a corporate body with emphasis on the aspect of identity. This general focus on the collective aspects in Paul will also be applied to other terms, such as πίστις (*faith; faithfulness*) and δικαιοσύνη (*righteousness; inclusion into justice*).

In the final chapter, the analysis of Galatians from the perspective of social systems theory builds upon the readings of the letter that were the results of the analyses involving rhetorical and linguistic criticism. In this part of the study, Galatians is investigated as a document transpiring from a social movement in transition toward increased levels of diversity—or as a document with the intent of defending the level of differentiation that was already achieved. Paul's emphasis on the Galatian addressees' inclusion as Galatians in-Christ—if accepted—would strengthen the resilience in the system (cf. instead of "biting and devouring each other"). Drawing on the work of Murray Bowen, social systems theory is employed as the interpretive lens for analyzing Paul's attitudes toward diversity and inclusion/exclusion, as expressed in this letter.[65] Here, resilience describes the capacity to retain functioning and preserve basic structures even in hardships and stress, whereas diversity (or *differentiation*) is the extent of individual variation that is supported within the system. It may be relevant to note that social systems theory does not presuppose any specific cultural traits in order to be applicable.[66]

While trying both to get a coherent grip on Paul's attitude toward differentiation and to understand σάρξ in terms of collective identity can be a puzzling experience, the last word has hopefully not been said on these matters. Indeed, the construct of collective identity, the interpretation of σάρξ, and resilience as described in Galatians are all areas of research that deserve nuanced and far-reaching discussions. Such discussions themselves might be an aid in increasing the level of resilience in the discipline, in the academic study of this text, and in (other) assemblies that read this text for spiritual development. As social systems theory describes, a social system supporting cooperation in diversity is more resilient than systems without such communication and differences.

Notes

1 See, e.g., Schweizer (1971, 98–155); Louw and Nida (1988/1989, 220); Spicq (1994, 231–251).
2 Spicq (1994, 231).

3 Dunn (1998, 70).
4 Stendahl (1976, 78–96, 1–77); Sanders (1977). See also Dunn (2013, 157–182); Hodge (2007); Eisenbaum (2009); Theissen (2016), and many others. An intersectional perspective includes ethnicity, female/male, enslavement/free, and other construct of privilege and marginalization; see, e.g., Kartzow (2012); Ehrensperger (2004); Campbell (2008).
5 See Gal 2:5, 14, in context.
6 Malina and Neyrey (1996); see also Moxnes (2005, 19–40); Hodge (2007), and others.
7 Cf. Gal 5:15, in context.
8 Resilience can be defined as "the capacity of a system to absorb disturbance; to undergo change and still retain essentially the same function, structure and feedbacks"; Walker and Salt (2006, 32).
9 See Quintilian, *Institutio Oratoria*; see also O'Banion (1987, 325–351). For an introduction to transition markers, see Holmstrand (1997). For social systems theory and resilience, see Bowen (1976/2004, 337–387); Walker and Salt (2006).
10 "In general, convergence is a term referring to various ways in which languages or language varieties become more similar to each other in all grammatical subsystems"; Braunmüller and House (2009, 1–9, esp. 4); see Myer-Scotton (2002, 172); see also Cook (2019, 31, 91–92).
11 It can be noted that the emergence of idioms imply that the initial creativity required to interpret these odd phrases has been diminished by the emergence of new, fixed interpretations. As Nida and Taber (1969/2003, 106) note, "the very fact that [certain expressions] are idioms means it is unlikely that the same type of distinctive form will have the same meaning in another language."
12 See Lakoff and Wehling (2012).
13 Erickson (1993, 303–6).
14 See, e.g., Gen 2:23; 29:14; Judg 9:2.
15 I want to express my gratitude to Esther Brownsmith and Terje Stordalen for sharing their knowledge and expertise.
16 Barclay (1988, 188). See, e.g., 1QS 4.2–6, 21; 1QH 7.6–7; 9.32; 12.11–12; 13.18–19; 17.26.
17 Kuhn (1958/1992, 94–113, 101, 107).
18 Barclay (1988, 188, emphasis mine). Notably, the "emphasis on the mercy of God and the worthlessness of 'all flesh' is expressed in the context of challenging the general Jewish assumptions of covenant membership"; Barclay (1988, 190, emphases removed).
19 See Joel 2:27–28; cf. Gal 3:26–29.
20 For a depiction of contemporary Jewish movements as all relating strongly to the Torah; Theissen (1974/1982, 32).
21 See Rom 1:3; 9:3. The term ἀδελφοί in the plural is gender inclusive.
22 See Joelsson (2018, 132–54).
23 Bucher, Dobrina, and Nilsson (2013, 168–73, esp. 171).
24 Bucher, Dobrina, and Nilsson (2013, 168–73, esp. 171).
25 See Bucher, Dobrina, and Nilsson (2013, 168–73) for a discussion of translation strategies; see also Joelsson (2018, 132–54).
26 It can be noted that "all languages are in fact mixtures of elements from different model languages", Braunmüller and House (2009, 2). See also Engberg-Pedersen (ed.) (2001); Martin (2001, 29–61); Tucker (2011, 2).
27 See, e.g., Rom 2:9–11; 11:16–18, 22–24; cf. Baur (1831, 61–206). See Ruether (1979); Martyn (2000, 246–66); Ehrensperger (2004, 27–39); see also Gerdmar (2009); Bengtsson (2020, 3–20), and others.

28 Dominick LaCapra (2001/2014, 1) distinguishes between two approaches to historiography: some apply a "documentary or self-sufficient reach model, of which positivism is the extreme form […] gathering evidence and making referential statements in the form of truth claims based on that evidence constitute the necessary and sufficient conditions of historiography," while another approach is "the negative mirror image of the first, is radical constructivism." Most studies in history can be placed somewhere in between those two extremes, with some capacity for self-criticism and some amount unprocessed "truth."
29 On the concept *racialization*, see Gupta et al. (2007); see also Azar (2005, 159–83).
30 Klein et al. (1996, 299).
31 As Kathy Ehrensperger (2004, 16) notes, "[a]lthough the Shoah was not the sole impetus, it certainly was the decisive event that made Christians aware of the urgency of radical changes in their teaching and preaching vis-à-vis Judaism."
32 Baur (1831, 61–206). Daniel Boyarin (1994, esp. 151, see also 11, 212) explicitly states his dependence on Baur: according to Boyarin, "[a]t stake is not Paul's love for Jews. I take very seriously his anguish in the beginning of Romans 9 over his brothers in the flesh. This very anguish, however, is precisely what signifies that as Jews—that is, as the historically understood concrete community of the flesh—Israel has no more role to play in history." Needless to say, Boyarin's conclusion here has been disproved.
33 Ehrensperger (2004, 28–31); see also Campbell (2008, 61–4, 91). Campbell (2008, 7) describes that "[t]he Christ community for Paul is a place where ethnic distinctions are recognized whilst not being permitted to become a means of discrimination." See also Douglas Campbell (2005, 17–55).
34 As the perspective of dual or nested identity is now contributive to the field; see Esler (2003, 71–73); Hodge (2007, 117–35); Neutel (2015, 80–85).
35 Baur (1864, 161). See also Riches (1993, 31–32). Dickson opposed Baur's suggestion; see Dickson (1883, 16). Similarly, Lorenzo Scornaienchi (2008, 346) notes that the destructive effect on people is particularly evident in the σάρξ, but the power actually at work is ἁμαρτία ("sin").
36 See Rom 9:1–5, esp. 9:3; Phil 1:24–25.
37 See Beiser (2002, 6). For a postcolonial critique of the "ideological turn," see Lopez (2008).
38 Damer (2019, 3–4). Similarly, racialization rests on the erroneous notion that different human races exist, see, e.g., de Reyes (2005, 233–58).
39 See Gal 2:14, in context.
40 For a discussion of Gnosticism as a scholarly construal for the rejection of the "other", see Robertson (2022); cf. O'Regan (2001).
41 As Kathy Ehrensperger (2004, 11) notes, as early as 1914, Walter Benjamin criticized the idea of evolutionism as well as the "objectivist position of detached scholarship." In other words, there were critics of the dominant discourse, but, since Walter Benjamin and many members of the Frankfurt school were Jews, their fundamental critiques were muzzled for many years.
42 Paul's concluding comment in Galatians that "in Christ, neither male circumcision nor foreskin avails anything, [but what it takes is] a renewed creation" will be discussed in the following chapters; see Gal 6:15 in context.
43 See Tholuck (1855); cf. Rom 1:3; 9:3–5; 11:14, and so on. See also Edwards (1996, 69–86) for a highly critical account of Paul's attitude to human sexuality while still interpreting σάρξ as a term referring to sexuality.
44 Holsten (1868). See also Lüdemann (1872). For contemporary opinions, see Spicq (1994, 231–51); Louw and Nida (1988/1989:2, 220); Dunn (1988/2006, 62–69); Thomas (2020).

45 Pfleiderer (1873).
46 Dickson (1883, 3).
47 Robinson (1952); Stacey (1956).
48 Schweitzer (1931, 127, 167); cf. Phil 1:24; 2 Cor 4:11.
49 See Rom 8:9.
50 Bultmann (1951/2007, 233).
51 Bultmann (1951/2007, 190–259, esp. 201, 232–49). See also Eastman (2017, 63–105, 176–85).
52 Käsemann (1969/1974, 1–31, esp. 22); see also Schweizer (1969, 40–55, esp. 48); Robinson (1952, 8–9, 79).
53 Zemek (2005, 25).
54 Zemek (2005, 24–27). See also Schweizer (1971, 98–155); Louw and Nida (1988/1989, 2, 220); Spicq (1994, 231–51); Edwards (1996, 69–86). Jewett and Dunn both note that, in Western interpretive tradition, scholars too easily assume that "lusts" refers to sexual passions. See Jewett (2007, 447–9); Dunn (1988, 363); Dunn (1998/2006, 62–70).
55 As noted, remaining in the σάρξ can be adopted to describe the beneficial state of remaining with a collective group and the σῶμα can be described as dead or dying and ruled by sin; see Phil 1:22; 1 Cor 9:11; Rom 1:3; 9:3; Phlm 16; cf. Rom 6:11, in contexts. Cf. Scornaienchi (2008, 296).
56 See Matera (1996, 172); de Boer (2011, 335–42). See also Thomas (2020); Lee (2010, 172–7); Dunn (1998/2006, 62–69); Aune (1994, 291–312); Schnelle (1996, 60); Fee (1994, 818); Boyarin (1994); Conzelmann (1975, 50, 51); Jewett (1971); Barrett (1968/2000, 57, 59, 124, 126), and others.
57 Cf. Dunn (1998/2006, 70); Nida and Taber (1969/2003, 88); Thomas (2020); Edwards (1996, 70); Boyarin (1994, 77).
58 As John Swedenmark (2011, 103) notes, the basic unit of discourse is the *phrase*, not the word or lexeme.
59 See Matera (1992/2007, 2); see also Longenecker (1990, 187); Jewett (1970/1971, 209–12).
60 See Tholuck (1855); Boyarin (1994, 174). For discussion, see Thiselton (2000, 289); Joelsson (2018, 132–54).
61 See Bowen (1976/2004, 337–87); see also Walker and Salt (2006).
62 See Stendahl (1976, 78–96, 1–77); Sanders (1977); Dunn (2013, 157–82); Ehrensperger (2004); Hodge (2007); Campbell (2008); Theissen (2016), and many others.
63 See Holmstrand (1997, esp. 24–31, 70–71).
64 See Quintilian, *Institutio Oratoria*; see also O'Banion (1987, 325–51).
65 See Bowen (1976/2004, 337–87); see also Titelman (2014); Keller and Noone (2020).
66 See Blessing (2004, 165–91; 2010); see also Kille (2001, 36); Nyengele (2004); Smith (2021, 131–46).

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2 A Monosemous Approach to Σάρξ

Exploring Collectively Oriented Interpretive Options

A monosemous approach to σάρξ was tentatively suggested in the introductory chapter and this approach will be further explored here. As the term was interpreted as the *collective group* and/or the *collective identity* (the collective, physical body), we left the individualistically oriented approach to σάρξ aside. An expression such as the "desire of the σάρξ" is therefore interpreted as the desire of the collective group or the collective identity, which, in this case, suggests a desire for conformity and identity through an idea of sameness. In other words, the monosemous approach to σάρξ is not exhausted but presents a viable option for understanding σάρξ in Paul's letters. In order to understand phrases such as σὰρξ ἐπιθυμεῖ ("the σάρξ desires") within the rhetoric and structure of the letter—rather than within the framework of associations that triggers, perhaps, semi-Freudian conceptualizations through certain individual words or phrases—this chapter investigates the relationships between clauses and passages as indicated by transition markers within the text.[1] For example, a direct address (such as ἀδελφοί) and a metacommunicative clause (e.g., λέγω, δέομαι, μαρτύρομαι) suggest the beginning of a new phase—or a new passage, if I may—in the communicative endeavor. But given that the letter is intended for oral delivery, only transition markers that are heard can be recognized as such (knowing that the divisions into paragraphs and subparagraphs are of much later date). In this context, a close reading of Galatians 5:11–24 has prolific bearing on the understanding of Paul's message in this letter. The aim of this chapter is therefore to investigate an interpretive alternative beyond the individualistic orientation of much modern interpretation.

The outline of the chapter will be as follows. First, the theoretical perspective of polysemy and monosemy is described. Second, the polysemous approach to σάρξ as suggested by Johannes Louw and Eugene Nida is discussed more at length. Third, the role of Galatians 5:11–24 in relation to preceding and subsequent passages is scrutinized, and a more monosemous approach to σάρξ is further tested within this context.

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In order to understand the term σάρξ within the linguistic structure of these passages, special attention is given to the transition markers of the text unit comprising verses 4:21–6:10. In the following chapter, the letter will be scrutinized as guided by a "heart of persuasion" (cf. the *narratio* in the Quintilian sense), and together the analyses in these two chapters set up the final part of the book, namely the examination of the letter from the perspective of social systems theory. The basic conviction is that, since the understanding of verses 5:11–24 is crucial to the understanding of Paul's message in Galatians, this passage needs to be understood within the context of the letter.

The Meaning of Σάρξ in Galatians 5

Assuming a polysemous approach to the term σάρξ in Paul's letters, Ceslaus Spicq contends that σάρξ in Paul "changes meaning from verse to verse."[2] Similarly, James Dunn describes the term as "ambiguous" and "problematic" for Paul.[3] John Barclay suggests that "Paul uses σάρξ as an 'umbrella-term' under which he can gather such disparate entities as libertine behaviour, circumcision, a range of social vices and life under the law."[4] These hypotheses call for further scrutiny, for, as Elizabeth Gordon Edwards notes, even when dictionaries count as many as six or eight different meanings for the term, it is still unclear which one of them is applicable to any given occurrence.[5] This confusion may be indicative of a lack of transparency with regard to method. Eugene Nida and Charles Taber note that "[i]f we assume that the writers of the Bible expected to be understood, we should also assume that they intended one meaning and not several, unless an intentional ambiguity is linguistically 'marked'."[6] Especially in discourses that can be characterized as argumentative rather than poetic, a high degree of exactitude in the terminology is to be expected.[7]

As noted in the previous chapter, in much modern theology and interpretation, there is a tendency to focus on cognition (the belief *in* Jesus) and the salvation of the *individual* (the "believer")—rather than on communal practices and transformed relations.[8] As Krister Stendahl famously noted, Paul was highly concerned with the peaceful coexistence of Jews and Gentiles, which he perceived in terms of renewed creation as the *day of the Lord* drew closer—but he paid little attention to the so-called introspective conscience of the West.[9] The renewed perspective on Paul (with its many developing sub-branches in Pauline studies) presents an ongoing shift that touches upon theology, anthropology, and conceptualization on many levels and, importantly, transformed relations and practices.[10] Focusing on Paul's use of the term σάρξ, we will tackle the following questions:

- What would a renewed focus on collective aspects mean for the understanding of Paul's message in Galatians 5:11–24?

- How does Galatians 5:11–24 work as an integrated part of the rhetorical composition if the transition markers within the text are appreciated as indicating a meaningful structure?
- And, finally, would a more monosemous approach to σάρξ suggest to a more coherent or incoherent understanding of Paul's message in Galatians 5:11–24?

As we set out to find some answers to these questions, it can be noted that the first two questions are not new. The orientation toward the collective—rather than the individual—has been discussed for some time.[11] Additionally, the rhetorical structure of Galatians has been given intense attention among Pauline scholars for decades. But, remarkably, the question of the extent of monosemy or polysemy in σάρξ has been largely absent from the discussion in Pauline studies—and for no good reason, it would seem. Since the approach commonly endorsed is quite unusual, namely that the term can change meaning from one sentence to another, this feature in semantics would be expected to attract some scholarly attention. And, if the semantic structure changes, one would like to know *how* it changes. However, in this study, a more monosemous approach will be tested as a first option.

Theoretical Perspective: Polysemy and Monosemy

The starting point of this chapter is that the potential of monosemy is not yet exhausted as an approach for understanding Paul's use of σάρξ in Galatians 5:12–24. Monosemy is here understood as the possibility to identify a semantic componential structure of the term that is consistent across the occurrences within the text or context of use. As Theo Janssen notes, the goal of both the "monosemous approach and the polysemous approach is to explain how one single word (or lexeme) can be used in a variety of situations while generally each particular actual usage of that word can be understood effortlessly."[12] In other words,

> polysemous and monosemous analyses of word meanings are not necessarily mutually exclusive but (…) they can effectively complement one another. In particular, the polysemous approach to word meanings should be replaced as much as possible by a monosemous approach based on conceptualization principles which account for the diversity of a word's usages.[13]

However, in relation to the word in actual use, the semantic componential structure is a description of the meaning of the term, that is, an abstraction. In written or oral discourse, the phrase or word always takes on nuances from the setting in which it occurs. The relation between the semantic componential structure (abstraction) and the word in use (occurrence) is comparable to the relationship between the *phoneme* and the *allophone*, that is,

the sign referring to a linguistic sound (phoneme) and the language sound (allophone) itself. Linguist Robert E. Callary describes:

> A single mental unit, in this case /t/, may have several physical units corresponding to it. A mental unit of speech is called a phoneme. The physical units, the actual sounds of speech, are called allophones. In the words *top, stop, pit, mutton, eighth, startle,* and *city,* there is only one /t/ phoneme, but there are six allophones—aspirated [t], unaspirated [t], unreleased [t], nasally released [t], laterally released [t], and dental [t]. Phonemes are abstractions: they never occur as such; rather, they are manifested in speech by one or more allophones. Phonemes are units of our intentions and our interpretations; they are what we think we utter and what we think we hear. But phonemes are neither spoken nor heard.[14]

In similar ways, the description of the semantic componential structure is not "used" as a term in communicative situations but provides a sufficiently precise description of the meaning of the term as it is used in actual communication. As the phoneme manifests itself differently depending upon its particular phonological environment, the meaning of the word is likewise affected by the context in which it is used (e.g., in combination with other words, in letter-writing or shouted, or used by a close relative).

While the description of the semantic componential structure of a term is an abstraction not to be confused with the term as used in actual communication, the abstraction can nevertheless be an important resource in the interpretation of a discourse. Especially for interpreters distant to the original setting of the discourse—as in learning a foreign language—the abstraction may offer necessary understanding of the term in actual use (cf. the allophone). The first task for the teacher, translator, or interpreter is to find an abstraction that is sufficiently precise to be meaningful to the interpretation of an actual discourse (cf. the phoneme /t/). This step is crucial to any scholarly discourse—and, naturally, the first step in translation.[15] In translation, the next step of restructuring the semantic components by means of the resources of the target language cannot be taken unless the first step is accomplished; without knowing what to transfer, there can be no translation.

The tendency of modern interpreters to understand and translate ancient texts into individually oriented concepts is an example of such sliding understandings that are difficult to avoid without taking necessary precautions. When the interpreter comes to a text with an inadequate understanding of the terminology, the meanings of more familiar terms easily meld into the interpretation of the more alien terms.[16]

Polysemous Approaches to **Σάρξ**

In their major Greek-English New Testament lexicon, Johannes Louw and Eugene Nida suggest that the semantic components in the term σάρξ comprise (1) flesh, (2) body, (3) people, (4) human, (5) nation, (6) human nature,

(7) physical nature, and (8) life.[17] Thus, in their opinion, the meaning of the term ranges from the anatomy of the individual to collective aspects and phenomena.[18] Then, they go on to elaborate on a number of phrases that include σάρξ. In their depiction, *flesh and blood* means "human being."[19] Moreover, *to share blood and flesh* means to"be a person" (together with someone else, the reader may presume).[20] Moreover, they suggest, the phrase *to come from behind on another flesh* means "homosexual intercourse," while a *thorn in the flesh* means "trouble," and *the will of the flesh* means "sexual desire."[21] Some of these suggestions could be commented and even contested.

For instance, the suggestion that *flesh and blood* means "human being" casts a peculiar light on Paul's claim in the context of 1 Corinthians 15 that "*flesh and blood* cannot inherit the kingdom of God."[22] Would this mean to suggest that "no *human being* can inherit the kingdom of God"? That content would seem to contradict what Paul says elsewhere.[23] For instance, his comment that certain criminals and offenders will not inherit the kingdom of God seems to imply that others will.[24] However, noting that the statement in 1 Corinthians 15:50 occurs within Paul's plea for solid hope in the common resurrection (including himself and the addressees in that hope), the emphasis of the clause may be correctly placed on the verb rather than on the noun. Suggesting that no *collective group* has the capacity to inherit the kingdom of God, the statement is a relevant restriction aimed at those who develop the teaching of separate (and inherently different) social segments or resurrection only for certain heroes. As Dag Øistein Endsjø notes, belief in the resurrection of certain privileged heroes close to the time of their demise was commonplace.[25] Moreover, the Roman emperors commonly tried to establish the idea of their own immortality together with their clans.[26] Therefore, in this setting, a monosemous interpretation of σάρξ (here appearing within the phrase σὰρξ καὶ αἷμα) as meaning *collective identity* and/or *collective group* renders a relevant understanding of the inability of people to inherit the kingdom of God precisely as a *people* or *kinship group*.[27] The questions cannot be assumed to be restricted to the individual's physical body, though included, but are asking about the resurrection of the *collective group* at the consummation of time.[28]

Moreover, as Bruce Malina, Jeremy Neyrey, and others note, in the cultures around the Mediterranean basin, the perceived nature of identity tended to be collectively oriented.[29] In the Gospel of Luke, not being a spirit—but σάρκα καὶ ὀστέα ("flesh and bone")—implies that the resurrected Jesus continues to share a collective identity with his horrified disciples, still being one of them.[30] Thereby, the fear for an unstable or corrupted identity is hushed. In this setting, σάρκα καὶ ὀστέα—a phrase similar to σὰρξ καὶ αἷμα and semantically connected—does not refer merely to physical existence but to Jesus preserved *identity* after his resurrection, corresponding to the phrase: "It is really me" (ἐγώ εἰμι αὐτός).[31] To summarize, when σάρξ is included in the phrases σὰρξ καὶ αἷμα or σάρκα καὶ ὀστέα, it does not only mean "human being" but more specifically being human as included into a specific *collective identity*.[32]

Additionally, in 1 Corinthians 15, Paul uses the term σάρξ to describe the variety of species (such as humans, beasts, birds, and fish) of which they all have their particular *collective identity* as included into particular *collective groups*.[33] While mentioning the seed growing into a plant, Paul notes that radical transformation does not exclude the possibility of maintaining the same basic identity.[34] In other words, transformation itself poses no threat to identity—neither collective nor individual identity.[35] Notwithstanding, both creation and this type of transformation depend ultimately upon God's intervention.[36]

1 Corinthians also displays some interesting derivations of σάρξ. First, those focusing on particular collective identities are described as σαρκίνοις and σαρκικοί: "I belong to Paul! I belong to Apollos!"[37] These people are described as immature in a specific way, namely in their perception that their exclusive collective identity is vitally important. Moreover, when Paul affirms his own and Barnabas's right to receive support from the Christ-loyal assembly, Paul refers to this type of support as σαρκικά, that is, sustenance and protection provided by the collective group.[38] In the same vein, getting married can be described as becoming one σάρξ, that is, assuming covenantal responsibilities for each other.[39]

Returning to Louw and Nida's list of phrases, their suggestion that κοινωνέω αἵματος καὶ σαρκός ("to share blood and flesh") means to *be a person* can be spelled out more precisely.[40] Naturally, sharing "blood and flesh" does not merely mean being a *person*, but also taking part in a *collective identity*. As this phrase occurs in Hebrews 2:14, the aspect of collective identity is strongly emphasized. "Hence, as the children share αἵματος καὶ σαρκός, so also he took part in the same, so that he through death might destroy the one having power over death, that is, the devil."[41] In Hebrews 2:11, the situation is explained that "For he who sanctifies and those who are being sanctified are all from One, and for this reason he [Jesus] is not ashamed to call them brothers and sisters." Hence, in this setting, the aspect of shared collective identity is emphasized and essential to the meaning of the phrase. Those who are sanctified do not merely exist as individual *persons* but also partake in a *collective group* and a *collective identity*.[42]

Moreover, Louw and Nida suggest that the phrase ἀπελθοῦσαι ὀπίσω σαρκὸς ἑτέρας ("to come from behind on another flesh") refers to *homosexual intercourse*.[43] Notwithstanding, the phrase in context does not refer merely to homosexual intercourse but, more specifically, to the sexual abuse of men belonging to *another nation*.[44] This circumstance may be highly relevant in the interpretation of the clause: ἀπελθοῦσαι ὀπίσω σαρκὸς ἑτέρας is not merely "homosexual intercourse" but the abuse of the stranger and foreigner.[45] Hence, the phrase does not refer to homosexual intercourse in a general sense, but more specifically the sexual abuse with the intention of hurting and maiming the honor and respectability of persons belonging to another nation or another *collective identity*. When Lot wants to hinder the rapists outside his house from hurting his guests, someone among the

would-be perpetrators suggests that they abuse Lot instead because he "is [also] a stranger."[46] In their second volume, Louw and Nida elaborate the phrase ἀπελθοῦσαι ὀπίσω σαρκὸς ἑτέρας as an idiom literally meaning "to go after strange flesh."[47] A monosemous approach to σάρξ would rather imply that the phrase literally refers to the abuse of people from another nation, which is confirmed by the setting in which it is used.

In this context, the phrase κατὰ σάρκα ("according to the flesh") is also of interest. In Romans, Paul identifies Jesus with respect to his collective identity as an offspring of David κατὰ σάρκα.[48] In translation into English, it may appear as redundant to describe ancestry by the combined phrases ἐκ σπέρματος and κατὰ σάρκα.[49] Later in the same letter, Paul emphasizes that he certainly is concerned about the fate of the Ἰσραηλῖται: they are his brothers and sisters and his kinsfolk κατὰ σάρκα.[50] They are the "Israelites, to whom pertain the adoption, the glory, the covenants, the giving of the law, the service, and the promises."[51] Evidently, being of the same origin κατὰ σάρκα ("according to the σάρξ") implies not only sharing the same biological father but also sharing a *collective identity*. In Romans, Paul emphasizes that the σάρξ cannot fulfill the law.[52] It could be rendered that the individual cannot fulfill the law (that solely muscles or instincts cannot do it would be a superfluous comment), but it would be more relevant to say that the collective identity as such is not the fulfillment of the law.[53] In this setting, Paul also adopts the phrase τὸ φρόνημα τῆς σαρκός ("the understanding of the σάρξ") which would be odd if the σάρξ was to be understood as the muscular parts and soft tissue of the body. On the other hand, if σάρξ is understood as the collective group or collective identity, the phrase is not strange at all.[54] Even if not always particularly bright, the collective group still has cognitive capabilities. Thus, when a monosemous approach as sketched above is adopted, this incapacity of the σάρξ to fulfill the law becomes relevant and intelligible. It would mean to suggest that the collective identity itself, or the mindset of a collective group, is not the fount of salvation.[55]

The fourth phrase Louw and Nida mention is σκόλοψ τῇ σαρκί ("a thorn in the flesh"), which they suggest means *trouble*.[56] The meaning of this expression has been subject to extensive discussion and several more or less speculative hypotheses have been formulated.[57] Nevertheless, the phrase occurs in the context of Paul's reason for boasting, which is a social activity, and the passage concludes with the comment: "Therefore I rather gladly boast over the weakness (ἐν ἀσθενείᾳ), so that the power of Christ may dwell upon me. For this reason, I delight in the weaknesses (ἐν ταῖς ἀσθενείαις), in reproaches, in needs, in persecutions, in distresses, for Christ's sake; for when I am weak/incapable (ἀσθενῶ), I am powerful/strong (δυνατός)."[58] Hence, the social aspects articulated in this elaboration of the nature of his weaknesses may also have a role to play in the expression itself. Therefore, the σκόλοψ ("thorn") in his σάρξ may be, at least partially, a socially charged characterization. Deteriorating physical condition could have social consequences and, conversely, deteriorating social position could clearly have

physical consequence as well. As Paul describes his life in 2 Corinthians, he has been:

> … in labors more abundant, in stripes above measure, in prisons mote frequently, in deaths often. From the Judeans five times I received forty stripes minus one. Three times I was beaten with rods; once I was stoned; three times I was shipwrecked; a night and a day I have been in the deep; in journeys often, in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils of my own countrymen, in perils of the nations, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brothers, in weariness and toil, in sleeplessness often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness.[59]

Collectively, all these ailments and sufferings could certainly be described as "weakness" or a "thorn" in his *social body*, as harm done to his *collective identity* (σάρξ).[60] Hence, the phrase σκόλοψ τῇ σαρκί might not only refer to "trouble" but might also offer a specific description whence this trouble originates and where it is located. In this setting, the monosemous approach to the term σάρξ in terms of *collective identity* and *collective group* renders a plausible understanding of the phrase: "But lest anyone should credit me more than what s/he sees in me or hear from me in the overwhelmingness of revelations, therefore—so that I may not be supercilious—I was given a thorn in my collective group (and/or identity), a messenger of satan to buffet me, so that I may not be supercilious."[61] As we know, satan (as a *role* rather than a character) tests the fidelity and—hopefully—unwavering loyalty of God's people.[62]

Fifth, and last, Louw and Nida suggest that *sexual desire* is the meaning of the phrase σαρκὸς θέλημα.[63] When the terms "flesh" and "desire" are put together, perhaps the most immediate association that arises in late modern English-speaking audiences is "sexual desire." Nevertheless, as Anthony Thiselton notes, the tendency to associate σάρξ with "nuances of sensuality" may owe more to Freud than to Paul.[64] As evidence for their suggestion, Louw and Nida mention John 1:13, where the evangelist states that those who receive the λόγος ("the word") as the true light were born "not from blood, nor from the will of the σάρξ, nor from the will of a man, but from God."[65] However, in this setting, the will of the σάρξ does not necessarily describe a wish for sexual gratification, but it might just as well be the desire for an heir and a prominent collective identity.[66] In other words, it is not self-evident that the θέλημα σαρκός ("the will of the σάρξ") in this setting is sensually oriented. As Robert Jewett notes, in Romans 7:7, the term ἐπιθυμία ("passion") is concerned with the desire for honor.[67] Especially within the Roman elite, it was often perceived as proper to desire honor more than life.[68] As Karin Neutel and Matthew Anderson note, if an "ideal man" of Roman antiquity were asked about his deepest desire, the answer would be *honor*—and not only for him personally, but for his collective group (cf. the Roman

empire).[69] Furthermore, the desire for an heir is pivotal, not only to several Roman emperors, but also to several narratives within the Hebrew Bible.[70] If John 1:13 is the sole evidence for the interpretation of the phrase θέλημα σαρκός as meaning *sexual desire*, the case is weak. As the Gospel narrative continues, the evangelist describes the "glory which the only Son is given by his Father" as the λόγος became σάρξ.[71] In other words, the σάρξ may desire *honor*—or an *heir*—but this Son receives his honor from above.

Moreover, it deserves to be mentioned that the terms σάρξ and θέλω also occur together in the closing of Galatians: "For not even those who are circumcised themselves (or circumcise themselves) keep the law, but they want (θέλουσιν) you to be circumcised so that they may boast in your σάρξ."[72] In this setting, according to Paul, the proponents of male circumcision desire that the addresses conduct male circumcision so that the proponents may boast in the addressees' shifting (or affirming) their distinct collective identity.[73] Michael Azar notes, the "symbolic object" (here: the concept of a shared collective identity with the capacity to exclude/include) "first of all appears as a metonymic sign, which through its being shared and located satisfies human desires of some kind."[74] No particularly sexual desires surface here, but the proponents desire to boast in the addressees' specific *collective identity*. Therefore, in both John 1:13 and Galatians 6:13, a more monosemous approach to σάρξ as referring to the *collective identity* and the *collective group* is a more compelling alternative than Louw and Nida's suggestion that σαρκὸς θέλημα would mean *sexual desire*.[75] In John 1:13, neither the phrase σαρκὸς θέλημα nor θέλημα ἀνδρός do necessarily refer to sexual desire, though such readings are understandable since Freudian musings have achieved a dominant role in the understandings of Western civilization. But no, the phrase is more plausibly referring to the desire for honor, wealth, and secured lineage.

Moreover, when Jesus is described as the light of all humanity, as the λόγος, the evangelist notes that he settled among them precisely as σάρξ "and he was full of grace and truth."[76] It goes without saying that Jesus as the incarnated λόγος was not essentially associated with sexual desire. Secondly, even though the constructs of collective identities easily become incompatible with "grace and truth," the exclusivist sense is not the only way to construct collective identity. Instead, as Azar notes, "[f]ar from the premise of classical integration ideology, which is about finding a way to overcome the fundamental differences between 'different cultures', it turns out that the difficult part rather consists in overcoming the threatening *similarities* by inventing differences."[77]

If whomever receives the light of truth is given the liberty and authority to become the children of God, an inclusive collective identity is fundamental to the passage.[78] Therefore, the claim that the λόγος operates in the σάρξ without being guided by the σάρξ is relevant and highly suggestive. This implies that the movement is not restricted by the interests of any particular group, but the collective group is rather the location for this λόγος.[79] Within the same prologue, the honor of Jesus is negotiated, namely the fact that "his own did not receive him."[80] Such a circumstance must commonly have been

assessed as shameful but can perhaps be reassessed as a resource in an attempt at establishing an *inclusive* collective identity, that is, an identity which is capable of incorporating people from other nations and other groups. Being the executed and reintegrated no-body, Jesus as a person becomes the perfect central figure for a collective identity open to anyone.[81] In John 1:14, the term σάρξ occurs in the description of Jesus as the incarnated λόγος: sharing a human collective identity and located in a particular social setting, "he dwelt among us."[82] That is, the identity and location are central. A more monosemous approach to σάρξ in terms of *collective group* and/or the *collective identity* is a sensible interpretation here. The λόγος did not become sexual desire (cf. σάρξ). Instead, condensed meaning or wisdom was located in a particular person or group (σάρξ)—but that particular person was not born to enhance any particular group or lineage nor *subdued* to the will of that human group (θέλημα σαρκός).

To summarize, these examples from Paul's letters and other texts from the early Christ-movement show that the monosemous approach to σάρξ is a vital option to the interpretation of this term. Hence, the semantic componential structure comprising *collective group* and/or *collective identity* is a worthy candidate for further investigation. Within their polysemous approach, Louw and Nida suggest as many as eight different meanings of σάρξ, while also giving more detailed interpretations of a number of phrases, even though the term can be given a more straightforward rendering as consistently referring to the collective group or the collective identity.[83] Naturally, it is essential to investigate the literary context in which such expressions and phrases occur. Therefore, the next step to this study is to analyze the use of σάρξ in Galatians 5 within its literary context of the letter's argument.

The Desire of the Σάρξ within the Argumentation of Galatians

The structure of the letter's argument is essential in testing the monosemous approach to Paul's use of σάρξ in Galatians 5:11–24. As we will discuss more in depth later, this passage occurs within a discussion of collective identity and heritage. Early in the letter, Paul describes his attack on Peter for having withdrawn from the inclusive table fellowship. In the same vein, Paul questions the addressees' attempt at establishing an exclusive collective identity. In Paul's view, Peter abandoned the truth of the Gospel and the addressees risk being deluded. Instead of adopting the customs of the Jewish collective identity (cf. male circumcision), Paul suggests that they ought to appreciate their inclusion as based on the faithfulness of Christ Jesus and their own already having received Holy Spirit. A fellowship organized around a crucified (and resurrected) person can hardly require any specific traits of honor with regard to the adherent's education, class, or gender.[84] Any attempt to replace the faithfulness of God with a collective identity is simply misguided.

Therefore, as Susan Grove Eastman correctly notes, the two women in Paul's account of the Abrahamic story are put forward as *principles*, that

is, as two mental constructs or rules.[85] Much can be said—and has been said—about the risks and perils of adopting these women as referring to groups of *people*.[86] In modern times, few interpreters managed to treat the two "women" as mental constructs, even if that appears to be the hermeneutics that Paul himself suggests.[87] First, within the paradigm of interpretations characterized by underlying anti-Semitism, the expelled "woman" was identified with the people of Israel.[88] Then this scholarly consensus was replaced by a type of historical hermeneutics which suggested that the expelled "woman" should be identified with a group within the historical Christ-believing assembly, more specifically the group who tried to enforce male circumcision also for Gentiles.[89] Within this interpretive phase, Paul's reference to Scripture—"drive out!"—was not seen as illustrating the proper attitude to a specific *principle*, namely, toward the construct of an exclusivist identity. Instead, it was perceived as referring to the proper attitude toward a specific group of *people*. Thus, the fate of Hagar was then taken as imperative for the original addressees even if quite contrary to the overall rhetorical aim of the letter (cf. the open-table fellowship).[90] In these interpretive phases in which the "enslaved woman" was interpreted as either a group extending to the present or a group present in ancient history, the suggested hermeneutics clearly failed to treat the "free woman" and the "enslaved woman" as concepts or principles (cf. ἀλληγορούμενα).

Notwithstanding, when the two women are interpreted as mental constructs or principles, another picture emerges. When understood as a principle, the "mother" refers to the guiding principle and her "children" can be interpreted as referring either to persons who are guided by that principle or to the actions which emanate from such principles. Within the framework of symbolic or allegorical hermeneutics, the enslaved "woman" represents the collective identities which are organized around exclusiveness and exclusion (cf. Sarah's exclamation that "the enslaved woman's son must not inherit together with my son Isaac!").[91] The one who is born to establish an exclusive collective identity—or chooses to live with this specific goal before his or her eyes—necessarily must remove others. Therefore, according to Paul, such practices and the mind-set of an exclusive collective identity are to be driven out (the "enslaved woman"). By contrast, the social organization of the "free woman" is built upon faithfulness and promise, which is the general idea of a covenant.[92] Within the "enslaved" type of construct of collective identity, the identity markers (such as male circumcision and food regulations) are given importance together with the additional dimension of their capacity to exclude others.[93] In Paul's view, the identity of the "free woman" is not threatened by her capacity to receive and include people from other nations and other strata of society. On the contrary, he cites, "Rejoice, o barren woman, you who do not bear (…) for the desolate has many more children than she who has a husband!"[94] Her strength is precisely her capacity to include other people and practices.

An essential piece of background to Paul's argument is that both Ishmael and Isaac were circumcised. One was circumcised for slavery and the other

for sonship and inheritance.[95] From the Genesis story, it becomes clear that Ishmael was the son of Abraham but that did not protect him from being driven out into the wilderness together with his mother, neither did his circumcision protect his mother from being "punished" by Sarah.[96] Hence, there are two types of male circumcision with different implications. As Matthew Theissen notes, "Ishmael's circumcision is not in accord with the law of circumcision and therefore has no covenantal value."[97] While the covenantal circumcision was performed on the son on the eighth day after birth, the second type was inflicted on male slaves or servants when they were bought (or whenever).[98] Therefore, Paul strongly suspects that the Gentile Galatian Christ-believers would not be fully included even if adopting the custom of male circumcision. As Michael Azar points out, when a collective identity places the markers of that identity at its core—rather than, for example, practices of faithfulness or love—the full inclusion may never be achieved by the newcomer.[99] Applied to the situation of the letter and the specific case of the Galatian Christ-believers, their capacity to fully understand and follow the law could always be questioned. After male circumcision come the requirements for the proper observance of the cult, the annual collection to the temple, the food regulations, and so on. The principle of exclusive collective identity necessitates exclusion.

Importantly, Matthew Theissen notes, the reference to keeping the "whole law" most likely refers to keeping the commandment of circumcision in its full. This commandment prescribes male circumcision on the *eighth* day after birth, which makes it highly unlikely that it can be achievable unless born by Jewish parents.[100] Furthermore, the commandment of circumcision includes a curse, namely that if the male infant is not circumcised on the eighth day, he is to be "cut off" from his people.[101] Thus, the curse connected to the commandment is exclusion.[102] Paul does not describe the law itself as a curse, but the curse within the law is dismissed.[103] In Paul's view, the addressees are "liberated from the curse of the law," that is, the curse that implied that foreign origins or parental neglect entailed permanent exclusion is annulled.[104] Although the law is meaningful and relevant, certain parts of it must be abandoned while other parts are applicable.[105] In other words, the collective identity can be adopted as a means for exclusion, but this path is enmity to the faithfulness in the Spirit, the hope of righteousness and justice, and their consequences of faithfulness and love.[106]

Notably, despite Paul's emphasis on Christ's liberating for liberty, Jesus did not die the death of a free person himself.[107] On the contrary, he died as a slave or insurrectionist, a *persona non grata*, beyond regret and repair. As Paul Sampley notes, "[c]rucifixion was the ultimate Roman sanction; nothing was more shameful."[108] The procedure of crucifixion can be described as a ritual of *dehumanization*.[109] Denuded, abused, and displayed, the convict was in appearance less than a slave. Moreover, the execution was not merely designed for killing the convict but also aimed at erasing the person from memory, or making every memory tainted by blood, filth, and

agony: the customary mourning rituals and commemorations were forbidden as part of the punishment.[110] Concomitantly, according to Paul, the fact that Christ was crucified is essential to the self-understanding of the assembly.[111] First, if the convict was not even viewed as a person anymore but garbage, the radical inclusion of all the faithful conceptually follows as a direct consequence of Jesus' crucifixion.[112] Second, every trait of honor and collective identity must be renegotiated together with their implications of honor and shame. By means of placing the non-person at the center of their construct of collective identity, even the organization of everyday living is affected.[113]

As a central understanding of Paul, God's election and promise do not exclude *inclusiveness* and openness: freedom and blessing can be combined.[114] As he notes, those who carry the burden of an exclusive collective identity are thereby enslaved themselves—even when privileged. They must defend their structure of collective identity and, additionally, they must continually defend their own inclusion. By means of their persecuting their defined outsider, they are themselves restricted in their relations (cf. loving their neighbor) and in their own development of their personal sense of self.[115] In his self-description, Paul mentions that he has "persecuted the assembly of God beyond measure and destroyed it."[116] In other words, Paul would have intimate knowledge of the principles of an exclusivist sense of collective identity and the desire for conformity to the point of persecution. Previously, he endorsed similar views, including giving an active role to the *curse* of the law.[117]

In this setting, the socially important difference is located between internal encouragement to resist conformity through keeping ancestral customs versus the imposition of such customs—with or without their construct of meaning—onto others. While the encouragement to keep Jewish customs for the diaspora can be construed as a call for liberty—i.e., a call to resist the desire for conformity with the larger community—the same encouragement can be taken as the suppressive call for conformity—especially if non-conformists are threatened with exclusion (cf. Paul's claim that he destroyed the assembly of God; "ἐπόρθουν αὐτήν").[118] There were reasons for Jewish people in the diaspora to neglect the traditions of the fathers. For instance, the covenantal sign of male circumcision could be understood differently among Greeks or Romans.[119] Still, the encouragement to keep ancestral customs does not inherently entail that those who do not conform are excluded. In Galatians, Paul encourages the inclusion of other people (e.g., people from other nations, women, and enslaved persons) while simultaneously opening for internal diversity: the markers of identity *avail* nothing.[120] While encouraging the addressees to resist the calls for observance of Jewish identity customs, Paul opens for the freedom to preserve previous customs and identities—exception made for venerating other gods or mistreating other people.[121]

When the *meaning* of the sign is given priority over the sign itself, the cross of Christ serves as shorthand for such reappraisal.[122] Jesus was faithful but executed as disloyal; he carried the marks of inclusion but was excluded. In this setting, the concept ἡ ἄνω Ἰερουσαλήμ ("the Jerusalem above") is

established as a collective structure on the conceptual level above the identity of Israelite, Galatian, Corinthian, Roman, etc. The "Jerusalem above" can include all of them as the "mother of all."[123] In his concluding chapter 4, Paul emphasizes that the addressees can correctly identify as "children of the free woman."[124] At the turn to the next chapter, Paul exhorts the addressees not to be "entangled again with a yoke of enslavement."[125] And, Paul concludes the letter by emphasizing that God forbid that he should boast "except in the cross of our lord Jesus Christ" by whom the world has been crucified to him and he to the world—"for neither male circumcision nor foreskin avails anything but renewed creation."[126] Therefore, "there is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus."[127] The superstructure suffices for their inclusion: there is no need for shifting collective identity from one to the other.[128] The *meaning* of the signs—covenant—is emphasized at the expense of the sign as such.

Concluding the last chapter, Paul suggests that each one among the addressees must seek every reason for honor in him- or herself and not in another (i.e., not in a collective identity).[129] On the other hand, reasons for shame are to be carried collectively.[130] In doing so, they can "do good to all, especially to those who belong to the household of faithfulness."[131] Paul describes, with the risk of being slanderous, that the proponents for male circumcision do not keep the law themselves, but they want to make a "good showing in the σάρξ."[132] Paul, on the other hand, emphatically claims that he will boast in no other thing than the cross of his Lord Jesus Christ "by whom the world has been crucified to me and I to the world."[133] In other words, his relatively prominent collective identity has no meaning to him as a means for boasting.[134] His pleading that he will not be troubled by the addressees anymore indicates that his own authority has been challenged and that he wishes to withdraw from that challenge-riposte game: "From now on let no one trouble me, for I bear in my body the marks of the Lord Jesus."[135] He professes no obligation to defend either his own or his collective honor.

The questions to which we now turn include whether there is a reason to believe that Paul changes topic in Galatians 5:11–24. How do these verses relate to each other more specifically? How do they relate to the larger context? We will focus on the relation to the preceding subparagraph beginning at verse 4:21 and the following subparagraph that closes at verse 6:11. Before the meaning of σάρξ in Galatians 5 can be analyzed, the structure of the text will be discussed on a basic level by making an attempt to identify the transitional markers.

Interpreting Galatians 4:21–6:10 Guided by the Transition Markers

The analysis of the structure of the passages preceding and subsequent to Galatians 5 will be carried out through the identification of transition markers in the text. As Jonas Holmstrand notes, the text itself displays markers that indicate a structure, for example, metacommunicative clauses ("I want

you to know"), direct addresses ("brothers and sisters"), and the statements of metapropositional bases (sometimes linguistically marked with ἄρα νῦν or οὖν).[136] As Anders Eriksson points out, the rhetorically learned advice of the era sometimes included that it may be wise to begin with the conclusion, especially when the audience is unlearned.[137] It can be noted that Paul commonly adopts references to Hebrew scripture as the ultimate proof for his argument or as the presuppositions which make his argument valid—even when the intended audience seems to comprise mainly non-Jews.[138]

With reference to transition markers, the transition between chapter 4 and chapter 5 is not a major transition. There are no strong markers in the text indicating a change of subject or the beginning of a completely new phase of Paul's argumentation. Instead, the themes of slavery and freedom flow uninterrupted from one chapter to the next.[139] At the outset of chapter 5, the perspectives described in verses 4:21–31 are applied to the situation of the addressees; the advice is given that they must not accept slavery.[140] The Nestle-Aland 28th edition suggests that a new subparagraph begins at verse 5:1: "For freedom Christ has set us free…" By comparison, the Nestle-Aland 4th edition suggests that a subparagraph begins at verse 5:2: "Indeed I, Paul, say to you that if you become circumcised, Christ will profit you nothing." Clearly, this clause adds more emphasis on the content of verse 5:1b, but is it really a new beginning? Verse 5:1b is then an alternative. This clause displays a change of mood (from aorist to imperative) and is linguistically marked by οὖν: "Stand firm, therefore (οὖν), and do not be entangled again with a yoke of bondage."[141] To summarize, the demarcation between the previous and the following subparagraph is a matter of dispute and alternative assessments can be made. Hence, chapters 4 and 5 appear to be closely connected, as more or less the same argumentation continues.

Thematically, the content of verse 5:1b corresponds with verse 5:10, where Paul confesses that he has confidence in the Galatians. The one who might trouble them, on the other hand, shall bear his judgment (whoever he may be).[142] According to the 28th edition, the subparagraph ends at verse 5:12 and a new one begins as verse 5:13: "For you, sisters and brothers, have been called to liberty: only not [let] the liberty [present] an opportunity for the σάρξ, but serve one another through love."[143] This hypothetical demarcation is less convincing, since the new subparagraph would then begin with the conjunctive particle γάρ ("for"). In keeping with Eugene Nida and Charles Taber's general assumption that grammar has meaning, it can be noted that this particle indicates a close connection to the previous clause.[144] As Liddell and Scott formulated more than a century ago, the particle γάρ "is regularly placed after the first word of a sentence: *to introduce the reason*."[145] Therefore, it can safely be asserted that the content of verse 5:13 explains the reason to the exclamation of the previous verse: "I could wish that they cut themselves off, those who bother you!"[146] The particle γάρ indicates that Paul could wish that those who trouble the addressees exclude themselves, for (γάρ) the addressees have been called for freedom.

Thus, in an even sharper formulation, the same sentiment is expressed again in verse 5:10.

Moreover, when the markers of the text are taken as indicative, verse 5:11 stands out as a possible beginning of a new subparagraph. The clause is accentuated by a direct address (ἀδελφοί) together with the rhetorical question: "Brothers and sisters, if I still preach circumcision, why am I still persecuted? Then, the offense of the cross has evaporated."[147] In contrast to the Nestle-Aland 28th edition, the 4th edition suggests that the subparagraph continues through verse 5:13 on to verse 5:15: "But if you bite and devour one another, beware lest you consumed by one another."[148] The following metacommunicative clause of verse 5:16 (λέγω δέ, "but I say") speaks in favor of such assessment. However, verse 5:16 merely reinforces the content of 5:14–15, namely that to love one's neighbor is to be led by the Spirit, while exposing each other to harassment is equivalent to doing what the σάρξ desires. Hence, while the direct address of verse 5:16 gathers emphasis on the content of the previous verses, the connections between 5:14–15 and 5:16 seem stronger than their distinctiveness. Thus, in keeping with the Nestle-Aland 28th edition, the strong connection between verses 5:15 and 16 renders a reading in which the subparagraph continues through verse 5:16, possibly all the way to verse 5:24.

When the subparagraph beginning at verse 5:11 is rendered as continuing to verse 5:24, the question of verse 5:11 finds an answer, namely that the offense of the cross has not ceased: instead "those who belong to Christ have crucified the σάρξ together with its passions and desires."[149] Not only is the cross offensive but also the Christ-loyal participate in this offense. Nevertheless, the meaning of verse 5:24 may still seem somewhat obscure, an issue which will be discussed later. At this point, it suffices to note that the themes of crucifixion and offense are carried through passage to reach their conclusion here. Besides, the relation among σάρξ, male circumcision, and persecution is suggestive. Paul's mentioning of the offense of the cross corresponds neatly to his relating Jesus' person and his losing his identity—in a superficial sense—to the similar identity loss of the Christ-assemblies as no longer claiming an identity in distinction. Hence, the subparagraph comprising verses 5:11–24 is a viable option for understanding the structure of the letter. Moreover, the illegitimate demands of the σάρξ are linked to present and former forms of persecution, including the addressees' present attacks on one another.

Finally, in verses 5:25–26, the larger paragraph is concluded. Paul suggests, "if we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit: Let us not become conceited, provoking one another, envying one another."[150] This conclusion refers back to the very beginning of chapter 3, where Paul asks: "Did you receive the Spirit by the works of law (i.e., identity markers) or by faithful obedience/attention?"[151] An aspect that the Nestle-Aland 28th edition and the 4th edition agree upon is that the last subparagraph of chapter 5 closes at verse 5:26, where the chapter also ends.[152] Simultaneously, in these verses,

Paul introduces his final address, in which he turns to his audience with his more practical advice for their everyday life.[153] In verse 6:1, Paul accentuates his message by means of a direct address (ἀδελφοί), but there is no strong demarcation between the chapters. The theme continues through verse 6:9 and into the *exordium*, that is, the letter closing that could traditionally be written by the author's own hand.[154]

To summarize, there is no strong demarcation between chapters 4 and 5, nor between chapters 5 and 6. On the contrary, these chapters are closely connected. The larger paragraphs can be divided into subparagraphs which are still part of the same discussion or argumentation. As suggested, the following subparagraphs together constitute the argumentative and implementing structure of the discourse:

A 4:21–5:1a **Children of Promise as Isaac**

- a 4:21–4:27 Two Principles
- b 4:28–5:1a Christ Liberated for Liberty

B 5:1b–5:10 **Defend Your Liberty: Exhortation to Resist Conformity**
C 5:11–5:26 **Let the Spirit Guide**

- a 5:11–15:24 Freedom Characterized by Generosity
- b 5:25–5:26 Spiritual Life without Arrogance and Envy

D 6:1–6:10 **Implementation of the Message**

While the structure could be described in more detail, this level suffices for our continuing analysis of the potential for a monosemous approach to σάρξ.

A Monosemous Approach to Σάρξ in Galatians 5

In several occurrences of the term σάρξ in early Christ-movement texts, the monosemous approach comprising the meaning of *collective group* and *collective identity* offers interpretations that are sensible and contextually relevant. As Janssen notes, the goal of both the "monosemous approach and the polysemous approach is to explain how one single word (or lexeme) can be used in a variety of situations while generally each particular actual usage of that word can be understood effortlessly."[155] In the traditional interpretation of Galatians 5, Paul's use of σάρξ is *not* effortlessly understood. However, the potential for a more monosemous approach to σάρξ has not been exhausted. The modern focus on the individual can be questioned, as well as the tendency to equate spirit (πνεῦμα) specifically with a *human spirit* in these settings. Elsewhere Paul claims that the "wisdom of the wise" led them nowhere, which makes it highly unlikely that Paul would suggest that the addressees must now follow their own individual spirit.[156] As a result of the "new perspective" in Pauline studies (or "Paul within Judaism"), the collective aspects of Paul's anthropology now receive more scholarly attention.

The monosemous approach to σάρξ in terms of *collective group* and *collective identity* is part of this effort.

Children of Promise as Isaac

Two Principles; Christ Liberated for Liberty
4:21–27; 4:28–5:1a

In Galatians 4:21, Paul asks a question that is programmatic to the following discourse: "Tell me, you who desire to be under the law, do you hear what the law says? For it is written that Abraham had two sons: one from the enslaved woman and one from the free […] these things are symbolic."[157] The subparagraph is then concluded with Paul quoting from Scripture: "Rejoice, o barren woman […] for the desolate has more children than she who has a husband."[158] This particular reference opens up for an understanding of the social structure as open for a multi-ancestry collective group and thereby also a multi-ethnical collective identity.[159] Both Ishmael and Isaac were circumcised, but Ishmael was born for the sake of the collective identity—as a means for securing a lineage—and was suddenly replaced by another child in the minds of those who participated in this endeavor.[160] Hence, when Isaac was born, Ishmael was replaced by Isaac as the one born κατὰ σάρκα, that is, for the sake of maintaining an exclusive collective identity and group.[161] Because of this, both Ishmael and Hagar were mistreated and excluded. This is the way the story goes and, according to Paul, it should be understood and interpreted symbolically.

In the Genesis story, severe persecution is directed against Hagar and Ishmael for the sake of establishing and maintaining an *exclusive* collective identity. Paul interprets this narrative symbolically, not as an injunction to drive out any particular person or group, but as a story describing and formulating two principles that can be assessed individually. The "mothers" are the mental constructs of, on the one hand, covenant (social system) focused on establishing an exclusive collective identity and, on the other, covenant (social system) as an established inclusive collective identity focused on God's promise and faithfulness.[162] Therefore, rather than driving out any particular group of people, Paul suggests that the mind-set and practices following upon establishing an exclusive collective identity must be driven out. It may certainly take some effort, since almost every prominent collective identity seems to have been constructed around the concept of the exclusiveness at some point in time—as if the exclusiveness of that construct was essential to its identity and survival (cf. nationalism, male chauvinism, bigotry, and so on).[163]

Beginning by another direct address (ὑμεῖς δὲ ἀδελφοί), in the next subparagraph, Paul suggests: "But you, brothers and sisters, are children of promise such as Isaac."[164] In other words, they have the capacity to include, since they themselves are included. Importantly, the addressees do not *replace* Isaac but are included *just as* Isaac.[165] This verse offers a metapropositional base that

formulates the presupposition which the following account elaborates and explains.[166] In this clause, the contrastive particle (δέ) indicates that even though the "Jerusalem above" is the "mother of all," they are among "her children" as guided by "her" structuring principle.[167] Hence, the question about standing "under the law" is not related to whether ethical conduct is important or not—Paul indeed pays close attention to ethics elsewhere—but it is related to *belonging* and *how* to relate to the law. Answering the question "what the law says," the subparagraph deals with the issues of collective identity, authority, and ancestry. The addressees are not under these things but rather held accountable for their actions' own merits.

Directly after Paul's statement that the addressees are "children" of the "free woman," severe problems of the constructs of exclusive collective identities surface.[168] The conjunctive particle ἀλλά indicates that, so far so good (they are all children of the free woman), *but* … as in times of old, Paul describes, the one "born according to the σάρξ" (κατὰ σάρκα) persecutes the one "born according to the Spirit (κατὰ πνεῦμα)." The question is then unavoidable: Who was born κατὰ σάρκα? And who is born κατὰ πνεῦμα? Simply put, *who* persecuted *whom*? As the Genesis story makes clear, the one who was abused and persecuted together with her son was Hagar.[169] Since Paul offers a symbolic interpretation of the story, Sarah's imperative that Hagar must be driven out together with her son must *not* be taken at face value. Notably, the whole letter defends the case that the Gentile Galatian "Hagar" must *not* be driven out. Instead the assemblies of Galatia ("ἐκκλησίαις τῆς Γαλατίας") are included among the assemblies of God.[170] In the meta-story (cf. the *narratio*; further discussion follows) in the opening of the letter, Paul does not suggest that Peter must be driven out—as a representative for those who withdraw from the open-table fellowship—even if his failing conduct was a reason for disappointment.[171] Indeed, the barren woman will have more children than the one who has a husband—if the authentic Gospel is understood and implemented. Hence, the distorted version(s) of the Gospel is to be driven out and excluded, since the constructs of exclusive collective identity generate severe problems and solve nothing: they distort the truth of the Gospel and alienate the addressees from their Christ.

By sheer necessity, the construct of an exclusive collective identity entails that someone is excluded. In Paul's view, the "free woman" and "Jerusalem above" are constructs that are located conceptually above the constructs of exclusive and discrete collective identities: she/it is the "mother" of all.[172] Paul concludes, "because of this (διό), sisters and brothers, we are not children of the enslaved woman but of the free. In freedom, Christ freed us."[173] When the monosemous interpretation of σάρξ is applied in terms of *collective group* and *collective identity*, being born κατὰ σάρκα ("according to the σάρξ") might mean to suggest being born for the sake of establishing and maintaining a *collective identity* or, indeed, the very principle of constructing a collective identity based upon an idea of sameness (or lineage) rather than faithfulness or promise. In this case, according to Paul, the addressees are not

born for the sake of establishing and preserving a collective identity, but they are liberated to be free.

Defend Your Liberty

Exhortation to Resist Conformity

5:1b–10

The following subparagraph begins with the encouragement: "Stand firm and do not be entangled again with a yoke of enslavement."[174] As Paul concludes, the proponents of conformity are merely troublemakers who will face their own judgment in due time.[175] Hence, no one has absolute power—in terms of a slave owner—but the proponents are themselves under authority also with regard to how they treat persons who seemingly voluntarily enslave themselves to them.[176] In Paul's view, the enforced adoption of identity markers is no minor issue (even though the identity markers themselves avail nothing).[177] If the addressees choose to adopt the custom of male circumcision, this will corrupt their capacity to appreciate Christ's inclusive faithfulness into zero and nothing, "for in the Spirit from faithfulness, we eagerly await the hope of inclusion/justice/righteousness."[178] As Paul notes, the curse upon anyone "who hangs on a tree" is nullified by Jesus' reintegration through his resurrection.[179] The ultimate exclusion in crucifixion is annulled and, therefore, the curse upon a male child who is not circumcised on the eighth day is also annulled.[180] While the inclusion into constructs of collective groups and identities is essential to human life and flourishing, the character of such constructs is of uttermost importance.[181]

In Galatians, the inclusion through faithfulness is placed in sharp contrast with the construct of collective identity that places its emphases on the identity markers. While the inclusion into an exclusive collective identity tends to make people supercilious, arrogant, and envious, the inclusion into the Christ-assembly based upon *faithfulness* works through *love*.[182]

Let the Spirit Guide You

Freedom Characterized by Generosity

5:11–24

Immediately after his pronouncement of judgment upon those trying to enforce male circumcision among the addressees, Paul notes that he would not be persecuted himself had he still preached male circumcision.[183] Thus, he actively questions such a position that assumes that male circumcision is essential and, therefore, even his own inclusion is now in question and his position challenged.[184] In Paul's view, preaching male circumcision as if it had salvific significance takes the force out of the Gospel; it is not even a gospel anymore.[185] In this light, Paul could wish that the circumcision preachers would exclude—"cut off"—themselves rather than being allowed to exclude others.[186] In Paul's view, the addresses are called to liberty and are therefore

encouraged to resist such urges for conformity that, for instance, may include imposed customs and signs.[187]

In Paul's depiction, the call for male circumcision causes the addressees to bite and devour one another—nearly to the point of finishing each other off—instead of promoting the fulfillment of the central commandment: *you shall love your neighbor as yourself*.[188] As preoccupied with issues of inclusion and exclusion, the addressees neglect to serve one another through love.

As Paul has just emphatically claimed the freedom of the addressees, he continues by asserting that they are not obliged to adopt the customs of any one collective identity, whether Jewish, Roman, or anyone else. The collective identity—or, specifically, the *exclusiveness* of a collective identity—does not enhance their capacity to follow the law. In the book of Joel, which is part of Paul's heritage, the prophet describes that God's Spirit will be freely distributed to everyone, including male and female, young and old, and privileged and dispossessed:

> In those days, I will pour out my Spirit on all people/everyone (πᾶσαν σάρκα; LXX 3:1), your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old man shall have dreams and your young men shall see visions; in those days I will pour out my spirit even upon your menservants and your maidservants.[189]

Living at the end of times, this seems to be what Paul and his friends are experiencing.[190] The Galatian addressees have received the Spirit, are invited to walk in the Spirit, and the fruit of the Spirit develops—such as love, joy, peace, patience/resilience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control.[191] As the addressees are not under the law, they are free to include—and to be included—into fellowship by loving their neighbors.[192] As Paul notes, the mere *signs* of a collective identity do not effect fellowship and faithfulness. Moreover, even as included into a collective identity with certain traits of prominence, people commit all sorts of crimes. While the fruit of the Spirit is received like the mystery of the growing seed, the crimes that are committed by people are described as their own doing—ἔργα τῆς σαρκός—with the implication of accountability and responsibility. What people do, according to Paul, includes "adultery, fornication, uncleanliness, lewdness, idolatry, sorcery, hatred, contentions, jealousies, outbursts of wrath, selfish ambitions, dissensions, heresies, envy, murders, drunkenness, revelries, and the like."[193] There may be all kinds of problems in Galatia (economic exploitation, sexual exploitation, selfish ambitions, heresies, idolatry, and so on), but Paul does not discuss their shortcomings in this letter. The errand of the letter is to explain that if they shift collective identity, that would not be a solution to any problem of actual behavior. No collective identity can ever compete with continuing in the Spirit, walking in the Spirit, and receiving the fruit of the Spirit.

While everyone has a collective identity—being without identity is inconceivable—the addressees can still choose how to relate to this aspect of their

lives. As Halvor Moxnes and others note, in agonistic cultures, every member is at all times obliged to defend the in-group honor.[194] In other words, one is not free to love thy neighbor unconditionally, nor to include anyone in fellowship. In verse 5:17, the tension between the Spirit and the σάρξ is described as the obstacle that keeps the Galatians from doing what they want. Even though it is not crystal clear what they want—it could be either exclusivity or inclusivity—the tension between the Spirit and the σάρξ is an obstacle to them.[195] If the Galatian addressees desire to be included into a collective identity of some prominence, that might suggest that their current status was not particularly high. Brigitte Kahl notes that in Roman sources, Galatia is often perceived as the subordinate and inferior *other*.[196] In such a situation, their inclusion into an ancient and prominent collective identity like Judaism may have appeared as a gain at least to some among the Galatian Christ-assemblies. On the other hand, if they were threatened with exclusion unless they adapted to the identity markers of Judaism, the prospect of gain may not have loomed large in their minds but rather the risk of loss.[197] The inclusion into a collective identity and a collective group of influence was often not only a matter of personal preference but a matter of safety and sustenance for oneself and one's kin.[198]

As Paul himself has ceased to preach circumcision, he encourages the addressees to adopt the same freedom for themselves.[199] Whilst this might indeed be a risk to their inclusion and prominence, Paul suggests that it is a risk to be taken for the sake of something much more important: the truth of the Gospel. The assumption that in-group identities matter is described as enmity to the Spirit. Addressing the fear in his audience that they may incorrectly perceive themselves as obliged to keep track of collective identities and the identity markers of each other, Paul emphasizes that they are indeed free.[200] They are even encouraged to intentionally abandon the exclusivist aspects of their collective identity (cf. the *curse* of the law), as the crucified Christ was reintegrated despite his exclusion and execution. The fruit of the Spirit will grow the better and feature practices and traits such as "love, joy, peace, patience (cf. resilience), kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control."[201] Having set out with a comment on the indispensable offense of the cross, Paul closes the paragraph by encouraging the addressees to remember that those who are in Christ have "crucified" their σάρξ.[202]

While also describing Paul's use of the verb *crucify* in this setting by the term "astonishing," Martinus C. de Boer notes that Paul (1) adopts the past tense and (2) describes the addressees themselves as the agents.[203] Here the monosemous approach to σάρξ would suggest that those who are Christ-loyal are assumed to actively disregard their own and others' collective identities as providing a means for privilege and distinction. For Paul personally, even if he describes elsewhere that he might have confidence in the σάρξ, he prefers not to rely on such things.[204] As Paul describes their own times, the renewal of creation is characterized by liberation for both privileged and dispossessed.[205] Therefore, the offense of the cross suggests the (re-)inclusion of

the excluded, enslaved, and cursed. While male circumcision on the eighth day is a sign of covenantal inclusion into Jewish identity, in Galatians 5:11–24, Paul opens up the discussion to be concerned with any collective identity and any collective group—not only Jew or non-Jew, but also Galatian or Roman, also male or female, free or enslaved.[206]

In Paul's symbolic account of the Hagar and Abraham story, the "mother" which is the very principle of distinction and exclusiveness is described as the core of their problem. Being born according to the σάρξ means to be exploited as an asset for the construct of a collective, exclusive identity. In other words, when the construct of a (prominent) collective identity becomes the end (cf. σαρκὶ ἐπιτελειόω) rather than a means (the setting in which one walks in the Spirit), the σάρξ wages war on the Spirit and the Spirit wages back. The fruit of the Spirit cannot develop, and the central word of the law is neglected, when the collective identity is the guide rather than the Spirit. However, if they disregard their former boasting and let go of aspirations for privilege and distinction (cf. *crucifies* the σάρξ), they are free to live in the Spirit and to walk in the Spirit.

Indeed, such reorganization could be appraised as both offensive and liberating. In any case, as seen from this perspective, Paul's suggestion that the addressees have already crucified their σάρξ is less peculiar.[207] Neglecting the boundaries of their collective identity and their collective group was part and parcel of the Galatian assemblies' receiving Paul in the first place. Precisely that the addressees listened faithfully and received the Spirit appear as the first miracle.[208] By contrast, the Galatian Christ-believers later turning to the σάρξ for completion appears as complete madness and causes Paul to address them as "fools" and "bewitched."[209] Doubtlessly, these are highly offensive epithets. Notwithstanding, such accusations convey Paul's assessment of the addressees as not being in their right mind. For Paul personally, it appears as if he would have to give birth to the same children twice.[210] Moreover, adopting the metaphor of the athlete, Paul says, they ran well, but in races there should be no obstacles.[211] Provided that the start was accurate, there should be no need for them to go back and start once more. In Paul's view, they have already been included as heirs and "children of the free woman," which is the principle of inclusion regardless of origin, civic status, or gender.[212] As an obstacle in the race, as the labor of giving birth to the same children twice, the non-gospel offered to the addressees distorts their view and compels them to return to an earlier phase of immaturity.

Paul's first arrival with them can be construed as an encounter with a complete stranger. The marvel is therefore that (1) the addressees received Paul as a messenger from God, (2) that they received the Spirit and are now included among the assemblies of God, and (3) that they would want to *undo* that full inclusion by means of being assimilated or subordinated as candidates who are obliged to adapt according to advises that are given by other humans.

When a monosemous approach to σάρξ is adopted, the passage can be interpreted as suggesting that whatever the collective group or collective

identity may demand from the addressees in terms of adaptation and conformity, the addressees are *not* obliged to comply. On the contrary, if they fulfill the desire of the σάρξ—which in this case would entail that they turn away from the open-table fellowship—their compliance would distort the truth of the Gospel. In other words, to follow the σάρξ entails that they cannot walk in the Spirit and serve their neighbor through love: the law in one word is then neglected.[213] It is no minor issue at stake. Moreover, abandoning the love for the neighbor is completely uncalled for, since "in Christ Jesus, neither circumcision nor foreskin avails anything, but faithfulness working through love."[214] Unfortunately, any group may deteriorate into functioning characterized by attempts at establishing and maintaining a collective identity through an idea of sameness. Especially in times of stress, this contraproductive strategy tends to be adopted when skills for problem-solving are in want or the emotional system overrules the intellectual system (an issue that will be investigated more in depth in a following chapter).

Importantly, the statement about not following the desire of the collective group has no anti-Jewish undertone, since such desire for conformity may occur in any collective group and any collective identity. Thus, the seemingly universal nature—at least regarding humanity—is highlighted by Paul's use of the term σάρξ. Any collective identity can be constructed around the exclusion of others rather than around faithfulness and more solid selves that can be developed when diversity is supported and appreciated in any collective identity. Besides, it seems possible that the call for male circumcision caused turbulence among the addressees: they bite and devour each other. Regardless of the original source of the call, the social pressure toward conformity might very well continue and be emphasized by proponents among the Galatians themselves. If some had already submitted to the rite of male circumcision, they might want others to follow.[215] Importantly, the problem is not that of *having* a collective identity, but that of *imposing* one's collective identity and identity markers onto others. To have no collective identity is inconceivable; rather any person has several overlapping or nested identities. Thus, the question is not if but how one relates to this fact.

As noted above, there are no strong transition markers to suggest that Paul in Galatians 5 would turn to a completely other theme or issue in any of the passages or subparagraphs. On the contrary, even verses 5:11–24 appear to be firmly integrated into the larger discussion about the collective group and how a collective identity may be constructed in ways that are harmful to the group itself and to others (i.e., by demanding conformity or mistreating others). In Paul's mind, the addressees are liberated from the obligations of the collective identity and the collective group, obligations to establish borders and to delineate themselves against other groups, and they are free. The subparagraph begins with Paul's comment that the offense of the cross would evaporate if the Christ-loyal began to preach male circumcision. In the same vein, the passage is concluded by Paul's comment that those who are Christ's have crucified their σάρξ.[216] As Jesus (and other convicts) lost every mark of

distinction, similarly, the Christ-faithful voluntarily let go of distinction and prominence. As the barren woman rejoices over her many adopted children, the Galatians are entitled to celebrate their inclusive fellowship in Christ.

Walk in the Spirit

Spiritual Life without Arrogance and Envy

5:25–26

Verses 5:25–26 describe that life in the Spirit can be lived without arrogance and envy. In these intense and even condensed clauses, Paul lays out the trajectory for the last part of his letter. He encourages the addressees to further implement the ways of the Spirit: "If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit. Let us not become conceited, provoking one another, envying one another."[217] *Conceit* is typically to assume or pretend oneself (or one's group) to be more special than one actually is.[218] *Provocations* may include boasting in one's achievements (or assumed superiority) and/or in smearing other people for their shortcomings in ways that do not assist their improvement but rather aim toward cementing the failure and inflicting permanent damage. Naturally, provocations are sometimes just simply lies. *Envy* denotes not the appreciation of others' achievements and benefits but wanting to have the benefits removed and relocated within one's own domains. Therefore, the difference between admiration and envy lies in the sense of generosity—or lack thereof—in the eye of the beholder. By contrast, Paul connects spirituality with faithfulness, generosity, and hope.[219] In other words, when σάρξ is interpreted as comprising the semantic components of *collective identity* and *collective group*, the hortatory section follows logically upon Paul's elaboration of the reasons for ignoring the desire of the σάρξ while instead accepting the guidance of the Spirit.

Implementation of the Message

Doing Good as Long as We Have Opportunity

6:1–10

The continuation of the hortatory section has a stroke of genius. Among the addressees, each is exhorted to find reasons for boasting only within oneself. Boasting over belonging to a particular identity thus becomes impossible.[220] Furthermore, any failures are to be carried collectively.[221] The temptation of the one overtaking someone else in trespass is the temptation to feel superior to the one who failed.[222] The passage is not primarily concerned with how to avoid trespasses but how to deal with a trespasser, while addressing the issue of the attitude of those who assume the role of being spiritual (πνευματικοί) and attempt to correct or exclude others. "You who are spiritual must restore such one [who is overtaken in any trespass] in a Spirit of gentleness, considering yourself lest you are tempted"—that is, tempted to perceive oneself as superior to the one who has failed: "for the

one who thinks oneself to be something—when one is nothing—deceived him- or herself."[223] Beautifully, Paul includes the one who corrects another in the process of restoration and makes the role of that person visible. There is a choice before them, and Paul invites them to "bear one another's burdens and so fulfill the law of Christ."[224] It can be a challenge and arduous to include and restore. But it is an endeavor in line with the truth of the Gospel. As Paul concludes, God is not deceived: the one who sows in the σάρξ—that is, in one's own collective group or collective identity—will reap corruption from the σάρξ.[225] The reason that corruption emanates from the collective identity is that it can too easily be made into an excuse for *not* doing good to everyone (cf. loving one's neighbor as oneself).[226] Moreover, Paul's injunction that the one who is taught the word share in all good things with the one who teaches is an excellent suggestion in order to avoid envy: privileges are to be shared.[227] Paul encourages endurance.

To summarize, the monosemous approach to σάρξ renders the understanding that the exclusive collective identity is no path to salvation. Instead, such constructs of identity entail distortion, corruption, and injustice—everything that is contrary to the Spirit of Christ.

Conclusion: A More Cohesive Discourse

While the polysemous approaches to σάρξ supply little assistance in the actual interpretation of the text of Galatians 4:21–6:10, a more monosemous approach focusing on the collective aspects in σάρξ suggests a compelling alternative. When Louw and Nida's polysemous approach was scrutinized, an individualistically oriented paradigm was discernible in several of their suggestions. This could be replaced by a collectively oriented paradigm, resulting in a richer account of the term as used in these settings. For example, Louw and Nida suggest that the phrase θέλημα σαρκός means "sexual desire" with reference to John 1:13, but the expression may rather speak about the reorganization of collective identity: Jesus includes anyone who receives him into fellowship, giving them the right to "be called the children of God."[228] In that setting, sexual desire is less relevant than not being born for the sake of a collective identity or for the sake of establishing, maintaining a specific lineage.[229] The phrase θέλημα σαρκός therefore most likely refers to the desire for an exclusive collective identity in contrast to the inclusive collective identity suggested and established by Jesus—an identity described as open to anyone who received him.[230] As a matter of fact, every expression and phrase that Louw and Nida mention from the Pauline corpus could be given an individualistically oriented interpretation, but the collective orientation of σάρξ offers a more coherent reading and renders a more relevant understanding of the term in the aforementioned contexts.

Similarly, de Boer's estimation of Paul's use of the term *crucify* (σταυρόω) in relation to σάρξ as "astonishing" appears to be less motivated if the collective aspects in σάρξ are considered. Everyone has a collective identity—or

several—and belongs to collective groups, but everyone can also choose how to relate to that fact. In Galatians 5:24, the expression about the crucified σάρξ relates directly to Paul ceasing to preach male circumcision: the life-giving scandal of the cross must not be forfeited.[231] As he continues, Paul discusses the traits that are connected to the constructs of an exclusive collective identity, namely conceit, provocation, and envy. If expressions such as the crucified σάρξ are understood within the context of human constructs of collective identity, it becomes apparent that Paul is not making a detour to another issue in this context. Rather, the argument against conforming to an exclusive collective identity is enriched by this verse. A more monosemous approach focusing on collective aspects provides a compelling alternative to more individualistically oriented interpretations: neither male circumcision nor foreskin avails anything, and their collective identity as such has been crucified.

While some people wanted the addressees to adapt to a certain set of identity markers, Paul suggests another approach to their collective identity. As members of Christ's collective body, the addressees are free to "crucify" their collective identity—or, more precisely, the exclusivist sense of their collective identity. However, the expression of crucifying the σάρξ is still harsh language, but it makes sense in the context of the letter: the addressees are no longer obliged to do what the collective group or the collective identity desires of them. As the markers of identity do not avail anything, the addresses are free to embrace—and to defend—the open-table fellowship as the truth of the Gospel. This is certainly provocative and perhaps even perceived as a challenge by some: it deserves being called a "scandal" (σκάνδαλον).

In the reception of Galatians, the interpretation of σάρξ has certainly been problematic. But Dunn's assessment of the term σάρξ as "problematic" is more befitting the history of the term's reception than as a description of how the term appears in Paul's letters.[232] The ambiguity in the term may have arisen from the introduction of an individualistically oriented interpretive paradigm rather than from ambiguous uses of the term in these letters themselves. Paul has been thought to contradict what he says elsewhere and to write his arguments with a loose logical order—or no logical structure at all. But this is not the only possible interpretation of these passages. As liberated and included into fellowship with the distinction-deprived crucified Christ, the addressees need not strive for initiation into any specific collective identity. As a matter of fact, that would only make them estranged from Christ. Paul argues that the constructs of collective identity—the initiation and inclusion into such identities—are not at all resources for the fruit of the Spirit to grow as they are claimed to be. Such claims were most likely voiced by those who preached circumcision, but the claims do not hold up to scrutiny. As Paul comments, exclusivist collective groups do not act any better than those who lack the resources coming from incorporation into a prominent collective identity. Instead, the inclusion into a collective identity with high social status appears as disturbances and impediments to good

relations both internally within that group and in relation to persons belonging to other groups.

As an argument for his case, Paul offers a long list of what people do while incorporated into collective identities (adultery, fornication, uncleanliness, lewdness, idolatry, sorcery, hatred, contentions, jealousies, outbursts of wrath, selfish ambitions, dissensions, heresies, envy, murders, drunkenness, revelries, and the like). In doing so, he notes that even persons within (prominent) collective groups will be held accountable for their actions. In other words, the individual does not become morally "invisible" within a collective identity. Otherwise, such sentiment can be deceptive (e.g., the imperial family and other ruling elites). Nevertheless, the collective groups can be the *places* where the fruit of the Spirit grows (i.e., love, joy, peace, patience/resilience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-mastery). The addressees, and Paul too, live within collective groups and as incorporated within collective identities—but they do not have to be enslaved by such "powers." As incorporated into the body of Christ, they live within collective groups and within collective identities in a specific way, in a reformed way. Namely, they are free from the rule of the σάρξ, free from fulfilling the desire of the σάρξ, and free to serve one another through love. Hence, living in the Spirit does not require isolation. Instead, it requires faithfulness and justice. To summarize, a monosemous approach to σάρξ renders a sensible and coherent understanding of Galatians 4:21–6:10, including 5:11–24.

In Galatians 4:21–5:1a, Paul emphasizes that, in its exclusivist versions, the construct of collective identity is just another type of enslavement or even the cornerstone of enslavement as such. The principle of exclusivity necessitates exclusion, and the threat of exclusion generates submission—since most people would not survive long without the collective group and their collective identity. In Paul's view, the subordination to the principle of an exclusivist collective identity entails enslavement and therefore that principle must be thrown out.[233] He emphasizes that his foundational convictions include that the addressees have been called by Christ for liberty.[234] Therefore, if understood as a prerequisite for inclusion into the fellowship of Christ, the call for male circumcision must be rejected as a distortion of the truth of the Gospel.

In Galatians 5:1b–24, Paul continues the argumentation by claiming that the constructs of collective identity as such are against the Spirit. He adopts quite provocative and even somewhat demanding rhetoric (cf. 5:17). Nevertheless, this perspective is completely in line with the views that are expressed at the beginning of the chapter, namely that the addressees must not let *anyone* ensnare them in another yoke of enslavement. Importantly, though Jews may appear to be "under" the law to outsiders, as a Jew, Paul can live in a healthy conversation *with* the law too.[235] Besides, when a sign of inclusion and faithfulness is transformed into a sign of exclusivity and conceit, it is not the same sign anymore.[236] When the sign of male circumcision is applied to the Galatians under the threat of exclusion, the rite does not have the same meaning anyway. According to Paul, the curse of the law—that is, the curse

within the law—has been excluded for Jews and Gentiles alike. Deviance from the norm does not imply exclusion but diversity, and the norm itself is thereby transformed or perhaps more clearly defined: the body of Christ incorporates persons regardless of the collective identities assigned to them.[237] The question is not whether members of various groups can live together—but *how*.

In Galatians 5:25–6:10, the focus of the hortatory passage provides further evidence for the collective orientation of σάρξ as a term oriented toward the collective aspects of human life. Processing the attitudes of conceit, challenge, and envy, Paul maintains that success should be carried individually, while shame and failure be carried collectively—quite contrary to the challenge-riposte game in which honor is derived from the deteriorating position of the other.[238] The temptation to feel superior to someone who is overtaken in trespass is avoided by means of sharing one another's burdens and attempting for restoration in a Spirit of gentleness.[239] Moreover, when the one who is taught the word share in all good things with the one who teaches, envy can easily be avoided.[240] To sow in the σάρξ comes across as the opposite to the restoration in mutual care (cf. conceit), the Spirit of gentleness (cf. challenge), and sharing in all good things (cf. envy). On the other hand, to sow in the Spirit implies doing good to everyone, especially to those who are of the household of faithfulness.

A More Monosemous Approach to Σάρξ

As this chapter has shown, a more monosemous approach to σάρξ in terms of *collective group* and *collective identity* suggests an alternative to more individualistically oriented approaches. The readings of the letter resulting from such a monosemous approach are more coherent compared to the readings derived from earlier highly polysemous approaches.[241] Furthermore, the transition markers of the text support a more coherent rendering of the text as thematically held together by one unified cluster of topics (such as collective identity, enslavement, exclusion/exclusivity, liberty, and Spirit). When a collectively oriented understanding of the term σάρξ is adopted, the passage comprising verses 4:21–6:10 can be read as a logically related sequence of treatments or subparagraphs.[242] The description of the semantic componential structure of σάρξ as comprising *collective group* and *collective identity* has proven to be sufficiently precise to be relevant and helpful in the interpretation of the term as it occurs in Galatians 4:21–6:10 (cf. the relationship between the phoneme as an abstraction and the allophone as the occurrence).[243]

If the goal of both the "monosemous approach and the polysemous approach is to explain how one single word (or lexeme) can be used in a variety of situations while generally each particular actual usage of that word can be understood effortlessly," this goal can be reached by the proposed monosemous approach to σάρξ.[244] The understanding of σάρξ as comprising the semantic elements *collective group* and *collective identity*—as a collectively

oriented term—ensures that the term can be understood effortlessly in each particular usage.

In conclusion, it can be noted that the results of this chapter both confirm and further implement the paradigmatic shift within Pauline studies from its orientation toward the salvation of the *individual*—in terms of cognitive "belief"—to the eschatological transformation of the *community* as structure of faithfulness. As Stendahl correctly observed, Paul was highly committed to the peaceful coexistence of Jews and Gentiles (while the introspective conscience played only a minor role). When Paul's discussion of the σάρξ and the πνεῦμα is understood as located within such a conceptual context, the tension can be discerned as located between the strivings for a collective identity based on sameness, on the one hand, and the inclusive fellowship of the once-crucified Christ on the other. As Paul describes, the addressees have received the Spirit and, hence, the fruit of the Spirit can develop within and throughout their inclusive form of fellowship that is open to righteousness and justice (which is in fact a type of collective identity, albeit *not* an identity focused on its own superiority or exclusiveness). The Galatians addressed by means of the letter can be incorporated together with Jews in-Christ without distinctions such as separate tables and similar demarcations. As the signs of collective identity are not given any importance as a means for exclusion or exclusivity, the addressees' renewed collective identity allows for diversity and overlapping identities.

The purpose of the next chapter is to achieve a better understanding of the structure of Galatians. By means of adopting the passage comprising verses 1:11–2:21 as a *narratio* (in the Quintilian sense), Paul's introductory stories could be appreciated as indicating the location of his case, while also providing helpful interpretive keys to the understanding of his subsequent arguments.

Notes

1 As Anthony Thiselton notes, the tendency to associate σάρξ with "nuances of sensuality" may owe more to Freud than to Paul; Thiselton (2000, 289).
2 Spicq (1994, 231–51, esp. 231). See also Schweizer (1971, 98–155); Louw and Nida (1988/1989:2, 220).
3 Dunn (1998/2006, 70).
4 Barclay (1988, 209). Similarly, Martinus de Boer describes the σάρξ both as a "dangerous cosmic power akin to Satan" and contends that "'flesh' *primarily* denotes the substance (containing blood) that covers a human being's bones"; de Boer (2010, 336–42, esp. 339, 336, emphasis mine).
5 Edwards (1996, 69–86); cf. Janssen (2003, 93–122, esp. 94).
6 Nida and Taber (1974/2003, 7). In this vein, Brian Thomas argues, "Paul finds σάρξ a fitting word to use in expressing his theology because it already has a certain range of meaning—which the lexicons are suited to reveal to us—not because the word σάρξ comes pre-loaded with that theology"; Thomas (2020, 92).
7 As Jeffrey Reed notes, "[t]otally incohesive texts are extreme exceptions in human communication. More typically, a discourse is cohesive of an 'unusual' kind (i.e., it contains noticeable peculiarities that do not follow the patterns of other

discourse) or cohesive of the 'usual' kind (i.e., it follows shared rules of language use)"; Reed (1997, 408).

8 At the beginning of the post-modern or late modern era, this focus is beginning to change. See, e.g., Eastman (2017, 85–105); Theissen (2016); Campbell (2008); Hodge (2007); Ehrensperger (2004) for contributions to this important change in Pauline studies. See also Harink (2003). For an example of study within the individualistically oriented paradigm, see Bultmann (1951/2007, 190–259, esp. 201, 232–49).

9 Stendahl (1976, 1–96). Matthew Theissen likewise maintains, "[i]n his work, Sanders makes the case that Judaism was neither a religion that was concerned with the question 'How might a person be saved?' nor a system of work-righteousness that promised salvation only to those who had achieved perfect obedience to the Jewish law. Most important for Sanders was the fact that the Jewish law contained within itself the means of recourse for when Jews broke it"; Theissen (2016, 5–6).

10 See, e.g., Dunn (2005, rev. ed. 2008); Yinger (2011); Tilling, ed. (2014), just to mention a few works reflecting on this aspect of development within the field of Pauline studies.

11 See, e.g., Morgan (2018, 23–45); Eastman (2017); Nanos and Zetterholm, eds. (2015); Trebilco (2012); Ehrensperger and Tucker, eds., (2010); Nanos (2002); Witherington (1998); Nanos (1996); Boyarin (1994); Campbell (2008); Ehrensperger (2004); Esler (1998/2003); Martin (1995); Malina (1981/2001) to mention just a few from this almost exploding area of study.

12 Janssen (2003, 93–122, esp. 94).

13 Janssen (2003, 93). See also Wishart (2017, 99–126); Ruhl (1989).

14 Callary (1981, 279–307, esp. 296).

15 See, e.g., Nida and Taber (1974/2003, 33–34); Joelsson (2018, 132–54).

16 For descriptions of how languages used in the same settings tend to become more similar—even grammatically—to each other, see Braunmüller and House (2009); Myer-Scotton (2002); Cook (2019, 31, 91–92).

17 Louw and Nida (1988/1989:2, 220).

18 The concept of cosmological power is missing; cf. Matera (1996, 172); de Boer (2010, 335–42).

19 Louw and Nida (1988/1989:2, 220).

20 Louw and Nida (1988/1989:2, 220); 1988/1989:1, 106.

21 Louw and Nida (1988/1989:2, 220). Louw and Nida write these expressions in Greek and in English translations. The preliminary or crude translations, including the English term *flesh*, are mine (e.g., *the will of the flesh*); cf. Louw and Nida (1988/1989:1, 772, 244–45, 292).

22 See 1 Cor 15:50.

23 In Galatians, e.g., Paul states that the addressees are heirs according to promise; Gal 4:4–7; cf. Rom 8:12–17.

24 See 1 Cor 6:9–10.

25 Endsjø (2008, 417–36, esp. 431–4); see also Origen, *Contra Celsum* 3.24; Plutarch, *Lives: Romulus* 27.3–28.2. According to Paul, the addressees already believed in resurrection with regard to Jesus; 1 Cor 15:1–11.

26 See, e.g., Julius Caesar's eulogy for his aunt's funeral: "On her mother's side, Julia, my aunt, was sprung from kings, and on her father's connected with immortal gods"; Suetonius, *Divus Julius* 6.1. By means of constructing this myth of a noble genealogy for his aunt, Caesar, naturally, legitimizes his own power; see Hodge (2007, 19). Moreover, coins had the deified Julius Caesar on one side, and Augustus as *divi filius* ("son of God") on the other; IG X.2.1 31; see Witherington (2006, 5).

27 When the verse is understood as describing that the Christ-loyal *can* rise together with Christ (regardless of their collective identities), this statement is also coherent with what Paul expresses elsewhere; see 1 Cor 7:17–23; cf. Gal 3:25–29;

Rom 1:14–16; 2:9–11, and so on. Furthermore, it corresponds to the opening question: "How are the dead raised and with *what body* (ποίῳ σώματι) do they come?" Here σῶμα is likely referring to social functioning rather than to the individual's body; many are assumed to rise as one body; cf. 1 Cor 15:35.

28 Cf. 1 Cor 15:1–11.
29 Malina and Neyrey (1996).
30 See Luke 24:39; Joelsson (2018, 132–54).
31 Luke 24:39; see also Joelsson (2018, 132–54).
32 Cf. Joelsson (2018, 132–54).
33 See 1 Cor 15:39.
34 Cf. Paul Ricoeur's conceptualization of identity as being *oneself* rather than being the *same*; Ricoeur (1990, 115–25).
35 See 1 Cor 15:36–49.
36 See 1 Cor 15:50–57. "I tell you a mystery: we will not all die, but we will all be transformed […] thanks be to God who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ."
37 See 1 Cor 3:1, 3.
38 See 1 Cor 9:11.
39 See 1 Cor 6:16; cf. 7:32–34. Through this reference to Genesis 2:24, Paul strengthens the social position of the πόρνη ("prostitute") to the role of a wife. René Gehring (2013, xiii) notes, "profound exegesis of this verse is conspicuously absent in most of the literature dealing with the prominent topics of biblical marriage and sexuality." See also Mauser (1996, 3–15, esp. 6).
40 Louw and Nida (1988/1989:2, 220); 1988/1989:1, 106.
41 See Heb 2:14.
42 See Heb 2:9–18; cf. Louw and Nida (1988/1989:1, 106).
43 Louw and Nida (1988/1989:2, 220).
44 See Jude 7; Louw and Nida (1988/1989:2, 220); 1988/1989:1, 772.
45 Cf. Louw and Nida (1988/1989:2, 220); see Jude 7; Gen 19. See also Riches (2010, 723–9, esp. 725).
46 See Gen 19:9.
47 See Louw and Nida (1988/1989:1, 772).
48 See Rom 1:3.
49 In Rom 9:7–8, Paul notes that not all σπέρμα of Abraham are his children; only Isaac is called his σπέρμα.
50 See Rom 9:3; cf. 9:5; 4:1; 11:14. For comparison, see also Heb 2:11–16.
51 See Rom 9:4.
52 "For the understanding of the σάρξ is enmity to God; it is not subject to the law of God—it indeed cannot be"; Rom 8:4; cf. Gal 5:19–21.
53 As the text continues, Paul notes that "as many as a led by the Spirit of God, these are the children of God"; Rom 8:14. Moreover, he concludes, they are "God's children […] heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ"; see Rom 8:16b–17.
54 See Rom 8:5–6.
55 This message is perfectly coherent with the overall errand of the letter: "For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who is faithful, for the Jew first and also for the Greek"; Rom 1:16. As Philip Esler notes, Paul's letter to the Romans is an attempt to conjoin two or more different ethnic groups in a new shared collective identity; Esler (2003, 154). Hence, the imperative to "greet" is repeated 15 times in chapter 16, implying to honor and to include in fellowship; Jewett (2007, 951–2).
56 Louw and Nida (1988/1989:2, 220); 1988/1989:1, 244–5; see also 2 Cor 12:7.
57 As Omanson and Ellington (1993, 221) note, these suggestions include "some kind of eye disease, malaria, epilepsy, severe headaches, defective speech, and so forth."
58 See 2 Cor 12:9b–10.

59 See 2 Cor 11:23b–27.
60 Cf. Gal 4:13–14.
61 2 Cor 12:6b–7; cf. Gal 5:26. On the issue of boasting; cf. Gal 6:13–14.
62 2 Cf. 1 Thess 2:18, in which it is noted that Satan has hindered Paul from visiting the Thessalonians despite his good intentions.
63 See Louw and Nida (1988/1989:2, 220); 1988/1989:1, 292.
64 Thiselton (2000, 289). Freud most likely received the term in the form of idioms in his German-speaking society; see, e.g., Santner (2016), in which the complexity, enculturation, and transformation of terminologies relating to "flesh" as a philosophical and psychological concept are laid bare.
65 See Joh 1:13; see also Louw and Nida (1988/1989:2, 220); 1988/1989:1, 292. As Kari Syreeni (2018) notes, in the Johannine corpus there are certain narcissistic traits; outsiders are depicted as thoroughly bad and insiders as thoroughly good.
66 As Cicero describes in his praise of boys: "How hotly they pursue their rivalries! how fierce their contests and competitions! what exultation they feel when they win, and what shame when they are beaten! how they dislike blame! how they covet praise! what toil do they not undergo to stand first among their companions! how good their memory is for those who have shown them kindness, and how eager they are to repay it"; Cicero, *On the Ends* 5.61; in Schottroff (2022, 34).
67 Jewett (2007, 436, 444); cf. Dunn (1988, 363); Dunn (1998/2006, 62–70). It can also be noted that, in 1 Thessalonians 2:17, Paul describes that he has endeavored to visit the Thessalonians with great desire (ἐν πολλῇ ἐπιθυμίᾳ). Similarly, in Philippians 1:23, he describes how he desires to depart and be with Christ. Clearly, the term is not always adopted as referring to sexual desire.
68 See Witherington (1998, 18); Moxnes (2005, 19–40); Hopkins (1983/1985).
69 See Neutel and Anderson (2014, 228–44).
70 See Hopkins (1983/1985); see also Gen 9–10; 11:10–12:8; 15:1–18:19, and so on.
71 See Joh 1:9–13, esp. 1:14.
72 See Gal 6:13.
73 Cf. Gal 5:15, 5:11–24.
74 Azar (2005, 159–83, esp. 160; translation mine).
75 See Louw and Nida (1988/1989:2, 220); 1988/1989:1, 292.
76 See Joh 1:14.
77 Azar (2005, 162; translation and emphasis mine). As Azar continues, "[i]f the strictly physiological difference is not sufficiently clear, one must, in the worst case, attach a Star of David to the body"; Azar (2005, 162; translation mine).
78 See Joh 1:12. On this particular attitude toward inclusion, see Nanos (2008, 179–210, esp. 209).
79 Cf. Gal 5:22–23.
80 See Joh 1:11; see also Rom 9:1–5; cf. 10:1–3; 1 Thess 2:14–16.
81 See Joelsson (2017, 150–1).
82 See Joh 1:14.
83 See "a) flesh, b) body, c) people, d) human, e) nation, f) human nature, g) physical nature, h) life", Louw and Nida (1988/1989:2, 220). See also Louw and Nida (1988/1989:1, 106, 244–5, 292, 772). Cf. Joelsson (2018, 132–54).
84 See, e.g., Gal 3:1–29. See also Bates (2019, 67–74). As Peter Oakes (2018, 255–75) comments, πίστις describes a relational way of life characterized by "trust, loyalty and/or trustworthiness"; see also Morgan (2015).
85 Eastman (2006, 309–36).
86 Whether or not an underlying current of misogyny is present in Paul's text, it has certainly surfaced in the history of interpretation combined with racism and triumphalist types of nationalism; see Junior (2019); Eastman (2006, 309–36); Castelli (1994, 228–50); Williams (1993); Weems (1991, 57–77); see also Brenner (ed.) (1998).

87 See Gal 4:24; see also Eastman (2006, 313–7).
88 See Eastman (2006, 310–4). As Eastman (2006, 310, footnote 5) notes, "Martin Luther […] links Hagar with the synagogue, but in his commentary […] he interprets Gal. 4.30 as a pronouncement against 'all that trust in their own works', including Jews, Greeks, Romans and particularly leaders within the church." See Luther (1535/1963, 441–2; 1538/1979, 294). See also Burton (1921/1988, 262, 267–8), Betz (1979, 251), and others.
89 Eastman (2006, 310–4).
90 See Gal 4:30; Eastman (2006, 310–4); see also Junior (2019, 1–13).
91 See Gen 20:10b.
92 Cf. Gen 17:1–22; Gal 4:21–31.
93 See Azar (2005, 159–83).
94 See Gal 4:27.
95 Theissen (2016, 67).
96 See Gen 16:1–6; 21:9–21. Similarly, Jesus' being righteous (and circumcised) did not protect him from being excluded and "cut off" from his sonship and inheritance; cf. Gal 3:13–14.
97 Theissen (2016, 67).
98 See Gen 17:12–13.
99 Azar (2005, 161–2). See also, as described in social systems theory, the futile attempt of the collective group at escaping psychological stress by excluding members or subgroups; Bowen (1976/2004, 337–87).
100 As Theissen (2016, 67, 91–101) suggests, "[c]ovenantal circumcision is not just any form of circumcision, but circumcision on the eighth day from birth […] any male not circumcised on the eight day after birth must be cut off from his people." Therefore, "Paul may intend the phrase ὅλος ὁ νόμος to refer to the entirety of the law of circumcision, not the entire Jewish law," and verse 6:13 can be translated: "For those who circumcise themselves do not keep the law," Theissen (2016, 93, 96).
101 See Genesis 17:9–14.
102 Cf. Gal 5:12. Hence, Paul's comment that he could wish that the proponents for male circumcision cut *themselves* off does not mean to suggest that they cut their foreskins off (or their penises), but their *self-exclusion* from the collective body; see Theissen (2016, 67).
103 See Gal 5:11; cf. 3:23–4:8.
104 Cf. Gal 3:13–14. Andrew Cowan (2020, 211–29) correctly notes, the curse mentioned in Deut 27:26 does not fall upon the people of Israel, as a *corporate curse*, but upon the individual perpetrator. "Deut 27:26 does not declare a curse on everyone who tries to obey the law […] but rather on those who *fail* to obey the law"; Cowan (2020, 212; emphasis mine).
105 See Gal 5:3; cf. 4:30. See also 3:15–18.
106 See Gal 5:5–6. See also Bates (2019, 67–74).
107 Cf. "τῇ ἐλευθερίᾳ ἡμᾶς Χριστὸς ἠλευθέρωσεν"; Gal 5:1.
108 Sampley (2003, 1–16, esp. 11–12).
109 The institution of slavery involved practices for dehumanizing enslaved persons in everyday life. As Orlando Patterson describes, slaves were biologically alive but socially dead; Patterson (1982, 1–75); see also Wessels (2010, 143–68).
110 Traditional mourning customs were forbidden in relation to crucified persons; see Hope (2009, 180).
111 See Gal 3:1; cf. 5:11, 24.
112 Samuelsson (2013, 16–17); Elliott (1997, 167–83, esp. 168); Hengel (1977, 76); see also Peters (1995, 3–43, esp. 16).
113 Cf. "If I must boast, I will boast in the things which concerns my infirmity"; 2 Cor 11:30. See also Phil 3:1–12. As Karl Barth (1933/1968, 36) suggests,

"the power of God is not the most exalted of observable forces, nor is it either their sum or their fount. Being completely different, it is the KRISIS of all power…". Moreover, "[t]he Gospel is not the truth among other truths. Rather, it sets a question-mark against all truths", Barth (1933/1968, 35); Harink (2003, 47).

114 See Gal 3:28–4:7, 3:7–14.

115 Cf. Bowen (1976/2004, 337–87) and Azar (2005, 159–83). See Jacoby (1994/2017).

116 See Gal 1:13–15.

117 See also Phil 3:6; cf. Gal 1:13–17; 3:9–14.

118 See Gal 1:13. As described in 1 and 2 Maccabees, there were violent oppositions against circumcision: under the rule of Antiochus IV, two mothers were killed as a punishment for them having their sons circumcised (the fathers are not mentioned); 1 Macc 1:60–61; 2 Macc 6:10; see Neutel (2016, 376).

119 Notably, Philo opens his apology for male circumcision by calling it "an object of ridicule among many people"; Philo, *On the Special Laws* 1.2; see Neutel and Anderson (2014, 228–44, esp. 228). Galen reports that there was special surgery for having the foreskin *replaced*; Jacoby (1994/2017, 12). In Roman antiquity, circumcised penises could be a source of deep embarrassment, since the athletes did their exercises naked but the glans of the penis had to be covered by the foreskin at all times: the athletes even "drew the foreskin over the glans and tied it with a string"; Jacoby (1994/2017, 12).

120 Paul no longer preaches circumcision, since the curse within the law is removed; Gal 5:11; 3:5–13. See also Gal 6:15; 1 Cor 7:17–19.

121 Cf. Gal 5:10–13; cf. 3:1–3. "As many as desire to make a good reputation within the collective identity, these would compel you to be circumcised, only that they may not suffer persecution for the cross of Christ"; Gal 6:12. Commemorating a convict of execution was obviously illegal; Hope (2009, 180).

122 See Gal 5:24. "And, sisters and brothers, if I still preach circumcision, why am yet I persecuted? Then the offence of the cross has evaporated"; Gal 5:11. See also Gal 3:1.

123 See Gal 4:26.

124 See Gal 4:31.

125 See Gal 5:1b.

126 See Gal 6:14–15.

127 See Gal 3:28. Sandra Hack Polaski comments to Galatians 3:28 that "[i]mplied here is the new creation Christ is bringing about in the believing community and in the world"; Polaski (2005, 67).

128 Cf. 3:3. "You foolish Galatians! Who has bewitched you that you should not obey the truth, before whose eyes Jesus Christ was clearly portrayed among you as crucified"; Gal 3:1.

129 See Gal 6:3–5.

130 See Gal 6:1–2. "Carry each other's burdens and thus fulfill the law of Christ"; Gal 6:2.

131 See Gal 6:10.

132 See Gal 6:12–13.

133 See Gal 6:14.

134 Cf. "If anyone thinks s/he may have confidence in the σάρξ, I more so: circumcised the eighth day, of the people of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew among Hebrews, with regard to the law a Pharisee, with regard to zeal persecuting the assembly, with regard to the righteousness which is in the law blameless, but what things were benefits to be, these I have counted loss for Christ"; Phil 3:4b–7. For a discussion of the nature of Paul's "marks of the Lord Jesus" in his (collective?) body, see Joelsson (2017, 73–75).

135 See Gal 6:17; cf. 2:11–21. See Joelsson (2017, 79, 82–83, 194; cf. 107–8; 142–4). For another setting, in which Paul apparently felt compelled to accept a challenge—and then regretted it, see 2 Cor 12:11.
136 Holmstrand (1997, 24–32,70–71).
137 "In actual speaking situations, when the audience is unlearned, it is more effective to begin with the conclusion, and then add the premises which lead to the conclusion as support for the theses advocated," Eriksson (1998, 57); see also *Ad Herennium* 2.18.28.
138 See, e.g., Gal 3:6, 8, 10–13, 16; 4:27, 30, 5:14.
139 As the division into chapters and verses is obviously not original, but, as later adjustments, they may serve technical purposes.
140 See Gal 5:1b. As E. A. C. Pretorius (1992, 443; emphasizes original) notes, "the *flesh controversy* is already heralded in the first part (3:3) and the *law controversy* still echoes in the second part (5.14, 18, 23), the relationship between the two issues needs clarification".
141 See Gal 5:1b.
142 See Gal 5:10.
143 See Gal 5:13 in *Novum Testamentum Graece*, 28th ed., 2012.
144 Nida and Taber (1974/2003, 34); see also Holmstrand for a clarifying discussion of how a text can be organized by transition markers. For instance, markers such as ἄρα νῦν or τοῦ λοιποῦ may suggest the beginning or close of a subparagraph or, indeed, the beginning of the conclusion for a larger argumentative sequence; see, e.g., Holmstrand (1997, 191, 195).
145 Liddell and Scott (1889, 160).
146 See Gal 5:12.
147 See Gal 5:11. Paul had a habit of beginning subparagraphs with this type of rhetorical questions; cf. Gal 1:10; 3:1; 3:19; 4:15–16; 4:21; (5:11); see also Rom 3:27, 29; 4:1, 3, 9, 10; 6:1–3, 15, 21, and so on.
148 See *Novum Testamentum Graece*, 4th rev. ed., 1983/1993.
149 See Gal 5:24.
150 See Gal 5:25–26.
151 See Gal 3:2b. James Dunn notes that the "works of the law" was that which distinguished Jews from other nations; see Dunn (1998/2006, 363).
152 See *Novum Testamentum Graece*, 4th ed. and 28th eds., 1983/1993, respectively, 2012.
153 See Gal 5:25–6:10.
154 Notably, Holmstrand (1997, 181–94) keeps verses 5:11–6:13 together in his investigation of the grammatical and linguistic structure of the text.
155 Janssen (2003, 93–122, esp. 94).
156 See Gal 5:16; Rom 1:15–23. See also 1 Cor 2:1–16. The addressees are encouraged to follow the guidance of the πνεῦμα, elsewhere identified as "the πνεῦμα of the one who raised Jesus from the dead"; see Rom 8:11; see also 8:9 and 8:4.
157 See Gal 4:21–24a.
158 See Gal 4:27; cf. Isaiah 54.
159 In Paul's view, adoption does not entail that the adopted children's ethnical identity is altered; cf. Rom 3:21–31; 4:10–17; 15:5–12; see also Gal 6:15; Hodge (2007, 129).
160 See Gen 16:1–2.
161 See, especially, Gen 18:11; cf. 17:15–22; 21:1–21.
162 See Gal 4:23.
163 See Azar (2005, 159–83). See also Horsely's (1997, 88–95, esp. 95) description of the *specialness* of the relationship as the fundamental aspect binding antique societies together; Lendon (1997, 19–24); Joelsson (2017, 39–40). Cf. Moxnes, Blanton, and Crossley (2009).

164 See Gal 4:28.
165 See Hodge (2007); Theissen (2016); Stendahl (1976, 78–96, 1–77). As Sandra Hack Polaski (2005, 15) notes, Paul embraces a "new status, 'in Christ,' to which Jews come as Jews and Gentiles come as Gentiles."
166 Holmstrand (1997, 200, 177) adopts the category "Other indication of topic (e.g. stressed change of grammatical subject, reference to place, reference to person)" rather than metapropositional base for this case.
167 As Liddell and Scott (1889, 175) describe, δέ is a "conjunctive Particle, with *adversative* force: it commonly answers to μέν, and may often be rendered by while, whereas, on the other hand, v. μέν:—but μέν is often omitted."
168 Cf. Paul's accusing the addressees for having begun in the Spirit but now making a vain attempt at fulfillment in the σάρξ; Gal 3:3 in context; see also Gal 2:11–21.
169 See Gen 16:1–6; 20:8–19.
170 See Gal 1:2–5; cf. 1 Cor 1:2 (τῇ ἐκκλησίᾳ τοῦ θεοῦ τῇ οὔσῃ ἐν Κορίνθῳ); Rom 1:7 (πᾶσιν τοῖς οὖσιν ἐν Ῥώμῃ ἀγαπητοῖς θεοῦ). "But the Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles out of faithfulness, preached the gospel to Abraham beforehand, saying: 'In you all the nations shall be blessed'"; Gal 3:8. As noted, the Gentile addressees are "children of promise" like Isaac and coheirs; Gal 4:28; cf. 3:28–29.
171 Cf. Gal 2:11–21; see also 5:12. This is unlikely a reference to self-castration. Rather, the curse over un-circumcised male children implies their being *cut off* from their people, that is, losing their in-group identity.
172 See Gal 4:26.
173 See Gal 4:31–5:1a.
174 See Gal 5:1b.
175 See Gal 5:10.
176 Among slave owners, the act of physically damaging the body of a slave could be perceived as a morally neutral act; see Wessels (2010, 143–68, esp. 160). In upper class discourse, enslaved persons could be perceived as biologically alive but socially dead; Patterson (1982, 1–75).
177 See Gal 5:2–6; cf. 6:15.
178 See Gal 5:5. As Yung Suk Kim notes, "Paul's vision rooted in God's righteousness not only extends to all people but also emphasizes God's justice in an unjust world"; Kim (2011, 45); see also Stendahl (1976, 78–96, 1–77).
179 Cf. Gal 3:6–14.
180 Joelsson (2017, 82).
181 See Gal 5:4–10.
182 Cf. Gal 5:6; see also 5:19–23.
183 See Gal 5:1.
184 See Gal 5:11–13; cf. 1:13–14. Cf. 1 Cor 14:38.
185 See Gal 5:11; cf. 1:7.
186 See Gal 5:12.
187 See Gal 4:31–5:1.
188 See Gal 5:16; cf. 5:14.
189 See Joel 2:27–29.
190 See Gal 3:1–7; cf. Gal 3:28.
191 See Gal 5:16; cf. 5:22–24.
192 Cf. Gal 5:18.
193 See Gal 5:19–21.
194 As Moxnes (2005, 28) notes, a person was "never regarded as an isolated individual, but always as a part of a group, responsible for the honor of the group and also protected by it". When the honor was challenged within an agonistic culture, every member should be prepared to defend it—often by means of

counter-challenge (*riposte*), which might involve physical or verbal violence—in order to avoid subordination to the challenger; Moxnes (2005, 20–21); Witherington (1998, 47); Malina (1981/2001).

195 See Gal 5:13; cf. 5:17.

196 "[O]n the *mental* map of the first century C.E., *Galatia* was a well-defined territory: it was enemy territory, burnt to earth and fertile ground where civilization—and the worldwide Roman Empire—could thrive on the ashes of barbarism"; Kahl (2010, 75). In ancient cities, far from everyone was a citizen, see Nasrallah (2019, 40–75); Harrill (2006); Patterson (1982).

197 Cf. Gal 4:17, in context. See also Gal 1:13–14; 2:3–4; 5:11, and so on.

198 In 1 Corinthians, Paul refers to the provision of sustenance and safety as σαρκικά,—that is, a derivation of σάρξ—meaning the practical care expected to be provided by one's kin; 1 Cor 9:11.

199 Cf. Gal 5:11.

200 See Gal 5:14; cf. 5:15.

201 See Gal 5:22–23.

202 See Gal 5:11; 5:24.

203 de Boer (2010, 367).

204 See Phil 3:2–7. See also Paul's subtle offense against the prominent figures of the Christ-movement by noting that they "were reckoned to be something—what they had been makes no difference [to me]"; Gal 2:6.

205 See Gal 5:24; cf. 6:14–15. See also 1 Cor 7:17–24; Gal 3:19–29.

206 See also Gal 3:24–29.

207 See Gal 5:24; cf. 4:7–10a. See also Gal 3:1–5; cf. de Boer (2010, 367).

208 See Gal 3:2–5.

209 Cf. Gal 3:1.

210 Cf. Gal 4:19. Moreover, Paul assesses the situation as requiring a certain sense of didactics or persuasion; see Gal 4:20.

211 See Gal 5:7; cf. 1 Cor 9:24–26.

212 Cf. Gal 4:21–30; cf. 3:21–29.

213 See Gal 5:11–24; cf. 4:1–20.

214 See Gal 5:6; cf. 5:11–24; 6:12–14.

215 Cf. Gal 5:15. See also Mitternacht (2004, 193–212).

216 See Gal 5:11, 24.

217 See Gal 5:25–26.

218 See Gal 5:26. "For I say, through the grace given to me, to everyone who is among you, not to think more highly of yourselves than you ought to think, but think soberly, as God has dealt to each one a measure of faithfulness"; Rom 12:3. Cf. Joelsson (2017, 143).

219 See Gal 1:3–5; cf. 5:22–23, 25.

220 See Gal 6:3–5.

221 See Gal 6:1–2.

222 See Gal 6:1.

223 See Gal 6:1b, 3.

224 See Gal 6:2.

225 See Gal 6:7–8.

226 See Gal 6:9; cf. 5:14, in contexts.

227 See Gal 6:6.

228 See John 1:12.

229 See Louw and Nida (1988/1989:2, 220); 1988/1989:1, 292.

230 If included by Jesus' faithfulness—which is reciprocally understood (covenant)—they are not included by blood, nor by the will of the collective group (ἐκ θελήματος σαρκός), nor through the will of a man (ἐκ θελήματος ἀνδρός), but through God (ἀλλ' ἐκ θεοῦ); see Joh 1:13.

231 See Gal 5:11.
232 Cf. Dunn (1998/2006, 70).
233 See Gal 4:21–5:1, esp. 4:30–5:1.
234 See Gal 4:21–5:1, esp. 4:26; 4:31–5:1.
235 See, e.g., Gal 3:10–11; 4:4–7.
236 See Azar (2005, 159–83) for an introduction to the concepts *metonymic sign* and *symbolic object*.
237 See Gal 1:11–2:21 for an introduction to the errand of the letter.
238 See Gal 6:1–4. For a description of the challenge-riposte game, see Moxnes (2005, 19–40); Witherington (1998, 18).
239 See Gal 6:1–2.
240 See Gal 6:6.
241 Cf. Louw and Nida (1988/1989:2, 220). In their view, σάρξ can be interpreted as (a) flesh, (b) body, (c) people, (d) human, (e) nation, (f) human nature, (g) physical nature, or (h) life.
242 As Reed (1997, 408) notes, "[t]otally incohesive texts are extreme exceptions in human communication. More typically, a discourse is cohesive of an 'unusual' kind (i.e., it contains noticeable peculiarities that do not follow the patterns of other discourse) or cohesive of the 'usual' kind (i.e., it follows shared rules of language use)".
243 As the allophone (i.e., the sound of language) is never exactly captured by the description (the phoneme), the description can be sufficiently exact to be relevant and helpful to understanding the sound of the language as it is used. Similarly, a description of the semantic componential structure (an abstraction) of σάρξ in Paul can never capture all the possible meanings and nuances of the term in use, but it can be sufficiently precise to assist in the understanding of the term in use; cf. Callary (1981, 296).
244 Cf. Janssen (2003, 94).

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3 The Narrative Composition of Galatians

The *Narratio* as the Heart of Persuasion

In the previous chapter, we turned to the passage comprising verses 5:11–24 and looked more closely at its context within the letter. In this chapter, we will look at the structure of the whole letter, using the narrative introduction as an interpretive key.

In Galatians, Paul opens the letter by describing his own background up to his opposition of Peter (Cephas) for the sake of the inclusion of the Galatians and other Gentiles within the Christ-movement and among the assemblies of God.[1] In this letter, Paul's background constitutes a point of reference for the forthcoming message, which is taken up in this chapter. As Paul refused to adapt his message and practices in Antioch, the Galatian addressees are similarly encouraged to stand firm in their own inclusion without letting a call for conformity lure them into submission. If this opening background story assumes the rhetorical function of a *narratio* (in the Quintilian sense), it may indicate the location of the case, that is, what type of situation Paul aims to address and what case his arguments are designed to support.

This chapter will also examine Paul's use of the term σάρξ as a collectively oriented concept. By implementing the suggestion that σάρξ may have a consistent semantic structure—as comprising the components *collective group* and *collective identity*—this hypothesis is tested. To determine if such a reading proffers a higher level of *coherency* between the introduction and the letter's subsequent argumentation, the chapter examines the letter's narrative introduction for interpretive keys to both the subsequent message and the rhetorical composition of the letter itself. If the reading does achieve a convincing *continuity* between the letter's plausible historical background and its rhetorical composition, it may provide a viable alternative to earlier interpretations and hypotheses.

This attempt to reassess the rhetorical structure of Galatians and restore collectively oriented aspects in the interpretation of σάρξ is highly indebted to the perspectives suggested by Krister Stendahl.[2] After recognizing that Paul did *not* propose a supersessionist approach to Judaism, it becomes clear that Peter's failure to stand up for the truth of the Gospel occasioned

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disappointment—and provided a situation for renewed instruction—but *not* his exclusion from the movement and fellowship in-Christ. As Francis Watson suggests:

> In Gal 5:1 it is said: "For freedom Christ has set us free; stand fast therefore, and do not submit again to a yoke of slavery." The context is not a debate with another religion (i.e. Judaism) but an inner-Christian debate about Christian identity; the question at issue is whether we have to become Jews in order to be Christians. Paul answers this question with an emphatic negative: for a Gentile Christian to adopt the Jewish way of life as defined in the Torah would be to submit to "a yoke if slavery." It is not that this can be shown to be the case by empirical demonstration—by appealing, for example, to the burdens that the law might be thought to impose upon the conscience. This negative assessment of the law appeals instead to a complex allegory.[3]

In this setting, the truth of the Gospel is spelled out, not in dogmatic fashion, but as the inclusion of Gentiles as full members in the body of Christ. However, I hesitate while confronted with Watson's assertion that the "way of life as defined in the Torah" must be a yoke of slavery to Galatian Gentiles (regardless of Watson's appeal to complex allegory). Rather, the customs indicating submission are only those introduced to the Galatians with accompanying threats of exclusion.[4] In Paul's perception, the proponents for adopting the rite of male circumcision among the Galatians want to exclude them so that they will be committed to the proponents for circumcision instead.[5] Paul encourages his addressees to trust that they are already fully included and, while standing firm, they can effectively ignore any claim from those who believe that identity markers can be applied as a means for inclusion/exclusion. The fact that Christ was executed is put forward as a proof for such inclusion: *if* the identity-deprived former convict can be at the center, surely that changes everything.[6]

An attempt to restore the collective aspects in the interpretation of Paul's letters involves many terms more than just σάρξ. For instance, the terms *pistis* (πίστις) and *dikaiosune* (δικαιοσύνη) are interpreted as incorporating the collectively oriented aspects of *faithfulness* and *justice*—even if, in modern and late modern times, the interpretations of these terms are often related to highly individualized aspects of human life (i.e., *faith* and *righteousness* conceived as the individual's relationship with God). When the terms πίστις, δικαιοσύνη, and σάρξ are assumed to comprise semantic elements beyond the individual, namely as including aspects of the *collective body*, a richer account can be made. In the same vein, rather than being assumed to include primarily semantic components less than the individual (such as *flesh*, *emotional aspects*, and *body parts*) or semantic components even beyond

humanity (i.e., a *cosmological power*), the term σάρξ can be interpreted as comprising precisely the unit in between, namely the *collective identity* and/or the *collective group*.[7] In this attempt to restore collectively oriented aspects, I do not suggest that the individual is dismissed in toto. Rather, the collective aspects are the place to begin (cf. collective orientation) rather than the opposite (cf. orientation toward the individual or individualistic orientation). Hence, in this study, every occurrence of these terms in Galatians is tentatively approached in a collectively oriented manner—or this is my aim.[8] The terms πίστις, δικαιοσύνη, and σάρξ are assumed to comprise elements beyond the individual and—in the case of humans—including aspects of the *collective body*. The term σάρξ will thus be investigated within the framework of the construct of collective groups and the construct of collective identity.

As the narrative introduction of the letter is here tentatively assumed to have a more critical function than merely providing some pieces of historical background, this goes beyond the understanding of Cicero.[9] Quintilian, on the other hand, described the *narratio* as the "heart of persuasion" and argued that unless the audience knows in advance to what the arguments are to be applied, the arguments themselves are useless and the whole case can be dislocated.[10] A *narratio* can have the form of a short story: no points are argued within the *narratio* itself, but the location of the case is indicated, and the structure and main topics can be displayed. In this study, Galatians 1:11–2:21 are tentatively assumed to take on the function of a *narratio* in this Quintilian sense, namely as indicating the location of the case by suggesting the "heart of persuasion."[11]

In Galatians 1:11–2:21, the opening of the letter body is concerned with the relative importance given to identity and identity markers by describing Paul's background as a persecutor, his strong reaction against the tendency toward separate table fellowships, and his own risking to be estranged from the "pillars" of Jerusalem. As Paul tells his-story, Peter feared being labeled a "sinner among the Gentiles" and therefore withdrew from the open-table fellowship with the Antiocheans in-Christ. As it appears, Peter's change of attitude transpired under the influence of some people who were in some way connected with Jacob (James), as he wanted to avoid giving them wrong impressions of himself.[12] The culmination of this narrative (hereafter called the *narratio*) is Paul's confronting Peter and explaining to him why his choice matters.

As I do not suggest any direct or even indirect contact between Paul and Quintilian, we may note that basically the same function is implemented in an *abstract* (as the term is adopted in late modern scientific discourse): the scholar introduces the topic prior to the case being argued. In the following reading of Galatians, the narrative introduction of the letter indicates the location of the case and potentially provides the keys to the interpretation of the rest of the letter. While also other ancient rhetorical perspectives could be described, I wish to keep the introduction to the concept of *narratio* as

brief and uncomplicated as possible. Especially since the implied audience of the letter seems to be open to a varied level of education and rhetorical experience, in this case, simplicity is actually sophistication. Nevertheless, as emanating from orally oriented settings, the concept of *narratio* can provide a valuable contribution to the late modern interpretation of Paul's letter to the assemblies in Galatia.

Theoretical Perspective: The Narratio as the Location of the Case

Modern treatments of classical rhetoric often neglect Quintilian's emphasis on the *narratio* as the introduction of the letter. In Quintilian, the *narratio* is described as the "heart of persuasion" and the key to the interpretation of the message.[13] Nevertheless, in his account of Quintilian's teaching, George Kennedy suggests that "[i]n Book V comes the discussion of the real heart of a speech, the *proof*."[14] Kennedy is not alone in neglect of the *narratio*. As Carl Joachim Classen notes, "[t]he work of Kennedy has also been taken up by many other scholars."[15] In Quintilian, however, the *narratio* is the "statement of the facts" on which the case rests.[16] In other words, the *narratio* is ideology, commonly in the form of story.[17]

Moreover, the *narratio* locates the case (*continua*) in relation to which the implementation and the argumentation must then try to be in accordance (*congruens*).[18] Quintilian emphasizes that neglecting to respond to an opposing *narratio* is in fact to give away the whole case.[19] Moreover, the *narratio* may incorporate, or be followed by, a *partitio* (or *propositio*) which distributes the topics or arguments in the order in which they then are treated subsequently. "*Partition* may be defined as the enumeration in order of our own *propositions*, those of the adversary or both."[20] Thus, the *narratio* serves as an important means to express foundational perspectives of the discourse and the *partitio*—which is sometimes incorporated within the *narratio*—indicates the structure of the following discourse. When the *narratio* serves to express foundational perspectives and setting the stage for the discourse, it describes the underlying logic which is then expected to be implemented in the subsequent discourse.

However, as Quintilian notes, for the composition of a speech there is no "rigid code of rules such as most authors of textbooks have laid down."[21] On the contrary, "[a]wareness of the interconnectedness of the 'parts' of the oration underlies Quintilian's treatment."[22] Notably, every speech must be adapted for the situation of delivery. In discourses intended for oral delivery, the transition from one section to the other—the *flow*—is often more important than the exact demarcations between paragraphs. Importantly, the use of *narratio* as a rhetorical figure is not restricted to upper-class oratory. Rather, in aurally oriented settings, the *narratio* is used to make the speech accessible and possibly persuasive to everyone.[23]

The function of the *narratio* is to describe the location of the case and its motivation (often in narrative form) and the function of the *partitio* is

to indicate the structure of the following argumentation. It can be noted that the function of the *narratio* and the function of the *partitio* (or *propositio*) are quite similar and can partially overlap. In actual discourse, the function of the *partitio* can sometimes be described as incorporated within the *narratio*, as the following analysis shows. One could say that a *narratio* and a *partitio* together form a table of contents for the ears—in narrative form!

A New Perspective on Paul and Σάρξ

As this study seeks to implement a new perspective in the study of Paul and takes a special interest in terminology and conceptualization, it is relevant to invoke Stendahl's observation that Paul was not particularly interested in the afflictions of the "introspective conscience of the West."[24] If collective aspects in terms such as σάρξ, πίστις, and δικαιοσύνη can be reestablished and authenticated within an interpretive tradition that has been focused primarily on the intellectual or emotional aspects of the individual, a partially new picture may emerge. Rather than ignoring communal life, or treating it as secondary, the construct of collective identities, relations between groups, faithfulness, and the inclusion into justice all become central to the understanding of the covenant of God. Furthermore, such aspects become central not only to the *understanding* of this covenant, but also to its practices.

As Stendahl's renewed perspective on Paul highlights, the sender sought the intellectual and practical resources for developing good relations among Gentiles and Jews in-Christ. That is, he sought to inspire relations that were characterized by faithfulness, justice, and, occasionally, a renewed estimation of the meaning and function of collective identity.[25] Moreover, as Davina Lopez notes, since "the Roman imperial ideology and power is gendered at its core […] when Paul uses the term ἔθνη there is more to this emergent picture than religious and theological 'difference' with respect to Israel and Judaism."[26] Hence, the message that neither circumcision nor foreskin avails anything also has a bearing on the prevailing but malleable identity politics relating to sex and gender.[27] Moreover, by refuting the assumed dichotomy between circumcision/foreskin, Paul also targets identity constructs relating to the practices and conceptualizations of enslavement and citizen (male), free-born (male or possibly female), or freed (male or female and possibly by alien birth), and so on. As Susan Eastman observes, enslaved men could be circumcised without becoming heirs or attaining any forms of civic rights at all.[28] In other words, ethnical status was never just ethnical but also gendered, and gendered status was also always determined by civic status, which also could be construed in terms of age, health, fertility, and so on.

Therefore, as in any investigation relating to the constructs of power, identity, discrimination, and systems for gaining privilege, an intersectional

perspective is more adequate than treating one aspect separately. As Marianne Bjelland Kartzow notes,

> Instead of examining gender, race, class, age, and sexuality as separate categories of oppression, intersectionality explores how these categories overlap. Every person belongs to more than one category, and faced with discrimination it might be difficult to articulate which correlative system of oppression is at work.[29]

To these categories could probably be added health, ableness, disableness, and many other aspects.[30] In 1 Corinthians, Paul suggests that those "who are not" or "nobodies" have been chosen by God in order to bring those who are [something] into nothing.[31] Similarly, in Galatians, Jesus being crucified is construed as essential to such renegotiations of human identity and human boasting.[32] Treating several constructs of identity and power as overlapping, interconnected, and mutually influencing each other, Paul specifically mentions barrenness/fertility (στεῖρα/τίκτουσα), family or tribe (σπέρμα, φυλή, σάρξ), and the relative position within one's generation (συνηλικιώτης) as possible indicators of pride or shame. Therefore, this study implements an approach to Paul within Judaism as a broader phenomenon than merely relating to religio-ethnical identity: the study is indebted greatly to previous studies that apply intersectional perspectives.[33]

At stake are more than just questions of religious and ethnic identity. As circumcision or foreskin is described as availing nothing, the letter evokes questions of gender and sexes as well. Furthermore, as neither circumcision nor foreskin would affect one's civic status as an enslaved person, issues relating to enslavement and the status of being freed, free-born, or a citizen are inherently present too. But, as Kartzow notes, "the standard categories of gender, sexuality, class, race, age, and health are not necessarily the most important ones for conceptualizing ancient societies."[34] Nevertheless, the overlapping and dynamic character of different systems for discrimination and subordination extends from antiquity: the construct of religio-ethnical identity intersects with the construct of gender, which intersects with the construct of civic position or enslavement, health/illness, ableness/disableness, barrenness/procreation, age, and so on. In his account of his speech in Antioch, Paul states that no one (οὐ … πᾶσα σάρξ) is made righteous/included/just by the "works of the law" (ἐξ ἔργων νόμου), thereby explicitly opening for an intersectional approach to inclusion/exclusion and the constructs of collective identity.[35]

As Paul notes in that speech, crossing a boundary can no longer be a transgression if the boundary is not there anymore.[36] The concept of being "crucified with Christ" implies suffering, exclusion, and dehumanizing shame.[37] Notwithstanding, Paul's expresses the view that a crucified person is placed amid the assemblies of God, and that the members of that collective body in-Christ have crucified the σάρξ (τὴν σάρκα ἐσταύρωσαν), which on

some level seems to imply participation in that shame, marginalization, and experience.

As a plethora of social constructs for inclusion and exclusion operate concurrently, Mari Matsuda describes intersectional approaches as a commitment to "asking the other question":

> When I see something that looks racist, I ask "Where is patriarchy in this?" When I see something that looks sexist, I ask, "Where is the heterosexism in this?" When I see something that looks homophobic, I ask, "Where are the class interests in this?"[38]

In this context, Kartzow comments that when interpreters are "enthusiastic about the women at Jesus' empty tomb (…) Matsuda may challenge us to ask about female slaves or about those who did not know the language."[39] When a circumcised person has to be male, has to be freed or free-born, has to be comparatively healthy and educated, has to be within a certain age span, etc., the issue of male circumcision and foreskin is unavoidably intersectional. This may be precisely the situation that Paul addresses by using the term σάρξ. The perspective suggested by Stendahl and others involves a shift from abstract, de-historized, and individualized concepts to the lived reality, which can be construed as multifaceted and sometimes ambiguous relationships between real *people*.[40]

Importantly, Jae Won Lee points out, prior to the new perspective suggested by Stendahl being articulated and developed, the "social and practical meaning of equality between Jews and Gentiles and its further implications for the problems, tensions, and conflicts which developed within early Christian communities were not taken into full consideration."[41] When the concrete historical context of Paul's thought and praxis was lost (or ignored), these letters could be relocated as if dealing with "the Western Christian, time-and-place-less universalism, introspective individualism, and soteriological dogmatism."[42] This was not merely an academic debate, though. If these interpretations of Paul were developed in pulpits and carrels, they took root in the pews across the world. Lee, for instance, notes how the ahistorical approach had a major impact on Korean Christians: "This has led the majority of Korean Christians to regard Christian faith as a means for an exclusively individual and otherworldly salvation."[43] While Christian faith was understood as assuming a universal identity, "the 'Korean' identity in its concrete socio-political and cultural context did not make much difference to the meaning of being 'Christian'."[44] As it was "believed that differences in social status, gender, ethnicity, and culture do not count […] the general ethos of Korean Christianity […] contributed less to the transformation of and resistance against the structural injustice of domination and oppression than to the consolidation and maintenance of the status quo of the Korean society."[45] In other words, the notion of universalism without diversity can become a tool of stagnation and oppression rather than transformation.

To summarize, in Galatians, Paul tries to communicate what he perceives as the truth of the Gospel within a complex set of ambiguous relations. This study implements and develops the reassessment of Galatians as historically located, addressing specific assemblies in specific historical situations, with a certain care for the relationships between different groups. In this interpretive endeavor, particular emphasis is paid to the collectively oriented aspects of terms such as σάρξ, πίστις, and δικαιοσύνη in contrast to the dominant interpretive tradition that has focused primarily on the intellectual or emotional aspects of the individual.

The State of the Question

The breadth of modern Pauline scholarship is vast, but before we continue, a few studies that deal specifically with the interpretation of σάρξ and the rhetorical composition of Galatians will be mentioned, offering some glimpses from this current of learning.

Galatians and the Supersessionist Paradigm (Betz and Stendahl)

In his highly influential commentary on Galatians, Hans Dieter Betz suggests that "Paul does not use *partitio* or *enumeratio* because there is only one point against which the whole defense has to be made (2:17)."[46] The hypothesis of the immense importance for a particular verse lacks supporting evidence: the verse is not linguistically marked as central to the passage.[47] Quite strikingly, the verse Betz suggests to be the heart of persuasion is the only one verse that could possibly be loosely connected to something similar to a haunted conscience: "But if, in our endeavour to be justified in Christ, we ourselves were found to be sinners, is Christ then an agent of sin? Certainly not!"[48] Taken out of historical context and individualized, the discourse can be interpreted as referring to the individual's standing as justified before God. However, within the narrative dynamic of the letter, the verse deals with Peter's unmotivated withdrawal from a group practicing a type of open-table fellowship. According to Paul, this choice was made from fear of being misjudged.[49] As Stendahl notes,

> It goes without saying that Paul's primary focus on Jews and Gentiles was lost in the history of interpretation. […] when [Paul's primary focus on Jews and Gentiles] was retained, the church picked up the negative side of the 'mystery'—Israel's 'No' to Jesus Christ—but totally missed the warning against conceit and feelings of superiority […] Justification no longer 'justified' the status of Gentile Christians as honorary Jews, but became the timeless answer to the plights and pains of the introspective conscience of the West.[50]

That is to say, rather than supporting the *inclusion* of the Gentiles among the assemblies of God, Galatians were taken as supporting the *exclusion* of the

Jews based on the inaccurate perception that, from Paul's perspective, Christianity would have superseded Judaism. Betz's commentary does little to allay that misguided perception.[51] About a decade later, John Barclay soberly noted that there are elements of continuity *and* discontinuity in Paul's way of presenting his ethics in relation to Jewish moral traditions. In this setting, the plural form of *traditions* is significant: both early Christ-loyal and Jewish traditions can be recognized as complex and diversified phenomena.[52] In Barclay's view, Paul—only on rare occasions—"reapplies the very title 'Israel' to those (Gentiles as well as Jews) who believe in Christ."[53] Even these occasions can be questioned, as will be discussed further later.

In Betz's view, "the *propositio* is extremely concise and consists of largely dogmatic abbreviations, i.e. very short formulaic summaries of doctrines."[54] Clearly, such perception runs the risk of making the assumed "formulaic summaries" into tablets ready for ideological projection. Stendahl comments that "Paul's doctrine of justification by faith has its theological context in his reflection on the relation between Jews and Gentiles, and not within the problem of how *man* is to be saved, or how man's deed are to be accounted, or how the free will of individuals is to be asserted or checked."[55] Stendahl notes that "[w]e do possess a strong psychological bent, and there is no question that the term in any quest for relief from sin and guilt which works best within a psychological framework is 'forgiveness.'"[56] Notwithstanding, in Paul's letters, "forgiveness" is *not* a prominent theme; faith, faithfulness, righteousness, and inclusion into justice, for that matter, are. Stendahl's following wry comment is perhaps both appealing and disturbing: "What makes this sort of quest [for individual forgiveness] so central—and again I guess—is that it is related to the fact that we happen to be more interested in ourselves than in God or the fate of his creation."[57] Betz's suggestion mentioned earlier bypasses the emphasis Paul places on the relationships between real people. Instead, it resembles and owes much to the later theologizing of Paul's letters, particularly by the Protestant reformation,[58] which casts Betz's line of argument in doubt. At a bare minimum, further scrutiny is necessary.

George Kennedy is correct in describing Galatians as *deliberative* rhetoric, that is, the letter aims at making the addressees take a particular course of *action*—rather than merely trying to defend the position of Paul himself.[59] Paul's encouragement for his addressees includes not only *being* but also *walking* in the Spirit, not losing heart while doing good.[60] The defense of Paul himself and his Gospel is included, but his aim is much broader.

The Ethical Suggestion in Galatians (Barclay and Thomas)

In his study, Barclay pays attention to the concept of the "sufficiency of the Spirit"—which is assumed to be derived from Paul.[61] Barclay comments that the reader who is preoccupied by this notion may be "somewhat taken aback to find him [Paul] support his appeal for love with a straight forward reference to the law."[62] Clearly, the law continues to play an important role to Paul. Brian

Thomas similarly suggests that the Spirit provides sufficient "ethical guidance and moral restraint apart from the Law," while Paul is assumed to encourage the addressees to "conform to the ethical pattern."[63] In this setting, it can be noted that Paul in Galatians emphasizes freedom and creative inclusion.[64] As a commentary to Scripture, Paul offers rich guidance on ethical and moral matters, while warning for conceit, provocation, and envy. Moreover, he warns for misapplications of the Scripture.[65] He seems to perceive their own experiences together with Scripture ("the law") as important resources for guidance in living by the Spirit.[66] But he teaches his addressees not to place themselves *under* the law.[67] In Barclay's study, there appears to be a lack of distinction between the "works of the law" and the law as history, tradition, and communication that offer guidance to good living as including the relationship with God.[68]

Paul repeatedly notes that neither circumcision nor foreskin avails anything, but there is no reason to assume that the law would be obsolete in all respects. On the contrary, Paul claims that the inclusion of the Gentiles was *foreseen* by Scripture.[69] As James Dunn suggests, the "works of the law" might specifically include such practices that distinguished the Jews from other people (cf. male circumcision), while the law in other respects continues to be a resource for flourishing life.[70] If the Spirit did suffice for moral guidance, all the exhortation Paul offers in every letter would be unnecessary. According to Thomas, "[w]e saw how Paul's argument moved toward an ethical component that showed the superiority of his Law-free gospel over that of the Judaizers in the ethical sphere."[71] Thomas claims that "Paul describes people in this SH time [salvation-history yesterday] as 'in the flesh', because they are solely flesh, apart from the Spirit's indwelling and empowering presence, in contrast to Christian experience."[72] Hence, the Spirit is associated with the cognition of the (Christian) individual and a particular Christian experience.[73] In ways such as criticized by Stendahl, Christianity is associated with everything that is good, while Judaism is associated with everything that is bad or substandard.[74] The impression remains that, under the disguise of "salvation-history," Thomas treats identity markers as if they mattered.

Similarly, Walter Russell purposefully deals with the interpretation of σάρξ in relation to the argumentative structure of the whole letter but neglects implementing the renewed perspective on Paul—or the *Paul within Judaism* approach.[75] He suggests that σάρξ and πνεῦμα do not represent an "internal duality within the Christian, but represent an external contrast between two conflicting eras or modes of existence with corresponding mind-sets," but, as he continues, Russell suggests that Galatians 6:8 is "*not* a reference to the ongoing existence of *sarx* in Christians, but rather a description of the ongoing existence of *sarx* in the Judaistic/Jewish communities."[76] Maintaining that the addressees had replaced the Judaizers as τὸν Ἰσραὴλ τοῦ θεοῦ and the true people of God, Russell excludes the possibility of an increased level of diversity in the social system.[77]

In the words of Yung Suk Kim, "Paul's vision rooted in God's righteousness not only extends to all people but also emphasizes God's justice in an

unjust world."[78] In a society in which enslavement was lived practice, the right to be given a fair trial is part of the higher good, that is, among the privileges of the citizen.[79]

The Rhetorical Structure Revisited (Russell)

In his rhetorical analysis of Galatians, Russell hopes to have "demonstrated the continuity in [Paul's] argument from Galatians 3–4 through Galatians 5–6."[80] In this setting, "by noting the continuity in argumentation, one is helped in noting afresh how Paul used σάρξ ('flesh') and πνεῦμα ('spirit') in chapters 5 and 6."[81] Russell does not identify a *narratio* as a rhetorical figure but goes straight from the "prologue or proem or exordium" (1:6–10) to what he calls the "proof or probatio or confirmatio" (1:11–6:10).[82] The term *narratio* only occurs in a subheading as a term describing references to historical events (cf. Cicero), and these verses are assumed to be part of the argument. In Russell's view, verses 1:1–2:21 comprises "a historical argument proving the superiority of Paul's Gospel via narrative or narratio."[83] But if we adopt the perspective that the introductory narrative indicates the location of the case that will be argued, we see that the two missions to reach both Jews and Gentiles exist simultaneously as two legitimate endeavors within the same movement—but nothing is "proved" by the story.[84] Verses 1:11–2:21 simply seems to have other important rhetorical functions, without providing any proof to the case as such.

Nevertheless, Russell makes several careful observations. As James Dunn notes in his review of Russell's work, Galatians 5:13–6:10 constitutes a part of a "redemptive-historical discussion in which Paul addresses the issue of group identity."[85] Russell correctly notes that "the desires of the flesh" may be "the Judaizers' passion for the circumcision of the *sarx*."[86] There are thus relevant connections between Russell's suggestion that both σάρξ and πνεῦμα in Galatians 3–6 present "external entities (i.e., community identities)" and the hypothesis that will be tested in this study—albeit an attempt to implement the so-called new perspective on Paul will also be made.[87] In his criticism of Russell's study, Thomas notes that rather than giving a definition of σάρξ, Russell offers a "brief description of Paul's theology of σάρξ."[88] In his own study, however, Thomas' description of σάρξ falls apart in four lists of different interpretations with seven, three, two, and then one more "meaning" suggested.[89] Thirteen descriptions in total, Thomas is nowhere close to a clear definition. At least, Russell makes an attempt to reach a definition of σάρξ through reading carefully the literary contexts in which the term appears.

The Implementation of New Perspectives on σάρξ (Jewett)

Robert Jewett's work spans more than 30 years. In his first study, Jewett offers an overview over research on *Paul's Anthropological Terms*. In this setting, Jewett works mainly within an individually oriented paradigm, although his

use of the generic *man* makes his reference uncertain. For instance, Jewett describes that "[m]an's alternative is between trusting in that which his own flesh can accomplish and in trusting in Christ. What emerges here is that flesh is not a part of man but rather the sum total of his virtues and possibilities."[90] As the statement of a metapropositional base, this could be interpreted individually *or* collectively; the reader cannot know the intention. However, the interpretation of πίστις as trusting renders an inwardly, psychologically oriented term, whereas *acting faithfully* would convey a collective orientation. Moreover, the reader who is familiar with Paul's communication may certainly wonder why the "sum total of [man's] virtues and possibilities" would be contrary to the Spirit (as Paul suggests in Galatians 5:17).[91] While Jewett notes that Paul's use of σάρξ is situated in polemic settings that required highly specialized usages, several of his hypothetical settings remain quite speculative.[92]

In his commentary on Romans, Jewett implements a renewed perspective on Paul. As such, his comment on Rom 7:5 may have bearing on the interpretation of σάρξ in Galatians as well. Noting the reality of historical complexity and the risk of imposing alien conceptual frameworks in the interpretation of Paul's letters, Jewett suggests:

> The παθήματα τῶν ἁμαρτιῶν τὰ διὰ τοῦ νόμου ('sinful passions that came through the law') are […] to be differentiated from sensual passions or human weaknesses, because the allusion to Paul's own previous experiences as a competitively zealous Pharisee and an opponent of the church seems so clear […] In this light, the "sinful passions" in Rom 7:5 are the yearnings for honor in conforming to the law and in coercing compliance with its norms. In the light of his conversion, Paul recognizes that such religious "passion" was motivated by "the flesh," that is, the desire to surpass others in honor, which engaged a highly religious person to enter into sinful opposition to God's will.[93]

Here Jewett understands σάρξ in ways that distance it from sexuality and passions, while at the same time noting that παθήματα ("passions, sufferings") can describe yearnings for *honor*.[94] As a comment on this broader use of παθήματα, the reader may note that Paul opens the direct address in Galatians by asking if everything they had experienced, suffered, or desired (ἐπάθετε) was in vain?[95] In this setting, πάσχω clearly extends beyond the restricted interpretation as (sexual) *desire*. Moreover, while boasting in the σάρξ refers to pride in a particular *collective identity*, it might also refer to the location of boasting, namely within the *collective group*.[96] Maybe this should not be so complicated, but our modern intellectual culture has made translating this word a particularly thorny task. As Anthony Thiselton notes, "*Flesh, fleshly*, cannot avoid nuances of sensuality in the late twentieth century […] may an objection not be made that our translation is anachronistic, owing more to Freud than to Paul?"[97] Such an objection is not out of

place—even when reading Jewett, who explicitly distances his interpretation of παθήματα from "sensual passions" or "human weaknesses." His continuous translation of σάρξ into *flesh* makes his reinterpretations hard to maintain and to distinguish from other interpretations. By now the reader will agree that the interpretation of σάρξ in Paul is a complicated endeavor, but so is the interpretation of its interpretations.

While Quintilian suggested that a case can be easily dislocated unless the interpretation of its arguments is guided by a *narratio*, the use of the concept in Pauline studies will be given some attention in the following. Then, we will unpack the rhetorical structure of Galatians, analyzing in particular: (1) the location of the *narratio*, (2) the interpretive keys as provided by the *narratio*, and (3) the application of these interpretive keys in the interpretation of the letter. In this setting, it could be added that the term *narratio* as such is not important to the study. Rather it draws on and describes phenomena larger than ancient or Roman rhetoric, namely the practice of indicating the location of a case before it is argued, or describing the underlying rationale before the program is presented (cf. the *abstract*).

The Rhetorical Figure of Narratio in Paul's Letters

The question of whether the concept of *narratio* is relevant to the study of Paul's letters or not can only be answered by the letter themselves. If a portion of a letter can be identified as having the function described in a *narratio*, then the question is answered affirmatively. After a brief detour through Paul's letters, it will become clear that *how* the function of the *narratio* is understood is critical.

Let us first turn to the article "Jewish Recipients of Galatians" by Bas van Os. He adopts the *narratio* as the lens through which the letter's argument can be located and identifies the three interpretive keys: (1) the relationship between the two parties, (2) the point on which they agree, and (3) the point on which they disagree.[98] This way of using the *narratio* as a tool is akin to the approach that is adopted in this study, and the use of this particular tool can be developed. As will be discussed later, verses 2:15–21 can be included in Paul's account of his speech in Antioch, since no linguistic markers suggest the demarcation into a new phase of communication, which implies that the *narratio* includes elements of theological or philosophical reflection—not only an account of historical event in terms of story.[99] This, in turn, has a bearing on the interpretation of the rest of the letter's arguments (as including the difference between appearance and reality, truth, and the role of the grace of God). Though helpful in understanding the function of the letter's introductory narration, van Os's article is limited to the religio-ethnical location of the addressees, whereas we are focused on the broader scope of Paul's attitude toward diversity and difference.[100]

Francois Tolmie argues against the use of the term *narratio* in the description of an element in the rhetorical structure of Galatians and figures of

speech altogether. Notwithstanding, Tolmie assumes a quite different understanding of the meaning of the term. In his view, the *narratio* is "normally regarded as merely preparatory for the 'real' argument still at hand."[101] Against Tolmie and Russell, a *narratio* in the Quintilian sense has no significant value as argument. On the other hand, Paul bears witness: a story is told. Neither Paul's position nor his message is confirmed or proved by the content of verses 1:11–2:14 but rather narrated. The "fact" that he did not receive instruction by the pillars of Jerusalem is a description of a course of events rather than a proof of his message originating with God.[102] However, the function of the *narratio* as described by Quintilian is not *merely* preparatory. It is preparatory in a significant way: it is the "heart of persuasion" by indicating the location of the case to be argued.[103]

Tolmie's criticism of Betz's application of the term can be appreciated without affecting the application of the term or its function in the present investigation greatly. As shown by Bas van Os, the application of the term does not necessitate that the discourse is restricted to a judicial context.[104] If the author follows the advice of another rhetorician, such as Cicero, the somewhat looser prescription that the "narrative is an exposition of events that have occurred or are supposed to have occurred,"[105] the *narratio* may indeed add nothing essential to the understanding of the following discourse. However, if Quintilian's definition of the *narratio* is adopted as suggesting the "facts of the case," while being the "heart of persuasion," the *narratio* exists for far more than providing historical information or a historical review. For example, Tolmie, who opposed the use of the term in Pauline studies, observes that Paul recounts his version of the incident at Antioch in order to show how he stood firmly for the "truth of the gospel."[106] If this account is understood as having thematic bearing on the *causa* of the letter, that would indeed suggest a *narratio* as defined in this study.

In relation to Romans, Robert Jewett suggests that the *narratio* is "providing the background of the issue under discussion" and is therefore commendably "placed between the introduction and the proof."[107] Subsequently, Jewett describes verses 1:9–12 as the "*causa* of the letter."[108] It seems clear that Jewett understands the *narratio* in a more limited sense than as the "heart of persuasion."[109] Jewett suggests that, in Romans, the *narratio* is found in verses 1:13–15, while the *propositio* (or *partitio*) is located in verses 1:16–17.[110] Turning to 1 Thessalonians, Frank Hughes suggests that verses 2:1–3:10 should be described as the *narratio*, while he assumes that 3:11–13 are the *partitio* or *propositio* (in three parts) which introduces the topics of the following three-part *probatio* (4:1–5:3), which is then recapitulated and summarized in the *peroratio* (5:4–11).[111] With regard to 1 Corinthians, several beginnings in the letter can be identified. Anders Eriksson suggests that verses 15:3–11 may function as a *narratio* to that chapter, introducing the facts of the case for Paul's plea for belief in common resurrection.[112]

To summarize, Pauline scholars sometimes use the term *narratio* to describe the function of passages within these letters. The term carried some

variation in meanings in antiquity, and this variation has continued to create confusion among modern and late modern scholars. Therefore, in order to avoid unnecessary misunderstandings, the meaning of the term must be defined or sufficiently described when used. According to Quintilian, the function of the *narratio* is to be the heart of persuasion, which is likely not intended to prove anything but to suggest the interpretive key to the forthcoming argument. Moreover, the function of the *partitio* (or *propositio*) can sometimes be incorporated within the *narratio*, by naming the issues and topics that will be treated subsequently (in order of appearance).

The Location of the *Narratio* in Galatians

Let us turn our attention to Galatians. According to Philip Kern, the majority of scholars who address the rhetorical structure of the letter do in fact identify a portion of the letter as the *narratio*.[113] Joop Smit and James Hester both suggest that the *narratio* comprises verses 1:13–2:21.[114] Betz takes a slightly narrower view, identifying the *narratio* as verses 1:12–2:14.[115] In Galatians, verses 1:10, 1:11, 1:12, and 1:13 all begin by the conjunctive particle γάρ (*gar*), which binds these clauses closely to the preceding one. A conjunctive particle, γάρ is usually adopted in its argumentative sense as introducing the reason for the preceding statement. According to Liddell-Scott, the particle can also be used to begin a promised narration or to strengthen a question.[116] While it seems reasonable to assume that the beginning of a new paragraph or subparagraph would be indicated by something more than a conjunctive particle, verse 1:11 does feature a direct address (ἀδελφοί) in combination with a metacommunicative clause (γνωρίζω).[117] The first γάρ, in verse 1:10, emphasizes the question and the verse additionally provides a statement of a metapropositional base: "For do I now persuade people or God? If I still pleased humans, I would not be the servant of God."[118] However, the direct address and the metacommunicative clause both suggest that this is the beginning of a passage with the function described in a *narratio*, here translated together with verse 1:12:

> For I make known to you, brothers and sisters, the Gospel which was preached by me is not according to humans (οὐκ ἔστιν κατὰ ἄνθρωπον) for (γάρ) I neither received it from someone (παρὰ ἀνθρώπου), nor was I taught, but [I received it] through a revelation of Jesus Christ.[119]

The γάρ of verse 1:12 appears to be adopted in its ordinary argumentative sense (see earlier) and provides the reason for the statement in verse 1:11. In verse 1:13, the promised narration begins by a new metacommunicative clause ("for you have heard"), while elaborating on the statement of verse 1:11 and the course of events described in verse 1:12. Moreover, as Jonas Holmstrand observes, the subparagraph 1:11–2:21 seems to be held together by both grammatical means and a thematic *inclusio*, since

verse 1:11 corresponds to the closing of the narrative.[120] In verse 2:21 Paul states, "I do not set aside God's grace, for if *righteousness/justice/inclusion* (δικαιοσύνη) comes through the law, then Christ died for nothing."[121] Suffice to say, there is evidence supporting the conclusion that the beginning of a new subparagraph may be located in verse 1:11. It can be noted that, in the Quintilian sense, a *narratio* is not necessarily exclusively composed of narrative elements. It may rather include—and even be made stronger by—metapropositional elements.

With regard to the close of the *narratio* in Galatians, Richard Longenecker and Betz suggest that it is located at verse 2:14, thus describing verses 2:15–21 instead as a *propositio*.[122] Notwithstanding, the textual evidence in support of the view that Paul's speech would close at verse 2:14 is comparatively weak. The text provides no indications that a demarcation between sections occurs at this point.[123] Moreover, while the designation that occurs in verse 2:15 of the addressees being "born Jews" is applicable to Paul and Peter, it probably does not apply to the majority of the Galatian addressees.[124] Therefore, in contrast to Longenecker and Betz's estimation, Paul's account of the speech in Antioch most likely continues through verse 2:15–21. Then it appears most reasonable to include the whole speech in the *narratio*—even though the *narratio* itself may incorporate a *partitio* (i.e., the distribution of the topics or arguments that will be treated subsequently).[125]

When the speech is delimited to exclude verses 2:15–21, the *narratio* is deprived of some of its guiding potential. If the *narratio* indicates the location of the case that will be addressed to the assemblies of God that are in Galatia, the speech itself may be as important as the more clearly narrative parts. The speech emphasizes the full inclusion of Gentiles as Gentiles in-Christ, and it also seems to anticipate Paul's encouragement to the Galatians to devote less attention to appearance and instead focus on living in the truth.[126] Moreover, in this setting, Paul seems to open up the case to a wider ranging issue than Peter's withdrawal from the inclusive table fellowship. In the speech, the intersectional nature of the case is acknowledged. Paul states that no one (οὐ … πᾶσα σάρξ) is made righteous/included/just (δικαιωθήσεται) by the "works of the law" (ἐξ ἔργων νόμου), that is, not Jews, Romans, Greeks, free-born, freed, enslaved, males, or females: literally *no one*.[127] In such ways, Paul's use of the term σάρξ allows for broader understanding of the letter's purpose than merely to address religio-ethnical identity.

To summarize, several scholars suggest that a portion of Galatians assumes the role of a *narratio*, even though their estimation of both the meaning *and* the precise location varies. In this study, rather than taking a narrow scope, I take the *narratio* to begin at the opening narrative and run all the way to the closing of the Antiochean speech, that is, from verse 1:11 to verse 2:21.

However, verse 2:21 seems to have the dual function of both providing Paul's comment to the situation in Antioch, as concluding the Antiochean speech, while at the same time providing the first comment on the situation in Galatia. A transit to the following direct address, Paul notes:

"I do not set aside the grace of God, for if righteousness/inclusion/justice (δικαιοσύνη) comes through the law, then Jesus died for no reason."[128] Hence, verse 2:21 provides a metapropositional base for his forthcoming exposition of the issues noted in the *narratio* in relation to the assemblies of God in Galatia.

Before the *Narratio*: The Opening of Galatians

In the opening of his letter to the Galatian assemblies, Paul makes known that he himself is *not* a messenger from any group of people (οὐκ ἀπ' ἀνθρώπων), nor through any person (οὐδὲ δι' ἀνθρώπου), but through Jesus Christ and God the father who raised him from the dead.[129] Philip H. Kern notes, the role of Paul as an apostle validates his person and, even more so, his message.[130] Even if he himself would preach another message, that message can be justifiably rejected by the Galatians: "But even if we, or an angel from heaven, preach another gospel to you than what you have received: let [it/him] be ἀνάθεμα."[131] As this verse indicates, this so-called non-gospel may come from a prominent person or faction within the movement. A challenge to his position as an apostle might explain this curse at the opening of letter.[132] As Philip Esler notes, the letter to the assemblies in Galatia aims at their doing something, namely distancing themselves from this—in Paul's view—erroneous message. Paul wants the Galatians to *not* do something as well, which is to attain the identity markers of the Jewish collective identity (cf. male circumcision).[133] Hence, Paul's emphasis on his own role as an apostle seems to be a statement that will encourage the Galatians to adopt the same liberated approach to other humans as he himself has assumed.

Collecting Interpretive Keys from the *Narratio*

The aim of the following analysis is to read Galatians in a way that is guided by elements collected from the *narratio* as the heart of persuasion. As a narrative, the *narratio* incorporates a richness of aspects and nuances. The elements identified in the following highlight certain aspects and narrative elements that are then employed in analyzing the letter's structure with its address to the Galatian assemblies.

1 To begin with, Paul's encounter with Jesus knocked him off course and set him on a new journey. Simply put, he did not continue as before. Moreover, Paul claims that the message he proclaimed to the Galatians originated with God and was *not* adapted to suit people's preferences (cf. "I did not immediately consult with **σαρκὶ** καὶ αἵματι").[134] For some reason, after his calling, Paul did not return to Jerusalem but went in another direction.[135] His contacts with Jerusalem were therefore quite limited. Only several years later did he travel to Jerusalem for a brief visit to Peter (Κηφᾶς), a visit during which he also met with the Lord's brother James (Ἰάκωβος).

He went to Syria and Cilicia, and it was more than a decade before he had additional contact with the assemblies in-Christ in Judea. Then, after a special revelation (κατὰ ἀποκάλυψιν), he went to Jerusalem.[136] Importantly, Peter and James did not find it necessary to circumcise Titus (who was Greek) and the Gospel that Paul, Barnabas, and Titus preached to the Gentiles was confirmed.[137] The brothers and sisters (ἀδελφοί; the plural form conceals the possible presence of women) of Jerusalem stood up for the "truth of the Gospel," even if some "false siblings" (ψευδάδελφοί) were hostile to such inclusive freedom.[138]

2 The task of bringing the Gospel to the Jews and the Gentiles, respectively, was identified as two missions, each with its own distinctive character. Paul and Barnabas's being sent to the Gentiles was confirmed by "the right hand of fellowship." Paul and Barnabas commissioned to remember the poor.[139] The full inclusion of Gentile brothers and sisters in-Christ was confirmed again by Peter, John, and James, the truth of the Gospel was also confirmed. Barnabas, and possibly Titus as well, were present.

3 Nevertheless, after such pronouncements of mutual confirmation, Paul experienced that under pressure even "true" brothers and sisters may become deluded and depart from the truth. The faithfulness of Christ opens for the inclusion of Gentiles in-Christ, which had been confirmed twice by the so-called pillars of Jerusalem, but "some from James" (τινας ἀπὸ Ἰακώβου) seem to have distorted the practices and knowledge of the Gospel.[140] Hence, the multi-cultural, pluralistic fellowship was thrown into suspicion! Peter and even Barnabas were persuaded.[141] In such ways, the pillars did not stand firm.

4 In Paul's view, such confusion and disturbance must be resisted. Therefore, in this setting, Paul opposed Peter publicly.[142] Renewed instruction was perceived as needful: Jews in-Christ and Gentiles in-Christ are not the same branch, but their inclusive fellowship is based on the faithfulness of Christ. In this setting, by using the term σάρξ, Paul opens the discourse to more than religio-ethnical identity. No person/group (οὐ … πᾶσα **σάρξ**) is included/justified/made righteous (δικαιωθήσεται) by means of identity markers, since the *faithfulness* of Jesus Christ sustains the inclusion of *everyone*.[143] In other words, their inclusion is not *affected* by their having disparate collective identities (and identity markers), nor would their inclusion be *effected* if some adapted themselves to fit in. In response to Christ's faithfulness, the diverse groups in-Christ sustain their inclusion by means of their faithfulness to each other, and to God.[144]

5 Moreover, appearance is less important than reality and truth. Christ was not a minister of sin and the excluded can therefore be included again—and rightfully so. Christ died as a sinner but was no sinner. Similarly, even if the Christ-loyal would appear to others as sinners, they do not have to rebuild boundaries that have been deconstructed.[145] Hence, appearance is inessential compared to faithfulness, justice/righteousness/inclusion (δικαιοσύνη), and the grace of God.

6 In this way, Paul has died by means of the law and been "crucified" with Christ. Therefore, the way Paul now lives in the σάρξ (νῦν ζῶ ἐν **σαρκί**), he lives in faithfulness to the Son of God who loved Paul and gave himself for him.[146] Clearly, to be crucified implies that every marker of privilege and distinction has been lost. As Paul notes, if the law could effect righteousness/inclusion/justice, Jesus would not have died: therefore, Paul does not set aside the grace of God.[147] Jesus had all the right markers of identity and distinction, but they did not help him: God did. The signs as such had no capacity to bring about the promised righteousness/justice/inclusion.
7 The audience remains ignorant about how Peter and others in Antioch responded to Paul's speech.

Unlocking the Message of Galatians

As suggested previously, the rhetorical function of a *narratio* is to locate the case (*continua*) in relation to which the following argumentation and implementation of the message accord (*congruens*).[148] Having identified several narrative elements that are distributed within the *narratio*, we can now use them as the interpretive keys to understand the subsequent message. As the analysis proceeds, the occurrences of σάρξ will be noted along with interpretations that follow the proposed semantic structure and which include *collective group* and/or *collective identity*. In the following, the interpretation of each occurrence of σάρξ will not be discussed but thus renewed understanding of the semantic structure will be implemented in our reading of the text.

1. Opening Acceptance of an Insubordinate Gospel (1:11–24)

Paul describes how the Galatians received both the Gospel and himself with open arms. In itself, this is quite remarkable, since anyone arriving from another region may be a deserter or run-away slave or, if upper-class and a former citizen, possibly a convict who had been presented with the choice of decapitation or fleeing exile. Unless carrying a letter of recommendation or bringing stock for trading, the social status of a person arriving from abroad was likely to be low.[149] In this context, the Galatians' appreciation for Paul is particularly noteworthy. Moreover, according to Paul, since the Galatian addressees received the Gospel—and the Spirit—their lives have changed. Paul expresses his hope that they did *not* experienced/suffered/yearned (ἐπάθετε) all this for nothing (εἰκῇ). Obviously, that which began in the Spirit (ἐναρξάμενοι πνεύματι) cannot be fulfilled in terms of [just another] collective identity (σαρκὶ ἐπιτελεῖσθε).[150] As it pleased God to reveal (ἀποκαλύψαι) his Son in Paul, this same Son has been portrayed before the very eyes of the Galatians precisely as crucified—that is, as a *no-body*.

Paul's emphasis that Jesus had been portrayed among the Galatians as crucified implies that the central figure of the movement has been reintegrated after being a "no one" or a nobody, that is, someone stripped of all valid

identity markers.[151] Paul Sampley notes that "[c]rucifixion was the ultimate Roman sanction; nothing was more shameful."[152] To be clear, crucifixion signals *dehumanization*. In Paul's view, the misguided recollection among the addressees almost inevitably leads them to make misguided choices. Hence, Paul reminds them of their own experience, the words of Scripture, and the common sense of civil law.[153] The Gospel of inclusion of the marginalized and executed/exiled neither originates with humans nor depends upon them—it is a promise of inheritance fulfilled by the gift of God.[154] In Paul's view, the faithfulness of Christ is the valid means for inclusion among the assemblies of God.[155] It is a good thing when the Gospel is confirmed by other people, but such confirmation is by no means necessary: the open fellowship is the "truth of the Gospel."[156]

As covenant cannot be changed once confirmed, new requirements cannot be added as a prerequisite for the Galatians' inclusion, which had already been granted. The Galatians are already included as Galatians in-Christ and *that* cannot be changed.[157] Some people ("false brothers/sisters") may want to use the law as a means for exclusion (cf. Paul's earlier commitment) by desiring conformity, but such desire is illegitimate. If the Galatians in-Christ would succumb to the demands for using identity markers (e.g., male circumcision and separate tables) as a means for exclusion, the truth of the Gospel would not be lived out in their community. As a matter of fact, that which had begun with the πνεῦμα would turn out to be just a collective identity (νῦν **σαρκὶ** ἐπιτελεῖσθε).[158] Clearly, in Paul's view, the truth of the Gospel excludes all social categorizations as legitimate reason for harassment or exclusion.[159] Conversely, "the righteous/included/just will live by faithfulness" (or, possibly: "the just/righteous/included by faithfulness will live").[160] As Paul notes, the assemblies of Galatia have already been incorporated and received the πνεῦμα by the "hearing of faithfulness."[161] Their inclusion can therefore not be conditioned by any identity marker or its absence.[162]

This rule is not limited to the Galatians, though. In Paul's view, no one (individual person or collective group) is included *by means* of circumcision. The identity marker is merely a sign of the inclusion that has already been effected by God's calling and the revelation of the Son.[163] Through Scriptural references, Paul notes that this calling and that revelation have already been given to the Galatians and to other nations in the past: (1) the faithful are children of God (as Abraham)[164]; (2) they are blessed together with Abraham[165]; (3) the principle of inclusion by means of identity markers entails a curse[166]; however, (4) God does not require inclusion by means of identity markers from anybody.[167] In the terminology of Michael Azar, the markers of identity are *metonymic signs*, that is, they derive their meaning from their *sharing* in a symbolic object.[168] This correlation implies that the markers of identity have no effect in themselves, nor do they have to, since they depend completely upon God's grace and Christ's faithfulness.[169] In other words, the markers of identity do not avail anything—they do not make anyone included/just/righteous—for the grace of God is more than the signs. According to Paul,

even the inclusion of the Gentiles was foreseen by Scripture.[170] Every single person and group is invited to respond with faithfulness to God.[171]

Moreover, while the covenant itself is not revised, the "curse of the law" (ἡ κατάρα τοῦ νόμου) is destabilized by means of Christ's resurrection.[172] God raising Christ from the dead implies that the ultimate exclusion is reversed (which is also commemorated among the Christ-faithful at the Lord's Supper).[173] As seen from this perspective, the "curse of the law" must not be interpreted as if the law itself would be a curse, but the curse *within* the law is revoked (which gestures to forgiveness or reconciliation, which frequently recurs within the Hebrew scriptures and is celebrated—especially in the Psalms but also in historical books such as the story about Jonah's commission to Nineveh).[174] Hence, the law remains a resource for transformed life and understanding for people in-Christ, but the law's curse can be reconsidered and revoked (cf. Paul's years when he "destroyed the assembly of God").[175] Clearly, in his letters, Paul continuously adopts references to Scripture as ultimate proofs to most of his arguments and convictions.[176] In a vast number of argumentative and educational contexts, the law is the primary dialogue partner and the source of discernment.[177] Therefore, in Paul's perspective, when the curse of the law is annulled, the law's potential for empowerment and education remains undisturbed.[178] While he was previously committed to the law as a means for exclusion (i.e., the *curse* of that law) when he persecuted the "assembly of God," Paul now places the emphases elsewhere.[179] As he strongly emphasizes in the opening of the letter, the addressees are not to obey *people*. They are to obey the truth.[180]

To conclude, the passage comprising verses 3:1–18 (approximately) corresponds to the beginning of Paul's narratio *in which he emphasizes that the message he proclaimed had divine origin and was not adapted for people's preferences. As an experience probably shared by many among the Galatian assemblies, Paul had not had much contact with Jerusalem and the Christ-loyal there. But Paul knows what he knows and is therefore entitled to proclaim the Gospel. Similarly, the Galatian addressees know what they know and are entitled to stay firm in their inclusion and their discernment.*

2. *The Truth of the Gospel as Inclusion (2:1–10)*

Just as Abraham is the father of the Jews, so is he also the father of the Gentiles.[181] In Paul's view, this fact has strong implications for the mode of inclusion of the Galatians. The truth of the Gospel is that the Galatians in-Christ are already fully included among the assemblies of God. Any voices against their inclusion—whether from Galatia, Jerusalem, or from somewhere else—are in error, misguided, and conceited.[182] As Barclay observes, the ethics described in Galatians is about *obeying the truth*, rather than obeying a specific group of people, tradition, or set of rules.[183] As Paul suggests, they have all been under supervision, but now the Galatian addressees are all included into justice—and held accountable—in-Christ.[184] They are capable of making

their assessments and taking responsibility.[185] Notwithstanding, the Spirit might not give all necessary understanding to one individual or one group, so they will need to develop their understanding of the truth in conversation with others (cf. Paul's letter and his own repeated visits to Jerusalem).[186] As not even angels from heaven are, in Paul's view, completely reliable, the assemblies of God in Galatia assume great responsibility to discern and keep to the truth.[187]

Their inclusion/justice/righteousness does not depend upon their belonging to any group but relies upon God's faithfulness, promise, and grace. And yet, Paul justifiably asks, why then was the law given? It was added for transgressions (which is a noble purpose). The law does not supply the foundation for their lives—neither as Jews nor Galatians—nor for their collective identity: God is the foundation for all. Their existence and relationship can be described in terms of creation and covenant. To mistake the sign for reality is akin to idolatry, but keeping to the good paths is not always easy.[188] While the law is secondary to their inclusion, it can still be an important resource (even if more than 400 later than the covenant).[189] Thus, in this setting, Paul teaches a sense of discernment in relation to the law itself. As noted previously, Paul argues that as the Gentiles in-Christ are already included as members in the collective body: not even a human contract can be changed (by third part) once established.[190] If the law was given for transgressions, this is also a good purpose. However, according to Paul, Scriptures foresaw this inclusion of the Gentiles as the fulfillment of the promise that was given to Abraham and his seed, namely that in him all nations will be blessed.[191] Moreover, not only are Jewish and Gentile citizens included into this covenant but also enslaved and formerly enslaved persons, and male and female. They are all included without distinction.[192] The claim that all are "one seed" in Christ (in the collective sense) makes a powerful claim that is anti-racist, anti-elitist, and anti-sexist. The Gospel is without discrimination, and in it there can be no discrimination.[193]

As Anna Miller notes, the term ἐκκλησία is not just any gathering or assembly but was the term for the *democratic city assembly* of the Greek cities. Therefore, the human voice is important to the constitution of such an assembly; it depends on the right to speak.[194] As the Greek city assemblies excluded persons of foreign birth, of female gender, and in servitude, Miller observes, "[t]he negation of distinctions based on gender and servitude, not to mention ethnicity, undermine the very boundaries separating the 'free' and 'equal' citizen from those non-citizens of the *polis*."[195] In Galatians, Jesus as the crucified (and risen) appears as the matrix of the reintegration of the nobody, the non-person, or the person incorrectly perceived as defilement. The addressees can therefore simply not accept that one must be someone [special] in order to be included, nor can they raise such claims on others. Adopting a metaphor that anyone could understand, Paul explains that "the law was our tutor [bringing us] to Christ, that we might be included into justice/righteoused from faithfulness."[196] But as faithfulness is coming, they are no

longer *under* a tutor.[197] No one would claim that a tutor is unimportant, but the relation between the tutor and the pupil changes over time. As Paul says elsewhere, they are not "under the law."[198] Moreover, the Galatian addressees are not infants that need to be born again. Regardless of systems for subordination and suppression present in other contexts, they are included among the ἐκκλησίαι of Galatia and therefore possess both responsibility and a certain authority.

But if someone tries to win inclusion by means of adapting his or her identity markers, it would seem to imply that their previous inclusion failed.[199] As F. F. Bruce notes, "[i]n itself circumcision was neither here nor there so far as Paul was concerned: he says so twice in this very letter (5:6; 6:15). What disturbed him was the enforcement or acceptance of circumcision as a legal obligation, as though it were essential to salvation or to membership in the community of the people of God."[200] Since the coming of faithfulness, Paul notes, they are no longer under a tutor, "for you are all sons/children of God through faithfulness in Christ Jesus."[201] Within Greek, Roman, and Greco-Jewish upper class male discourse, it is emphasized that enslaved persons need masters and women need husbands—they cannot rule by themselves.[202] Such perspectives are here gainsaid by Paul.[203] However, as Karin Neutel correctly points out, there is no indication that equality, in terms of sameness, is assumed here.[204] Nevertheless, to remove distinctions implies that any sense of *distinction* or prominence is also removed. In close affinity with the prophecy in Joel, the distribution of the Spirit to everyone suggests that a new phase has been inaugurated—whether in the life of the individual, the life or the community, or in the life of the cosmos (or some sort of combination of these three spheres).[205] As noted, a fellowship organized around someone who had been crucified could hardly demand any specific traits of honor and distinction from its members (e.g., ethnic status, civic status, or gender status).[206] Therefore, rather than being Jew *or* Greek; slave *or* free; male *or* female, they are now Jews *and* Greeks; enslaved *and* free; male *and* female. They are one in Christ.[207] As the distinctions are removed, the prevalence of nested identities is also affirmed.

As suggested elsewhere, Paul was subjected to several severe punishments, both in Roman and Jewish settings.[208] Such punishments were designed to inflict physical harm and pain, but they were also intended to ruin the social reputation of the convict. These were public corrections.[209] As Jeff Hubing notes, "[i]f the weakness of the flesh Paul refers to in 4.13 is interpreted through the lens of this kind of eschatological persecution, then the 'temptation' in Paul's flesh becomes the potential for the Galatians to reject and despise the apostle due to his status as a persecuted man and the likelihood that they too will be subjected to the same persecutions."[210] In this vein, Paul's "weakness in his σάρξ" may describe his weak position within the social body, that is, as a persecuted man. The test that this circumstance provided for the Galatians may thus have been two-fold: they may reject him because (1) they despised the weakness in people who lacked social recognition, and/

or (2) they feared becoming targets of similar persecution themselves. As the individual body of Christ Jesus was maimed, wounded, and crucified, the members of his collective body risk being maimed and harmed as well—albeit without losing their reputation or inclusion within this particular collective body.[211] Hence, a monosemous approach to σάρξ in this setting is not only possible but also compelling.[212] Paul's message makes sense when the "weakness of the σάρξ" (ἀσθένειαν τῆς σαρκός) is interpreted not only as Paul's physical (individual) body but also—and primarily—as the corporate, collective body.[213] The openness and supportiveness among the Galatians when Paul first arrived is indeed quite remarkable.[214]

To summarize, as noted in the narratio, *the mission of taking the Gospel to the Gentiles was confirmed twice. Some were hostile to the inclusive freedom of the Gospel, but Peter and James did not find it necessary to circumcise Titus at their meeting in Jerusalem. The full inclusion of the Gentile brothers and sisters was thus confirmed. This part of the* narratio *corresponds approximatively to Galatians 3:19–4:14. Paul was received with open arms and his message was understood and appreciated.*

3. *An Indiscriminating Fellowship Thrown into Suspicion (2:11–13)*

The multi-cultural, pluralistic fellowship that Paul had seen flourish in Galatia was later thrown into suspicion. Paul depicted his first arrival to Galatia as characterized by outstanding and exemplary reception by the Galatians,[215] but since Paul left things seem to have changed. As it appears, someone has preached another message to the Galatian assemblies of God. The social position, background, and motivations of this other messenger/apostle(s) remain unclear, but, in Paul's view, his or her commitment is for no good: the non-gospel is a message of exclusion for the Galatians so that the Galatians will be committed to this other messenger—and this other message—instead of Paul's inclusive Gospel.[216] It is striking how compelling a message of exclusion—and exclusivity—can be. However, at the fore is not just the attractiveness of the competing message but the social pressure to avoid risking exclusion or marginalization.[217] Thus, Paul comments, it is good for the addressees to be committed to a good thing always, and not just when he is present with them.[218]

Though the identity of this messenger is not clear, the message is. As F. F. Bruce perceives, "[t]he most certain feature of the false gospel was its insistence on circumcision."[219] A faction seems to be forming within the Christ-loyal assemblies of Galatia—or so Paul fears—which insists that male circumcision is a prerequisite for members in-Christ. Importantly, such insistence not only targets the social position of non-Jews but may also restrict the inclusion of enslaved persons, women, disabled, under-aged, and every other group or individual with a low or damaged reputation.[220] Paul suspects that this faction will exclude those among the addressees who do not conform to a specific set of identity markers, so that the Galatian Christ-assemblies

will need to turn their attention to this apostle or group for guidance rather than being committed to the one who already "supplies the Spirit and works miracles" among them.[221] In this ongoing discussion, Paul's own leadership is under attack. Paul asks, "Have I become your enemy because I tell you the truth?"[222]

The Galatian audience may understand that, in Paul's view, their observance of days, months, seasons, and years is not a prerequisite for their inclusion among the assemblies of God.[223] To Paul, having to correct them on this point is like having to give birth to the same children twice, something both painful and unnecessary.[224] One could rather have expected that the addressees would be ready to give birth to their own "children" by now.[225] Why on earth would they want to return to a state of submission?

As indicated in the narratio*, even "true brothers/sisters" may sometimes become deluded. This delusion, which Paul fears is spreading in Galatia, stands in sharp contrast to their former exemplary acceptance of the Gospel when he first arrived. Even if the so-called pillars are not standing firmly, their confusion must be resisted. The passage comprising verses 4:15–20 corresponds to the verses in the* narratio *in which Paul describes how Peter and even Barnabas were persuaded, and the multi-cultural, pluralistic fellowship came thrown under suspicion.*[226]

4. *Resisting Confusion by Renewed Instruction (2:14–16)*

Paul tries to win the Galatians back as he describes the truth of the Gospel, which hopefully will stir a response of faithfulness. The markers of identity do not effect anything, but they are merely signs that remind of God's promise and God's faithfulness, even for Jews.[227] The markers of identity such as male circumcision and observance of holy days are signs, not *means*: every group and every person still depend upon God's promise and faithfulness.[228]

In the words of Michael Azar, identity markers are *metonymic signs*, since they derive their meaning by *sharing* in a symbolic object.[229] If the sign ceases to share in the symbolic object, the sign is no longer meaningful in itself (though it may take on other meanings). Moreover, if the symbolic object is changed, the meaning of the sign changes too.[230] Therefore, it is very difficult to transfer a sign from one setting to another because the meaning of the sign shifts—sometimes in unintended ways. For instance, if male circumcision is transferred from a rite expressing the inclusion of person (especially a new-born child) to a rite suggested as a prerequisite for adult males to remain included into a specific collective identity, it is not exactly the same sign anymore and, in the latter case, the rite is most likely not perceived as a sign for God's faithfulness and grace. In the covenant, the order of things is that creation and relation come first. The sign comes later and is, indeed, secondary. The sign of male circumcision would be nothing without the covenant, and the sign could also share in another symbolic object (e.g., enslavement).[231] Those who circumcise [themselves or each other] cannot keep a

commandment which prescribes that circumcision should be performed on the eighth day after birth. When the sign has been moved to another setting, is it still the same sign? Does it share in the same symbolic object?

The question of inclusion and exclusion is further elaborated in Paul's account of the story about Hagar and Sarah who both bore children to Abraham. Paul suggests that these two women are symbolical (ἀλληγορούμενα) as they describe two *principles* for the construct of collective identity. As Susan Eastman correctly points out, the women are not identified with *any* specific group of people (neither with Judaizers in-Christ, nor Gentiles in-Christ; neither with Jews, nor with a later emerging "third race" of Christians).[232] This malleability of identity constructs is essential to the understanding of the discourse.[233] As Paul states very directly, "these things"—alternatively: "these women"—are symbolic (ἀλληγορούμενα).[234] Paul avoids making an explicit correspondence between Ishmael—enslaved—and Isaac—free—which is a significant feature of the passage. While the one begotten according to the σάρξ is first Ishmael, and thereafter Isaac, Paul's persistent avoidance of mentioning their names is likely intended to be a means to make the allegorical interpretation come across more clearly: the enslaved woman and the free woman are principles, *not* people.[235]

When a subdued or enslaved "mother" gives birth for the sake of preserving a particular collective identity, that is the meaning of giving birth according to the σάρξ (κατὰ σάρκα). The enslavement to a cause is transferred from mother to son—from principle to action and understanding (from Hagar to Ishmael) but also involving almost everyone around them; the enslavement of being subdued to a cause is transferred from Ishmael to Isaac, resulting to the first child and his mother being excluded and the second almost suffering infanticide.[236] On the other hand, the symbolic "mother" giving birth by promise (δι' ἐπαγγελίας) is free—regardless of ethnic origin or civic status. And the barren woman shouts with joy over her many children—she could ethnically be both historical Sarah and Hagar, one of them, or neither: the point is that the free woman is not concerned with exclusion and exclusivity but can accept anyone as her child. She is "barren" but adopts an inclusive approach to her symbolic children. The principle of progeny κατὰ σάρκα, on the other hand, enslaves and generates persecution, because its claim to exclusivity entails that someone else is removed. The logic of Paul's symbolic interpretation of the story implies that the principle of an exclusive lineage or collective identity inherently enslaves—even if the members are prominent and wealthy—while a principle of promise has the capacity to liberate.

In the Genesis narrative, it is noteworthy that both Ismael and Isaac were circumcised.[237] Ismael was circumcised at the age of 13 and Isaac at the age of 8 days. In referencing the story about Ismael and Isaac, Paul warns the Galatians in-Christ that they will become "enslaved" rather than "sons" if they think that they can attain inclusion by means of the *sign* instead of receiving inclusion by faithfulness.[238] Since they have already received inclusion through God's promise and faithfulness, there is really no reason for anyone

to make a fuss about their initiation (cf. νῦν σαρκὶ ἐπιτελεῖσθε). Indeed, that would make it seem as if their first inclusion failed. As the story reveals, Ismael was clearly not protected from exclusion: the sign availed nothing when put to test. His circumcision did not strengthen his civil status in ways to make him an heir.[239] Therefore, the Galatian audience must not be deluded into believing that the rite of circumcision would make them into *sons* and *heirs* but should realize that their full inclusion lies with the principle of the "free mother," that is, in relation to promise and faithfulness. In Paul's view, the Galatians are "children of promise as Isaac," so there is no need for further rites of initiation.

As the narrative of the persecution against Hagar and her child painfully discloses, the metonymic signs are unreliable by nature: unless they share in a relevant symbolic object (such as *promise* or *faithfulness*), they may have no relevant meaning. While an exclusive collective identity can be characterized by privilege and prominence, such constructs are still just the other side of the coin as another manifestation of slavery, since the construct of an "inside" presumes an "outside," just as the construct of "privilege" presumes "disadvantage" and "dispossession."[240] As Paul's symbolic account of the story about Hagar conveys, *every* construct of collective identity based on privilege/exclusion is bound to be a curse to someone. Moreover, those who are inside may be enslaved by their own structures—and possibly by their own fear of exclusion—but the dispossessed may suffer acutely from marginalization, exploitation, harassment, and other forms of injustice. Besides, forms of inclusion by means of adaption can easily become a constantly unfinished business: there may always be more adjustments to make and more signs to attain before full inclusion is achieved. Inclusion by means of promise, on the other hand, can instantaneously confer full membership.

In Paul's depiction, the Jerusalem above (ἡ ἄνω Ἰερουσαλὴμ) stands on higher conceptual grounds: it is free and the "mother" of all.[241] The "Jerusalem above" is free from domination and open to diversity.[242] Clearly, the prosperity of the "mother of all" does not depend upon her own capacity to produce offspring. It is written, Paul notes, "Rejoice, O barren, You who do not bear! Break forth and shout, you who are not in labour! For the desolate has many more children than she who has a husband."[243] Thus, "Jerusalem above" stands conceptually above other contemporary constructs of collective identity by having the capacity to freely include new "citizens" into promise and blessings. Therefore, the "mother" rejoices in justice and righteousness. It can be noted that this imagery aligns perfectly with the truth of the Gospel as depicted in the *narratio*, namely the full inclusion of Gentiles in-Christ. The *narratio* deals with marginalization, which implies resistance against conformity.[244]

Paul describes one "child" as born for the construct of a collective identity (κατὰ σάρκα), and another as born by the free woman through promise.[245] As the women are here interpreted symbolically as principles, their symbolic children are most likely the behavior emanating from keeping to

one or another such principle. Notably, in the Genesis story, the literally enslaved mother and her child do not persecute anyone, but the story explicitly describes how the enslaved mother and her child were both persecuted: "Cast out the enslaved woman and her son!" In Paul's symbolic reading, this imperative is taken as an exhortation to reject the *principle* of constructing (exclusive) collective identities, together with the withdrawal from such practices that follow upon embracing that principle. As the story aptly describes, those who aim at securing their collective identity and/or collective group by means of making their identity (or lineage) an end in itself are consistently vulnerable to change. First one child (Ishmael) was born for the sake of preserving the lineage; then another child (Isaac) replaced him in that position. In Paul's view, this story describes more than ancient history. "As the one born according to the σάρξ (κατὰ σάρκα) then persecuted the one born according to Spirit, so it is also now."[246] Those who construct their collective identity for the sake of exclusivity and privilege deny the promise given to Abraham in whom every nation can be blessed.

In his symbolic interpretation, Paul suggests two principles for constructing collective identity: one open to diversity (promise) and one focused on exclusivity and privilege (enslavement). In the story in Genesis, the "mother" focused on privilege says: "Cast out the enslaved woman and her son: the enslaved woman's son shall not inherit with my son Isaac."[247] In Paul's understanding, constructs of identity built on privilege do not liberate. Exclusivity necessarily implies that someone is removed, while those who remain are not free either. Paul therefore presents his audience with this choice: either they organize their fellowship around some idea of exclusivity—with its adjoining persecution—or around the idea of inclusiveness, as guided by the Spirit, which would allow them to enjoy the open-table fellowship, while also allowing others to enjoy it.[248] If people demand that they conform to certain constructs of exclusive collective identity, the addressees are still free to ignore such a call into a yoke of bondage.[249] They belong to a collective body organized around promise and faithfulness.

Being children according to promise like Isaac, however, the addressees cannot—and do not have to—replace Isaac.[250] As distinctions are removed, difference is not a problem: both Jews and those among the addressees who are not Jews are included into the fellowship according to promise, as children of the free woman and heirs: "Rejoice, O barren, You who do not bear! Break forth and shout, you who are not in labour! For the desolate has many more children than she who has a husband."[251] Within this collective body, nobody is excluded or marginalized.[252] While the proponents for male circumcision illegitimately threaten the addressees by placing their fellowship under the symbol of exclusion and exclusivity, with its implication of enslavement, the addressees are free under the symbol of inclusion and faithfulness (cf. the law of Christ and the truth of the Gospel). The construct of collective identity through promise is not endangered by male circumcision itself—but by the *call* for male circumcision.

The narratio *offers profound implications for the interpretation of the passage 4:21–5:10. As Paul opposed Peter publicly, the addressees are entitled to defend their own inclusion among the assemblies of God against those messengers who might suggest otherwise. The addressees do not have to fear persecution or exclusion, since they are already children of the "free woman," that is, included into justice and righteousness through the principles of promise and faithfulness*—not *through the principles of conformity, privilege, and exclusivity. Since they are born by promise and not for the sake of preserving a collective identity, they are also free to include others freely. The Galatian addressees are included just as Peter, Paul, Barnabas—just as Isaac.*

5. *Appearance versus Truth (2:17–19)*

Paul pleads with the addressees that they must neither let themselves be fooled by appearance, nor let fear of prejudice compel them into making poor decisions. Their fear of being excluded might distort their moral compass.[253] While the faithfulness of Jesus and God's mercy sustain the inclusion of both Jews and Gentiles, the same sense of faithfulness supports their inclusion of each other—particularly the ones without signs of prominence (cf. Jesus).[254] In Paul's view, the addressees' renewed interest in collective identities makes them estranged from Christ who was crucified.[255] Moreover, since law prescribes that Jewish males be circumcised on the *eighth* day (or be "cut off" from their people), this commandment is not applicable to Gentile-born adult males what-so-ever.[256] As Paul suggests, this curse of the law (i.e., exclusion) is now reversed, since the reintegration of Jesus implies that the curse "upon everyone who hangs on a tree" is obsolete.[257] Scripture must be read selectively, and the curse of the law excluded.

Moreover, Paul testifies that every man who becomes circumcised [or: *who circumcises himself*] is obliged to keep the whole law (ὅλος ὁ νόμος). Notably, as Matthew Theissen suggests, the "whole law" might refer to the "entirety of the law of circumcision, not the entire Jewish law."[258] Clearly, the law as moral code continues to be relevant.[259] Prophecies and historical narratives are noted as resources for recognition and guidance, but the commandment of covenantal circumcision on the eighth day is indeed impossible to implement for an adult man: it is not relevant—and it would only change his appearance.[260]

As male circumcision is merely a sign, not a means, circumcision has no capacity to effect anything for anyone.[261] If the signs could produce the covenant, neither the addressees nor other groups would not need the grace of God anymore.[262] Besides, even though he was carrying the signs for inclusion, Jesus was betrayed and executed.[263] Hence, "in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor foreskin avails anything, but faithfulness working through love."[264] The signs may suggest inclusion/righteousness/justice (δικαιοσύνη), but they do not guarantee it or make it happen. The signs for the covenant rely upon

God's grace and faithfulness, which in turn need to be acknowledged by humans: the signs avail nothing by themselves. In this setting, the offense of the cross can be spelled out as the provocative and indiscriminate inclusion of the constructed outsider: the stranger/enslaved/female.[265] But it can also be spelled out as the provocative emptiness of the signs.[266] As Paul argues, the construct of an exclusive collective identity does *not* contribute to life and flourishing. The Spirit supports reintegration, but people do all kinds of things that break fellowship apart—even when included into esteemed collective identities.[267] While the markers of identity and exclusivity are empty, the calling of the addressees is freedom.[268]

In this letter, Paul expresses concern that people may want to take advantage of the freedom of the addressees by imposing various customs and important days on them: their freedom can be exploited as an opportunity for building or enforcing (a specific) collective group/collective identity (εἰς ἀφορμὴν τῇ σαρκί).[269] Such strivings that result in conformity are misguided and bring nothing good. If the addressees strive for constructing an exclusive collective identity, that is also (sadly) what they will get. For in taking all their problems with them into that identity, they will receive no solutions. Moreover, the identity markers can also be used as a means for exclusion (i.e., a curse).[270] In Paul's view, their resurgent interest in identity markers must not hinder them from obeying the truth. Adapting one's identity markers might appear as a small thing, but just as the sourdough starter works its way through the dough, their focus on the identity markers will affect their whole construct of collective identity, leaving no aspect untouched. As F. F. Bruce described, "[t]he 'works of the flesh' which posed the most deadly threat in the churches of Galatia appears to have been a quarrelsome spirit; hence Paul's warning in 5:15: 'But if you go on fighting one another tooth and tail, all you can expect is mutual annihilation'."[271] In trying to implement the non-gospel of an exclusive collective identity, Paul writes that the addressees "bite and devour one another even to the point of being consumed by one another."[272] They were called to serve one another through love, not to be consumed by their (and others') focus on appearance and identity markers.[273]

Still, in this very moment, they are free to neglect the non-gospel's call for conformity, and to include the neighbor into fellowship (again).[274] The call for male circumcision may appear to be a small thing, but that impression is deceptive since the call is incorporated into a larger construct of meaning (cf. the desire of the σάρξ). People may demand that the addressees conform to the expectations of the collective identity, but the Galatians are free to walk in the Spirit.[275] The rhetorical composition of the letter may be essential for a correct understanding of this passage. As suggested previously, the opening of the subparagraph is found in verse 5:11: "And, brothers and sisters, if I still preach circumcision, why do I still suffer persecution? Then the offense of the cross has evaporated."[276] The paragraph then closes in verse 5:24 with a thematically corresponding comment: "And those who are Christ's have crucified the σάρξ with all its passions/sufferings (τοῖς παθήμασιν) and

desires/demands (ταῖς ἐπιθυμίαις)."[277] In other words, there is no reason to assume that Paul would turn here to another issue, or another *group* within the assemblies. On the contrary, verse 5:16 can be interpreted as firmly incorporated within the larger communicative project of the letter: "But I tell you, walk in the Spirit and do not fulfill what the σάρξ desires (ἐπιθυμίαν **σαρκὸς** οὐ μὴ τελέσητε)."[278]

In verse 5:13, Paul explains why he could wish that the proponents of male circumcision exclude themselves: "For you, sisters and brothers, are called to freedom, only do not let this freedom be exploited as an opportunity for the collective group/collective identity (ἀφορμὴν τῇ σαρκί), but serve one another through love."[279] In other words, the risk for exploitation by the collective group (σάρξ as an active agent) is connected to the construct of collective identity based on an idea of sameness. By means of imposing male circumcision as a means for inclusion/exclusion, in Paul's view, the proponents are troubling (ἀναστατοῦντες) the addressees.[280] Paul himself once preached male circumcision but stopped as he recognized Jesus as the Lord. Furthermore, as he recognized his calling to include the Gentiles, he can now be persecuted himself by others who now embrace the same perspectives and assumptions as he did himself.[281] In this sense, he is an expert in persecution. As a response to this persecution based on an erroneous message, Paul suggests that addressees uproot the practices and conceptualizations emanating from the construct of an exclusive collective identity.[282] Paul expresses that this is a very serious matter. The desire of collective group for an exclusive collective identity does not promote the fruit of the Spirit.

The addressees must not succumb to the demand for male circumcision with its implications of fear for exclusion. According to Paul, the entire law is concluded in one word: "You shall love your neighbor as yourself."[283] In other words, the addressees' calling is the freedom in which they can serve one another through love. The limitations that restrict diversity and prohibit the inclusion of the constructed deviants (cf. Jesus) are not compatible with the rule of the Spirit of Christ. In this setting, the desire of the σάρξ (ἐπιθυμία **σαρκός**) can be construed as the collective group's desire for conformity with regard to identity markers (here: male circumcision and festivity calendar).[284] Notably, the identity markers are secondary and therefore nothing to be "preached" (cf. κηρύσσω).[285] As repeatedly noted in the letter, the signs avail nothing.[286] Moreover, even though the proponents for male circumcision exhibit zeal for the Galatians, Paul's contends, "they want to exclude (ἐκκλεῖσαι) you, that you may be committed to them," that is, to contribute to establishing a center of power.[287] There is a distinction between ethically motivated limitations, that is, limitations that protect the freedom of someone else, and limitations that simply construct a sense of outsiders and insiders.[288] In this setting, Paul emphasizes the law's encouragement to love (include) while restricting the use of the law to hate (exclude).[289]

As noted previously, the issue of circumcision/foreskin may appear to concern merely religio-ethnic identity, but that impression is deceptive. As

not every circumcision is counted as a covenantal circumcision, the issue of enslaved/free is inherently included in the matter. Moreover, as male circumcision is an all-male issue, the questions of sex and gender are inevitably included as well. When construed as giving special spiritual value and competence to a person, the issues of ableness and education may be important as well.[290] In this context, Paul also mentions the aspect of age:

> We are no longer under a tutor since the coming of faithfulness, for you are all children of God through the faithfulness of Chris, for as many who are baptised into Christ have put on Christ: there is neither Jew nor Greek; neither slave nor free; neither male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus; but if you are Christ's, then you are Abraham's seed and heirs according to the promise.[291]

When Paul speaks about circumcision/foreskin, he explicitly mentions aspects of sex, gender, enslavement, age, and other constructs of collective identity with implications for privilege and marginalization. As the addressees do not have to obey illegitimate requests made by people, they must not accept being exploited or bullied in any way. They are entitled to stand firm in their inclusion, guided by the law and following the Spirit.[292] Paul uses highly polemic language in asserting that the message of adaptation is a non-gospel. In his description, the constructs of collective identity and collective groups (σάρξ) and the Spirit are contrary to each other (ἡ σὰρξ … τὸ πνεῦμα … ἀλλήλοις ἀντίκειται).[293] When the addressees are led by the Spirit, they are not *under* the law.[294] In other words, the law can be an important dialogue partner, a guide and a resource in every way, but *not* their master. Moreover, if the identity markers are construed as impediments to fellowship and inclusion, the enforcement of conformity with regard to these markers becomes incompatible with the command to "love your neighbor as yourself."[295] In this setting, Jae Won Lee notes, the idea of a universal collective identity can be deceptive, since it may turn out to be imperialism in disguise.[296] Such notions can be adopted with the end result of demanding conformity in terms of being the same, rather than being united. As Paul Ricoeur suggests when he distinguishes between identity as being "the same" and identity as being "oneself," universalism can be construed in different ways.[297]

Here it is worth pausing to examine the prophecy in the book of Joel, which offers an intersectional approach to unity and identity in the Hebrew scripture that could be relevant to Paul's argument to the Christ-followers in Galatia:

> In those days, I will pour out my Spirit on all people/everyone (πᾶσαν σάρκα; LXX 3:1), your sons and your daughters will prophesy, your old men will have dreams and your young men will see visions; in those days I will pour out my spirit even upon your menservants and your maidservants.[298]

In this setting, everyone is connected through the Spirit. Seen from this perspective, to follow the guidance of the Spirit—that is, to walk in the "canon" of the Spirit—implies that the Galatian addressees are free to live together with the law (but not under it).[299] In this way, the Judaizers present the Galatians with a feigned choice: the Galatians in-Christ do not have to do what the σάρξ desires or fear exclusion.[300] As a matter of fact, it would not be for anyone's improvement if they adapted their markers of collective identity anyway. Even if proponents of exclusive collective identity often claim superiority for themselves, such claims seldom hold up to scrutiny. Rather they struggled as anyone else (the imperial family being the obvious example).[301] In this setting, Paul's list of moral failures is not moral exhortation *per se*, but an argument in favor of the perception that the incorporation into collective groups—even prominent ones—does not protect against moral failure. Rather, the works of the σάρξ (τὰ ἔργα τῆς σαρκός) are evident, namely "adultery, fornication, uncleanliness, lewdness, idolatry, sorcery, hatred, contentions, jealousies, outbursts of wrath, selfish ambitions, dissensions, heresies, envy, murders, drunkenness, revelries, and the like."[302] As everyone knows, not even a collective identity at its best—distinguished and prominent—safeguards against moral corruption.[303] Every collective group would benefit greatly from having the law as a dialogue partner, but needs the guidance of the Spirit of Christ, and depends upon God's mercy for finding and implementing the "canon" of life.[304]

As noted, the addressees' resurgent focus on prominence/identity threatens to distort their moral compass and their capacity to appreciate the ethical guidance offered by Spirit and Scripture.[305] Whilst there may be moral problems in Galatia (these are not given extensive treatment in this letter), an attempt to shift collective identity would probably not be a solution to any of their problems.[306] As the continuation of the letter indicates (after the transition to the actual *paranesis*), the very idea of being included into a prominent collective identity increases the risk for pretense or play-acting (κενόδοξοι) while also adding to both the risk for aggression instead of reconciliation (ἀλλήλους προκαλούμενοι) and the incorrect estimation that success in another group or person would be a loss to oneself (ἀλλήλοις φθονοῦντες).[307] As indicated by the clauses in the introduction to the *paranesis*, the moral exhortation of the letter deals with how to restore one another in gentleness (cf. κενόδοξοι), how to be prominent or successful without turning success into a burden for others (cf. ἀλλήλους προκαλούμενοι), and how to share everything that is good with one another (cf. ἀλλήλοις φθονοῦντες).[308]

Since the actions of collective groups (ἔργα τῆς σαρκός) are actions (ἔργα) done by human beings, such actions and modes of behavior have the implication of responsibility.[309] As Paul comments, "just as I told you in the past, those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God."[310] On the other hand, "fruit of the Spirit" (καρπὸς τοῦ πνεύματός) is described precisely as fruit (καρπός) that develops or grows with implications of gratitude. In other words, while making efforts to be incorporated into a prominent

collective identity does not contribute in the least to the development of behaviors and attitudes that are associated with the Spirit, the inclusion into justice/righteousness through *faithfulness* may provide the soil in which something good can grow. Barclay and Thomas agree that Paul might draw on prophecies such as Isaiah 32:15–16 and Joel 2:18–32 for his expectations and conceptualization of this spiritual fruit that grows "wildly" as knowing no boundaries among people.[311] According to Paul, the behavior and attitudes that grow as fruit of the Spirit are "love, joy, peace, long-suffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law."[312] Naturally, all people want these things, but the tricky question is how to get there. In Paul's view, the construct of collective identity does not contribute at all, but, on the contrary, such constructs are against the Spirit. People do all kinds of things and are unreliable, to say the least, when it comes to providing relevant guidance. The list of their "work" is clearly unimpressive.

Hence, the solution to the predicaments and failures of humanity is not the inclusion into a prominent collective group—nor a shift in identity—but to follow the guidance of the Spirit in the faithfulness and grace of God. The promise was given to Abraham and his *seed* (σπέρμα), which, according to Paul, is Christ.[313] The term σπέρμα is probably best understood in its ordinary, collective sense as *children*, *offspring*, that is, as the collective body—not merely the individual.[314] Paul does not suggest the prevalence or construction of a "third race" but rather an assembly of nobodies in which anyone can be included by means of adoption.[315] In other words, it is the assembly in which identity is "nothing."[316] Paul goes as far as suggesting that those who belong to Christ have "crucified" their σάρξ (τὴν σάρκα ἐσταύρωσαν) together with its passions/sufferings/experiences (παθήματα) and desires (ἐπιθυμίαι).[317] Importantly, neither παθήματα nor ἐπιθυμίαι necessitates connotations to sexual desire or the emotional state within an individual. Notably, when references to sexual desire occur, Paul uses other terms (see ὄρεξις; πυρόομαι).[318] In Romans 7:5, Robert Jewett notes, the term παθήματα seems to refer to desires for honor within the collective group.[319] In Paul's opening of the address in Galatians, Paul asks, "Have you really suffered/experienced/desired (ἐπάθετε) all these things for nothing?"[320] Clearly, his audience wanted something else than another collective identity from the start, and it is possible that they have already suffered for that choice in relation to their acceptance of Paul and his message. As it seems, they made choices and took steps that could have taken—and did take them—beyond ordinary human strivings for prominence.

Now if the addressees want to live in the Spirit, they may also live in agreement (στοιχῶμεν) with the Spirit.[321] The term στοιχέω is commonly translated into English as *walk*, but, as Walter Russell notes, the term "has the added sense of 'to be in agreement with' or 'to be in step with'."[322] Notably, the connected noun appears to be used in a similar way both earlier and later in the same letter. It is suggested that both Paul and the addressees have

been enslaved to "weak and beggarly principles" (στοιχεῖα).[323] Naturally, Paul has not been enslaved to other gods in any regular sense—but he has lived according to other principles than those he now turns to for guidance.[324] Moreover, in his final blessing, Paul wishes for peace and mercy upon "as many as live according to this rule (τῷ κανόνι τούτῳ στοιχήσουσιν) and upon God's Israel."[325] This conceptualization of two principles that can also be found in ancient history—one that is enslaved and one that is free—has been discussed thoroughly.[326] Naturally, Paul has not been enslaved to other Gods, but he has been enslaved to erroneous principles that can occur within any group and any collective identity.[327]

As the description of a choice indicates, collective identities can be structured in ways that are detrimental to health and functioning, but such structures can be transformed, which is also the occasion for communication. The structures of collective identities and collective groups are malleable and can be changed, as every individual can also choose his or her approach toward the collective body. For Paul's address to the Galatian assemblies to be meaningful as deliberative rhetoric, the addressees must understand his message and be motivated to respond by changing their behavior in relevant ways. In Paul's view, "those who are Christ's have crucified the σάρξ together with its passions/sufferings/experiences (παθήματα) and desires (ἐπιθυμίαι)."[328] This suggests a difference between what they experienced/desired/suffered after their acceptance of Paul and his message, and what the σάρξ demands or desires. When the interpretation of σάρξ is implemented as tentatively suggested, in this setting, that implies that the σάρξ desires male circumcision (and other metonymic signs such as noting holy days) with its implications for a collective identity constructed around conformity.

Notably, the addressees' approach to their collective identity is something within their domain of influence: they can choose to "crucify" their collective identity together with its passions and desires. Similarly, in the passage about the enslaved "mother," there is no actual person or group of persons that must be driven out, but the message targets a principle and a construct (that can be destroyed by keeping to God's grace).[329] As Caroline Johnson Hodge reminds us, "[t]hough both kinship and ethnicity, as categories of identity, claim a primordial or natural base, they are nevertheless human creations."[330] While the addressees may construct and understand their collective identity in one way, they could also choose differently. By means of accepting Paul (and his message) at their previous encounter, the Galatians made a choice with strong implications for their way of constructing their collective identity or, possibly, affirmed a way of constructing identity that was already theirs.[331] As Paul emphasizes again, they have been "called to liberty" and "liberated to liberty."[332] There is a choice, which they made, which now needs to be made again.[333]

It should be noted that there is a world of difference between *having* markers of identity and *imposing* such markers upon others.[334] The problem described in Antioch was not that some were circumcised, but that some

were acting as if this were a valid reason for discrimination.[335] Peter's withdrawal from their open-table fellowship conveyed a message that was not in accordance with the truth of the Gospel. As noted, male circumcision does not generate anything by itself.[336] Moreover, when the sign (e.g., the identity marker) is moved from one setting to another, it is most likely not the same sign anymore. A metonymic sign needs to share in a symbolic object that gives it relevant meaning—or, indeed, it is *nothing*.[337] As transferred to Galatia, Paul fears, the sign of male circumcision would be a sign of submission rather than inclusion. As noted, any attempt to transfer a sign from one setting to another is precarious and sometimes even hazardous: the meaning is easily transformed as well. In this setting, Paul suggests that the cardinal sins of the collective identity are *conceit*, *provocation*, and *envy*, which would obstruct the Galatians walking in the Spirit by loving their neighbor as themselves.[338]

To summarize, even as excluded and crucified, Christ was not *a minister of sin. But the markers of identity are simply not able to effect justice, inclusion, and righteousness. The absence of markers is no reason for exclusion and harassment. The addressees in Galatia can be quite certain that adapting identity markers would not do anything good for them. Such constructs of exclusiveness would result merely in pretense and would in fact be an impediment to their walking in the Spirit. Therefore, instead of making new attempts at being included into a specific collective identity, they are entitled to*—and should—*live in the fulfillment of the law in one word:* You will love your neighbor as yourself *(see Gal 5:11–26).*

6. *Letting Go of Prominence and Distinction (2:20–21)*

As Paul leaves the section of argumentation, he offers his suggestions for the practical implementation of the approach to collective identities that he has outlined. These suggestions should assist the addressees in avoiding incorrect applications of the metonymic signs. In this setting, Paul suggests a three-point program: (1) shame be carried collectively, (2) success be carried individually, and (3) privileges be shared. First, in a situation in which someone is found to be trespassing, the trespasser must be "restored in a spirit of gentleness."[339] Rather than being preoccupied by the situation as an opportunity for recognition (and for the risk for disgrace), the addressees are encouraged to focus on restoration. Therefore, the temptation in this setting is that the one who rebukes is seized by "empty pride" and thinks him- or herself to be superior to the other (cf. κενόδοξοι). Paul suggests that as authentic, spiritual people (πνευματικοί), they restore one another in gentleness.[340] This attitude is further described by Paul's comment: "Carry one another's burden, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ; for if anyone thinks [oneself] to be something, when one is nothing, that one deceives oneself."[341] In other words, each one must find reasons for pride only within oneself, not in the *failure* of another. Conceit is *not* a spiritual gift.

Unlike people who are preoccupied with their own social reputation, success is to be carried individually: "Let each one examine his or her work (ἔργον) and then have pride only in oneself (not in another)."[342] The meaning could be construed either as having pride only *in* oneself (i.e., one's own achievements) or only *before* oneself (i.e., *not* seeking recognition from others). Quite interestingly, as with shame in failure, success is also described as a load to be carried—but this time individually. In other words, one must not boast in the achievements of other members of the group (or not *before* others).[343] Notably, the concept of honor depends upon achievements or prominence being *recognized* by others.[344] (Of course, one can confer honor upon oneself, but that honor is meaningless—albeit humorous—unless others confirm that honor.) Hence, with precision, Paul encourages the addressees to do exactly the opposite of what is expected from a group focused on honor and shame. The shame for mistakes is to be carried collectively, while reasons for pride are found—and possibly kept—within the individual. Thirdly, privileges be shared. That is, "let the one who is taught the word share with the teacher in all good things."[345] When this suggestion is implemented, the basis for envy (cf. φθόνος) disappears. As it seems, this sharing would go both ways, from the teacher to the student and from the student to the teacher.

Paul encourages his audience not to grow weary of doing what is good; in due time they will reap what they have sown.[346] While there is no reason for the Galatian assemblies—or for members within those assemblies—to perceive themselves as superior to others, their task is to bear one another's burdens (of shame) collectively, to carry the load (of success) individually, and to share privileges with one another, thus fulfilling the law of Christ. When they stop pretending that their collective group/identity is superior to that of others, they are free to work to the benefit of all. Moreover, when all good things are shared, the basis for conceit, provocation, and envy (cf. the "work of the σάρξ") disappears and their behavior toward one another may turn into gentleness, generosity, and joy (cf. the fruit of the Spirit). Clearly, the one sowing in one's own σάρξ (εἰς τὴν σάρκα ἑαυτοῦ) will also reap decay from that same σάρξ (ἐκ τῆς σαρκός).[347] Naturally, nothing good will come out of their building up the reputation of the collective group while denying any failure—or blaming the individual. Similarly, the individual will not benefit from boasting in the achievements of other individuals (as if they were one's own). God is not fooled and the addressees better not be deceived either.[348]

If they invest their resources in a collective identity (or in attempts to achieve membership of a specific collective identity), they might very well attain that.[349] On the other hand, if they focus on faithfulness, resilience, and joy, that is what they will get. Clearly, focus on appearance tends to result precisely in just that—*appearance*. In Paul's view, if they invest their resources in the construct of a particular group identity—especially if individual prominence is construed as his or her belonging to a collective identity (while still blaming any failure on the individual)—this construct will lead to the ruin of that collective group (and the individual). In other words, by

investing their resources in the σάρξ, the addressees will also reap ruin from the σάρξ (ἐκ τῆς σαρκὸς θερίσει φθοράν). The tendency to blame any failure on the individual might obscure the need for development in the collective identity/group, while boasting in the success of the group as if it was the success of the individual does not help the individual to improve. Notwithstanding, to celebrate the achievements of the individual as the achievement of the individual could become a motivating force to acknowledge and develop skills and competences. Paul encourages his addressees that they must not grow weary doing good. In due season, they will reap, if only they do not give up.[350] The one sowing in the Spirit reaps true/authentic/eternal life (ζωὴν αἰώνιον).[351]

In other words, those who do want to save themselves easily "lose" themselves, since the combination of pride in the collective group and shaming the individual member (after transgression) makes restoration and reconciliation almost impossible.

But there is another way. Instead of building a collective identity around the prominence of that identity, collective self-criticism can be embraced as a promising opportunity for development. In the terms of Ricoeur, the construct of identity does not have to consist in being "the same" but can also be construed as the process of being and becoming "oneself" or "ourselves."[352] In the process of restoration, the spirit of gentleness does not have to be lost. Instead of caring for (the reputation of) the group at the expense of the individual, the group can care about individual to the benefit of all. Only when the collective identity—and the signs of that collective identity—are given less importance, that collective group will be liberated to "walk in the Spirit" and to step in line with the rule of the Spirit. The care for the reputation of the collective identity can indeed become an obstacle to walking in the Spirit and loving one's neighbor as oneself, and thereby be contrary to the Spirit of Christ.[353] While the intent of every collective identity is to be good, to do good, and to be recognized for good, precisely the focus on reputation becomes the stumbling block on which one easily fall.

To summarize, Paul suggests a specific way to live within a collective group, namely by living in God's grace, through focusing on restoration, carrying success by oneself, and sharing all good things. Paul now lives ἐν σαρκί in a specific way, namely, in the faithfulness of the Son of God who loved him and gave himself for him. If the addressees invest their resources in attaining an exclusive collective identity, this will result in ruin. On the other hand, if they sow in the Spirit, they will also reap life from the Spirit. Hence, Paul encourages them not to lose heart (see Gal 6:1–10).

7. *An Open-Ended Closure*

As Paul does not know how the audience will react to his message, the open-ended closure of the *narratio* extends into the situation of the letter. The addressees obtain no information about how Peter, Barnabas, and others

responded to Paul's speech in Antioch, but just like Peter, the addressees can respond positively to Paul's message by obeying the truth and following the Spirit. Closing the main body of the letter, Paul suggests, "Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all, especially to the house of faithfulness."[354] The letter presents the addressees with a choice. If they choose faithfulness, gentleness, and rely on the promise made to Abraham, the challenge against Paul will be settled, and they will be free to walk in the Spirit. In turn, their fear of being excluded if they do not submit to the rite of male circumcision would be but a memory, since they would be acknowledging that identity markers are "nothing" and without purchase.

The Closing of Galatians

In the closing of the letter, Paul may seem to slander the proponents for male circumcision, suggesting that they focus merely on honor and exclusion rather than being committed to faithfulness, love, and restoration.[355] According to Paul, they want to attain a positive image within their collective identity (ἐν σαρκί) in order to avoid persecution (i.e., being excluded or marginalized) for the sake of the cross which then results in their excluding others.[356] Personally, Paul hopes that he will "never boast in something other than the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ," through which he has been "crucified to the world" and the world to him.[357] As seen from this perspective, the disgrace of the central figure (Jesus) extends to the collective identity but can be converted into disdain for the attitudes and practices emanating from a focus on honor and reputation. From this conversion, a new sense of dignity emerges. Therefore, Paul concludes that "neither circumcision nor foreskin is anything, but [it takes] renewed creation."[358] While the striving for honor is a zero-sum game—one member can gain only if another loses—Paul's idea of renewed creation opens a space for generosity. When life is shared, the gain of one can be the gain of another, and the loss of one can be the loss of all.[359] Hence, the inclusion of the Gentiles does not necessitate the exclusion of the Jews. On the contrary, Paul wishes for "peace and mercy upon those, as many as live according to this rule, *and* upon God's Israel."[360] These two groups—or two missions—are not merged into one, even if they partake in the same fellowship and share in the same blessings.[361] In this way, the letter suggests a plea for unity in diversity by insisting on the full inclusion of the other.[362]

Paul's concluding wish to be left in peace may indicate that he has been challenged by another apostle or by a specific faction among the assemblies (from Galatia or elsewhere).[363] In the letter, Paul describes his understanding of the situation, and especially the motivations behind his reactions: here his suggestions for their future behavior. The exhortation is his idea of how to continue living as guided by the Spirit and now it is up to the addressees to choose. But this concluding wish to be left in peace indicates that Paul intends to withdraw from any further obligations to defend his honor and

his in-group status: he carries the marks of the Lord Jesus in his collective/individual body.[364] Had he been ever so popular, that would not secure his being right nor guarantee that his message always aligns with the "rule of the Spirit." As even Jesus was marginalized and excluded, relative social status says little about a person's moral character or claims to truth.[365] While challenges operate on the level of appearance, Paul encourages his audience to keep to the truth.

A New Perspective on the Location of the Case

Just as most acts of zeal are probably made in good faith or, more precisely, with good intentions,[366] so did Paul's own zeal during his early years emerge from a passion for something good.[367] Additionally, even though such acts seem to have earned him a peerless reputation in his generation, they were misguided and destructive.[368] In this way, Paul's zeal during those years when he "destroyed the assembly of God" could be seen as an important backdrop to Galatians where he argues that the σάρξ can be contrary to the πνεῦμα and that the addressees are not obliged to do what the σάρξ desires.[369] While the *narratio* certainly deals with passions, the commitment it mentions should be associated with Paul's (and other's) zeal for the traditions of the fathers and for achieving a prominent position within one's group rather than with sensuality or sexual drives, as it usually is.[370] What the σάρξ desires, in this historical setting, appears to be a collective identity based on a concept of *sameness* and thus the *conformity* with regard to identity markers.

However, zeal for one's traditions and the strategy to achieve unity and cohesion by means of an idea of sameness are not specifically Jewish characteristics but can be found within almost every construct of collective identity at some point in time. Aristotle even suggested that it was the distinctions between different groups that were the foundation of Greek culture.[371] As Bernadette Brooten shows, in later periods in the emerging branch of Christianity, not only were persons in leadership roles mostly male (as a type of sameness based on gender) but older texts were also sometimes adapted to fit into that mental structure.[372] Moreover, as Gerd Theissen succinctly describes, there were several movements contemporaneous with Paul, all of which related to the law and tradition in its own way.[373] Maintaining a positive sense of collective identity during a period of pressure can be a difficult goal to reach, and the strategies adopted to this end do not always result in the intended outcome. As Theissen suggests,

> the effort to preserve cultural and religious identity by emphasizing and heightening the Law leads to the very loss of this identity and results in many groups, each of which claims that it alone represents the true Israel. With the appearance of the Baptist and the Jesus movement a counterforce, born of this inner contradiction, begins to take shape. As with other renewal movements, here too we find a heightening of the

> Law. This leads, however, not to the condemnation of others but to a sentence of destruction on all humanity which in turn creates a new solidarity, the solidarity of those dependent on grace.[374]

Calling into question the "non-gospel" of constructing a collective identity around sameness, Paul assumes that precisely the diversity and faithfulness within the movement are the key to success. From this perspective, even though the ideas of "sameness" may vary greatly, they still lead to persecution or marginalization of the deviants (the constructed other). Naturally, any construct of collective identity or collective group intends to achieve and implement harmonious relations and a prosperous life (cf. the fruit of the Spirit). The question is merely how to get there.

Reading the letter of Paul as the message of an ex-extremist may suggest important cues for understanding the strong convictions that are expressed in relation to the risks inherent in trusting people and in constructing a collective identity at the expense of health, security, and the respect for the individual. In relation to his views on inclusion and exclusion, his extraordinary personal history may be essential to understanding his estimation that the σάρξ is contrary to the Spirit.[375] Even to his contemporaries, such estimation is not necessarily the obvious or conventional one. On the other hand, what is obvious (φανερά) in Paul's view is the general hopelessness of "people" and their inability to do good (τὰ ἔργα τῆς σαρκός), an estimation probably shared by many of his contemporaries.[376] Still, his injunction that they let go of any idea of prominence—crucifying one's collective identity and only "boast[ing] in the cross"—is radical and suggests a grand decision that would require both determination and valor to implement.[377] An essential part of Paul's instruction in Galatians maintains that not even prominent people are completely reliable: they may be wrong, they might be right.[378] Especially when under some pressure, even so-called pillars can lose their grip on the situation.[379]

While the competitive message that the Galatians must adopt Jewish customs may appear as a small thing, this is no insignificant question. However innocent and harmless such a call for adaptation may appear, it has strong bearings on theology, ethics, and, of course, identity politics. Asking someone to change his or her identity markers is a potent means for submission, especially when backed-up with the threats of exclusion or marginalization. However, as Louis Martyn suggests, the message of the Judaizers may have emerged as a law-observant mission among the Gentiles from Jewish Christ-loyal teachers—not primarily from "opponents" to Paul.[380] In Martyn's view,

> In the main it is not they who are reacting to Paul's theology, but rather he who is reacting to theirs. To be sure, the Galatians heard Paul's gospel first and only later that of the Teachers. But the finely formed theology of the Teachers is best understood on the hypothesis that the order of events in Galatia is for them atypical. Elsewhere they will have

> worked in virgin fields, impelled not by a desire to correct Paul, but by a passion to share with the entire world the only gift they believed to have the power to liberate humankind from the grip of evil, the Law of God's Messiah. In the full sense of the expression, therefore, they represent a Law-observant mission to Gentiles, a mission inaugurated not many years after the death of Jesus.[381]

In Paul's view, only himself and Barnabas would go to the "nations" (τὰ ἔθνη), which is an estimation for which the historical accountability can be called into question.[382] The *narratio* can be expected to indicate the location of the case as seen from Paul's point of view, which does not necessarily imply that everyone would have described the case in the same way. As Paul presents himself as a self-appointed—or, indeed, God-appointed—apostle, later affirmed and confirmed, this was likely an odd way to acquire a leadership position within a movement and to claim to be knowledgeable in issues ranging from ethics to politics to theology. His way to prove that he is driven not *only* by zeal but *also* by understanding may come across to the addressees through careful communication.[383] An aspect of this communication that could strengthen the case is the possible continuity between the location of the case and the historical situation as described in the letter (cf. the aspect of *continua* in Quintilian). Moreover, within the *narratio*, Paul places himself *next to* Peter, James, and others—not above, not below—and he similarly places the Galatian addressees *next to* himself and to these persons counted as pillars.[384] It is important to note that the arguments of the letter can be interpreted in accordance with the location of the case as indicated by the narrative introduction (cf. *congruens* in Quintilian).[385] Even though it may be impossible to determine the historical accountability of the statement that James, Peter, and John agreed that (only) Paul and Barnabas would go to the Gentiles, this was likely Paul's perception of the case.

Turning to the aspect of *continua*, it can be noted that throughout the letter, Paul expresses the view that the collective group or the collective identity cannot be expected to offer relevant and reliable guidance.[386] This perception stands in continuity with his experience of being at the top of his generation, while also being in error at significant aspects. As he carefully points out in the opening of the letter, Paul's mission and message to the Gentiles did not emerge within the setting of instruction from other people. Furthermore, he did not adapt this message in order to please people.[387] In this way, what otherwise could come across as a weakness—namely, that he was not sent by other people—is here suggested as his greatest strength: "Paul, an apostle, not from some group (οὐκ ἀπ' ἀνθρώπων) or through someone (οὐδὲ δι' ἀνθρώπου), but through Jesus Christ and God, the father, who raised him from the dead."[388] Notwithstanding, Paul goes some length to explain that his message was confirmed by others in due time (both by the "pillars" and the multitude),[389] only to be neglected and for him to be betrayed. The introductory narrative speaks its message clearly: human leadership cannot

ultimately be trusted. Peter and James gave him and Barnabas the right hand of fellowship so that Peter and James would go to the "circumcision" and Barnabas and himself to the nations.[390] Later, in Paul's view, those "pillars" were unfaithful to both the mission and the message, and ultimately unfaithful toward the Gentiles in-Christ—such as the Galatians.

The way in which collective identity is understood and constructed has a bearing on how relations are organized within that social system, how overlapping systems are appraised, and how the proper relations to other systems are conceived. In other words, the relative importance placed upon identity markers has an impact on the construct of collective identity, and *vice versa*. Moreover, as we shall discuss further in Chapter 4, the way of constructing collective identity has a direct bearing on the resilience of the system: a strong emphasis on conformity with regard to identity markers obstructs good relations within the system, as well as the relations to other systems, and poses an obstacle to the existence and development of overlapping systems (cf. the love of the neighbor; the fruit of the Spirit). When conformity with regard to identity markers are assumed to compensate for failing bonds in terms of faithfulness and grace, the general status of social relations quickly deteriorates.[391] As Paul noted, neither circumcision nor foreskin avails anything.[392] If Peter feared being appraised as a sinner and therefore withdrew from the open-table fellowship, this choice of action would likely result in a crack in the fellowship, which would then trigger the perception that Gentiles and Jews do not belong together, which in turn could result in both distrust and disrespect. In this setting, Peter's withdrawal may convey the message that actual conduct or behavior of the "other" is irrelevant (as if being categorized as Gentile were sinful rather than actual harmful behavior) and, similarly, that Peter's possible *appearing* as if "a Gentile and a sinner" would be worse than his neglecting the true fellowship with sisters and brothers among the Gentiles. From such general orientation, the status of the relationship can easily turn from bad to worse. Hence, the relative importance placed upon identity markers is critical to the functioning of the collective group.[393]

In Paul's depiction, the proponents for male circumcision want to "make a good appearance in the σάρξ."[394] Again, Paul's estimations do not have to be historically accurate, but his description of the estimations of this group stands in accordance with a general orientation toward identity markers (especially male circumcision). Rather than focusing on actual relations, actual behavior, and so on, focusing on the implementation of the custom of male circumcision suggests that appearance in this sense is deemed to be important.[395] While the collective group seems to insist upon male circumcision, this—in Paul's view—is merely a vain attempt to gain recognition, which works *against* the rule of the Spirit. Importantly, however, the Judaizers themselves would not think that they only wanted recognition from their collective group, as Paul in his early years did not think that he set out to destroy the assembly of God.[396] They probably would want to avoid persecution—and

who would not? However, Paul claims that he personally has crucified the σάρξ together with its passions and desires, and he suggests that those who belong to Christ have done this too. This serves as a pointed way to describe an alternative approach to collective identity and the demands of the collective group.[397]

As the desire for *male circumcision* is an urge against which Paul clearly positions himself, he goes into great detail to explain why. (Such a claim could have been done in one or two clauses, and without reference upon reference to Hebrew scripture!) However, the case is not that there is anything wrong with Judaism or the Jewish group. It is precisely the message that there is *nothing* wrong with Judaism, but it is still not a good idea for Gentile males to become circumcised, which is a message that is difficult to transfer. It seems that Paul made his best effort but was still not confident that it would correctly come across right.[398] In this setting, Paul suggests that the desire for signs as evidence for unity and harmony as such is characterized by pretense, poor exegesis, and the neglect of God's faithfulness and grace.[399] The emphasis on signs results in focus an appearance (in the σάρξ) instead of reality (in the σάρξ).

As Paul repeatedly emphasizes, the signs of collective identity do not constitute a problem in and of themselves. It is the meaning attributed to them that might become a problem. For instance, when adopted as means for inclusion/exclusion (cf. curse), the signs have been given a meaning that they should not have.[400] Such desire to construct and maintain a collective identity around an idea of sameness would imply that something that was (rightfully) destroyed has been *rebuilt*, namely the wall between Jews and Gentiles, between enslaved and freed or free-born, and between male and female. However, the various constructs of collective identity that exist as systems for subordination and domination are rendered obsolete in-Christ.[401] As Paul emphasizes elsewhere, the wisdom of the cross knows to tell that those who were nothing have been chosen by God.[402] Therefore, rather than suggesting an ideal person (male, Greek/Jew/Roman, free), Paul abolishes the distinction for a collective identity within which everyone can be included and no special advantages are conferred upon those who are normally advantaged.[403] No longer being Jews or Gentiles, enslaved or free, female or male, they are now Jews *and* Gentiles, enslaved *and* free, female *and* male.[404] Assuming that neither circumcision nor foreskin avails anything, Paul's perception thus allows for dual or nested identities.[405]

Paul anticipates that a collective identity or collective group focused on *sameness* would invalidate the open-table fellowship as including women, enslaved persons, and uncircumcised men together with circumcised.[406] This is a somewhat justified concern. If any of these—or other—constructs of collective identity are systematically adopted as a means for oppression or for gaining prominence, that would pose an obstacle to the addressees being "led by the Spirit" to follow the law in one word: *You shall love your neighbor as yourself*.[407]

To summarize, Galatians can be interpreted as a rhetorically coherent discourse with verses 1:11–21 assuming the function of a *narratio* (in a Quintilian sense). While possibly also incorporating the function of a *partitio*, the location of the case can be appreciated as indicating the structure of the forthcoming argumentation. In such ways, the function of the *narratio* is not merely to give a historical account—besides, everything told retrospectively is not a *narratio*—but to describe the heart of persuasion while indicating the location of the case. When the *narratio* is not expected to prove anything but instead to suggest the location—and perhaps the structure—of the forthcoming argument, the similarities between the *narratio* and the scholarly discourse's *abstract* might come across more clearly. A *narratio* that incorporates the function of a *partitio* can be described as a *table of contents for the ears*. Paul's letters were clearly intended to be delivered orally, and therefore, the narrative introduction suggests an important means to understanding the location of the case in order to avoid dislocating and obscuring the arguments in interpretation. The closing of the letter to the assemblies in Galatia corresponds to the location of the case as suggested by the opening narrative, and the arguments can be interpreted in relation to the case as indicated by the *narratio*.

Beyond Nationalism, Development Optimism, Idealism, Individualism

Using the *narratio* as the guide to the letter allows for a more coherent, cohesive interpretation of Galatians. Recognizing the location of the case makes it harder to dislocate the arguments during the process of interpretation. This is important since, over time, the arguments seem to have been dislocated in at least two ways, which we will cover in the following.

First, exegetes working within a nationalist paradigm lost sight of—or obscured—the possibility of diversity within the same social system—not to mention the interpretive potential of dual or nested identity. Second, interpretations springing from an individualistic paradigm made the problems of the collective group, and the problems within the constructs of collective identity, invisible.

Within the nationalistic interpretive paradigm, the group of Gentile Christ-believers was assumed to replace not only Jewish Christ-believers but also Judaism itself, even though such anti-Semitic readings had no foundation in the text itself. Unfortunately, such unjustifiable, indefensible interpretations continue to be reproduced to this day. In this vein, scholars sometimes even assume that Paul wanted to effect the liberation from "yoke of Torah," which is simply inaccurate.[408] Paul adopts the phrase ζυγός δουλεία "yoke of slavery" to describe the type of submission that presents itself when/if the Galatians yield to the demands of the *Judaizers*, but he does not describe the Torah itself as a yoke.[409] However, when the interpretation and attitudes toward the law are discussed, Paul's criticism targets what he perceives as incorrect applications of the law. Just as the "pillars" of Jerusalem are not

placed above Paul and Barnabas (cf. the *narratio*), Paul does not place himself above the Galatians. In the same vein, none of them are *under* the law.[410] As indicated by the *narratio*, the situation in Antioch provided an occasion for renewed instruction, which extends to the situation of the letter to the assemblies of God in Galatia.

Importantly, the practices of interpretation and reinterpretation of the law (and its applications) are by no means alien to Jewish tradition. As Philip Wexler comments,

> Tradition is creative and it is the "midrash," the interpretation, which effects intergenerational transmission and communication of the archetypal revelation at Mt. Sinai. The "pure being" of Revelation is not possible without meaning, which is the interpretation or resymbolization of tradition.[411]

Similarly, Gershom Scholem suggests,

> Revelation needs commentary in order to be rightly understood and applied […] Not system but *commentary* is the legitimate form through which truth is approached […] Commentary became the characteristic expression of Jewish thinking about truth, which is another way of describing the rabbinic genius.[412]

In other words, there is no reason to assume that Paul's reinterpreting and expanding on Jewish history and Scripture would imply a break with Judaism, but on the contrary. In his letters, he frequently refers to Hebrew scripture and he attests to his active commitment to his Jewish identity.[413] While Paul communicates strong convictions regarding *how* the addressees' collective identity is to be constructed—that is, as including Galatians in-Christ as heirs and legitimate children—he does not express any supersessionist views in Galatians (nor in the other extant letters, as far as I am aware). The description of the curse within the law as obsolete does not relate to the inclusion of the Jews but to the inclusion of the Gentiles—and the reintegration of Jesus.

Employing the *narratio* as a guide to the letter allows identifying a second dislocation in the reception history of Galatians, namely the hypothesis that Paul refutes so-called *libertine* tendencies in Galatia.[414] According to Daniel Boyarin, "[t]he desires [*sic*] of the flesh are indeed what they seem to be, namely, sexual desire, but the works of the flesh are the social outcome of such desire."[415] Nevertheless, when the passage about the so-called "desire of the flesh" is interpreted in the light of the *narratio*, the hypothesis of libertine tendencies disintegrates. There are no indications of individual, sensual passions in the *narratio* (unless such passions are taken as including desires for honor and prominence)—nor, for that matter, any indications of cosmological powers at work (unless fear and pretense can be counted as such powers). Rather, the *narratio* speaks of the fear of being excluded or

marginalized for not adapting to the demands of the *collective group*.[416] As the phrase "desire(s) of the flesh" has taken on a particular meaning in late modern Western culture, it has come to be used almost exclusively in relation to sexual desire.[417]

In his commentary on 1 Corinthians, published in the year 2000, Anthony Thiselton notes, "*Flesh, fleshly*, cannot avoid nuances of sensuality in the late twentieth century."[418] I regret to say that nothing has changed in the two decades since. However, the desire of the σάρξ, as construed in Galatians, relates to the construct of collective identity in general—and to the non-gospel call for male circumcision in particular—as a call for conformity. The collective group demands adaptation and assimilation, but such a desire is motivated by less informed goals. In Paul's view, the connected claims are illegitimate: the addressees are already included as Galatians in-Christ without adapting their identity markers. There is no indication within the *narratio* that the desire of the σάρξ would relate to sexual desire, or sexual misbehavior.

Moreover, a problem with many studies in the field of dogmatic and exegetical theology is that σάρξ is perceived as a complicated and polysemous term within Paul's writings. The basic orientation suggested by Stendahl and others provides valuable insights into the interpretation of several key terms in Paul. The collectively oriented aspects in the term πίστις do not fully translate into the English term *faith*, and they can be more fully appreciated as *faithfulness, loyalty*.[419] Therefore, *faith* without *faithfulness* would not do justice to the "truth of the Gospel" as depicted in Galatians.[420] Similarly, the *inclusion* without *justice* (cf. δικαιοσύνη) would erase the scandal of the cross—that very scandal that Paul made such an effort to preserve for the Galatians (and other Gentiles).[421]

Moreover, if σάρξ is translated into *flesh*, the interpreter can easily remain oblivious to the discussions about the movements of the social body within the rhetoric of the letter, and the powerful suggestions regarding the construct of collective identity could thus be distorted. In Galatians, the enforcement of specific signs for collective identity, such as male circumcision, and the celebration of certain days are described as important constituents of the message of the so-called Judaizers. In this case, as Paul understands the situation, the Galatians are confronted with demands for adaptations and assimilation rather than being accepted as included into justice and thus made righteous. Just as Paul encouraged Peter to participate in the open-table fellowship without fear of being appraised as a "sinner among the Gentiles," the Galatians should not need to fear being excluded.[422] According to Paul, the situation in Antioch instilled fear in Peter with the result that he marginalized himself. In Galatia, the same type of fear may result in the Galatians "biting and devouring" one another to the point of annihilation.[423] This leads us to the second type of displacement, namely the individualistic orientation.

While the "nothingness" of the identity markers is a central issue of the letter, the application of an individualistic paradigm entails that Paul's forceful argumentation against assimilation and enslavement simply disappears.

However, it is not the individuals' passions that have led the Galatians to bite and devour one another—but a misguided construct of collective identity or the call for the implementation of such a construct. In the same vein, the individual's passion was not the force that made Peter voluntarily exclude himself from the open-table fellowship. Instead, it was his fear of the social consequences that would follow if he did not comply and adapt. To summarize, the two incorrect presuppositions—or dislocations—that distort the message of the letter include the assumption that the level of diversity must be low (cf. nationalism) and the assumption that the anthropological terms Paul uses primarily relate to the individual (cf. individualism). In this setting, the paradigms of nationalism and individualism, when combined, reduce the whole case to rubble: Paul's case for the open-table fellowship becomes inconceivable as either irrelevant or impossible.

Notwithstanding, when the term σάρξ is investigated as a term oriented toward the collective group and the collective identity, a more monosemous approach to the term emerges as a vital option. As Stendahl suggested, Paul was concerned with the peaceful coexistence of Jews and Gentiles (while not being concerned in the slightest about what Stendahl somewhat polemically called the "introspective conscience of the West").[424] Adopting the hypothetical semantic structure of σάρξ as comprising *collective group* and *collective identity* has proven to be a viable interpretive option throughout the letter. What, then, does it take for a reassessment of the term to win approval in the scholarly community? That it stands in continuity with what we think we know about that historical period (cf. external evidence)? That it makes sense within the rhetorical composition in which it occurs (cf. internal evidence)? These two requirements have already been met. We have reason to believe that Paul lived in a time in which the construct of collective identity was perceived as essential to human life and flourishing, but that aspect of life was also contested as the constituents of a collective identity were not self-evident.[425] Moreover, the internal logic of the letter seems to benefit from a collectively oriented interpretation of σάρξ. Rather than changing topic without indication by means of transitional phrases—and possibly shifting to address a specific subgroup within the audience—the composition of the letter follows a logic that was already indicated at the beginning of the letter (cf. the *narratio*). Now we have further developed the perspectives suggested by Stendahl. In the previous chapter, we turned to the passage in which the phrase ἐπιθυμία σαρκός ("the desire of the σάρξ") occurs—and, in particular, to the relations between this passage and those that frame it.

Conclusion: The Σάρξ as Collective Identity/Group

In conclusion, the desire of the σάρξ as depicted in the *narratio* does not appear as "sensual appetites" but as the desire in the collective group for a collective identity constructed by means of *conformity*—especially with regard to appearance. The reading of Galatians 5:13–26 as relating to the passions

of the individual(s) presupposes that each argument can be treated as a separate unit without internal logic. On the other hand, if the letter is read with the guidance provided by the *narratio* as the key to the location of the case, such an assumption becomes hard to defend. As was investigated in more depth in an earlier chapter, the subparagraph about the "desire of the σάρξ" seems to begin in verse 5:11, rather than in verse 5:13, which may make the issue of the passage come across in another way.

As Quintilian warned, unless the audience knows in advance how the arguments are to be applied, the arguments can easily be dislocated or rendered useless.[426] However, when the passage of Galatians 1:11–2:21 is appreciated as the *narratio* (in the Quintilian's sense), two significant observations can be made. First, the *narratio* provides no ground for the interpretation of σάρξ as a cosmological power or as referring to sexually oriented passion. The forces described within the *narratio* are "certain persons from James" (τινας ἀπὸ Ἰακώβου)—that is, social pressure—and Peter's fear for being assessed as a "sinner among the Gentiles" by his peers. There is nothing relating even remotely to sexuality or desire in this sense. Second, there is no ground for any replacement-theology or supersessionist view applied to Judaism. Within the *narratio*, there is no discussion of whether Peter and the other prominent persons within the Christ-assembly in Jerusalem (the "pillars") would be excluded. They continue to be in-Christ, but the message involving the call for adaptation and submission must be cast out (cf. 1:8–9; 4:21–31). Hence, a consistent theme of the letter is that markers of collective identity cannot replace relational bonds of faithfulness (πίστις) and justice (δικαιοσύνη). As Paul describes, neither circumcision nor foreskin avails anything—but what it takes is renewed creation (i.e., serving one another through love).

In Paul's view, there is no reason for the addressees to trust that their own adapting to Jewish identity markers would provide their full and equal inclusion as heirs *together* with Isaac. Both Ishmael and Isaac were circumcised, though one continued in enslavement while the other gained sonship and inheritance. In other words, when a sign is transferred from one setting to another, its meaning is likely to change too. The Judaizers may intend to offer full inclusion to the males who become circumcised (or "circumcise themselves"), but human words cannot always be trusted (cf. 2:11–21). Paul expresses his concern that if the Galatians adopt the sign of male circumcision, that sign would eventually turn out to be merely a sign of submission. On the other hand, in his view, their renewed reality, as brought about by Christ's faithfulness and God's grace, has already been inaugurated with the result of God supplying the Spirit and working miracles among them (cf. 3:4–5). Mustering support from Scripture, Paul asserts that the Galatians in-Christ are already included into justice/righteous and are co-heirs *together with* Isaac. Paul comments that not even a human contract can be changed once ratified. Therefore, their adapting their identity markers would add nothing. In fact, it would only subtract something, for a focus on inclusion/exclusion would make their relational status and mutual affection fade away.

Paul describes Peter's failure to be straight about the truth of the Gospel precisely as his failure to continue accepting the inclusion of people from other nations and other strata of society into fellowship through an open table. Moreover, Paul reiterates, the markers of identity must not be adopted and adapted to the end of preserving (or creating) a collective identity, since this would too readily entail persecution against the constructed other. In a highly provocative manner, Paul states that the σάρξ is against the πνεῦμα and the πνεῦμα against the σάρξ. Even if the intentions of the construct of a collective identity are thoroughly good, nothing good will come out it (cf. the crucifixion of Jesus and Paul's former zeal). Unfortunately, the one who sows in the σάρξ will reap destruction from the σάρξ. When the passage comprising verses 5:11–24 is interpreted as firmly incorporated into the rhetorical structure of the letter, even this passage can be understood as proceeding the argument against markers of identity (especially male circumcision) being adopted as prerequisites for inclusion into the collective identity and the collective group.

The story in the *narratio* includes an event in Antioch that is described as an occasion for disappointment, and one which led Paul to confront Peter. However, there is no reason to connect σάρξ or the ἐπιθυμία σαρκός ("the desire of the σάρξ") to Judaism in particular. On the contrary, the point in adopting the term σάρξ in this setting is likely to be able to discuss the issue on a more general level—in terms of principle—as the inherent risks in constructing a collective identity do not restrict themselves to any particular group. In Paul's view, as expressed in Galatians 3:14, the Gentiles or nations receive the promised πνεῦμα by the faithfulness of God. This faithfulness can be deciphered as both God's faithfulness to the Galatians and the Galatians' response in the faithfulness from God—that is, as a mutual relationship. In this vein, Peter's neglect to act upon the "truth of the Gospel" could be construed as a lack of faithfulness toward those who belonged to other nations or strata of society and the failure to act upon the faithfulness of God that he has himself received. In his letter, Paul's descriptions of God's faithfulness can be understood in relation to the faithfulness of Jesus and the faithfulness by which the assemblies of God are expected to respond to each other (cf. Paul's and Barnabas's assignment to remember the poor).

Paul wages war against the desire for conformity, which in this case implies that the Galatians in-Christ are compelled to adopt Jewish markers of identity. However, the collective group can desire other things (such as faithfulness, fellowship, and justice). Such a renewal of their construct of collective identity is closely related to the exhortation (see 5:25–6:10). Any rebuilding of the distinctions between different groups as a means for discrimination would be indicative of conceit, and merely pretense and provocation. While shame is to be carried collectively, success can be carried individually or perhaps even within the individual. Furthermore, if privileges are shared, the basis for envy evaporates as do the obstacles for developing the fruit of the Spirit. When Christ's faithfulness has created space for their faithfulness

toward God and one another, the addressees can rely upon themselves being included into justice/made righteous and their being called to love one another—regardless of origin, gender, or social status. Therefore, Paul justifiably asks, having begun with the πνεῦμα, are they now to be fulfilled or perfected by just another collective identity?

Clearly, collective identities can be structured in ways that are detrimental to health and functioning. But such structures can be transformed, hence the occasion for Paul's communication with the Galatian assemblies. Since the individual can choose his or her approach to collective identities and collective groups, the structures of such social bodies are malleable, which in turn may render Paul's address to the Galatian assemblies a worthwhile errand. In Galatians, Paul suggests that "those who are Christ's have crucified the σάρξ together with its passions/sufferings/experiences and desires" (5:24). In Romans, Paul similarly suggests that the addressees have no obligations to walk according to the σάρξ (8:12). If the interpretation of σάρξ suggested here is implemented, their approach to their collective identity (or identities) is an aspect of their lives within their range of actorship. The Spirit of God suggests inclusion and confidence (cf. Rom 8:14).

In the following chapter, we will analyze Paul's attempts to increase the level of differentiation (i.e., the extent of individual variation) in the social systems he encountered and of which he was a part. Investigating Galatians through the lens of social systems theory is a novel approach to the interpretation of this letter, and this endeavor will simultaneously address the issue of social resilience and systems in transition.

Notes

1 See Galatians 1:11–2:21; 1:1.
2 Stendahl (1976, 78–96, 1–77); see also Dunn (2013, 157–82).
3 Watson (2007, 363). As discussed previously, Paul did not suggest a negative assessment of the law but made a negative assessment of the *curse* of the law; see Gal 3:9–14, in context. Therefore, Paul suggests, the Galatian addressees can live in fruitful dialogue with the law, as Paul himself does, rather than being *under* the law; 3:19–4:6.
4 See Gal 4:17; cf. 5:15.
5 See Gal 4:17, in context.
6 See Gal 3:1–4; cf. "renewed creation"; 6:15, in context.
7 For a study on the semantic orientation in σάρξ toward collective identities, see Joelsson (2018, 132–54).
8 For instance, what is the meaning of Gal 5:16–17: "But, I say, walk in the Spirit and do never accomplish what the σάρξ desires, for the σάρξ desires against the Spirit and the Spirit against the σάρξ—for these are contrary to each other—so that you do not the things that you want"? Translations mine, unless otherwise indicated. Does Paul mean to suggest that the "flesh" desires something as related to inner, individual drives, or does he refer to a cosmological power exercising influence over the human (individual)? See, e.g., Martyn (1997); de Boer (2011, 335–42); Matera (1996, 172); see also Baur (1864, 161); Tholuck (1855); Dunn (1998/2006, 62–70); cf. Spicq (1994, 231–51); Schweizer (1971, 98–155); Louw and Nida (1988/1989, 2, 220).

9 Cicero described the *narratio* as an "exposition of events that have occurred or are supposed to have occurred," (Tolmie 2005, 45); Cicero, *De Inventione Rhetorica* 1.27.
10 Quintilian, *Institutio Oratoria*, 2.1.10 and 4.2.78, 5.10.109; see O'Banion (1987, 325–51, esp. 325, 338). The views of Quintilian are not extraordinary nor exceptional, but simply well-expressed. In this study, it is not assumed there is any connection between Quintilian and Paul—other than that they both lived in orally oriented cultures during approximatively the same historical period and that they both devoted much of their time and work to questions relating to communication.
11 Quintilian, *Institutio Oratoria*, 2.1.10 and 4.2.78; see also O'Banion (1987, 325).
12 See Gal 1:11–2:21, esp. 2:14.
13 Quintilian, *Institutio Oratoria*, 2.1.10 and 4.2.78; see also O'Banion (1987, 325).
14 Kennedy (1969, 66, emphasis mine).
15 Classen (2016, 13–40, here 16).
16 See Quintilian, *Institutio Oratoria*, 4.2.79. See also O'Banion's (1987, 325–51, esp. 328, 339) description of the *narratio* in Quintilian. As Robert Jewett (2007, 29) describes, the function and location of a *narratio*, it can "be placed between the introduction and the proof, providing the background of the issue under discussion."
17 As Bruce Lincoln (1999, 207) suggests, "myth is ideology in narrative form." As Caroline Johnson Hodge describes, "myths are not containers of information (about divine-human relationship, about the origins of people or place, for example), but tools used to persuade (…) Myths are particularly effective as purveyors of ideology because they call upon authoritative past events or relationships which authorize present-day arrangements (or changes in those arrangements)"; Hodge (2007, 5). "*Narratio* was one's case proffered in the form of a story"; O'Banion (1987, 328).
18 Quintilian, *Institutio Oratoria*, 4.2.79; O'Banion (1987, 325–51, esp. 328, 339). As O'Banion (1987, 328) describes, "*[n]arratio* was the 'continuous' or narrative version of the proposition (to be defended in the proof)."
19 Quintilian, *Institutio Oratoria*, 4.2.78; see also O'Banion (1987, 325–51, esp. 349).
20 Quintilian, *Institutio Oratoria*, 4.5.1; As Philip Kern (2004, 107) notes, "In his much longer discussion, [Quintilian] speaks of *partitio* as a subset of the *propositio*"; see also Jewett (2007, 29).
21 Quintilian, *Institutio Oratoria*, 2.13.1; see also O'Banion (1987, 331–2, 338–9). Conversely, Kern notes, Betz and Kennedy tend to employ the "rhetoric of the handbooks," without noting that the instructions of the handbooks are intended to support the preparation and delivery of a speech, rather than supplying tools for the analyses of given speeches, and that every oratory be adapted to the occasion; see Kern (2004, 14, 132, 258–9). As Dieter Mitternacht (2007 53–98, esp. 55, note 2) puts it, "[r]hetorical theory was, of course, devised for production, and with the express aim that an orator should not behave like a little child that keeps to the clothes that mother gave. Instead, he or she should diversify in such a way that 'these things seem to be born and sprung from Nature herself' (Quint 5.14.31-2). Such advice illustrates that there is no clear-cut path from devise to analysis."
22 O'Banion (1987, 327). As Francois Tolmie (2007, 1–28, esp. 1) notes, "[t]he rigid application of 'the' ancient rhetorical system is on the decline."
23 See Mitternacht (2007, 53–98) for a study which focuses on the aural aspects in the hypothetical reception of the structure of Galatians; see also Byrskog (2002). See Ong (2002) on estimations of literacy and illiteracy in Roman antiquity.
24 Stendahl (1976, 78–96, 1–77). See also Dunn (2005, rev. ed. 2008); Christiansen (1995); Yinger (2011); Tilling (ed.) (2014), and others.

25 Cf. Stendahl (1976, esp. 78–96, 1–77); Sanders (1977); see also Dunn (1983), reprinted in Dunn (1990, 183–214); Eisenbaum (2009); Moxnes (2009); Kartzow (2012), and so on. As Sandra Hack Polaski notes, Paul embraces a "new status, 'in Christ,' to which Jews come as Jews and Gentiles come as Gentiles" (Polaski (2005, 15).
26 Lopez (2007, 115–62, esp. 151).
27 As Beverly Roberts Gaventa (2007) notes, Paul presents himself as gender-fluid. See also Emmett (2021, 15–37); Marchal (2020); Punt (2016, 1–9) [note: the article treats 2 Cor 10–13]; Moxnes (2015, 327–41); Smit (2012, 1–17); Conway (2008); Ivarsson (2007, 163–84); Clines (2003, 181–92); Moore (2003, 1–22).
28 Eastman (2006, 309–36).
29 Kartzow (2012, 15).
30 Solevåg (2018); Lee (2015); Bailey, Liew, and Segovia (eds.) (2009).
31 In this context, Paul explicitly states that the purpose of God's election of the "nobody" is that no one (μὴ … πᾶσα σὰρξ) should boast before God; 1 Cor 1:27–29, in context. See 1 Cor 1:26–31; 7:18–23; Gal 3:24–29.
32 See, e.g., Gal 3:1, 13; 5:11, 24; 6:12.
33 See Kartzow (2011, 2012); Moxnes and Kartzow (2010); Ehrensperger (2009); Punt (2007), and others. For studies that develop the understanding of Paul within Judaism, see Fredriksen (2017), Theissen (2016); Nanos and Zetterholm (2015); Bieringer and Pollefeyt (2012), and others. See also Runesson and Gurtner (2020). Suggesting a brief list of scholars "Beyond the New Perspective on Paul," or within the "Radical New Perspective on Paul," Brian Tucker (2011, 8) mentions William S. Campbell, Kathy Ehrensperger, Peter Tomson, Mark Nanos, Caroline Johnson Hodge, David Rudolph, Pamela Eisenbaum, John Gager, Stanley Stowers, Lloyd Gaston, Krister Stendahl, Marcus Barth, Markus Bockmuehl, Anders Runesson, and Magnus Zetterholm, while noting that these scholars "follow the same broad mode of thought with regard to Paul, their positions on other matters, such as soteriological categories, differ."
34 Kartzow (2012, 17).
35 For a discussion of the "works of the law" as that which made the Jewish people distinct from other groups, see Dunn (1992).
36 See Gal 2:18–19. "For only if I rebuild these things again which I have torn down, then I prove myself a transgressor"; 2:18.
37 See Gal 3:1; 5:11, 24; 6:12–15, and so on. See also 1 Cor 15; Phil 2:1–11.
38 Matsuda (1991, 1183–92, esp. 1189); see also Matsuda (1996); Kartzow (2012, 18).
39 Kartzow (2012, 18).
40 Cf. Stendahl (1976, esp. 78–96, 1–77); Ehrensperger (2004); Campbell (2008); Kartzow (2012).
41 Lee (2015, 1–2).
42 Lee (2015, 2).
43 Lee (2015, 2). Clearly, this type of construal of salvation is prevalent not only in Korea. See, for instance, Lincoln (1981, 3).
44 Lee (2015, 2).
45 Lee (2015, 2).
46 Betz (1979, 114).
47 See Holmstrand (1997, 70–71, 163, 196–202). Verse 2:17 begins by the contrastive particle δέ, which signals its connection to the previous clause. The following verse begins by γάρ to indicate that it suggests an explanation of the previous discourse. Holmstrand (1997, 163) suggests, the clause about being "found to be sinners" may refer back to the problem of Peter and other Jews at Antioch that if they ate they would appear as if sinners and Gentiles.
48 See Gal 2:17, translation: *Revised Standard Version*.

49 See Gal 2:11–21; "found to be a sinner."
50 Stendahl (1976, 5).
51 According to Betz (1979, 246), "Paul's intention is clear; he wants to create a dualistic polarity between 'Judaism' and 'Christianity.'"
52 Barclay (1988, 96–105, esp. 96).
53 Barclay (1988, 98). Somewhat anachronistically, Barclay (1988, 96) suggests that "[a]ny sect in the process of breaking away from the parent religion will endeavour to justify its existence as the sole legitimate heir of the religious tradition while also introducing a host of reinterpretations which define its difference from the rest of the religious community.". However, Paul's communicative goal in Galatians is to affirm the Galatians' role as co-heirs (rather than as sole heirs), as was elaborated further in the previous chapters.
54 Betz (1979, 114).
55 Stendahl (1976, 26, emphasis original).
56 Stendahl (1976, 24).
57 Stendahl (1976, 24).
58 To quote Schneiders (1991, 171), "[t]he goal of criticism, however, is not only to sift the text for error, deceit, and distortion (i.e., to protect the reader from the text) but also to protect the text from a premature appropriation by the reader."
59 Betz's classification of Galatians as a judicial or forensic speech or "apologetic letter" has been heavily criticized by other scholars. According to Walter Russell (1997, 44–53, esp. 52), Betz lets "the rhetorical tail wag the exegetical dog." See also Kennedy (1984, 144–7); Tolmie (2005, 45–47). Deliberative rhetoric aims at action and is thus focused on the future.
60 See Gal 5:25. As Russell (1997, 129) notes, the term adopted in this verse (στοιχέω) does not merely translate into walk or implement (cf. περιπατέω) but στοιχέω has the added sense of "to be in agreement with" or "to be in step with." Notably, the term recurs in the closing of the letter: "Peace and mercy upon as many as live (στοιχήσουσιν) according to this rule (τῷ κανόνι τούτῳ) and upon the Israel of God"; Gal 6:16; see also 1:8–9; 5:1–6:10.
61 Barclay (1988, 106–45; see also 223–8).
62 Barclay (1988, 125).
63 Thomas (2020, 152). Cf. Barclay choice of the title "Obeying the truth" for his monograph, even if the concept is not given much attention in the book itself; see Barclay (1988). Notably, the term πείθεσθαι could be translated into being *persuaded*, *convinced*, *won over*, *conciliated*, *satisfied*, rather than merely referring to blind *obedience*.
64 See Gal 5:1, 6, 14; 6:15, in contexts.
65 See Gal 3:2–5. See also Gal 1:11–12; 4:21–31; 5:14, 22–23, and so on.
66 See Gal 3:1–6; 5:11–26.
67 See Gal 3:23–25; 4:4–7, 21; 5:1–6, 13–14, and so on.
68 Notably, the law (νόμος) is a much broader phenomenon that merely law and regulations, that is, including, custom, way of life, sacred scripture, and tradition. On the other hand, the "works of the law" are most likely correctly interpreted as the identity markers that "distinguish Jew from Gentile"; Dunn (1998/2006, 363).
69 See Gal 3:8, in context.
70 Notably, Paul warns against placing themselves under the law (ὑπὸ νόμον) as if that would be the fulfillment of the law; see Gal 5:18. As Barclay notes, Paul's comment concluding the list of the Spirit's fruit could be rendered in [gender-inclusive] masculine, that is, "against such [people] there is no law"; Gal 5:23; see Barclay (1988, 122).
71 Thomas (2020, 211; see also 173–4).
72 Thomas (2020, 124).

73 Thomas (2020, 124). Thomas later suggests that "[e]ssential to Paul's purpose was the need to *explain* the nature of justification through faith, which was antithetical to the 'gospel' of circumcision and the Law, which rendered Christ's death superfluous." Moreover, Thomas assumes that "[s]ince the Galatians already possessed the Spirit, they had definite proof they were in a right standing with God based on *faith in the gospel* of the crucified Jesus that Paul had preached to them" (Thomas (2020, 211, emphases mine). It is surprising to hear that anyone would be able to "prove" their "possession of the Spirit."
74 Stendahl (1976, 5).
75 According to Russell (1997, 4), "Paul's challenge is a challenge to live according to the objective standards that Christ brought (6:2) and not revert to the preparatory, now-inferior standards of the Mosaic Law and flesh era." For an introduction to the renewed perspective on Paul, see Stendahl (1976); Dunn (2005, rev. ed. 2008); Eisenbaum (2009); Nanos and Zetterholm (2015); Fredriksen (2017), and others.
76 Russell (1997, 2, 184–5, emphasis original).
77 See Matsuda's (1991, 1189) description of intersectional analyses in terms of asking the other question: "When I see something that looks racist, I ask 'Where is patriarchy in this?' When I see something that looks sexist, I ask, 'Where is the heterosexism in this?' When I see something that looks homophobic, I ask, 'Where are the class interests in this?'" See Kartzow (2012, 18). Cf. Rom 2:9–11; Gal 3:24–29. See also Bowen (1976/2004, 337–87). Cf. Russell (1997, 55, 21); Russell (1993, 422).
78 See Kim (2011, 45); cf. Stendahl's emphasis on *justice*, rather than *conscience* and *introspection*; Stendahl (1976).
79 In Roman antiquity, enslaved persons and most under-aged lacked legal rights; see Lendon (1997). If punishment was judicially sanctioned, the most severe punishments were inflicted on enslaved persons; Samuelsson (2013, 16–17); see also Peters (1995, 3–43, esp. 16). As Thomas (2020, 161) correctly notes, in classical Greek, the term δικαιοσύνη could be used to mean "'to do or treat one right or justly', which, in some circumstances, also meant 'to condemn, punish, or pass sentence upon'"; see also Hill (1976/2000, 101).
80 Russell (1993, 416–39, esp. 439).
81 Russell (1993, 439). Similarly, Holmstrand keeps verses 5:12 and 5:13 together—a connection indicated by the presence of the conjunctive particle γάρ ("for")—rather than assuming as other scholars have done—seemingly at random—it to be the location of a major demarcation; see Holmstrand (1997, 181–94, 200).
82 Russell (1993, 418, 421).
83 Originally: "A HISTORICAL ARGUMENT PROVING THE SUPERIORITY OF PAUL'S GOSPEL VIA NARRATIVE OR NARRATIO"; (Russell (1993, 421).
84 See Gal 2:7–10; cf. 6:16.
85 Dunn (review) (2001, 280–2); Russell (1997, 109–10). As Russell (1993, 439) suggests, "[t]his continuity [between chapters 3–4 and chapters 5–6] should help remove the chasm between chapters 4 and 5 that has hindered most expositions of the epistle"; see also Barclay (1988, 22–23).
86 Russell (1997, 151).
87 Russell (1993, 439). In Paul's view, however, the πνεῦμα may not be a *community identity* but rather a location (cf. *in* the Spirit) or a mode of living (cf. *according to* the Spirit), while also being a distinct existence apart from humans; see Gal 5:25; see also Rom 8:1–30, esp. 8:14–17, in context.
88 Thomas (2020, 92); cf. Russell (1997, 8–11). As Thomas (2020, 92) soberly notes, "Paul finds σάρξ a fitting word to use in expressing his theology because it already has a certain range of meaning—which the lexicons are suited to reveal to us—not because the word σάρξ comes pre-loaded with that theology."

89 First, "Seven Old Testament Meanings" that are complemented by three more meanings also belonging to the so-called Old Testament Background to the theme of "flesh" (Thomas 2020, 25–48, 62–66). As Thomas proceeds to Paul, two more meanings are identified which are somewhat similar to some among the previous ones, then one more is added (Thomas 2020, 68–86, 87–101). If intending to offer a definition of σάρξ, this study does not reach its goal.
90 Jewett (1971, 101).
91 Jewett (1971, 101); cf. Gal 5:17.
92 For instance, Jewett suggests, anti-nomistic, anti-libertinistic, anti-gnostic, and anti-θεῖος ἀνήρ polemic settings; Jewett (1971, 453–6).
93 Jewett (2007, 436). See also Dunn (1988, 363); Dunn (1998/2006, 62–70).
94 For a discussion on honor as a central Greco-Roman value, see, e.g., Conway (2008); Hodge (2007); Moxnes (2005); Malina (1981/2001).
95 See Gal 3:4, in context.
96 Moreover, Jewett (1971, 100–1) suggests, "[t]he opposition between flesh and spirit is thus *not* rooted in Hellenistic dualism inherent in the terms themselves but rather in the historical conflict between those depending upon their circumcision in the flesh and those depending upon Christ. Anthropologically this implies that man's dilemma is not the conflict between his own fleshly desires and the spirit […] Those who boast in their flesh are for Paul not primarily the weaklings or the libertinists but the religious Jews"; cf. Rom 7:5.
97 Thiselton (2000, 289); see also Mannoni (1971/2015, 49–51, 152–4). Sigmund Freud, on the other hand, as an Austrian Jew, had likely been exposed to certain segments of Pauline reception history. As Klaus Berger (1991/2003, 7) comments, "[t]he constant concern of historical psychology is precisely to dissolve these arbitrary dichotomies that so often became formulated only during the Middle Ages but that since then have dominated our thought at every turn." However, the Middle Ages were as any period full of variety and complexities. The reader may note, for example, the thirteen-century saint and theologian Thomas Aquinas commented that "[t]he sins of the spirit are far graver than the sins of the flesh"; Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae* I-II, 73: 5; quoted in Fox (1992/2020, 423).
98 As indicated by the title, Bas van Os (2008, 51–64, esp. 59–60) focuses on the recipients of the letter, while arguing in favor of a mixed audience comprising both Jews and Gentiles.
99 See Holmstrand (1997, 153–65, esp. 163; 196–202; cf. 70–71).
100 van Os (2008, 51–64, esp. 59) suggests that the *narratio* comprises "Gal 1:11–2:14, or part of it."
101 Tolmie (2005, 234).
102 Against Tolmie, who suggests that Galatians 1:11–24 is "[r]ecounting events from his life in order to *prove* the divine origin of his gospel"; Tolmie (2005, 234, emphasis mine).
103 See Quintilian, *Institutio Oratoria* 2.1.10 and 4.2.78; O'Banion (1987, 325–51, esp. 325).
104 Tolmie (2005, 45).
105 Tolmie (2005, 45); Cicero, *De Inventione Rhetorica* 1.27. See also Donfried (2002, 163–94).
106 Tolmie (2005, 234).
107 Jewett (2007, 29).
108 Jewett (2007, 118, emphasis original).
109 Cf. Quintilian, *Institutio Oratoria* 2.1.10 and 4.2.78; O'Banion (1987, 325–51, esp. 325). Moreover, instead of suggesting a demarcation between verse 1:15 and 1:16 as if belonging to two discrete units, it seems fair to say that the *propositio* (or *partitio*) may be incorporated within the *narratio* (which rather comprises verses 1:8–17).

110 Jewett (2007, 30).
111 Hughes (2016, 86–95, esp. 89–90).
112 Eriksson (1998, 253–5). The case is even stronger if verses 15:1–2 are included.
113 For a discussion of the exact location of the *narratio*, see Kern's overview, in Kern (2004, 90–92). Some scholars also suggest a specific portion of the text to be *propositio*; see Betz (1979, 16–24); see also Longenecker (1990, 20–80).
114 Smit (1989, 1–26); Hester (1984, 223–33); cf. Hester (1991, 281–307). Russell (1993, 436) suggests that verses 1:11–2:21 are a "historical argument proving the superiority of Paul's gospel via Narrative or *Narratio*." Notwithstanding, this suggestion is undermined by the circumstance that Paul does not prove anything in his *narratio* (which is not the purpose of a *narratio* anyway; cf. O'Banion, 1987, 325–51). For instance, going abroad does not prove that one's version of the Gospel is not adjusted to other people; it is merely an indication that one's ideas may be less influenced by one's *own* people.
115 Betz (1979, 16–24).
116 Liddell and Scott (1889/1968, 160).
117 For an exposition of transitional markers, see Holmstrand (1997, 19–32, 70–71).
118 See Gal 1:10.
119 See Gal 1:11–12. See, e.g., Longenecker (1990, 20–80); Russell (1993, 436–7). According to Bas van Os (2008, 51–64, esp. 59), the *narratio* comprises "Gal 1:11–2:14, or part of it." See also Holmstrand (1997, 196).
120 "[Paul's] gospel is not according to man, but entails crucifixion with Christ and dying to the law in order to live to God"; Holmstrand (1997, 196, see also 157–65, 196–216, esp. 164).
121 See Gal 2:21.
122 See Longenecker (1990, 20–80); Betz (1979, 16–24).
123 As Dunn (1983, 3–57, note 116) notes, "[t]he Gentile Galatian readership could hardly have understood the ἡμεῖς of v. 15 as other than a reference to Peter and Paul." See also Holmstrand (1997, 196). Paul's affirmation that the Gospel he preached has a divine origin corresponds to the affirmation that he does not set aside God's grace. If righteousness/inclusion/justice comes through the law, Christ's death would have been without reason; see Gal 1:11, 2:21.
124 Holmstrand (1997, 159–65). However, van Os (2008, 51–64) suggests, Galatian addressees might have been a mixed audience comprising both Jews and Gentiles.
125 Holmstrand (1997, 161) comments, "it is not really very surprising that the phrasing of 2:15–21 sometimes seems better suited to the situation in Galatia than to that in Antioch. 2:14b–21 is obviously not a verbatim report of what was actually said in Antioch, but rather a free rendering of the main points of Paul's argument against those in Antioch who represented a Judaizing tendency."
126 As Paul inculcates with Peter: "If while seeking to be righteous/just/included in Christ, we have been found to be sinners ourselves too, would this imply that Jesus was a servant of sin? Of course not!" Gal 2:17.
127 See Gal 2:16.
128 See Gal 2:21. As Barclay (1988, 76) notes, the whole section 2:11–21 "serves an important purpose as a bridge between the more historical and the more theological sections of the epistle." But, in the perspective of this study, "theological sections" can be incorporated within the framework of deliberative rhetoric—that is, in persuasion for the sake of *action*. The historical *and* theological sections are rhetorically purposeful accounts for the sake of *locating* the case. As Barclay further notes, "what Paul records of his statement to Peter sounds as if it were addressed to the Galatian agitators. Clearly, it is an opportunity for Paul to set out some of the main themes of his forthcoming argument"; cf. Betz (1979, 18–19, 113–4); see also Dunn (1983, 3–57, esp. 6).

129 See Gal 1:1–2. Russell (1997, 53) comments that Paul's three-fold repetition of God's being their father is unique among the openings of Paul's letters.
130 Kern (2004, 53); see also Hall (1987, 277–87).
131 This verse is commonly understood as if Paul issues this curse on the messenger; see, e.g., Arichea and Nida (1976, 14). But Paul in Galatians seems capable of describing quite complex coherencies. There is therefore reason to believe that he was capable of distinguishing between the messenger and the message—especially since he describes that even if he himself would deliver an erroneous message to the addressees, that message would still be wrong; see Gal 1:8. A person in grief or under stress is generally more prone to attack another person, as compared to a person in a more balanced emotional state; see Spiegel (1973/1978, 74). However, it is not obvious whether this unbalanced tendency to attack another person, rather than the message, resides in Paul or his later interpreters—a case for comparacy can be found in the interpretation of Gal 4:21–5:1, together with the general tendency toward the idea of replacement rather increased level of differentiation; cf. Eastman (2006); Stendahl (1976). A view could be dismissed without excluding the person holding such a view.
132 As Russell notes, "[p]erhaps [the addressees] questioned Paul's credentials and appealed to the Jerusalem apostles"; Russell (1993, 416). See also Joelsson (2017, 70–72, 80–81). As Lincoln (1981, 10) notes, "[w]e may infer from Paul's anathema on even an angelic messenger if he were to bring 'another gospel' […] that the agitators came claiming high qualifications." It is possible that the letter itself is the response to a challenge, as customs surrounding honor and shame entailed that a challenge should be met by a response (cf. challenge-riposte); Moxnes (2005, 19–40, esp. 20–21); see Joelsson (2017, 70). By the close of the letter, Paul seems to express a wish to withdraw from such exchange; see Gal 6:17.
133 Esler (1998, 60). For an overview of research describing Galatians as *deliberative* or *forensic* rhetoric, see Tolmie (2005, 3–16). As Tolmie (2005, 2) puts it, "[d]eliberative rhetoric dealt with counselling the audience on a future course of action, usually within a political context, the basic issue being the expediency or harmfulness of a future act"; see also Russell (1993, 416–39, esp. 417–21).
134 See Gal 1:16; cf. Gal 1:10–24. As indicated by the context, the term σάρξ is neither relating to sensual passions nor cosmological powers here.
135 See Gal 1:15–17. The group supporting his very attempt to destroy the deviance of the Christ-faithful most likely took offense in his choice to affiliate himself with the very group he had tried to terminate; cf. Gal 1:13–14. This most likely made Jerusalem an unsafe place for Paul; Joelsson (2017, 73–75).
136 See Gal 2:1–2, in context.
137 See Gal 2:3–10, in context.
138 See Gal 2:5.
139 See Gal 2:7–9; 2:10.
140 See Gal 2:12.
141 See Gal 2:11–13. "In this narrative segment, Paul stresses the actions of Peter, and to a degree of Barnabas, in a way that highlights the inconsistency of their actions over against their basic convictions" (Hubing 2015, 161).
142 As Jerome Neyrey (1998, 204) notes, the verb "stand up to" (ἀνθίστημι) may be interpreted in terms of Paul responding to a challenge from Peter; see Gal 2:11.
143 See Gal 2:15–16.
144 See Gal 2:15–16.
145 See Gal 2:17–18. Without boundaries, there is no transgression: the boundaries here are not ethical boundaries, but boundaries between collective groups and collective identities; see Gal 2:15.
146 See Gal 2:20; 2:17–20.

147 See Gal 2:21.
148 Cf. Quintilian, *Institutio Oratoria*, 4.2.79.
149 As Peter Arzt-Grabner (2010, 128–9) notes, when an enslaved person was sold to someone else, it could be claimed that the person was "neither a truant nor a fugitive" but loyal (πίστις). Moreover, as Peters (1995, 3–43, esp. 14, see also 17–19) observes, "those who came to be termed *honestiores* either were quickly executed—usually by decapitation—or allowed to flee into exile."
150 See Gal 3:1–5. The hypothetical semantic componential structure of comprising the components of *collective identity* and *collective group* is here implemented.
151 See Gal 3:1. No traits of honor could be preserved in this form of execution; even after death, the removal of customs for burial and commemoration were part of the punishment (Hope 2009, 60). As "the curse of the law" is destabilized by Jesus' resurrection, the Roman exclusion beyond regret and repair is also revoked; see Gal 3:13; see also Joelsson (2017, 81–82).
152 Sampley (2003, 1–16, esp. 11–12). See also Samuelsson (2013, 16–17); Horsley (2011, 180–1). See also Josephus, *Jewish Wars* 2.5.2; 7.6.4; Seneca, *Moral Letters* 101; Cicero, *Against Gaius Verres* 2.5.165. In other words, no nobleman would have to fear being executed by means of crucifixion. As Peters (1995, 3–43, esp. 16) comments, "[t]he difference [between *honestiores* and *humiliores*] became more important during the imperial period, when punishments themselves became more and more severe." Crucifixion did not only aim at abusing the convict's body, but all social aspects such as customary mourning periods, burial, and commemoration were also prohibited as part of the punishment (Hope 2009, 2, 180).
153 See Gal 3:4–18.
154 See Gal 2:5. "Not even for a moment did we yield in submission to them [the pseudo-brothers/sisters] so that the truth of the Gospel might continue with you."
155 See Gal 3:11–12, 16–18.
156 See Gal 2:3–5; see also 4:16, in context.
157 See Polaski (2005, 15). According to Paul, "Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles (τὰ ἔθνη) by faithfulness, preached the Gospel to Abraham beforehand, saying: 'In you all the Gentiles (τὰ ἔθνη) will be blessed'"; Gal 3:8.
158 As Lincoln (1981, 11, emphasis mine) notes, "it appears that the Judaizers promoted circumcision on the ground that only those who submitted to this rite could enter fully into the elect *community of the people* of God and become the seed of Abraham." However, it may be unclear what the so-called Judaizers offered. The sign could be counted as a sign of privilege (and inclusion) or submission and the deprivation of choice (threat of exclusion). According to Genesis 17, for example, male servants who are forced to be circumcised attain this sign without being given any privilege of citizenship nor being included among the heirs; Gen 17:12b–13a.
159 Cf. Bowen (1976/2004, 337–87).
160 See Gal 3:11.
161 See Gal 3:1–3.
162 In this context, it can be noted that baptism as a sign is invisible: as soon as the body and clothes have dried, no lingering marks are left—apart from memory.
163 See Gal 3:6–12; cf. 1:15–16. As Sanders (1977, 420, emphasis original) comments on contemporary literature within Judaism: "In all the literature surveyed, *obedience maintains one's position in the covenant, but it does not earn God's grace as such*"; see also Russell (1993, 424). As the reintegration of the crucified Jesus implicates, for Jews also, the curse is discarded; see Gal 2:14, 19–20; cf. Joelsson (2017, 81–82). See also Gal 3:11–12.
164 See Gal 3:6–7.

165 See Gal 3:8–9.
166 See Gal 3:10.
167 See Gal 3:11–14.
168 See Azar (2005, 159–83).
169 A symbolic object does not have to be a fictive or passive object. It could be God, or the faithfulness and grace of God, but we speak about the relation between the symbolic object and the metonymic sign as a relationship in which one depends upon the other by means of sharing; see Azar (2005, 159–83).
170 See Gal 3:8.
171 See Gal 3:7.
172 Cf. Gal 3:13–14. See also Joelsson (2017, 81–82).
173 Cf. 1 Cor 11:17–34. See also 1 Cor 15:1–58.
174 See, for instance, Psalms 88–91; see also the Book of Jonah. Please note that the passage from the Hebrew scriptures to which Gal 3:13 seems to refer explicitly states that the corpse of someone who has been executed and hanged on a tree must be taken down before nightfall; the corpse must be buried that same day, or the land will be defiled; see Deut 21:31. In contrast to Roman legal practice, the body of an executed person *should* be buried.
175 Cf. Gal 1:13–14.
176 Notably, Paul continues to adopt references to Scripture as ultimate proof of his arguments and convictions; see, e.g., Gal 3:6–14; see also Tomson (1990).
177 Even if Paul does not place himself *under* the law, the law is a resource to him; see Gal 4:21; cf. 4:1–11. See also Paul's statement in Romans that "the law is holy, and the commandment holy and just and good"; Rom 7:12.
178 In Paul's view, Scripture foresaw the inclusion of the Gentiles in-Christ; see Gal 3:8.
179 See Gal 2:18–21; cf. Gal 1:13–24, 5:11; 6:14.
180 Even if Paul himself and his fellow apostles, or an angel from heaven, would preach another gospel, they must let that message be accursed [or, possibly: that messenger]; Gal 1:8–9; see also Gal 3:1; 4:16; 5:7–10; 6:12–13.
181 See Gal 3:14; see also Hodge (2007, 4–5); Theissen (2016, 5–6). As Karin Neutel (2015, 110) notes, "Abraham thus becomes a dual character, both circumcised and uncircumcised, and can be the ancestor to both groups, as long as they follow Abraham's example of faith."
182 See Gal 3:19–4:10. In this setting, the origin of those who try to introduce the curse of the law is of lesser importance; even if coming from a very prominent source, their message is still incorrect; cf. Gal 1:8–9.
183 "[P]resicely because [the cross] represents the foolishness of God it constitutes God's means for salvation, for it demolishes the human evaluation of wisdom and power"; Barclay (1988, 245); see also Gal 2:5; cf. 5:7.
184 See Gal 3:19–29.
185 See Gal 4:1–14.
186 As seen from this perspective, the Spirit does not offer independence but rather a form of inter-dependence; cf. Gal 4:3–7. "God has sent forth the Spirit of the Son into your hearts […] therefore, you are no longer enslaved"; Gal 4:6b, 7a.
187 Cf. Gal 1:8, in context.
188 See Gal 3:19–24; cf. Rom 2:1–29.
189 Cf. Gal 3:15–18.
190 See Gal 3:15–18.
191 See Gal 3:29.
192 See Gal 3:28. Neutel (2015, 242) notes, "[i]n the metaphors that Paul uses, it is clear that he expects a community that is close-knit and mutually supportive. By calling believers brothers, and occasionally sisters, and by referring to them as a body, by asking them to be each other's slaves and bear each other's burdens, he

emphasizes their mutual dependence […] we should see Paul's letters as contributions to the contemporary conversation about an ideal community."

193 Cf. "For there is neither Jew nor Greek; neither slave nor free; neither male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus"; Gal 3:28; cf. 1 Cor 1:20–31. "And those insignificant of the world, and those who are despised, God has chosen in order to bring to nothing those who are [something]"; 1 Cor 28.

194 Cf. 1 Cor 12:1–14:40, esp. 14:26–39.

195 Miller (2015, 141).

196 See Gal 3:24; cf. Gal 2:1–5.

197 See Gal 3:25.

198 See Gal 4:1–11.

199 Cf. Gal 2:21; 3:18.

200 Bruce (1984, 27). Notably, the concept of table fellowship may involve food regulations and celebration of holy days too; cf. Gal 4:10. As Bird (2006, 113, emphasis original) notes, "[i]t may be that Paul is not confronting 'legalism' or 'covenantal nomism' but an *ethnocentric nomism*."

201 See Gal 3:25–26. Moreover, they are described as Christ's, and thus "Abraham's seed and heirs according to promise"; Gal 3:29.

202 See Aristotle, *Politics* 1.2.3–5, in Neutel (2015, 32–33). See also Philo, *On the Decalogue*, 165–166, in Neutel (2015, 35). See also Richter (2011, 47). However, "Plutarch's very attempt to limit and control the public behavior of women reveals their presence in theater, procession, and temple, where they move amongst the male citizens"; Miller (2015, 130). Moreover, as Neutel (2015, 33) notes, Paul's removing the distinction between Jew and Greek stands in accordance with Stoic cosmopolitanism which argues that Greeks and barbarians possess reason in the same way; see also Richter (2011, 69–86).

203 See Gal 3:21–29.

204 See Neutel (2015, 237).

205 See Gal 3:1–2; 3:23–29. See also Joel 2:27–29: "In those days, I will pour out my Spirit on all people/everyone (πᾶσαν σάρκα; LXX 3:1), your sons and your daughters will prophesy, your old man will have dreams and your young men will see visions; in those days I will pour out my Spirit even upon your menservants and your maidservants."

206 As Conway (2008, 73) notes, "the concept of the noble, manly death and the emasculating crucifixion are not ideas that are easily held together in the gendered ideology of the first century." See Gal 3:1–29.

207 "There is neither Jew nor Greek; neither slave nor free; neither male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus"; Gal 3:28. See also Hodge (2007, 129). Hubing (2015, 1) notes that "[t]his new creation relegates the notion of 'circumcision or uncircumcision' to a place of insignificance and has radically altered Paul's own convictions about the nature of righteousness and how one gains access to it"; cf. Gal 6:17.

208 In 2 Cor 11:23b–26, Paul describes that he "five times [...] received from the Judeans the forty lashes minus one." Moreover, being beaten with rods was a distinctively Roman form of punishment; see Hubbard (2010, 164); 2 Cor 11:25. As Paul Treblico notes, "[t]he fact that Paul endured a potentially life-threatening punishment five times shows that he did not lightly give up his Jewish connections and that he voluntarily continued to attend synagogues and submit to their discipline"; Treblico (1999, 20); Sanders (1983, 192). It is possible that Paul's traveling into the region of Galatia was an attempt to escape persecution without declining from his message; cf. Gal 6:12.

209 As Neyrey (1999, 151–76, esp. 166) comments, "[j]uridical warnings were intended to inflict pain, but especially to humiliate and discredit the troublemakers"; cf. Gal 6:14; cf. 5:11, 24.

210 Hubing (2015, 176). See also Goddard and Cummins (1993, 93–126, esp. 104); Martin (1999, 65–91); Hafemann (2000, 165–84).
211 Cf. Gal 6:14; cf. 5:11, 24.
212 In this study, the tentative monosemous approach to σάρξ implies the restoration of collective aspects in the term, rendering a semantic componential structure, including the elements of *collective identity* and *collective group*; cf. Joelsson (2018, 132–54).
213 See Gal 4:13–14. "… you know that [it was] because weakness in the σάρξ (ἀσθένειαν τῆς σαρκός) that I communicated the Gospel among you at first and you did not despise or reject the test of you which were in my σάρξ (πειρασμὸν ὑμῶν ἐν τῇ σαρκί), but received me as an angel of God, as Christ Jesus …."
214 In Greco-Roman juridical systems, exile could be counted as equivalent to execution (Peters 1995, 20). See also Lendon (1997, 19–24); Moxnes (2005, 19–40).
215 As he depicts elsewhere, Paul was subjected to several severe punishments, both in Roman and Jewish settings; see 2 Cor 11:23b–26. As E. P. Sanders (1983, 192, emphasis removed) famously notes, "[p]unishment implies inclusion."
216 See Gal 4:17.
217 As Barclay (1988, 77) notes, "the fact that Peter, by withdrawing from Gentile fellowship, is in effect compelling Gentiles to 'judaize' […] demonstrates that Peter and the others are 'not walking straight in line with the truth of the gospel.'"
218 See Gal 4:18.
219 Bruce (1984, 27). As Theissen (2016, 6) notes, "particularly circumcision, Sabbath, and dietary laws, functioned as an identity badge that distinguished Jews from non-Jews."
220 See, e.g., Lopez (2007, 115–62); Kartzow (2012); Lee (2015).
221 Cf. Gal 3:5: "ὁ (…) ἐπιχορηγῶν ὑμῖν τὸ πνεῦμα καὶ ἐνεργῶν δυνάμεις ἐν ὑμῖν."
222 See Gal 4:16. The term ἀληθεύω can be translated both in terms of "telling the truth" and "being true"; cf. Gal 2:11–21, esp. 2:14; 5:26.
223 See Gal 4:10. See also Hardin's (2008, 14, 43–44) argumentation for the case that the Galatians were incited to follow the imperial cultic calendar. Again, to observe one's own holy days is honorable, but observing someone else's is a sign of submission.
224 See Gal 4:19. See Gaventa (2007, 41–50). See also 1 Thess 2:7; Gal 1:15; 1 Cor 3:1–2.
225 Cf. Gal 3:19–4:11; see also 4:19.
226 See Gal 2:11–13. "In this narrative segment, Paul stresses the actions of Peter, and to a degree of Barnabas, in a way that highlights the inconsistency of their actions over against their basic convictions" (Hubing 2015, 161).
227 As Johnson Hodge (2007, 16) notes, "[t]hough both kinship and ethnicity, as categories of identity, claim a primordial or natural base, they are nevertheless human creations"; cf. Azar (2005, 159–83).
228 "But you, brothers and sisters, are children of promise as Isaac"; Gal 4:28.
229 Azar (2005, 159–83).
230 Cf. Azar (2005, 159–83).
231 See Gal 2:16: "no one (οὐ … πᾶσα σάρξ) is included in righteousness/justice (δικαιωθήσεται) by means of the 'works of the law' but by means of the faithfulness of Christ (ἐκ πίστεως Χριστοῦ)." See also 5:1–5:9; cf. 4:21–31.
232 As Eastman (2006, 309–36, esp. 312) notes, there has been a shift in consensus from the "traditional view [in which] Gal. 4:30 announces the exclusion for all time of a specific group of people from salvation; according to the new consensus it commands the expulsion at a particular point in time of a specific group of people from within the Galatian congregations." In other words, what Eastman here calls the traditional view can be described as a case of literal-generic hermeneutic—without the above-suggested repudiation—while the new

consensus is a relocation of a literal reading, though it is unclear whether it is applicable to other groups in the future.

233 See Gal 4:25. "Hagar is Mount Sinai in Arabia, but in the present (νῦν) she corresponds (συστοιχεῖ) to Jerusalem, for she is enslaved with her children." In the actual historical situation of the letter, Jerusalem is in most aspects practically—but not formally—subdued to the Roman empire. As Gesila Nneka Uzukwu (2015, 150) describes, when the term δοῦλος is translated "'slave', meaning those who are socially, economically, or politically under the control of someone else or living in a servile condition," this definition seems to describe Jerusalem during this period.

234 See Gal 4:24. Eastman (2006, 309–36); see also Theissen (2016, 87–89). According to Cicero, the meaning of adoption to the Roman statesman was to maintain "the *nomen* (name), *pecunia* (property), and *sacrum* (religious rites)"; see Burke (2008, 259–88, esp. 264); Cicero, *On his House*, 35.

235 See Eastman (2006, 309–36).

236 See Gal 4:29.

237 See Gen 17:9–14, 23–27.

238 See Gal 4:1–9, 21–31. In exegesis contemporary to Paul, Abraham's late circumcision (at the age of 99 years) was sometimes adopted as scriptural evidence supporting late male, Gentile circumcision as a means for inclusion into the Jewish collective identity. As Theissen (2016, 29) notes, "*Mekhilta de-Rabbi Ishmael*, an early rabbinic commentary on Exodus, provides such a reading"; *Mekhilta de-Rabbi Ishmael*, *Nezikin* 18; see also *Genesis Rabbah* 46.2. Paul questions such exegesis, by noting that Scripture also says "drive out the slave woman and her son." Not only was Abraham circumcised at the age of 99, but Ishmael was circumcised at the age of 13 and continued to be enslaved. In other words, a reference to what Scripture says does not secure a sound interpretation and trustworthy application; cf. Gal 4:21–5:1a; see also Polaski (2005, 15).

239 See Gen 16:1–6; 21:9–14. According to Gen 16:6, "Sarai dealt harshly with her [Hagar] and then she fled from her." Later, according to Gen 21:10, Sarah pleads with Abraham that he must cast out Hagar with her son, "for the son of this enslaved woman shall not be heir with my son Isaac," and Abraham agreed. As Kartzow (2015, 405) describes, "[t]he slave woman's son was only born according to the flesh, and did not get access to relations of socio-juridical-religious parenthood."

240 Cf. Azar (2005, 159–83). Hardin (2008, 14, 43–44) suggests that the "months and days" which the Galatians were incited to follow were the imperial cultic calendar.

241 See Gal 4:26. In this setting, Paul discredits the practice of *Judaizing* rather than Judaism; Neutel (2016, 373–96). Against Betz: "Paul's intention is clear; he wants to create a dualistic polarity between 'Judaism' and 'Christianity'" (Betz 1979, 246). Cf. Rom 1:16, where Paul states that the Gospel is the "power of God to salvation for anyone who is faithful; to the Jew first and *also* to the Greek," emphasis mine.

242 Cf. Gal 4:27. As "the barren woman will have more children than the one who has a husband," the Galatian addressees are obviously included; see Gal 4:28; see also Bird (2006, 110); against Betz (1979, 247). As Stendahl (1976, 1–77, 78–96) notes, the peaceful coexistence of Jews and Gentiles is central to Paul in his letters; see also Theissen (2016).

243 See Gal 4:27; cf. Isa 54:1; Gen 17:1–8.

244 See Gal 1:11–2:21.

245 See Gal 4:22–23. As Neutel (2016, 384) notes in relation to Phil 3:3, "[w]hile there is a long interpretation history that sees Paul depreciating physical, external practices and promoting internal, spiritual ones, the term "flesh" here refers

rather to lineage and ethnicity, as the subsequent text makes clear"; see also Jewett (1971, 100–1).

246 See Gal 4:29.

247 See Gen 17:10.

248 See Gal 5:1. Betz (1979, 250) incorrectly assumes a supersessionist view on Judaism: "if God has given the inheritance to the Gentile Christians (cf. 3:14, 29; 4:1, 7), the Jews are excluded from it." Against Betz, it can be noted Paul emphasizes the *inclusion* of Gentiles, that is, together with the Jews; see Gal 3:14, 29; 4:1, 7; cf. Rom 1:16–17; 10:11–12, and so on.

249 See Gal 4:22, 26–28.

250 Cf. Gal 4:29.

251 See Gal 4:27–28; cf. Isa 54:1; Gen 17:1–8.

252 Cf. Gal 3:26–29; cf. Joel 2:27–28. Paul comments that he could wish that the proponents of an exclusivist sense of collective identity would exclude themselves, that is, if they cannot accept that level of diversity; see Gal 5:11–13. See also 1 Cor 1:20–31; 12:11–28.

253 Cf. Gal 4:17. "They are committed to you for no good, but they want to exclude you so that you will be committed to them."

254 Cf. 1 Cor 1:18–31.

255 See Gal 5:4.

256 See Gal 5:3; cf. Genesis 17:9–14. As Theissen (2016, 67; see also 91–101) notes, "[c]ovenantal circumcision is not just any form of circumcision, but circumcision on the eighth day from birth […] any male not circumcised on the eighth day after birth must be cut off from his people."

257 See Gal 3:13: cf. 2:14–20.

258 See Gal 5:3; Theissen (2016, 93); see also Gal 6:13. As Theissen (2016, 96, emphasis mine) notes, Gal 6:13 could be translated: "For those who circumcise *themselves* do not keep the law." See also Eastman (2006, 309–36).

259 See, e.g., Gal 5:14, 19–23; cf. Gal 6:6. See also Tomson (1990).

260 See, e.g., Gal 3:6–16; 4:27, 30. As Caroline Johnson Hodge (2007, 131) noted, being in-Christ is not ethnically neutral but Gentiles are included as new a branch on the Abrahamic root.

261 Cf. Rom 2:29; see also Neutel and Anderson (2014, 228–44, esp. 239).

262 Cf. Gal 2:21.

263 Cf. Gal 3:1.

264 See Gal 5:6; see 5:2–6.

265 Cf. Kartzow's (2012, 15) call for intersectional approaches to identity in Biblical studies.

266 See Gal 5:11; cf. 3:26–29.

267 Cf. Gal 5:19–21, 22–23.

268 See Gal 5:11. Betz (1979, 257) suggests that "the task of Christian ethics can be defined as 'to preserve' freedom," which according to Betz "means that Paul does not share the Jewish concept of 'ethics' as the prevention of transgression and the fulfilment of a ritual code of the Law (Torah)." While Paul did not suggest that the "ritual code" of male circumcision was applicable to the Galatians, he preserves Jewish concepts of ethics as a resource to prevent moral transgression; see 1 Cor 6:9–10; 10:1–13; see also Gal 5:19–21.

269 See Gal 5:13.

270 Cf. Paul's comment that the "curse in the law" is destabilized by Jesus' crucifixion (and resurrection); Gal 3:13.

271 Bruce (1984, 25); cf. Gal 5:15.

272 See Gal 5:15. In historical situations of siege, Hebrew scriptures can describe the Israelites as forced to eat the "flesh of their sons and the flesh of their daughters"; see Leviticus 26:29; Zechariah 11:9, 16; Baruch 2:3, and so on. Brian

Thomas (2020, 29–31) suggests that this implies that their "flesh" is eatable. But the expression rather suggests that, under siege, their collective identity and lineage is consumed by severe circumstances.

273 See Gal 5:13–14.
274 See Gal 5:16.
275 See Gal 5:16, 13.
276 The location of transition markers and their implications will be further investigated in the following chapter of this study.
277 Verses 5:25–26 conclude this subparagraph and constitute the transit to the following exhortation. If these verses are included, this subparagraph is concluded by an injunction: "Let us not become conceited, provoking one another, envying one another." (For further discussion, see Chapter 2.)
278 See Gal 5:16; cf. 5:13.
279 For instance, Betz (1979, 271) reproduces this division into paragraphs without commenting on the oddity that a new section begins by the conjunctive particle γάρ. Holmstrand, on the other hand, suggests a larger paragraph comprising verses 5:11–6:13, while within that major paragraph (albeit describing verses 5:13b–6:11 as a subunit); Holmstrand (1997, 181–91).
280 See Gal 5:12.
281 See Gal 5:11; cf. 1:13–14.
282 Cf. the principles of liberty and enslavement depicted as two women in Gal 4:21–31.
283 See Gal 5:14. In this too, Paul's message aligns with the message of Jesus, including the support he receives from Hebrew scripture; see Matt 22:34–40; Luk 10:27; Joh 13:34; see also Deut 6:4–5; Lev 19:18, 33–34, and so on.
284 See Gal 5:16; cf. 4:10; 5:11, and so on.
285 See Gal 5:11; cf. 1:14. As Lee (2015, 1–2) notes, the construct of universalism in terms of "no collective identity" is deceptive as it often turns out to be imperialism in disguise: instead, everyone has several collective identities; cf. Kartzow (2012, 17–18). See also Tucker (2011, 119).
286 See Gal 5:6, 5:11–12, 24; 6:12–15. Similarly, Paul states in 1 Corinthians that food offered to idols is "nothing" unless it is eaten or perceived as *something*: then problems arise; see 1 Cor 8:1–13; cf. 10:14–33, esp. 8:4; 10:25. "Circumcision is nothing and foreskin is nothing, but keeping the commandments of God is what matters"; 1 Cor 7:19; cf. 1 Cor 6:9–11.
287 See Gal 4:17.
288 Cf. Gal 2:18.
289 Cf. Gal 5:19–21; 22–23.
290 In his letters, Paul highlights the intersectional nature of identity as different systems for subordination and liberation in lived reality; see 1 Cor 1:20–31; Phil 3:1–26, esp. 5–6. In the study of the liberating potential in Paul's letters, intersectional approaches are indispensable (Kartzow 2012, 5–8).
291 See Gal 3:25–29.
292 As Paul emphasized in the opening of the letter, the addressees are *not* bound to heed what people desire: even if facing a message from an angel from heaven or Paul himself, they are free to remain with the Gospel of Christ; see Gal 1:6–10; cf. 5:16–17. See also Gal 5:24. In Romans, Paul similarly suggests that the addressees have no obligations to walk according to the σάρξ; see Rom 8:12.
293 See Gal 5:11–17, esp. 5:17.
294 See Gal 5:14, 18.
295 See Gal 5:14–15.
296 See Lee (2015, 1–2).
297 Cf. Ricoeur (1990, 115–25); see also Uggla (1999, 442–45).
298 See Joel 2:27–29.
299 See Gal 5:14, 18. Cf. the term κανών ("rule") as it occurs in Gal 6:16.

300 See Gal 5:16; cf. 4:17.
301 See, e.g., Boatwright (2021); Alston (1995/2005).
302 See Gal 5:19–21. As Lorenzo Scornaienchi (2008, 351; translation mine) notes, "Die Auflistungen zeigen, dass die aktive menschliche Kraft zu einem destruktiven Verhalten des menschen führt. Den aktive göttliche Kraft hingegen ist das Prinzip, das ein konstructives Verhalten erst ermöglicht" [The lists show that active human power leads to destructive human behavior. The active divine power, on the other hand, is the principle that makes a constructive behavior possible in the first place]. While humans certainly are dependent upon God's creation and creative Spirit for any up-building capacity and competence, God is likely more than a "principle" to Paul and, furthermore, human activity could sometimes be constructive too.
303 Cf. Rom 1:16–3:20.
304 See Gal 5:14, 18; 6:16.
305 While Thomas and Barclay emphasize that, according to Paul, the Spirit is sufficient for moral guidance, Paul's extensive use of Scripture suggests otherwise; see Gal 5:14; 1 Cor 5:13; 6:16; 9:9; 10:1–12, and so on. Cf. Thomas (2020, 152); Barclay (1988, 106–45).
306 Cf. Gal 5:19–21.
307 See Gal 5:24–26.
308 See Gal 6:1–3, 4–5, 6.
309 See Gal 5:19–21. Cf. the conceptualization of δικαιοσύνη as being included into justice and held accountable; Hill (1976/2000, 101).
310 See Gal 5:21b; cf. 1 Cor 6:9–10.
311 See Thomas (2020, 197); Barclay (1988, 121–2). According to Joel 2:28–29, God will pour holy spirit over all people, including women, young, and enslaved persons. In Isaiah 32:15–18, it is similarly claimed that Spirit from above will be poured upon "us," and the desert become a garden, with justice everywhere, and the effect of righteousness will be peace.
312 See Gal 5:22–23. According to Russell (1993, 433), "[Paul] was persuading the Galatians that the people of God, having been born κατά πνεύμα, should manifest a life in community that is directly traceable to God's Spirit."
313 See Gal 3:16.
314 Cf. Gal 3:16. See Louw and Nida (1988/1989, 2, 225).
315 As Tellbe (2009, 1) correctly notes, "the early Christian movement largely considered itself to be Jewish rather than a 'third race' in opposition to Judaism." See also Horrell (2013, 150–51). The term was familiar to Tertullian, but he was also skeptical, as he associated the concept with sexual identity; see Bediako (1999/2011, 39).
316 See Gal 3:26–29; see also 1 Cor 1:28, in context.
317 See Gal 5:24.
318 See Rom 1:27; 1 Cor 7:9.
319 Jewett (2007, 436).
320 See Gal 3:4.
321 See Gal 5:25.
322 Russell (1993, 129); cf. Louw and Nida's (1988/1989, 2, 228, emphases mine) list that includes "natural substances," "supernatural powers," "basic *principles*," "behave," and "*imitate*."
323 "At that time—when you did not know God—you were enslaved under those whom by nature are no gods, but now, knowing God—or, rather, God knowing you—how is it that you wanting to be enslaved again turn back to the weak and beggarly principles (στοιχεῖα)?" Gal 4:9. Notably, in Gal 4:3, Paul's description of having been "subject to the principles (στοιχεῖα) of the world" is applied to himself too.

324 See Gal 1:15–16; cf.1:13–14, 23–24.
325 "Upon as many who want to live (στοιχήσουσιν) according to this rule, peace upon them, and mercy, and upon the Israel of God"; Gal 6:16.
326 Cf. Gal 4:21–31.
327 See Gal 1:13–14; cf. 2:18–21.
328 See Gal 5:24. In Romans, Paul similarly suggests that the addressees have no obligations to walk according to the σάρξ; see Rom 8:12.
329 Cf. Gal 4:21–31; see also 2:18–21.
330 Hodge (2007, 16); cf. "For only if I rebuild those things that I have destroyed, I make myself a transgressor"; Gal 2:18. See Azar (2005, 159–83).
331 Cf. Gal 4:8–9.
332 See Gal 5:1, 13.
333 Cf. Gal 4:19; 5:7, 10, and so on.
334 See Neutel (2016). Cf. the enforced commemoration of Caesar's father's death-day; Hardin (2008, 14, 43–44). For instance, the issue was not the commemoration of a father (cf. holiday), but the *enforced* commemoration of someone else's (deified) father; cf. Hopkins (1983/2006, 4). In 17 B.C.E., "women's mourning was suspended for the celebration of the once-a-generation Secular Games" (Hope 2009, 124).
335 See Gal 2:11–20.
336 See Gal 5:6; 6:15; cf. 2:1–21.
337 Cf. Azar (2005, 159–183); see Gal 3:26–29.
338 See Gal 5:26; cf. 5:13–14.
339 See Gal 6:1.
340 See Gal 6:1.
341 See Gal 6:2–3; cf. 5:26.
342 See Gal 6:3–4.
343 See Gal 6:4–6. "For each one will carry one's own load"; Gal 6:5.
344 See, e.g., Moxnes' (2005, 19–40, esp. 28) description of situations in which a person is "never regarded as an isolated individual, but always as part of a group, responsible for the honor of the group and also protected by it."
345 See Gal 6:6.
346 See Gal 6:9.
347 See Gal 6:8.
348 See Gal 6:7.
349 Cf. Gal 3:1–4.
350 See Gal 6:9–10. "Therefore, as long as we have opportunity, let us do good to all/everybody, especially to those who are of the household of faithfulness"; Gal 6:10.
351 See Gal 6:8. The Greek term αἰώνιος comprises semantic components, including both *quality* and *quantity*. Hence, the translation of ζωή αἰώνιος into English as "eternal life" may be complemented by terms such as "true life" and "authentic life."
352 Cf. Ricoeur (1990, 115–25); see also Uggla (1999, 442–5).
353 Cf. Gal 5:17.
354 See Gal 6:9–10.
355 See Gal 6:12–13.
356 See Gal 6:12, 13; cf. 4:17. In other words, when someone wants to make a "good showing in the σάρξ," it is precisely within the collective identity and the collective group that they promote their reputation; see Joelsson (2017, 73–74); cf. Joelsson (2018, 132–54).
357 See Gal 6:14.
358 See Gal 6:15. As the context indicates, the term καινὴ κτίσις is better rendered as "renewed creation" (transformation) rather than "new creation" (replacement);

see, e.g., Burke (2008, 259–88, esp. 282); Horrell, Hunt, and Southgate (2010, 117); Ware (2009, 129–39); Engberg-Pedersen (2009, 179–97, esp. 196). Cf. 2 Cor 5:17.

359 Cf. Gal 5:25–26; 6:1–10.

360 See Gal 6:16, emphasis mine.

361 As Paul elsewhere adopts the metaphor of the tree, the Galatians and the Jews are two branches belonging to the same tree and carried by the same root; Rom 11:17–24; cf. Gal 3:26–29. They are members of the same body; 1 Cor 12:11–28. As it would be ridiculous to say that every member is the same, it would be equally stupid to suggest that they would be just as fine if disconnected; cf. Smith (2018, 143–60).

362 As noted in Quintilian, the relation between the *narratio* and the rest of the letter is hopefully characterized by congruity (*congruens*); Quintilian, *Institutio Oratoria*, 4.2.79; O'Banion (1987, 325–51, esp. 328, 339).

363 See Gal 6:17; cf. 1:6–10. As noted previously, a challenge toward his position and message would be a relevant explanation to Paul's curse opening of letter; see Gal 1:8–9.

364 See Gal 6:17. See also Paul's comment on his weakness in the σάρξ when he first arrived to Galatia; Gal 4:13–14.

365 Cf. Gal 2:21.

366 As C. K. Barrett (1976, 1–16, esp. 15) suggests, "[t]he adversaries did not act out of mere personal spite or jealousy; they held a serious theological position which they supported by detailed biblical arguments." See also Martyn (1983, 221–36, esp. 235).

367 See Gal 1:13–14. As Tolmie (2012, 69–82, esp. 69–70) notes, πορθέω "indicates a higher level of violence, since it was generally used to refer to attacking someone or something with the intent of destroying it." See Betz (1979, 67); Joelsson (2017, 72–73). See also Jewett's comment on "zeal without discernment" (Jewett 1994, 112–27, esp. 112–119).

368 "And I advanced in Judaism beyond many in the generation of my kindred, being more extremely committed to the traditions of my forefathers"; Gal 1:14; cf. 6:13.

369 See Gal 1:13–14; cf. 5:17.

370 The English translation of the phrase ἐπιθυμία σαρκὸς as "desire of the flesh" thereby triggers erroneous associations; see Joelsson (2018, 132–54). The reader may note Thiselton's (2000, 289) comment that "*Flesh, fleshly*, cannot avoid nuances of sensuality in the late twentieth century."

371 See Aristotle, *Politics* 1.2.3–5; see also Neutel (2015, 32–33).

372 See Brooten (1977, 142; 2001, 174). As Brooten (1982, 5–33) also notes, the head of the synagogue was later assumed to be all-male despite evidence to the contrary.

373 Theissen (1974/1982, 32).

374 Theissen (1974/1982, 32).

375 Cf. Gal 5:16–17.

376 See Gal 5:19–21; cf. Joh 4:47–49.

377 If the individual was protected by being incorporated in a collective identity with honor, the "crucifying" of one's social identity would imply certain risks; see e.g., Moxnes (2005, 19–40, esp. 28); Malina (1981, rev ed. 2001, 27–37); Lendon (1997, 19–24).

378 See Gal 1:1–11, 15–17; cf. 6:16–18.

379 See Gal 2:11–21; cf. 1:6–12; 3:1–6; 6:11–17.

380 Martyn (1983, 221–36); cf. Barclay's choice of the term "agitators"; Barclay (1988, 37–45).

381 Martyn (1983, 221–36, esp. 235).

382 Cf. Gal 2:9.
383 See Gal 1:11–12, 15–17. Rom 10:2.
384 Cf. Quintilian, *Institutio Oratoria*, 4.2.79. As O'Banion describes, "*[n]arratio* was the 'continuous' or narrative version of the proposition (to be defended in the proof)"; O'Banion (1987, 328).
385 Cf. Quintilian, *Institutio Oratoria*, 4.2.79; see also O'Banion (1987, 328, 339).
386 Quintilian, *Institutio Oratoria*, 4.2.79; O'Banion (1987, 325–51, esp. 328, 339).
387 See Gal 1:1, 10–12.
388 See Gal 1:1.
389 See Gal 1:18, 24; 2:6–9.
390 See Gal 2:7–10.
391 Cf. Bowen (1976/2004, 337–87).
392 See Gal 6:15.
393 Cf. Gal 2:11–21. As Dunn (1998/2006, 363) notes, the "'[w]orks of the law' are what distinguish Jew from Gentile."
394 See Gal 6:12. Robert Jewett's (2007, 436) comment on Romans 7:5 that the σάρξ desires honor might be an estimation that is applicable also to the σάρξ in Galatian. See also Jewett (1971, 100–1); Joelsson (2017, 74).
395 As Barclay (1988, 46) suggests, "what Paul says about the motivation of the opponents in this highly polemical passage has to be taken with a pinch of salt; but we can presume that he is correct at least about the fact of their demand for circumcision."
396 See Gal 1:13–14; cf. 6:12.
397 See Gal 5:24; cf. 6:14.
398 Cf. Gal 4:20.
399 See Gal 2:11–21.
400 See Gal 2:15–17.
401 See Gal 2:11–21; cf. 3:26–29. See also Joel 2:27–29.
402 Cf. 1 Cor 1:20–31.
403 See Gal 2:11–21; cf. 3:26–29.
404 Cf. Gal 2:11–21; 3:26–29.
405 See, e.g., Gal 2:16; 3:11, 21–29; 5:6; 6:15, and so on.
406 See Gal 2:11–20; cf. 3:26–29; 4:17.
407 See Gal 5:14, in context.
408 In his study, Thomas (2020, 173, 181, 183) repeatedly uses phrases such as the "yoke of Torah"; cf. Thomas (2020, 187); cf. Gal 5:1–2.
409 See Gal 5:1–2, in context; cf. Gen 17:12–14.
410 Being *under* the law is associated with immaturity. After coming of age, both Jews and non-Jews live *with* the law as responsible agents; see Gal 4:1–6; cf. 4:7–11.
411 According to Wexler (2008, 161), "messianic activism alone is insufficient for a new Jerusalem. The emptying of meaning in the apocalypse requires a complementary fulfilment in tradition. In historic Judaism, this means cultural creation within a tradition, but through its *revision* in interpretive commentary."
412 Scholem (1971/1995, 287, 289, 290, emphasis original).
413 See 2 Cor 11:22–29; Rom 11:1–2, and so on. Rather than expressing an anti-Jewish conviction, in 1 Thess 2:14–16, Paul levels criticism against those who persecute their own people—in Jerusalem as well as in Thessaloniki; see also Joelsson (2017, 57–61).
414 See, e.g., Boyarin (1994, 173–6); Jewett (1971, 101–8).
415 Notably, Boyarin (1994, 174) speaks of "desires" in the plural form, in continuity with modern idioms, but in discontinuity with the Greek text; see Gal 5:16. Sexual desire as the ultimate reason behind every moral failure appears as an

over-simplification of the predicaments of human life; cf. the "works of the σάρξ" in Gal 5:19–21.
416 See Gal 2:12, in context.
417 See Joelsson (2018, 132–54).
418 Thiselton (2000, 289).
419 In the oaths of loyalty that were sworn within the Roman empire, the Latin term *fides* translates into Greek as πίστις; Hardin (2008, 43–46). See also Hays (1983). For a discussion of πίστις in terms of faithfulness, see Hodge (2007, 82–91); see also Harink (2003) for a discussion of the role given to *faith-in-Jesus* in Protestant theology. As John Barclay (1988, 83) notes, "faith emerges as the key factor both in identity ('we are justified by faith in Christ') and in behaviour ('the life I now live I live by faith')."
420 See Gal 2:5, 14; 4:16; 6:10.
421 See Gal 2:21; 5:11; 6:12–15.
422 See Gal 2:11–21, esp. 2:12; cf. 4:17.
423 See Gal 5:15; cf. Lev 26:29; Zech 11:9, 16; Bar 2:3, and so on.
424 Stendahl (1976, 78–96, 1–77).
425 Cf. Theissen (1974/1982, esp. 32).
426 Cf. Quintilian, *Institutio* 5.10.109; O'Banion (1987, 338).

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4 Galatians from a Social Systems Perspective

Galatians and Social Systems Theory

In the previous chapters, we sought to read the letter of Galatians by employing the *narratio* as an interpretive lens. In doing so, we were able to avoid reproducing the individualistically oriented paradigm of modern Pauline interpretation of the Greek term σάρξ. As resources in this reassessment, the relations between passages and clauses were investigated as indicated by opening and closing phrases, particles, and other textual elements (cf. *transition markers*) that are available in the letter itself. The result was a more coherent discourse suggesting that the addressees were not obliged to attain specific identity markers, or to form a collective identity around some idea of sameness, in order to remain included into the collective identity of being in-Christ. In other words, they were not obliged to despise the defined outsiders but free to fulfill what was prescribed as the center of the law, namely: *You will love your neighbor as yourself*.

As we focus on the attitudes to diversity that are expressed in Galatians, their implications for resilience are central. What attitudes toward diversity and difference does Paul express in this letter? What are the main factors that contribute to systemic resilience? Social-scientific criticism, to quote Stephen Barton, has the "capacity to revitalize historical criticism of the New Testament by enlarging the agenda of interpretation, allowing a different set of questions to be put to the text, and providing methods and models to answer these new questions in a controlled and accountable way."[1] Harold Ellens similarly speaks about a "model of interface between two scientific enterprises that offers mutual illumination."[2] In this setting, social-scientific criticism and historical criticism are two disciplines in their own right. They not only "stand legitimately on their own foundations," but also possess some shared interests and partially overlapping expertise.[3] In other words, social systems theory and historical criticism may complement each other and, in this case, help illuminate Paul's letter to the Galatian assemblies.

Social systems theory has the advantage of not being very complicated. Rather than asking *why* people do what they do, it asks *what*, *how*, and *when* they do it. Naturally, the answers to those questions do not exist in

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a vacuum. Social systems theory notes that what humans share with other parts of the universe is essential to the understanding of human life and its resilience. Indeed, it evokes a deeply biblical conclusion: humans are part of *creation*.[4] Early in his career, Murray Bowen expressed a hunch that the difference between human systems and other ecological systems may be less than we commonly perceive—although humans make better excuses.[5]

Social Systems Theory in Biblical Studies

Since social systems theory acknowledges that different systems exist simultaneously, often overlapping each other, it does not preclude a spiritual understanding of human life. Looking at Galatians through the lens of social systems theory, it is evident that God the origin, the spirit of God, and the crucified Jesus all play vital roles as both symbolic objects and active agents. God is described as someone who does things (e.g., raises from the dead, calls, sends). Similarly, God's spirit promotes peace and faithfulness, and Jesus includes everyone as a "son" or "heir" by means of his faithfulness and grace. As such spiritual system overlaps with the human systems and other biological and ecological systems, various human social systems overlap each other (e.g., Paul and his co-workers, the Galatian assemblies, the assemblies of God in Judea, the local society in Galatia, enslaved people, foreigners, women, and minors). In Galatians, Paul opens the letter by stating that a competing message must be cursed—which indeed not only has spiritual overtones but also has implications for their construct of social identity and the relationships between overlapping social systems.

When social systems theory is adopted in the study of biblical themes, the concept of differentiation often plays a major role.[6] While describing how Paul presents Peter as a poor role model to the Galatians, Kamila Blessing shows that systemic relations may include non-human and symbolic objects (e.g., *Paul, Peter, and the messengers* [or *non-gospel*], and, subsequently, *Paul, the addressees, and the non-gospel*).[7] Blessing uses the concept of triangles to visualize the systemic aspects in social constellations: when one corner moves, the triangle's other corners are also affected. Miroslav Volf suggests that "the consequences of the Pauline move away from (differentiating but internally undifferentiated) bodies to the (unifying but internally differentiated) body of Christ for understanding identities are immense."[8] In his article on David's ethics, Richard Smith similarly notes that "[d]ifferentiation refers to one's capacity to be an emotionally separate person." And Smith continues, "[t]he more differentiated a self, the more a person is able to be an individual while still in emotional contact with the group."[9]

The concept of differentiation has also been adopted in studies of modern or late modern theology and spirituality. For instance, Brian Majerus uses differentiation as a concept for understanding the Trinity. As united but still separated, the Trinity can be seen as the perfect example of "full

integration of the 'both-and' of personhood (individuality) and relationship (togetherness) found in DoS [differentiation of self]."[10] Differentiation requires the possibility of being different without being isolated. Therefore, being separate is not a threat to unity. Moreover, Mpyana Fulgence Nyengele adopts family systems theory in investigating African women's theology and offering a critical analysis of how gender domination and oppression can be reinforced under the pretense of a pastoral act.[11] Similarly, Jack Balswick and Judith Balswick suggest that "*[d]ifferentiated in Christ* refers to the New Testament emphasis on each believer finding his or her identity and reference in relationship with Christ rather than with other human beings […] Mutual commitment to spiritual transformation keeps family members consciously aware of how God is working in and through each of them and how it affects the family as a whole."[12] Social systems theory provides knowledge and describes essential aspects of human interaction and human functioning. But, again, the theory is not complicated as such. In the words of Blessing, with a "little reading, nearly anyone can apply Bowen theory, and anyone with a tutored knowledge of the Bible can apply it to interpretation."[13] What's more, one can quite easily apply it to one's own milieu.

In describing the theoretical perspective, Blessing and Nyengele refer to *family systems theory*, while Majerus, Smith—and, occasionally, Blessing—use the term *Bowen theory*. Below, I will employ the term *social systems theory*, since its application is broader than the family and the term Bowen theory is not yet widely used. Without further ado, we can now turn to the theoretical perspective provided by social systems theory, as developed by Murray Bowen, after which Paul's letter to the Galatian assemblies will be analyzed using social systems theory as an interpretive lens. But, first, let us unpack social systems theory.

Theoretical Perspective: Social Systems Theory

Social systems theory is first and foremost a systems theory. At the outset, the family was the location for the clinical observations, but the theory soon proved valid across a wide range of social systems.[14] The fundamental observation is that "a change in one part of the system is followed by compensatory change in other parts of the system."[15] Social systems theory illuminates the aspect of resilience in human interaction by describing the systemic functioning in societal and social life, while also acknowledging the prevalence of overlapping social systems. Differentiation is the extent of individual variation that is supported within the system.[16] However, it must not be confused with the difference that arises when one individual dominates over another, or when one group is ascribed certain characteristics by another group. It is therefore important to note that differentiation requires that under- and over-functioning is avoided and that *individual variation* is supported by the system. Differentiation implies that the individual is given

the possibility to develop his or her *solid self* in contrast to the pseudo-selves that are developed when the individual is forced to adapt to the preferences or habits of others.[17]

In situations of hardship and stress, social systems with a high level of differentiation react with less severe symptoms and need less time for recovery, compared to social systems with lower levels of differentiation.[18] Therefore, openness to individual variation is central to societal *resilience*. Resilience is here the capacity of a system to absorb disturbances without changing its basic structures and overall identity.[19] While most systems go through cycles, a system may move through a threshold from which it cannot return—at least not without help from overlapping systems. If that happens, the system's overall identity is transformed, and significant functionality can be lost. For instance, fertile soil can become desert, or a region can collapse into civil war.[20] In such situations, the system most likely needs support from other overlapping systems to stand a chance at recovery.

However, in experiences of stress, systems with a low level of differentiation commonly face problems with *reactive emotions*, which implies that an emotional reaction becomes detached from its original situation.

When a system is burdened beyond its emotional capacity, *reactive emotions* come into play. These describe the emotions that have become disconnected from the situation in which they emerged, while still causing reactions within the system.[21] In the undifferentiated social system, the pain or anxiety in one person is experienced by the whole system, but no one is capable of asking about the causes of these emotions, for the intellectual system is overruled by the emotional system. When efforts are directed at extinguishing reactive emotions, the strategies adopted are usually harmful to the system itself, and the members of that system may find it difficult to stay emotionally connected.[22] These strategies fall into three main categories:

- emotional and/or geographical distance;
- conflict/harassment;
- over- and under-functioning.[23]

These strategies are not mutually exclusive, so two or more are often combined. But none of them—alone or in combination—can be expected to contribute positively to solving a problem or dealing with the situation. They are short-term approaches to handling emotions which are experienced as unbearable, emotions that will most likely return and need to be ameliorated again. Take, for example, revenge as a means of handling grief. The undesirable emotion of loss is turned into *conflict*. This is also most likely a case of *over-functioning*, which implies acting as if having more knowledge and control over the situation than one does, while also acting as if knowing how to deal with it, namely with aggression. The exclusion of another member from the group may be another example of *distance*. The excluded member may not even be the one responsible for the situation at hand but is nonetheless

appraised by others as expendable to the group (or may simply lack sufficient measures of safety and protection from the group).[24] An unspoken agreement not to talk about a sensitive topic follows the same pattern, namely as an attempt to isolate emotions from conscious and purposeful scrutiny. Finally, it can be noted that if an act of revenge is accomplished, the emotion of grief is probably still there, and the loss that stirred the emotion continues to be as real and present as before.[25]

In cases of under-functioning, some members or subgroups are reduced to functioning below their level of competence and capacity. On the other hand, when measures are taken to benefit from existing knowledge, democratic models for decision-making are generally most efficient. But such models require an openness to the development of alternatives.[26] As social systems with a low level of differentiation tend to seek unity through an idea of sameness, the unfortunate consequence is that creativity is heavily restricted in the process. As noted, if *emotional reactions* turn into reactive emotions, the emotional aspects might overrule intellectual considerations, thus impeding the decision-making process.[27] As Blessing notes, a social system with low level of differentiation "makes emotionally determined decisions to allay the societal anxiety of the moment."[28] In cases of over-functioning, some members are correspondingly elevated to function above their capacity and competence with the likely consequence that less informed decisions are made and the implementation of such decisions are carried out in a substandard way.

Systems with a high level of differentiation, on the other hand, allow their members to develop diverse competences without this being perceived as a threat to the unity of the group. In such settings, identity can be conceived of as being *oneself* rather than being the *same*.[29] Since the identity of the collective group is not fused into an *undifferentiated ego mass*, the emotional reaction in a member can be endured without the whole system becoming emotionally affected.[30] As other types of illness are understandable reactions to specific circumstances, emotional illness is a reasonable reaction to specific life circumstances and experiences. However, there are treatments that will assist the social system in recovering from such emotional illness. In this case, an increased level of differentiation would be a resource for the members of the system to analyze the situation from different perspectives while seeking solutions through both joint and individual deliberate action.

Given that a high level of differentiation is an advantage to the social system with regard to its resilience and flourishing, it would be fair to assume that any attempt to increase the level of differentiation would be welcomed with open arms by the rest of the system. But this is often not the case. An attempt to increase the level of differentiation is commonly met with hostility by other members of that group.[31] The reactions against a subgroup or person who attempts to increase the level of differentiation tend to follow the same pattern, in the same chronological order.

First, the motives of that particular group or person are questioned. Often such initial responses say much about the value system of the group. For instance, remarks like "she is only egoistic," "he only wants to show-off," "they only want to live on welfare," may be examples of such accusations in the contemporary world. These particular accusations may have nothing or little to do with the subgroup or individual who makes the attempt at increased differentiation. They do, however, reflect the cultural values that one should not be egoistic or show-off but instead should contribute to the common good—in ways that the accuser recognizes and deems acceptable. Naturally, it can be difficult—or outright impossible—to determine if such accusations are fair and reasonable, unless one knows a little about the increasers from previous accounts. Besides, as most of us are a little bit egoistic, a little bit vain, a little bit lazy, it is also a question about proportion—and whether it is reasonable to assume that these traits indeed are the motivations behind the attempt to increase diversity.

Since the value system is often shared by the increasers themselves, such accusations of insincere motives—even if inaccurate—are often enough to make them step back in line.[32] If the increasing party persists, however, this subgroup or individual is likely to be threaten with exclusion.[33] In late modern times (as well as in Antiquity), immigrants or religious minorities are frequently attacked with vague accusations of criminality, deprivation, and otherwise disorderly behavior. Therefore, nationalist parties can run precisely on the promise that they will exclude immigrants and will not receive refugees. In Roman antiquity, for example, Jews were expelled from Rome after a great fire. Being a minority with limited political power, and as most Jews lived in an area that was largely unharmed, they were an easy target. Politically, their exclusion provided a way for Roman authorities to redirect attention away from the fact that the city had been unable control the fire. But the expediency in blaming a minority had naturally no corresponding effect on future precaution and fire prevention, and the system only became less resilient. Strategies of emotional and geographical distance are commonly harmful to the system itself.[34] As this phase in the process toward an increased level of differentiation is potentially dangerous, strategies to maintain emotional equilibrium run the risk of even *decreasing* the level of differentiation. Unless security and safety are provided for every member in the system, violence can be used to effect distance (or under-functioning).

Again, if the increasing subgroup or person persists and overcomes the threat of exclusion, the system enters a third phase, that is, the acceptance of the formerly marginalized group or person. The level of differentiation in the social system is thus increased—with improved resilience as a result.[35]

Investigating a social system from a social systems perspective does not make historical criticism unnecessary—on the contrary. The more one knows about the system, the more easily and accurately its movements and interactions can be seen.[36] Therefore, knowledge about the historical situation of

Galatians is essential for anyone who seeks to understand the movements of the social systems as described in this letter.

The Historical Situation and Galatians

The region of Galatia was located at the outskirts of the Roman empire. It is hard to know how the relation to Rome was perceived by the Galatian addressees.[37] Taxation was typically not imposed on *friends*—that is, more or less equal partners or allies—but on the subjects of conquered nations.[38] As Richard Horsley correctly notes, the specialness of every relation was the fundamental aspect binding society together: there were no universal standard of taxation.[39] But imperial Rome was also known to demand from subdued cities and regions that they observe Roman imperial holidays.[40] According to an inscription found in Laconia, south of Galatia, the city was obliged to arrange a six-day theatrical festival (or be fined 2,000 drachmas).[41] As individuals and subgroups were interwoven into intricate nets of relationships and obligations, the space for agency and transformation could be quite limited. When entire cities were compelled to pledge faithfulness to the Roman emperor, such coercion naturally resulted in under- and over-functioning rather than mutually strengthening, beneficial relations.[42] Therefore, if also Jewish holidays were imposed on the Galatians under the threat of exclusion, such intrusion was perhaps not essentially different from Romans' bullying subjects into cultural submission.[43]

The ideal of the cosmopolitan figure could be found in popular culture in both Greek and Roman settings but, in practice, strangers were generally viewed with suspicion. They could be exiled offenders, persons running from enslavement, or deserters from military operations (the concepts of human rights and political asylum had yet to be invented).[44] Even if there happened to be a Jewish group in Galatia, this group would most likely be interested in a letter of recommendation to support the stranger's position within the group and allay suspicions.[45] The letter to the Galatians itself attests to the Galatian assemblies' willingness to accept at least one stranger into fellowship: Paul. Despite the weakness that was perceived in his collective body (ἀσθένεια τῆς σαρκός), he had been accepted as one of them.[46] The system of the Christ-faithful thereby increased its level of differentiation when it incorporated a person from another nation and region, if the system was not already characterized by a high level of differentiation. Moreover, according to Paul's depiction in his letter, persons could be accepted into fellowship among the Christ-faithful regardless of their religio-ethnic identity, social class, sex, and gender.

The societies around the Mediterranean basin were commonly characterized by their fragmentation into different groups and subgroups.[47] In Greek and Roman upper-class discourse, the dominating position of certain groups could be described as a trait of civilization.[48] Even the estimations of the severity of crimes were generally based upon the collective identity of the offender and the aggrieved party, respectively (accountability was emphasized

in persons with lower social status, while upper-class persons often escaped correction).[49] As noted, the weakness in Paul's σάρξ as depicted in Galatians might refer to his weak position within his collective group, but, as his letters convey, he originally belonged to a well-educated and influent stratum of society. Therefore, it is quite noteworthy that, according to his own account, Paul was subjected to several corrections (cf. Jews lashes and Romans rods), which likely left lingering physical marks in addition to the damage inflicted upon his reputation.[50] Therefore, Paul's ἀσθένεια τῆς σαρκός—his weak position within his collective group—can easily be imagined as a test to the Galatians. Would they trust their own judgment of the character of this newcomer or would they rather rely upon the judgment of others?

It can be noted that, in the opening of the letter, Paul addresses two or more assemblies (ἐκκλησία) in Galatia. The multiple recipients could reflect geographical spreading, different strata of society, or other organizational aspects, but the letter does not display the plurality of assemblies in the region as problematic to Paul.[51] From the vantage of social systems theory, the prevalence of several assemblies does not imply an impediment to the resilience in the system—so long as no subgroup or individual was allowed to dominate over the others (cf. under- and over-functioning). In fact, the risk of under- and over-functioning can be equally severe when there is only one assembly.[52] Importantly, the term ἐκκλησία was normally used in referring to the Greek city assemblies, in which decisions were made and every citizen had the right to speak.[53] In contrast to such city councils, however, Paul's letter to the Galatian assemblies of God explicitly states that enslaved persons, women, and immigrants could be members of these ἐκκλησίαι.[54] As noted earlier, Paul claims that the distinctions between free or enslaved, male or female, and citizen or foreigner have been removed—distinctions that otherwise were commonly given major importance.[55] In Paul's view, neither male circumcision nor foreskin avails anything.[56]

In earlier research, much attention has been focused on the specific role of Paul as an apostle, but, as Bernard Lategan notes, "interpreting Galatians in terms of apostolic authority is misleading."[57] According to Paul, the integrity and authenticity of the message cannot be secured by its being delivered by any particular messenger (cf. ἡμεῖς ἢ ἄγγελος ἐξ οὐρανοῦ).[58] As described earlier, Paul's opening curse is most likely not directed against another *messenger* but against another *message* (ἀνάθεμα ἔστω; it [the message] be cursed).[59] The exhortation than an erroneous message must be rejected—even if proclaimed by Paul himself or by a messenger from heaven—is far removed from the concept of apostolic authority.[60] Instead, Paul encourages the addressees to keep to what they themselves have experienced and they themselves have understood, a rhetorical strategy to which we will return.[61] As he describes how he wished to win approval from the representatives of the Jerusalem assembly for his Gospel, he also makes it clear that he would not adapt his message to win such approval.[62] If the integrity of the message is more important than himself (or any other person for that matter), the addressees are free to

connect their identity with God—together with Paul.[63] Rather than claiming apostolic authority—whatever that might be—Paul's general commitment to communication and persuasion (cf. deliberative discourse) indicates a fairly equal relationship between himself and the addressees.[64]

Moreover, Paul mentions his commitment to "remember the poor in Jerusalem," which is indicative not only of sharing privileges and alleviating grief, but also of establishing and maintaining a bond of fellowship between the assemblies in Galatia and those in Judea.[65] As Paul notes elsewhere, he and his fellow workers provide πνευματικά (spiritual things) and, therefore, they would expect to receive some σαρκικά back, that is, such privileges or sustenance that was normally derived from being included in a collective identity and a collective group.[66] Accepting a gift was never seen as an isolated event but the receiver would be seen as obliged to return the gift in due time and in due measure; a gift which then would be returned again.[67] In Paul's view, both Jews and Gentiles were included into the assemblies of God by means of Christ's faithfulness and God's grace.[68] While the corresponding faithfulness of the Galatians extends to the assemblies in Judea, this bond seems to include fellowship between the dispossessed and the resourceful.[69] In other words, Paul encourages the perception that the Jerusalem assembly and the Galatian assemblies belong together in the same system despite their geographical distance and various levels of resourcefulness.

Nevertheless, in Galatians, Paul's opening curse against an indistinct "other message" speaks in favor of the perception that the credibility of his own message had been challenged.[70] In Paul's view, those who would compel the Galatians to adopt the custom of male circumcision desire to "make a good face" (εὐπροσωπῆσαι) in the collective group, that is, to build up their reputation as a collective group—or for them personally within that group; ἐν σαρκί—as a means to avoid persecution.[71] However, if a good reputation is conceived of as the means to avoid persecution—rather than the group making joint efforts to avoid persecution for both disgraced and honored—the risk for persecution against the disgraced prevails. It follows that if a sign for promise and faithfulness (cf. covenant) can be transformed into a sign of exclusivity and distinction, it can easily be turned into a sign for exclusion and distance as well. In Galatians, Paul describes the latter as a misguided application of the law, since the curse of the law is removed.[72] Therefore, the aim of making a "good face" or sustaining a collective identity is too shallow for a spiritual endeavor. While the letter may indicate that Paul's own inclusion has been questioned, Paul affirms that he bears the "marks of Jesus" (τὰ στίγματα τοῦ Ἰησοῦ) and asks the addressees to trouble him no more.[73]

Tensions between Social Systems

Crucifixion indicates a tense relation, to say the least. As an example of Roman capacity for excessive—if legal—violence, it was widely used. According to social systems theory, the tension in one system is likely to affect other

overlapping systems as well. The Galatian assemblies' willingness to accept a crucified Christ at the center of their fellowship attests to their capacity to relate to experiences of severe persecution and violence without becoming involved in similar tensions themselves.[74] Persecution might also have been the reason for Paul traveling thus far away from his well-known roads and regions. In the letter itself, Paul mentions the addressees' willingness to accept himself in fellowship despite the weakness that was in his σάρξ (here interpreted as his *collective body*).[75] The willingness of the addressees to accept a person who had suffered aggression and dishonor into fellowship may suggest that they had either experience from similar trials themselves, or that they were able to relate to experiences different from their own—which both attests to the high level of differentiation in their social system. In his letter, Paul therefore bids the addressees to remember that Christ was presented to them as crucified before they dedicate themselves to persecuting outliers.[76] They seem to have a high level of differentiation, established earlier, to fall back upon now that the going has gotten rough.

In a situation that is appraised as a crisis or a threat, the desire for conformity can emerge in any collective group. Therefore, such desire for conformity should not be associated with the Jewish community or any particular social system (cf. projection) since it could occur anywhere. Moreover, the prevalence of overlapping systems is often important to the understanding of systemic movements. Within the Roman empire, both Galatians and Jews presented minorities that—if allowed to function on their actual level of competence—would increase the level of diversity within that system.[77] If the encouragement to keep Jewish customs (such as male circumcision) suggests an attempt to increase the level of differentiation in the diaspora, the same encouragement could decrease the level of differentiation internally within that group—especially if accompanied by threats of exclusion.[78] Paul's earlier commitment to "preach circumcision" might have addressed deviants within his Jewish community—such as uncircumcised Jewish men or non-Jewish men who wanted to participate in the Jewish community—but that is not important as long as his preaching resulted in persecution and destruction.[79] In other words, shifting or establishing a collective identity is never done in a social vacuum.[80] Since a decreased level of differentiation would be harmful to the resilience in the system, such calls for conformity in times of stress are most unfortunate.[81]

It may be difficult to discern whether the members of the Galatian assemblies had anything to gain economically and politically from being incorporated into the Jewish collective identity.[82] Naturally, it depends on both the original social status of the person who shifted collective identity and the position which that person would receive when incorporated into the Jewish group.[83] As Paul notes within his account of the story of Hagar, merely being included into another collective identity does not guarantee an honored position within that social system. Indeed, the social position of the Galatian addressees may be as fragile as Hagar's.[84] Besides, the question of gain belongs

to the paradigm of calculation and exploitation (cf. distance) rather than service and love.[85] Moreover, in the situation described in the letter, rather than being tempted by the prospects of gain from becoming incorporated into the Jewish collective identity, the members of the assemblies in Galatia seem to have feared being marginalized from a group to which they already belonged (cf. the body of Christ).[86] Therefore, the risk for exclusion may have spoken more loudly than the prospects for gain.

The Galatian Assemblies as a Social System

In Roman antiquity, there was obviously nothing neutral in reintegrating (and elevating) the former victim of crucifixion.[87] However, if the portrayal of the crucified Christ does not lend itself to the construct of a neutral collective identity, it can still be taken to support the construct of an *inclusive* collective identity (cf. the truth of the Gospel).[88] Paul's suggestion that the Galatian assemblies are, together with Isaac, children of Abraham supports a high level of differentiation in that social system.[89] Moreover, as Paul locates Jesus within the tribe of David, Christ is not only a concept or an idea but also a person with a face and a fate.[90] Hence, the portrayal of Christ as crucified is described as an historical event from which the addressees can draw their own conclusions.[91] The name Israel is not given to someone else, but Paul's concluding prayer expresses the wish for peace upon as many as live according to this rule (i.e., the inclusive table fellowship) *and* for mercy upon God's Israel—which is still subject to imperial rule.[92] In Galatians, the liberation from enforced assimilation or enforced distinction is the central issue. Therefore, the very assumption that the Galatians must choose is a vain attempt to lure them into believing that the open-table fellowship is an anomaly.[93]

According to Paul, "neither male circumcision nor foreskin [is] anything"; instead the situation calls for the renewal of creation.[94] It can be noted that Paul leaves space for an intersectional perspective when he states that there is "neither Jew nor Greek, neither enslaved nor free, neither male nor female" but they are all "one in Christ" and "heirs according to promise."[95] While his claim that neither male circumcision nor foreskin avails anything may have been provocative to many, it would strengthen the resilience in the system if the removal of distinctions implied that no one was given authority, privilege, or safety at the expense of others (cf. under- and over-functioning; conflict, harassment, and distance).[96] Paul suggests that the very principle of exclusivity is rejected. In his view, God's promise and covenant are foundational to the self-understanding of both Jews and Galatians.[97] Rather than being enforced to shift their collective identity (cf. enslavement), the addressees are held accountable for their actions and convictions. In other words, these identities are not merged but simply placed together—not conflated but connected. Again, as seen from the perspective of social systems theory, this is indicative of a high level of differentiation. As Paul describes the open-table

fellowship as the gospel that has been revealed to him, this new-found freedom implies that they are enabled and allowed to love their neighbor.[98]

In relation to the aforementioned call for conformity (cf. male circumcision; separate tables; the celebration of specific days and seasons), Paul claims that such traits are simply irrelevant to their inclusion in Christ.[99] Additionally, in his list of borders that are now insignificant or "nothing," Paul also mentions enslaved (δοῦλος) and free (ἐλεύθερος); male (ἄρσην) and female (θῆλυς).[100] Paul's removing the border between male and female works against the marginalization of one group or identity (cf. distance; under- and over-functioning), and the removal of the border between enslaved and free undermines the very institution of enslavement. Its structure was engendered for the exploitation of some persons by other persons.[101] When the border between such identities is removed, exploitation and subordination can be replaced by mutually reinforcing relationships, including service and gratitude. The system is then transformed in profound ways (cf. renewed creation). Paul describes the attitude he wants to see in Philemon toward the enslaved Onesimus thus: "If you count me as a partner, receive him [Onesimus] as you would me."[102] As Paul elaborates the issue in 1 Corinthians, enslavement should be avoided; enslaved persons should leave enslavement if possible (and expedient), and free persons should avoid becoming enslaved. But if enslavement could not be avoided, the enslaved person should still remain with God.[103]

Moreover, as Klara Butting suggests, Paul's allusion to Genesis 2:24 indicates a reception of that passage that liberates both men and women from gender polarity.[104] While the phrase could be interpreted as suggesting the abolition of marriage and the returning to a primordial androgynous state—which would imply a decreased level of differentiation—the phrase could also be interpreted as validating and affirming the possibility of difference while also removing the borders.[105] Besides, it is possible that Paul employed the terms ἄρσην and θῆλυς precisely in order to avoid the misunderstanding that there is no longer husband/man (ἀνήρ) and wife/woman (γυνή). As Paul expresses his opinions elsewhere, contracts of marriage must not be neglected or terminated lightly.[106] From a social systems perspective, Paul's acknowledging the same amount of agency and accountability in both spouses is interesting.[107] Possibly he means that in ways similar to Jew and Greek, both male and female are integrated in the same social system in-Christ; not conflated but interconnected.

From Paul's perspective, every collective identity must be handled with care in order to avoid it becoming a sign of exclusion and marginalization. In Christ, members can be both Jewish and Greek, enslaved and free, or male and female without necessarily splitting into separate groups or having to choose one identity over the other. Especially in the case of enslavement, the risk for marginalization must have been severe. As Lategan notes, Paul's claim that his Gospel does not follow human preferences should "not be misunderstood as reflecting an anti-human attitude or a negative evaluation

of human existence as such […] But it does mean that the gospel implies an 'Umwertung aller Werte', a reversal of currently accepted norms."[108] In describing his suggestions for a renewed approach to collective identity, Paul assumes that the old paradigm is as good as dead. Something new is flourishing. The Galatian assemblies are now free to love their neighbor. As Paul concludes his hortatory section, "let us not grow weary while doing good […] as we have opportunity, let us do good to all, but especially to those who are the household of faithfulness."[109] Indeed, something new is flourishing—or at least *was*. In Paul's description, the addressees consider taking steps toward enslavement: they seem to be all back at square one, as if Paul would have to give birth to the same children twice.[110]

Paul's Communicative Strategies

We have noted that the deliberative character of Paul's letter to the assemblies of Galatia suggests more mutually beneficial relationships than, for example, the enslaver/enslaved relationship.[111] Standing in dialogue requires a higher level of differentiation compared to giving and receiving orders; dialogue requires that its participants have more solid selves than what is presupposed in systems characterized by the under- and over-functioning of pseudo-selves.[112] As seen from the perspective of social systems theory, Paul's aiming at persuasion indicates a high level of differentiation in the system: everyone is *not* assumed to endorse the same views but the mutual assessment of each other's opinions is essential to the decision-making processes. This approach can be placed in contrast to social systems in which everyone is assumed to think similarly and systems from which deviants either leave voluntarily or are excluded.[113] As Sylvia Chan notes, the "freedom to formulate and advocate political alternatives" must be included even in a minimalist definition of democracy.[114] Similarly, Lars Laird Iversen suggests that democratic societies are characterized by *the way* in which people do not think the same.[115] Having different opinions is not an impediment to dialogue but foundational to dialogue. Persuasion, after all, assumes that different positions can be taken and argued.

Of course, the concept of persuasion does not entail that every opinion is equally good or equally well-founded. Paul assumes the existence of a variety of views, some of which are more beneficial to the system (cf. the truth of the Gospel) while others are outright destructive (cf. the call for conformity). Only when the participants are enabled to reach their own conclusions, and to argue their own cases, can a fruitful dialogue take place. On the other hand, a sense of togetherness that is structured around an assumed *sameness* is an impediment to dialogue—enforced sameness restricts the space for open dialogue even more. In Paul's view, the addressees should trust in their own discernment and hold on to their convictions.[116] No human—not even a messenger from heaven—can guarantee the integrity of the Gospel. Therefore, instead of letting someone else into their minds (cf. being bewitched) or

letting others dictate their doing (cf. submitting to the desire of the σάρξ), they are encouraged to remember what they themselves have experienced and learned.[117] As the addressees are entrusted to make their own assessment, relying upon their own judgment, in Paul's view, they are capable of recognizing the Gospel—even if a familiar and perhaps authoritative voice suddenly got it wrong.[118]

Therefore, the addressees should not place themselves *under* the law but rather stand in dialogue with the law, as Paul does.[119] Merely saying "it says in the Scripture" does not suffice, since most passages can be interpreted in several ways.[120] For instance, according to Paul, the story about Hagar does not articulate that the Galatians (or any other group) must be expelled unless they are assimilated and conform to Jewish identity markers. Ismael, after all, was circumcised—which was completely unhelpful when Sarah's desire for exclusivity was transferred to Isaac.[121] The story thus conveys that the sign itself availed nothing.[122] Instead, according to Paul, the *principle* of exclusive collective identity must be cast out.[123] Tolerance cannot tolerate intolerance, or intolerance will consume tolerance. In other words, not even every interpretation of Scripture holds up to scrutiny, but the addressees must make up their mind and adhere to what they know to be true—and then act accordingly.[124] One aspect of the offense of the cross can therefore be understood as the offensive inclusion and reintegration of former convicts and deviants.[125] Another aspect is that applications of the law can go terribly wrong. Moreover, the scandal of the cross can be understood as the misguided and superficially legal violence on display in Jesus' crucifixion.[126] Therefore, in order to avoid such misapplications, the addressees and everyone who interprets the law must be held accountable for their interpretations.

In Galatians, the intellectual system does not appear to be overruled by the emotional system (even if Paul occasionally uses harsh language). For instance, Paul's criticism of Peter is delivered as a small but well-balanced speech.[127] Similarly, Paul's defense of the open-table fellowship in Galatia is made with some intellectual vigor. As discussed earlier in the book, the introductory narrative assumes the function of a *narratio* (in the Quintilian sense), that is, as indicating the basic convictions that will be argued; the following discourse is kept congruent within that ruling narrative. As the *narratio* holds the keys to the interpretation of the subsequent message, these keys are provided in the order that these topics will appear. In other words, the *narratio* can function as a *table of contents for the ears*.[128] Hence, the rhetorical structure of Galatians strengthens the impression of a well-balanced and proficiently argued case. Paul describes his Gospel clearly and coherently: the faithfulness of Jesus suggests the inclusion and fellowship with the *other* within the assemblies of God, and the non-gospel of exclusivity and conformity can be rejected. As his rhetorical style is aimed at persuasion, Paul does not make threats to effect coercion but rather assumes that the underlying system behind the call for circumcision must be scrutinized.[129]

However, not being *ruled* by the emotional system does not suggest being devoid of emotions.[130] If the letter constitutes a response to a challenge directed against Paul himself, it may be worth noting that Paul largely manages to avoid counterattacks and defamation of others. A possible exception is his comment that those who propose male circumcision do not keep the law themselves. Obviously they do, only in another way than Paul.[131] Paul's calling his audience foolish and bewitched is also quite rude—and he most likely had to pay: defamation like that would not have gone unnoticed (even if it was, perhaps, rhetorically efficient).[132] However, Paul does not even mention the identity of those who promote the custom of male circumcision among the Galatians; his comment that an erroneous message must rejected regardless of the social status of its messenger might imply that those who promoted circumcision among the Galatians had relatively strong positions within the movement.[133] Nevertheless, the level of sophistication in Paul's reasoning can be quite demanding. For instance, faithfulness and promise are described as solid "entities," while circumcision or foreskin is *nothing*.[134] Moreover, a *principle* must be excluded so that everyone can join; the *curse* of the law is excluded, but the law itself is not a curse. Finally, a message can be evaluated as distinct from the messenger and even an entrusted messenger can be wrong.[135] Each of these metapropositional bases can be highly emotional and still be argued intellectually.

Nevertheless, each of these statements that are mentioned previously requires a logic that is capable of distinguishing between a sign and its application. But, especially in times of stress, such capacity to distinguish between message and messenger often fails.[136] It can be experienced as more compelling (and far easier) to target specific individuals or subgroups with harassment and accusations than to scrutinize the underlying system that inform the situation—regardless of the lacking accuracy in such attacks.[137] In Galatia, for some reason, people seem willing to accept the narrative that uncircumcised men would be a problem for the assembly. Rather than asking what the sign of circumcision communicates in that particular situation, the sign is treated as if an object itself. Hence, a logically clear content can be difficult to communicate to a social system under pressure. Therefore, Paul's rhetorical strategy toward accountability may be clearly articulated but still hard to get across.[138] When the operative intellectual system is overruled by the emotional system, there is a strong tendency to focus on a person or subgroup rather than a principle.[139]

To Paul, the logic runs the other way. The fact that Christ was lawfully executed conveys that there was something wrong with that application of law. But when the risk for misapplications of the law is accepted, any application of the law can be estimated as just that: an *application*. Hence, no interpretation or application of the law can be taken as unmediated truth.[140] In Paul's words, the law was "ordained by messengers [*or* angels] by the hand of a mediator."[141] Naturally, it is not a trait specific to Roman or Jewish law. Every tradition or religion exists in the same reality; every tradition or law

is mediated. As the twentieth century Jewish scholar and mystic Gershom Scholem notes, "[r]evelation needs commentary in order to be rightly understood and applied."[142] It is important to note, however, that this aspect of tradition is not necessarily a disadvantage to the life within the community. Rather the necessity of accountability is an aspect that comes across more clearly: everyone who makes an interpretation or application is responsible for his or her interpretations and actions.[143] As Paul puts it, if the law could effect justice, Jesus would not have died.[144] People make things happen. We make interpretations and suggest applications, and those have consequences. In this case, an innocent person was executed.

Jesus' crucifixion highlights the necessity for people to be accountable for their actions instead of relying on applications of the law that might be incorrect—and never neutral. People who are included into fellowship regain their faces, which is fundamental to dialogue. There would be no point in making a structured argument if everyone already thinks the same, or if every way of thinking and acting would be equally beneficial to the system and congruent with the Spirit. Paul aims at persuasion. To summarize, Paul's rhetoric presumes a comparatively high level of differentiation in the social system in Galatia.[145]

Defending the Level of Differentiation

According to Paul, the Galatian addressees have received the Spirit and God has worked miracles among them. The level of differentiation has already been increased; now it needs to be defended. Paul expresses high expectations of the Galatians' capacity to ignore social pressure.[146] In his view, those who belong to Christ have "put on Christ" and "crucified" their *collective* identity (τὴν σάρκα ἐσταύρωσαν).[147] In this letter, the open-table fellowship is equivalent to the principle of living according to the Spirit. The offense of the cross includes that anyone—regardless of states of being dishonored—can be integrated in Christ's collective body: Christ was restored to life and revered as Lord.[148] However, when newcomers are forced to conform to conventions, the indispensable offense of the cross is lost: a spiritual adventure becomes just another construct of collective identity.[149] Nobody is neutral but everyone is able to relate actively to the measures of influence and trust that are given to them.[150] Conventions and customs are part of life, but it does not follow that they necessarily are adopted as means for discrimination and exclusion. The "curse within the law" can be removed and the increased level of diversity defended.

According to Paul, those who want to compel the Galatians to adopt the custom of circumcision want to "make a good face" (εὐπροσωπῆσαι) in the collective group (ἐν σαρκί).[151] If they desire to avoid persecution—which implies that they themselves experience pressure from others—they in turn might extend that pressure to the Galatian assemblies. Anyone would want to escape persecution—as an unknown future of marginalization and

harassment—but the question is whether one allows that fear to dictate one's behavior. In Paul's view, Peter withdrew from the open-table fellowship in Antioch not by conviction but out of fear of being excluded or wrongly judged by others; he was not even targeted by persecution yet.[152] Similarly, the Galatian addressees might fear being excluded or marginalized unless they conform, but fear itself is the first enslaver to which they must not willingly submit.[153] What characterizes a "good face" is highly subjective, and the collective group is therefore never a reliable source for guidance—especially since a collective group under pressure might suddenly marginalize other subgroups due to the perceived need to handle reactive emotions.

As social pressure can be resisted, the addressees would need encouragement and good arguments for defending their inclusion (without adaptation and assimilation) among the assemblies of God. In Paul's view, the Galatian assemblies have already crucified their collective identity and can therefore safely ignore any call for conformity.[154] Particularly if dominant or influential parts of the assemblies of Galatia desire that these assemblies adopt the custom of male circumcision, it would require conviction and some stamina to ignore such a call—but it can be done. What would happen to those who did not comply? Who could afford to refuse? Would they be excluded, persecuted, or marginalized? For how long? How would other overlapping systems react if they were excluded from their current collective identity as a subsystem within larger systems? It is possible that the Galatian assemblies were already in a vulnerable position within the larger society since they had accepted an exiled stranger such as Paul into fellowship. Additionally, as it seems, they had confessed loyalty to a crucified Christ from another region. Such connections could easily be looked upon as disloyalty or even treason.[155] Paul describes the addressees as free, "liberated for liberty," but living that way may be easier said than done.[156]

The implementation of Paul's message of a "crucified" collective identity can be challenging as such, but it is also challenging to anyone who perceives such constructs of collective identity to be a worthy goal.[157] Paul emphasizes that the "curse of the law" can be rejected and trespassers restored in a Spirit of gentleness, but following such principles of restoration and integration can be more complicated and arduous than simply excluding the trespasser or outlier.[158] Indeed, from the perspective of prominent subgroups or individuals, the exclusion, harassment, and marginalization of less influent subgroups can seem a more compelling option than healing.[159] In fact, the system may not always desire for the fruit of the Spirit to grow—even if that would be the best for everyone.[160] Social systems under pressure commonly desire to marginalize or exclude scapegoats without further sense or reason. When under- and over-functioning, conflict, and distance are perceived to be expedient strategies to restore emotional equilibrium, pervious experiences of fruitful conversation and cooperation can be ignored. Therefore, an attempt to initiate conflicts and facilitate distance between the perceived stressor and the system can be implemented under the false flag of necessity. In Paul's view, as

described in Galatians, the desire of the collective group directly opposes the Spirit—and must therefore be rejected as a guide to spiritual life.[161]

However, even if the barriers to restoration and integration may be high, they are not insurmountable. Transformation within a system is possible. Take, for instance, the every-day experience of an under-aged person having little or no authority "until the day his father has decided."[162] There is a time in every person's life during which one is *under* the rulers or rules (στοιχεῖα) of the world or, more specifically, *under* the law.[163] Paul points out that one's position develops during the life cycle: the current status may be temporary and something else can be latent.[164] Under-aged children are eventually freed from confinement. The barren woman can have "more children than the one who has a husband"; the naked grain will grow into a harvest: things change.[165] The important aspect here is that something can be true or relevant even if not manifest at the moment. Together, these proofs from the spheres of family life and agriculture are taken to support the perception that transformation is possible. Remaining *oneself* does not necessarily imply being the *same*.

In Paul's letter to the Galatians, the strongest and perhaps most provocative proof for the legitimate inclusion of the addressees is that the identity markers do not avail *anything*. Even if the Galatians were included into another collective group and identity, that would itself have no effect on how they treat one another—at least, no positive effect.[166] Rather than a resource for doing good, collective identities are often used as excuses for doing harm.[167] Not only are the identity markers astonishingly ineffective in effecting transformation, the works of collective groups are characterized by shortcomings and destruction.[168] Therefore, instead of being *under* the law (cf. initiates), the addressees are held accountable for their actions.[169] Even if strong forces within the system claim that a group must return to their phase of initiation (under-function); be punished (conflict/harassment); or even be excluded (distance) from the structures of justice unless they conform, such forces must be resisted.[170] On the other hand, the addressees' experiences of receiving the Spirit and God working miracles among them are not counted as proof—but as a resource: *remember* what you have experienced. In the same vein, the fruit of the Spirit as growing among them is not an achievement but a gift. They are included into justice and can afford to be grateful—and self-critical.[171]

To summarize, the level of differentiation describes the extent of individual variation that is supported within the social system. Even though the transition to a higher level of differentiation would make the whole system more resilient, opposition can be expected in relation to such attempts.[172] In his letter to the Galatian assemblies, Paul runs to the defense of an increased level of differentiation in the social system (i.e., the inclusion of the Galatians *qua* Galatians). Indications of hostility toward their inclusion are visible throughout the letter, as some other messenger in Galatia suggests that the Galatian addressees must be isolated unless they are assimilated. Paul forcefully argues

against this line of thinking. In his view, the perceived risk for exclusion causes the Galatian assemblies to act irrationally.[173]

In situations of emotional stress, the social system that is afflicted by reactive emotions is likely to adopt futile strategies—such as under- and over-functioning, conflict, and distance—in order to handle such emotions.[174] We will turn now to these aspects of social functioning and dysfunction to analyze them with social systems theory.

Under- and Over-Functioning

In the opening of the letter, Paul emphatically states that he is *not* a messenger from any group of humans (ἀπ' ἀνθρώπων), nor is he sent through of any person (δι' ἀνθρώπου) but "through Jesus Christ and God, the father, who raised him from the dead."[175] Paul's description of God's delivering him from his mother's womb similarly emphasizes God's relating directly to him. But does his perception of his being called by God make him fundamentally different from other human beings and his fellow believers? In other words, as expressed in this letter, does he assume a role of over-function in relation to the members of the assemblies of Galatia? My tentative answer would be negative. The central theme of the letter is that God has called the Galatians: Paul emphasizes their inclusion and calling as included in promise and grace, and he also emphasizes their accountability.[176] Moreover, the Galatian addressees are included as themselves. Rather than placing himself in a position of over-functioning in relation to the Galatians, Paul emphasizes that they are not subdued to any group or individual but free to live for God.[177]

While there is a period of formation in every person's life, during which the under-aged is *under* the law, being taught the ways and the customs and inhabiting the role of a student or apprentice, that period necessarily ends.[178] There is nothing problematic with *having been* an apprentice or initiate: problems arise when a full-grown and knowledgeable people are incited to return to the role of under-functioning as if their maturity, discernment, and expertise did not exist.[179] Paul has left the position of being *under* the law himself, and he is no longer *under* other humans.[180] Likewise, the Galatian assemblies must resist the call for under-functioning that demands from them that they behave as if they did not know what they already know. In this context, Paul's description of himself as having been sent to them does *not* require their under-functioning. Instead, Paul bids the addressees to remember their "coming of age" as sons and heirs, no longer enslaved but freed.[181] If the call for male circumcision presupposes that the Galatians must return to a state of initiation, that call must be ignored.[182] Paul describes it as painful to see the Galatians assuming to role of needing to return to their mother's womb—a state of ignorance—as if they needed to be born once more.[183] They should have moved on by now: being confined to the role of a child after coming of age is unnecessary and damaging to both the individual and the collective group.

It has been noted that Paul's communicative strategy includes encouraging the addressees to trust in their capability to recognize the truth themselves. Rather than being dependent upon others, they can move away from under-functioning.[184] In his rebuke, Paul expresses his astonishment at their turning to another "gospel" instead of keeping to the One who called them in the grace of Christ.[185] In this setting, their *submissiveness* is regrettable. Confidence or boldness would be preferable. As they are all one—both Jews and Greeks, both enslaved and free, both male and female—there is no call for the under-functioning of any particular group in the letter.[186] As the grace of Christ embraces all of them, there is no legitimate reason for anyone to assume a role of over-functioning or to keep someone else under their thumb.[187] Instead, the open-table fellowship is described as the truth of the Gospel and the call for conformity or submission is the alien "non-gospel" that Paul addresses.[188] Paul's designations of the Galatians as "foolish" and "bewitched" are clearly insulting, but rather than accusing the addressees of lacking intellectual resources (ἀνόητοι), Paul accuses them of not *using* their resources.[189] Rather than accusing them of being unruly and self-indulgent, he accuses them of being under the influence of someone else (τίς ὑμᾶς ἐβάσκανεν). His rhetoric is aimed at encouraging the addressees to trust in their capacity for recognizing the truth.

In Galatians, Paul emphasizes the need for accountability. Misconduct appears among humans regardless of their collective identity (cf. the work of the σάρξ), and those who behave in such ways do not inherit the kingdom of God.[190] In other words, certain actions are harmful both to members of the collective body, and to the system itself (e.g., adultery, fornication, idolatry, sorcery, hatred, contentions, outbursts of wrath, envy, and murders), and are therefore to be avoided. In this setting, Paul assumes that those who belong to Christ have crucified their σάρξ together with its passions and desires—but such passions are not equivalent with sexual desire. Instead, the crucifixion of the σάρξ likely acknowledges that the addressees and the other assemblies of God no longer assume their inclusion into a specific collective group as their ruling narrative. As members of the body of the no-body—the once-crucified Christ—they are liberated to include the neighbor in service and love. The collective group may desire an exclusive sense of collective identity but, in fact, that makes it ill-equipped to handle its real problems. As opposed to dealing with misconduct and transgression—which all agree must be done—the call for male circumcision and separate tables offers a false solution to real problems. Additionally, people who do not want to be accountable for their behavior is a real problem.

In Paul's depiction of the incident in Antioch (cf. *narratio*), Peter withdrew from the open-table fellowship out of fear for being misjudged by some people from Jacob.[191] Despite knowing that participation in open-table fellowship would do no harm to neither the other participants nor to himself (cf. transgression), Peter withdrew, according to Paul, for the sake of appearance.[192] In terms of under- and over-functioning, Peter acted as if he were still

under the law—under-aged and immature—when he was fully capable of discerning the truth and living *by* the law together with others. Again, the issue is not the existence and expressions of law, customs, or tradition, but their use as a means for inclusion/exclusion.[193] Paul makes a distinction between God's promise (primary relevance) and the law (secondary relevance): these are not contradictory but, if correctly understood, work in different ways.[194] As seen from this perspective, using the law to force people into submission is an *abuse* of the law.[195] Peter should be able to choose another path than those from Jacob without fearing punishment or harassment for his participation in the fellowship of the open table.[196] Indeed, his fear of being marginalized seems to have caused him to function below his actual level of competence. Other people, together with the law itself, should be appreciated as a relevant dialogue partners.[197] Merely being *other*—or in communion with someone who is *other*—is not transgression.[198]

Confronting (real) transgression opens a space for restoration.[199] When transgression does need to be addressed, there are several options. In peaceful and generous times, Jesus' marks of inclusion would probably have secured both his position within the collective group and his right to have a fair trial (cf. δικαιοσύνη). But when the pressure on the system increased—and defending the diversity in the social system was more urgent than ever—people may have gone in the opposite direction.[200] In this setting, for instance, the strain on the system applied by the Roman empire may have made the Jewish communities turn upon themselves.[201] As Jesus was executed as a slave, his signs for inclusion into justice availed nothing: he became a target for excessive violence.[202] This is not surprising, however, for while the resilience in the system is reduced when subgroups or individuals are compelled to under- and over-function, there is also an increased risk for violence.[203] We will now turn to conflict and harassment as a strategy to deal with reactive emotions.

Conflict and Harassment

In Paul's depiction, the call for assimilation by adopting the rite of male circumcision causes the addressees to "bite and devour one another to the point of being consumed by each other."[204] As a sign for conformity—rather than integrity and promise—male circumcision seems to have become incorporated into a structure of exclusivity and exclusion. Conflict is almost inevitable. Paul notes that he could wish that those who trouble the Galatians assemblies would *exclude themselves* rather than being allowed to bully people.[205] In this setting, it may be relevant to note that Paul does not threaten the so-called troublemakers with exclusion. He refutes their message, but he does not hit back. Try as he might to avoid getting involved in the addressees' biting and devouring, he is not completely successful. His curse over their message in the beginning of the letter can be read as though he is cursing them.[206] Besides, even if accurate to depict the proponents of male circumcision as disinterested in the law, it still comes across as a bit slanderous.[207]

Trying to restore the proponents of another gospel in a Spirit of gentleness, the quarreling atmosphere that is depicted in the letter extends to the rhetoric of the letter itself—albeit perhaps on smaller scale.

That said, conflict is not always destructive. As a matter of fact, it can be precisely the creative process of listening and speaking—and thus becoming persuaded or persuading someone else—that is the core of a healthy decision-making process. Nevertheless, when people are targeted with accusations, or excluded on the grounds, of being different or non-conforming rather than for committing a specific crime or transgression, the whole conflict might be just a strategy to alleviate reactive emotions. This is also a question of proportion. Even if Paul would have committed crimes or made serious mistakes, it is hard to imagine their warranting the list of punishments that he rattles off. According to 2 Corinthians, he received forty minus one stripes five times; was beaten with rods three times; was stoned (once), and was frequently imprisoned.[208] Similarly, Jesus' crucifixion stands in peculiar proportion to what he seems to have said and done (even if our records are made by his adherents). Even if conflicts are not always destructive, destructive conflicts may turn into harassment and persecution. Paul's attempt at persuasion presents another tack.

In Galatians, Paul emphasizes the question of *how* someone caught in trespass be corrected, and he suggests that restoration should be carried out in the spirit of gentleness.[209] In this sense, Paul's gospel does not only mirror the non-gospel position (cf. distance) but also suggests another principle.[210] He does not suggest another set of identity markers but instead emphasizes their insignificance. Accordingly, fellowship with someone from other group is not transgression. And, as the boundaries between collective identities have been removed, they are nothing to quarrel about.[211] But when someone is overtaken in trespass—that is, harming someone or something—correction should not be exploited as an occasion for harassment and conflict.[212] Therefore, the shame of the trespass should be carried collectively. When that happens, the risk for emotional distance and harassment is parried. As people are held accountable for their actions, corrections should be reasonable and no one should be punished on occasion (cf. the situation of enslaved persons).[213] When Paul urges the addressees to become like him as he has become like them, this is a plea to become compeers, as brothers and sisters, again. He continues: "You did me no injustice" (or "You did not harm me; οὐδέν με ἠδικήσατε").[214] In other words, Paul does *not* suggest that they must become identical—or even similar—but that they should accept one another as included into justice and as having the same right to be given a fair trial (cf. δικαιοσύνη).

Paul encourages the addressees to avoid blind fealty to individuals or groups. Instead, one should seek out and obey the truth. A higher level differentiation would likely have allowed more flexibility. Some might choose to adopt the custom of male circumcision, while others could choose otherwise. But a system with low level of differentiation—or a social system

under pressure—may assume that conformity is necessary. Here, flexibility is replaced by rigidity and choice by mandate, for its functioning is built on the false premise that domination, submission, isolation, or harassment would cure emotional stress. When the emotional system overrules the intellectual system, such strategies of harassment and conflict can continue to target new subgroups and individuals.[215] While the fruit of the Spirit cannot grow in a climate characterized by striving either for prominence and domination (over- and under-functioning), or provocation and envy (conflict and harassment), its growth can also be inhibited by emotional and geographical distance.

Distance

While there are behaviors that are harmful to the system and its members, fellowship across borders is not one of them. It can be noted that Paul's gospel does not simply mirror the non-gospel position (cf. distance) but suggests other foundational principles.[216] In relation to people being divided into out- or in-group, his idea is not simply to move the borders elsewhere but also to *remove* them.[217] In contrast to correction that deepens the divide between the corrected and the one who corrects, Paul suggests bearing one another's burdens.[218] Moreover, fellowship with a stranger is not to be counted as transgression. As Paul emphasizes in the introduction, he will not rebuild what he has destroyed.[219] In systems afflicted by reactive emotions, however, occasions for correction, and the constructs of collective identity, can be appropriated as occasions for distance, harassment, or under- and over-functioning.[220] In this sense, distance can be adopted as a strategy for handling reactive emotions, but when the shame in failure is carried collectively, it may become apparent that the convict is never completely different from the judge. The futile strategy of conceit is thus less accessible.[221]

If crucifixion is the symbol of utmost domination, emotional distance, and dehumanization—to say nothing of harassment—resurrection represents the opposite.[222] Unclothed, abused, and displayed as a warning in his shame, Jesus had been stripped of every aspect of collective identity and in-group belonging.[223] It is therefore quite beautiful that Paul recurrently describes the faithful as having *clothed* themselves in Christ.[224] Whereas the convict is transformed from *somebody* into *nobody*, resurrection or reintegration returns the *nobody* to *somebody*. Furthermore, resurrection implies restored agency; Jesus' being confessed as lord implies that emotional distance is bridged, and his reintegration suggests that anyone who has suffered isolation or abuse can be restored and reintegrated. Therefore, as mentioned, the rehumanization and restored agency of the deviant may be one of the important aspects of the scandal of the cross.[225] Paul's identification of his marks as the marks of Jesus—whatever those marks were—is also the removal of distance. If Paul and others in the Galatian assemblies were capable of emotionally relating to such marks, the reintegrated Christ could be a resource for overcoming distance in relation to other persons in misfortune and disgrace.[226]

Importantly, Paul does not try to establish the Galatian Christ-loyal as a *third race* (which would be moving the borders rather than removing them).[227] Instead, in Galatians, Paul expresses his concern that the addressees may be compelled to withdraw from a position which is rightfully theirs. In this and other ways, he goes against the implementation of distance.[228] Recalling that Peter resorted to under-functioning instead of boldly speaking his mind, Paul also criticizes Peter for choosing distance.[229] The assumption that the Gentiles would replace Judaism or Jews is completely unsubstantiated within the discourse of the letter. Paul defends the full inclusion of the Galatian assemblies together with the Jews as the truth of the Gospel. His wish for peace and mercy extends to the addressees *and* to the Israel of God.[230]

Overcoming distance is a resource for relating to existing problems within oneself and within the larger system. While transgression constitutes a threat to the social system, corrections that do not aim for restoration may aggravate that threat even more. It can be noted that conformity (e.g., by enforced as male circumcision) or distance (e.g., separate tables) are rarely resources for solving real problems in the social system. In his list of transgressions that occur within social systems, Paul mentions behavior that would be unequivocally be perceived as transgressions; "crimes of passion" (i.e., adultery, fornication, uncleanness, and lewdness), idolatry, and sorcery. As sexual and spiritual exploitation often presumes that the rights and preferences of others are ignored, such transgressions most likely also involve emotional distance. As he continues, Paul mentions trespasses commonly connected to construct of collective identity (i.e., enmities, contentions, jealousies, outbursts of wrath, selfish ambitions, and dissensions). Closing the list, Paul mentions other obvious crimes such as heresies, envy, murders, drunkenness, revelries, and the like.[231] Important, none of these behaviors are things that only people in *other* groups do. On the contrary, behavior like this occurs in *every* group. Hence, the list cannot be used to explain why other groups are hideous, but every attack would backfire. In the letter, Paul's concluding exhortation focuses on conceit, provocation, and envy, all of which presume emotional distance to the constructed other.[232]

Paul encourages the addressees to overcome the distorted view of being completely different from others, which can be the first step in confronting similar tendencies within oneself.[233] The one who corrects an offender must therefore not be tempted to act harshly.[234] In this setting, Paul refers to the admonishers as "spiritual persons" (πνευματικοί; which might be a self-designation).[235] It looks like Paul wants to hold accountable those who admonish to discourage them from applying distance between themselves and the ones they admonish.[236] If the attempt to correct someone emerges as a strategy to handle a reactive emotion, the admonition may take on aspects of revenge rather than restoration. If the goal of correction is not the restoration of the one who has been overtaken in trespass, but instead to destroy that person emotionally, socially, or physically (or some combination), the resilience in the system is impaired.[237] Therefore, correction must be made

with precaution, which is precisely what Paul suggests. When focusing on identity markers as a means for constructing group boundaries, fundamental aspects to fellowship such as justice, mercy, and faithfulness are sometimes neglected. In Galatians, Paul persistently suggests that group boundaries have no significance.

As Paul suggests in this letter, the addressees are neither obliged to achieve a good face within the collective identity (cf. εὐπροσωπῆσαι ἐν σαρκί) nor to do what the collective group desires (ἐπιθυμία σαρκός). As the collective group in this particular setting seems to desire conformity by means of adopting—and enforcing—male circumcision, such desire can simply be ignored.[238] Naturally, the desire for sameness can also entail other things (e.g., separate tables, food restrictions, and the celebration of certain holidays) and be combined with the application of gender restrictions (male/female), class restrictions (enslaved/free), and ethnical restrictions (Jew/Greek, Galatian). Paul expresses his fear that the proponents of male circumcision will illegitimately exclude members who ought to be included and that boundaries between people will be enforced or reenforced.[239] In Paul's view, therefore, the σάρξ is against the Spirit and the Spirit against the σάρξ. Clearly, strivings for inclusion and the fear for exclusion do not contribute to the development of the fruit of the Spirit at all. According to Paul, if the addressees want to live in the Spirit, they must also live according to the rule of the Spirit—which suggests the inclusive table fellowship.[240]

It is important to note that in Paul's discussion of σάρξ in Galatians 5:11–24, no specific collective identity is targeted or demeaned. On the contrary, the use of the term σάρξ allows him to discuss the constructs of collective identity and collective groups in more general terms. While he expresses his identification with his Jewish collective identity strongly elsewhere, this is not a discussion about his own collective identity but about the structures and choices to be made in any collective group and in any collective identity. As such, he recognizes that his own group is no different—neither worse nor better—than those whom he addresses in the present letter. Precisely as being σάρξ, every collective group is held accountable for its actions.[241]

In Galatians, Paul suggests that markers of collective identity must not be used as a means for discrimination and distinction.[242] In contrast to structures for facilitating distance, Paul claims that the borders between people have no significance in Christ. Neither Jew nor Greek, neither enslaved nor free, neither male nor female is anything; however, they are all one in Christ.[243] Thus, in opposition to prevailing systems of enslavement, gendered systems for subordination, and the systematic marginalization of the foreigner, Paul emphasizes the unity of all people. Brigitte Kahl asks: "Can the God of the Bible be 'God with us' without being 'God against others'?"[244] The answer Paul offers is an emphatic "yes."[245] Rejecting the borders between citizenship and enslavement, ethnic in-groups and out-groups, and male and female, Paul opens and validates a space for dual or nested identities.[246] The conceptual basis for under- and over-functioning is removed along with the distance

or conflict between these groups or identities.[247] Moreover, when people's nested identities are appreciated rather than deemed a threat to the social system, the system is able to support a higher level of diversity with improved capacity and resilience.

To summarize, in Galatia, a dominant or powerful part of the assemblies may have felt strongly that distance, conflict, or under- and over-functioning would alleviate the emotional stress (cf. reactive emotions), but these are not adequate strategies to deal with the situation.[248] If real problems are to be solved, the addressees cannot afford to be foolish or bewitched.[249] Holding the individual and the group accountable for their actions opens space for creativity and for individuals to pursue their interests—as long as they are not harmful to others (cf. transgression).

Resilience in the Social System

The resilience in a collective group depends upon the level of differentiation in the social system.[250] Differentiation relates to the extent to which each member has attained a solid self—as compared to the pseudo-selves that are displayed in order to correspond with an idea of sameness.[251] In Paul's view, those who are Christ's have crucified their collective identity, which might in fact be beneficial to the group as a social system.[252] In a paradoxical way, persons who are capable of maintaining their individuality within their collective group can be the most important assets to that same group. As they are not restricted by the group's current shape, ideas, or fears, individuals who have attained a more solid self are liberated to embrace creativity in problem-solving—and are less prone to becoming the victims of reactive emotions.[253]

Identity constructs that focus on maintaining the *status quo* often cast suspicion upon the desire of the individual. Lacking both nuance and accuracy, sweeping hostility toward the individual's liberty may be akin to or even identical with the hostility directed against an individual or subgroup that tries to increase the level of differentiation in the social system. Importantly, when the σάρξ is interpreted in terms of the collective identity and the collective group, the crucifixion of the σάρξ does not assume that the volition or wishes of the individual are removed (or denied). On the contrary, the individual is free to try to achieve his or her personal goals—as long as that these personal goals do not harm others—and to actively pursue his or her interests, by which the level of differentiation is increased and the whole system made more resilient.[254] As Viktor Frankl notes, even in extreme conditions, the experience of meaningfulness is essential to survival.[255] When each member of the system is able to act responsively (and responsibly) to his or her own desires, and thus thrive and find meaning, the whole system benefits.

Meaningfulness is often—but not always—connected to fellowship. Temporary or long-term withdrawal from the collective group can be beneficial to the social system, so long as it is done voluntarily and not by force.

In the individualistically oriented interpretations of σάρξ, however, the connection between the call for male circumcision and the desire of the σάρξ as a collective entity easily goes unnoticed.[256] Rather than relating to a collective group's demand for conformity—with concomitant risks for harassments (cf. "bite and devour"); over- and under-functioning (cf. "under the law"); and distance (cf. "want to exclude")—the passage about the desire of the σάρξ is frequently dislocated to the domain of correcting the individual: the "desire" of the individual is thrown in suspicion. For instance, Louw and Nida suggest that the meaning of σαρκὸς θέλημα is "sexual desire" (which in the context of Gal 5:16–17 appears "against the πνεῦμα").[257] In doing so, scholars place themselves within a long tradition of hostility against sexuality and of slandering individuals and out-group people.[258] When desire, without any further qualifications, is targeted with sweeping accusations, it could be a way to suppress the individual (or making the individual suppress her- or himself), making him or her feel that whatever one wants, it is wrong. Be that as it may, when σάρξ is interpreted as the collective identity, the connection between the desire of the σάρξ and the custom of male circumcision can be seen more clearly: the σάρξ desires conformity.

While sweeping hostility against the individual's desire would not contribute to the resilience of the social system, scrutiny applied to the desire of the collective would, since the collective group under stress often desires against its own good. Precisely when it would benefit the most from defending its level of differentiation, the collective group often desires conflict, under- and over-functioning, and exclusion—which function as release valves for reactive emotions. Thus, Paul may do well in casting suspicion upon the desire of the collective group. The collective group can be a site for human flourishing, but it must not be given the role of judge, savior, or god. That is to say, the collective group is not the goal of pilgrimage (cf. σαρκὶ ἐπιτελεῖσθε) but merely its setting and participants.[259] According to Paul, the Galatian assemblies were progressing well until something cut into their path in ways that shook their conviction of the truth in the Gospel.[260] Being astonishingly foolish, the addressees seem to have shifted from living in the Spirit to instead trying to acquire their collective identity anew.[261] Clearly, these two options do not even exist on the same plane. The collective group may so strongly desire conformity (cf. separate tables; male circumcision) as to trivialize every other concern, but such desire for conformity is both senseless and foolish. It has nothing to do with the Spirit.[262] The addressees' misplaced concern for their collective identity makes them appear as if bewitched, that is, as though they have lost contact with their solid selves. In other words, the individual's desire (or the outliers of the social system) should not be viewed with suspicion, but collective groups, especially in times of stress, tend to desire conformity—even if it would lead to both individual and collective ruin.

In times of stress, instead of attempting to absorb change and restore functioning (cf. resilience), systems commonly turn upon themselves in

attempting to handle reactive emotions.[263] Partially overlapping systems can also be targeted. As in the case of crucifixion, persons may genuinely have believed that violence, exclusion, and execution were the best ways to protect the empire. Similarly, in the case of adopting the custom of male circumcision, people may genuinely have believed that marginalization, exclusion, and enforcement were the best ways to protect the Jewish identity. In such contexts, Paul suggests that the addressees voluntarily let go of their collective identity and their collective groups. Therefore, Paul's suggestion that the Galatians are not obliged to participate in any futile collective strategy for relieving emotional pressure is a message of liberation in every sense of the word: the individual does have to do what the collective group (cf. σάρξ) desires.[264] Reactive emotions can be strong and individuals who do not conform to the will of the group can be depicted as the enemies of the system. But if these individuals persist, the system will be more resilient. By means of giving up their positions within their respective collective groups, the addressees may renew their relations to these same collective identities.

Paul describes himself as deeply committed to his kinspeople—but not in ways that would make him compromise the truth of the Gospel (cf. the open-table fellowship).[265] In 1 Corinthians, he claims to having received forty minus one lashes five times and having been beaten with rods three times, which may surprise the reader: he is either *incorrigible* and *irredeemable*—or liberated.[266] In Paul's view, Christ has liberated himself and the addressees for living in service through love—and they are removed from enslavement. No longer obliged to do what the σάρξ desires, Paul distances himself from both privileges and obligations in relation to collective identities.[267] His transformed relationship to the σάρξ may indeed represent the renewal of creation (cf. καινὴ κτίσις): neither male circumcision nor foreskin is anything.[268] He looks disapprovingly on people who try to escape persecution while seeking to be rewarded by other people.[269] In his view, they would rather have given up their position within their collective group. To be clear, he has no qualms with avoiding persecution or seeking affirmation—but will not do so at any cost.

The commandment to love one's neighbor seems to be the most important resource to systemic functioning and to the development of resilience (cf. "the law in one word").[270] It can be noted that the neighbor is precisely the one who is *not* oneself but *close*.[271] Thus, in a social system under pressure, the neighbor is the one most at risk for being constructed as the *other* (cf. distance); targeted with harassment (cf. conflict); and compelled to submit to authority or authorities (cf. under-functioning). If the call for male circumcision could be heard as an open invitation without direct consequences for the relative social position of the deviant, it would not be harmful to the system. Deprived of the concomitant threats of exclusion for the non-compliant, it would have been just another message within the paradigm of conversation: the open invitation is a way to *include* the neighbor. Enforcement, on the

other hand, is the way to effect subordination (cf. enslavement); the neighbor is no longer respected as partially *other* and included into fellowship and love.

Σάρξ and the Spirit

In the opening of the passage in which Paul rejects the desire of the σάρξ, he makes a reference to preaching male circumcision. This connection between the call for male circumcision and the desire of the σάρξ speaks in favor of interpreting the desire (ἐπιθυμία) as a reactive emotion. Only in highly specific circumstances would a man desire to have this piece of skin cut from his body, and the collectively validated meaning of being included into justice would certainly qualify. However, as noted earlier, this specific passage is most likely not about the desire of the individual but the desire of the collective (cf. the opening narrative of the letter).[272] As a social system under pressure can be expected to desire a decreased level of differentiation (cf. marginalization, persecution, distance), the desire for conformity fits into this picture. Furthermore, when a subgroup or individual attempts to increase the level of differentiation in the social system, this will likely be met with initial suspicion and hostility.[273] Thus, as a means to escape persecution, a sign of inclusion and promise may become highly desirable—and, as a means to motivate exclusion, the missing sign might become desirable to a system under pressure.

As reactive emotions can take the form of a desire for conformity in the social system, the emotions as experienced by individuals—not the collective—can lead to oppression against other individuals. Behavior that otherwise would be out of the question can suddenly be perceived as reasonable when it is sustained by the collective group or the collective identity (e.g., to affix someone to a piece of wood and let him hang there until he dies, to exclude someone from fellowship because he is uncircumcised, or to perceive someone as unclean because the person has a specific gender or is born somewhere else). However, in Paul's view, the addressees have already made their choice, namely, to crucify the collective identity (τὴν σάρκα ἐσταύρωσαν) with all its passions and desires.[274] As belonging to Christ, they are not enslaved to anymore but liberated from dominion.[275] The reactive emotions are therefore no longer their business, and they are not obliged to submit to calls for conformity that may emanate from such emotions.

As members of groups who most likely also have several collective identities (cf. nested identity), the addressees are encouraged to take control over their behavior and to serve one another through love. While a collective group or collective identity may suggest all kinds of restrictions to its members, the addressees are liberated—and liberated to love their neighbor. Paul specifically mentions that the addressees must not give up their freedom, since that would present an opportunity for the collective group to retake control over them (cf. εἰς ἀφορμὴν τῇ σαρκί).[276] In Paul's view, the entailed conformity and assimilation are features of enslavement. As they are encouraged to walk

in the Spirit and to follow the rule of the Spirit, the members of the assemblies of God are not obliged to respond to the social pressure of any group.[277]

In Galatians, the term σάρξ is recurrently adopted in Paul's discussions about the construct of collective identity and the structure of the collective group as a historical reality. In his view, enforced circumcision would not turn anyone into a Jew but would only enslave them. His criticism does not target Judaism or the Jewish covenant but instead take aim at the practice of enforced conformity. After all, the result of becoming co-heirs with Jesus implies to be included, together with Israel, as children of *Abraham*.[278] While the proponents of male circumcision may have been Galatians who had already undergone the rite themselves, they could also have been messengers from abroad. At any rate, the exact identity of the proponents is impossible to determine from the letter and it is also of lesser importance, for Paul's use of the term σάρξ makes it clear that his criticism is applicable to any collective group or collective identity that prevents its members from loving their neighbor. Paul's message is *not* that another group or collective identity would be better (cf. projections and the strategy of distance), but that constructing collective identity around an idea of *sameness* is harmful.[279] He criticizes the collective group as a living reality, and σάρξ is the term that describes this reality.

Still, his message may have been too much for his audience to stomach. If a significant part of the assemblies felt that an increased level of conformity would solve their problems or alleviate their emotional stress, Paul suggests otherwise. He does not seem to expect that he can convince them all. In fact, by the close of the letter, he asks them not to trouble him anymore.[280] Notably, the connection between the call for male circumcision and the desire of the collective group is essential to the understanding of the exhortation of the letter. Rather than suggesting hostility against the non-conforming individual—or arguing against the desire of the individual—Paul questions the sensibility and intelligibility of the collective group's desire for privilege and distinction. Instead of trying to deal with real problems (cf. what people do; ἔργα τῆς σαρκός), the collective group seems to focus on group boundaries, specific identity markers, and reputation or dishonor within that group (cf. distance, conflict/harassment, and under- and over-functioning). As he levels criticism against their current mode of functioning, Paul even asks if they have become foolish or bewitched. In other words, his case not only requires the capacity to discern the difference between messenger and message, between a sign and its meaning, but it may also be contrary to what some in his audience would like to hear.[281]

Paul argues that their current mode of constructing collective identity is contrary to the Spirit. Instead of being under the law—as in a phase of initiation—Paul describes the addressees as full-grown and accountable members of the ἐκκλησίαι of God. Even if they would manage to stay included with an exclusivist construct of collective identity, that would not be a resource for them in loving their neighbor (cf. the law in one word). Instead, such constructs of identity are an impediment for the fruit of the Spirit to grow, for adaptation to an idea of sameness is an obstacle to resilience. Paul suggests the

metaphor of adoption as more fruitful an approach for actively including the stranger—regardless of whether their otherness derives from gender, ethnicity, social class, or something else. As the desire of the σάρξ can be legitimately ignored, the addressees' liberty of including and being included can be fully embraced. For the open-table fellowship is the truth of the Gospel.

Becoming Oneself

The adaptation of identity markers can be seen as a way to please people, particularly those who assume a role of over-functioning. As it appears, the proponents of male circumcision do not mind mistreating those among the Galatian addressees who do not comply—possibly even to the point of exclusion.[282] Paul's latest communication with the Galatian assemblies makes him ask if he has become their enemy by telling the truth.[283] Analogously, in Paul's description, Peter did not mind neglecting the open-table fellowship for the sake of not offending some "people from the circumcision."[284] Hence, pleasing people is not about pleasing just anyone but quite specifically about pleasing those in power or in high social esteem. Paul invites his audience to understand, from his curse, that he does not aim to "please people" (ἀνθρώποις ἀρέσκειν): being a servant of Christ, it is precisely the proponents of male circumcision whom he cannot please.[285]

At the surface of things, the Galatian addressees would seem to have every reason to feel pleased that Paul renders male circumcision unnecessary—had it not placed them amid conflict. When a call for conformity constitutes a strategy to handle reactive emotions, conflict, harassment, and exclusion are not the unfortunate outcomes but to be expected. Therefore, Paul's assurance that his Gospel is a message with integrity—coming through a revelation of Jesus Christ—together with his substantial argumentation in favor of his case, might even be perceived a burden by his audience despite the provision provided for them to escape the call for assimilation.[286] Paul encourages his audience to travel the same path as himself, namely to give up their attempts to adapt to what people desire.[287] Ignoring a call for conformity may appear to be an easy path, but most likely it is not.

As seen from the perspective of social systems theory, Paul's emphasis on not pleasing people opens a space for developing a more solid self, that is, a self that is less characterized by social pressure and one's own desire to fit into the current shape of that identity construct (cf. an "undifferentiated ego mass").[288] As Paul notes elsewhere, it is precisely through the members being partially different from each other that the collective body functions optimally.

Differentiation and Resilience

According to Paul, God did not give everyone the *same* gift through the Spirit. But, to avoid schisms in the collective body, the greater honor is given to the member who lacks it.[289] Paul seems to prefer using the term σῶμα ("body")

when he describes collective *functioning* and σάρξ when he describes collective *identity*—possibly to distinguish from other groups or species.[290] Since a plethora of human problems arises from human boasting, it is no wonder that σάρξ is generally described in more negative terms than σῶμα.[291] Human collective functioning is good (albeit possibly impaired), but the constructs of collective identity can be outright destructive and dangerous. It goes without saying that throughout history, nationalistic orientations have caused enormous damage in human lives.[292] A greater extent of solid selves in the members of the social systems would have been a resource in avoiding tremendous tragedies that are, to a high degree, dependent upon social pressure. As mentioned earlier, there are several things that people would not do unless supported by a social structure. Concurrently, there are things that people would like to do, but they perceive themselves as restricted by laws and regulations, since these actions and behavior would be harmful to other members of the social system: being under guard is not always a bad thing.[293] On the other hand, being restricted from loving one's neighbor is not a good thing either. When having reached a stage of maturity, a person cannot be confined to customs but must instead be held accountable for one's actions.

Outside the rhetorical context of the letter, Paul's plea that the addressees should become like him—for he has become like them—could easily be interpreted as a call for sameness.[294] In the context of the letter, it becomes obvious that he does not mean to suggest that they should adopt the same customs and identity markers as himself; the assumption that the identity markers are not important is a central message of the letter.[295] Moreover, Paul's emphasis on the inclusive table fellowship as the truth of the Gospel affirms the same approach. Besides, his call for the addressees to become like him is followed by the comment that "you did nothing wrong/unjust (ἀδικέω) to me."[296] Paul treated them fairly and—at that time—he received the same fair treatment back, even though he no longer expects to find that same atmosphere of mutually respectful attitudes anymore. As Peter was accused of withdrawing from the open fellowship despite his own convictions, the addressees are accused of returning to a previous state of ignorance and enslavement despite their actual level of knowledge and experience.[297] "At that time, not knowing God, you were enslaved by those whom by nature are no gods. Now, however, knowing God—or rather being known by God—how is it that you turn back to those weak and poor rules (στοιχεῖα) to which you want to be enslaved again?"[298] To be like Paul, though, is to be free.

Conclusion: Galatians in the Perspective of Social Systems Theory

In his letter to the Galatian assemblies, Paul describes how the fate and person of Christ ought to impact their construct of collective identity. In Paul's view, the reintegration of this crucified person is central to their understanding of God's faithfulness and grace; here, grace is not merely understood as the forgiveness of sins but as transformed relations.[299] Brilliantly, Paul opens

the letter by describing the open-table fellowship as the truth of the Gospel, which he then tries to protect from erroneous convictions and practices that would threaten this truth.[300] In doing so, he attempts to sustain the addressees' liberty to love their neighbor as themselves—the *other* can be included into fellowship and mutual affection and support. Therefore, the call from the collective group for conformity, separate tables, and submission to the observance of (someone else's) holiday (cf. ἐπιθυμία σαρκός) must all be resisted as incongruous with the truth of the Gospel. Instead, Paul bids the addressees to remember what they themselves have experienced—how they received the Spirit and God worked miracles among them. Clearly, the constructs of an exclusivist collective identity pose an obstacle to the commandment in one word, namely to "love your neighbor as yourself."[301]

The endeavor to make the Galatians return to a phase of initiation is thereby simply misguided (cf. under-functioning), since they are already included among Abraham's children—together with Isaac. The development of the fruit of the Spirit depends upon the Spirit, not upon any identity construct or identity marker (cf. works of the law). While Paul has no qualms with customs like male circumcision, the pretense of them being a prerequisite for inclusion is not an option. He would like to have support and affirmation from those who were reckoned as the pillars, but adapting the message that was revealed to him is not an option. There is no sensible reason for the addressees to shift collective identity (cf. distance), since being incorporated into a prominent identity does not protect its members from destructive behavior anyway (cf. ἔργα τῆς σαρκός). Receiving the Spirit and walking in the Spirit is what matters, and that is open to anyone who hears the message and adheres to it.[302] In other words, the origin of the so-called *Judaizers* is irrelevant—but their *message* must be refuted.[303]

In Paul's view, the construct of an exclusive sense of collective identity causes the addressees to "bite and devour" each other (cf. conflict and harassment). Insofar as such a construct of identity poses an obstacle to the open-table fellowship, it must be disclaimed as working against the Spirit. The very principle of exclusive collective identity must be driven out.[304] The problem is therefore not that of being included into collective identities—or having identity markers—but the choice of *imposing* such identity markers upon others or threatening them with exclusion. Moreover, in Paul's view, the construct of an exclusive collective identity has weak support in the Scriptures. Admittedly, there are passages that could be interpreted in such ways (cf. the story about Hagar), but there are other interpretations of such passages that might be more accurate—and, of course, other passages that unequivocally contradict exclusivist learnings. The crucifixion of Christ serves as a guide to understanding the integration and reintegration of new and old members into the assemblies of God.[305] According to Paul, the promise of inclusion is more foundational than the customs that were developed to remind the assemblies of that covenant. Therefore, the use of custom (cf. law) as a means of exclusion is an abuse of that same custom. As crucified,

Jesus was deprived of all markers of distinction and inclusion; if such person can be reintegrated and placed amid God's assemblies, then anybody can be accepted into fellowship. But if the addressees choose another path than the one that is fashionable for the moment, negative reactions can be expected.

Precisely the fact that Christ has liberated the addressees for the liberty to include anyone into fellowship—whether this person is Jew or Greek, enslaved or free, male or female, or some other combination identities—may be a scandal to some, but it is a godly scandal.[306] Paul boldly claims that those belonging to Christ have crucified their collective identity (τὴν σάρκα ἐσταύρωσαν). As shown earlier, the crucifixion of the σάρξ—with its passions and desires—most likely refers to the rejection of an exclusivist sense of collective identity together with its call for conformity and its obligation to increase and defend in-group honor.[307] As those who belong to Christ are *not* obliged to meet the requirements of any collective identity, the open-table fellowship can be described as the truth of the Gospel. Some members of the social system may oppose it, but including a stranger into fellowship is not a transgression. Paul, for one, will not rebuild what he has torn down (i.e., the borders between people).[308] The liberation of Christ opens a space for serving one another in love. As a high level of the differentiation makes a social system more resilient, the assemblies are now prepared to deal with their real problems—rather than merely trying to handle reactive emotions.

No longer obliged to defend in-group honor (εὐπροσωπῆσαι ἐν σαρκί), the addressees can unburden themselves of conceit, challenges, and envy.[309] In this vein, a situation of correction must not be taken as an occasion for over- and under-functioning, harassment, or distance, but those who correct someone must heed themselves: correction must be made in the Spirit of gentleness. After all, this is the way to turn into good soil where the fruit of the Spirit can grow (καρπὸς τοῦ πνεύματος). The liberty of inclusion and community opens a space for dealing with problems without trying to transfer them to someone else. Clearly, in situations of stress, a social system can resort to decreasing the level of differentiation. This is most unfortunate, however, since the resilience in the system depends upon a high level of differentiation. As such, a high level of differentiation must not be abandoned but can and should be defended. Paul encourages the Galatians to venture this path by describing how he stood up against Peter. Attempts to decrease the level of differentiation must not be passively accepted. The message of adaptation and assimilation under the threat of exclusion falls outside the Gospel Truth. In contrast to what some people in Galatia seem to claim, such a message can rather be described as a non-gospel.

If the call for conformity causes them to bite and devour, exclude, or illegitimately assume authority over one another, the cure is simple. As Paul expresses in his letter, the open-table fellowship can be appreciated as the truth of the Gospel. When the addressees resume responsibility for how they treat each other—including the disrespected and foreigners, and the ones overtaken in trespass—they can no longer be lured into believing that the

deviants or marginalized groups are the biggest problem they face. No longer foolish or bewitched, the addressees might remember what they themselves experienced; how they received the Spirit and how God worked miracles among them. The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, endurance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. No one is against these traits and attitudes, but the question is how to get there. In this setting, Paul affirms that his addressees must not perceive themselves as being *under* the law (i.e., spiritual customs, tradition, and regulations in a wide sense) but place themselves in fruitful dialogue with the law, its reception, and other people. They must assume responsibility as "grown-ups." Even if their contemporary world is brought to the brim of extinction, the renewal of creation as the grace of God is their hope—not a collective identity or the defense of such identities. If they live in the Spirit, they may also walk in the Spirit.

Notes

1 Barton (1997, 297). Harold Ellens (2004, 286) notes that "[p]sychology is another lens through which it is possible to see any text and understand dimensions of it the way it reflects the living human document behind it which could not be understood if one did not employ this lens." See also Rollins (1999, 78).
2 Ellens (2004, 277–87, esp. 282). As Ellens and Wayne Rollins (2004, 1–16, esp. 15) write, "out of the dialogue between psychology and the Bible comes the realization that there are no saints in the process: religion can be therapeutic but also pathogenic; psychology can enlighten or distort."
3 Ellens (2004, 277–87); Ellens and Rollins (2004, 1–16).
4 Bowen (1973/2004, 413–50, esp. 416). It was noted that emotional illness is "deeper than a one-generation product of parent-child relationship; that it has about the same incidence in different cultures with widely different child rearing practices, if there is allowance for the ways different cultures deal with emotionally impaired people; that there are suggestions it might even exist in wild animals; and it would be profitable to have this broad assumption in the background"; Bowen (1973/2004, 413–50, esp. 417). Cf. Psalms 90, 103:14–16, 104, and so on. See also Matt 6:25–34, 13:1–35, and other parables.
5 In his twentieth century modes of language, Bowen (1973/2004, 413–50, esp. 417) expresses that "man is more intimately related to the lower forms of life than is generally recognized, and that emotional illness is a dysfunction of that part of man which he shares with lower forms." See Berenson (1976/2004, 389–411, esp. 394) and also Rakow (2023).
6 See Blessing (2004b, 194–97); Majerus (2010, 288–99); Nyengele (2004); Smith (2021, 131–46); Balswick and Balswick (1989/2007). As pioneers in the social scientific study of the Bible emphasize the importance of collective identity in the world of the New Testament, many scholars have adopted akin perspectives, see, e.g., Theissen (1974–1975/1982); Stendahl (1976); Sanders (1977). For more recent accounts, see Boyarin (1994); Esler (2003); Ehrensperger (2004); Hodge (2007); Campbell (2008); Eisenbaum (2009); Kartzow (2012), Theissen (2016), and many others.
7 Blessing (2004a, 165–91). It can be noted that, in Paul's view, *Paul, Peter, and the non-gospel* or *Paul, the addressees, and the non-gospel* should be replaced by *Paul, the addressees, and their own experience*, or *Christ, the addressees, and Paul*.
8 Volf (1996/2010, 48). Volf does not refer to Bowen or socials systems theory, albeit adopting relevant terms in the same way.

9 Smith (2021, 131–46, esp. 145, emphases removed).
10 Majerus (2010, 288–99, esp. 295); cf. Volf (1998), for similar understandings of the conceptualization of the Trinity.
11 Nyengele emphasizes the importance of the "Bowenian concept of differentiation"; Nyengele (2004, 4).
12 Balswick and Balswick (1989/2007, 150, emphasis original).
13 Blessing (2004b, 186).
14 See, e.g., Bowen (1973/2004, 413–50; 1974/2004, 269–82; 1976/2004, 337–87, esp. 371). As Blessing (2004a, 165) notes, Bowen "showed that society generally manifests the attributes of the family." Moreover, Blessing further notes, Bowen was "the first to create a self-consistent theory of the relationships within the family"; see also Schlussel and Gasbarrini (2019, 331–3); cf. Bowen (1966/2004, 147–81, 155).
15 Bowen (1966/2004, 147–81, 155).
16 See Bowen (1976/2004, 362–70). In everyday-speech, the term *diversity* captures most of the same meaning—even if the systemic aspects may not come across as clearly. Bowen (1976/2004, 354) notes that "[w]hen we speak about the 'differentiation of self,' we mean a process similar to the differentiation of cells from each other."
17 Bowen (1976/2004, 337–87, esp. 366–8); see also Blessing (2004a, 165–7).
18 Bowen (1976/2004, 337–87). As Bowen (1976/2004, 371) notes, "[o]nce it is possible to see the phenomenon [of differentiation], there it is, operating in full view, right before our eyes. Once it is possible to see the phenomenon, it is then possible to apply the concept to hundreds of different human situations."
19 Walker and Salt (2006, 32, 37–38); Bowen (1966/2004, 147–81). See also Bowen (1976/2004, 337–87). As Brian Walker and David Salt (2006, 9–10, 74–95) note, complex systems are often characterized by secondary feed-back loops, which makes change part of their identity. A resilient system retains its capacity to return to previous states while constantly adapting through cycles of change and conservation.
20 Walker and Salt (2006, 74–95).
21 The reactive emotions occur when members of a social system are incapable of distinguishing between the emotional state in one member and the emotional state in another. Bowen speaks about *emotional reactiveness*, which is here extended to the term *reactive emotion* to distinguish such emotional state from an *emotional reaction*; cf. Bowen (1973/2004, 414–5, 420–3). Bowen (1966/2004, 160–62) adopts the concepts *ego fusion* and *undifferentiated family ego mass* as well.
22 Bowen (1976/2004, 337–87, esp. 377).
23 Bowen (1976/2004, 337–87). In the context of marital problems, Bowen (1976/2004, 377–80) speaks about (1) *marital conflict*, (2) *dysfunction* in one spouse and impairment of one or more children, and (3) the *family projection process* [in the present study: the term *distance* is employed]; see also Bowen (1966/2004, 166–8).
24 Bowen (1974/2004, 269–82, esp. 276) notes in relation to societal regression that "[s]ocietal pressure is directed first at those who are most unsure of self, and vulnerable to pressure. Then it extends to others […] There are those who are better differentiated who still maintain a reasonable level of self-determined self, and who still manage to function in society, but they are more the exception than the rule."
25 Bowen (1976/2004, 337–87, esp. 367).
26 Cf. Sylvia Chan's (2002, 10) minimalist definition of democracy requires "the provision for participation of all adult members of a society, freedom to formulate and advocate political alternatives, and the credible availability of political alternatives." Similarly, Lars Laird Iversen (2014) notes that democratic societies

are characterized not by people thinking the same but *the way* in which people do not think the same.

27 Bowen (1976/2004, 353–87, esp. 371).
28 Blessing (2004b, 185–207, esp. 195).
29 Cf. Ricoeur (1990, 115–25).
30 Bowen (1966/2004, 160–2).
31 Bowen (1971/2004, 183–240, esp. 216–8).
32 As Bowen notes, in family settings, most attempts at increasing the level of differentiation seem to last only for a few hours; Bowen (1971/2004, 216).
33 Bowen (1971/2004, 216–18; 1976/2004, 361–87).
34 See Hopkins (1983/2006, 212); Pliny, *Letters* 10:33–34. See also Bowen (1976/2004, 377–80).
35 Bowen (1966/2004, 147–81; 1976/2004, 337–87); Walker and Salt (2006, 32, 37–38).
36 Cf. Bowen's description of the family through therapy becoming experts on its own history; (1966/2004, 156).
37 Kahl (2010, 75). See also Lopez (2008).
38 See Hopkins (1983/2006, 1).
39 See Horsley (1997, 95); Lendon (1997, 19–24). The *beneficia* was always seen as a special favor—and therefore expected to incite gratefulness—but upper class or elite persons could also find gift-giving an expedient means to keep good relations to others in power; Horsley (2011, 34; 1997, 91–95).
40 For instance, both Cassio Dio and Tacitus note that Tiberius deprived the city of Cyzicus of its freedom partly because the inhabitants neglected to finish a temple to Tiberius' father, whom Tiberius had deified; see Cassius Dio, *Histories* 57.24.6; Tacitus, *Annales* 4.36; see also Hardin (2008, 42–43).
41 The inscription also specifies that each day should be devoted to a certain imperial family member and the celebrations should include processions, games, and sacrifices; SEG 11.922–3; see also Hardin (2008, 43–44). When the city of Thessaloniki filed grievances to the emperor about the tax burden, this was then turned against them and the region was reduced to a province. In 44 C.E., the emperor Claudius reversed the decision made by Tiberius, and Macedonia was made a senatorial province one again; Witherington (2006, 6); see also Tacitus, *Annales* 1.76. Moreover, as an example of imperial Rome's disregard toward—and intrusion into—its subjects' lives and concerns, the emperor Caligula "postponed all law-suits and suspended mourning" in order to make everyone join in the theater for imperial celebrations; Hope (2009, 124); see also Cassio Dio, *Histories* 59.7.5.
42 See Moxnes (2005, 19–40); see also Hardin (2008, esp. 45–46). According to Seneca, the good emperor would not need any bodyguard, because he would be protected by the loyalty and gratefulness that others owed him; Seneca, *On Mercy* 1.13.5. See also Bowen (1976/2004, 353–87). Paul's commitment to the "poor in Jerusalem" may be an example of an attempt at establishing and affirming such a bond of mutual gratefulness and obligation; see Gal 2:10.
43 In Paul's view, the "days, months, seasons, and years" that the Galatians are incited to observe are indicative of enslavement; see Gal 4:8–11; see also Hardin (2008).
44 See, e.g., Steve Mason's article on ἀμιξία (non-mingling, aloofness) in Josephus, Tacitus, and Philo; see Mason (2019, 232–55); Neutel (2015, 59–71). For an account of exile and other legal punishments in Roman antiquity, see Peters (1995, 3–43).
45 See Philemon and 2 Cor 3:1–3; 10:18; 12:11–12, for Paul's references to his own recommendations, to which his recommendations for other persons could be added. See also Gray (2012, 55–56); Tite (2010, 57–100, esp. 70), for further

discussion on recommendation and recommendation letters. For an interesting discussion on the interpretation of evidence—or lack of evidence—in archeology, see Warren (2023, 1–20). For a discussion of the possibility of Jewish members within the Galatians assemblies that Paul addresses, see van Os (2008, 51–64). As Joseph Lightfoot (1874/2009, 11) noted, inscriptions found in Galatia "presents here and there Jewish names and symbols amidst a strange confusion of Phrygian and Celtic, Roman and Greek."

46 See Gal 4:12–14. When the individualistically oriented paradigm is shifted for a collectively oriented one, these expressions are interpreted as "the weakness in the collective group or the collective identity" (ἀσθένεια τῆς σαρκὸς) and "the trial of you (pl.) that was in my collective identity *or* my collective group" (τὸν πειρασμὸν ὑμῶν ἐν τῇ σαρκί μου); see Gal 4:13, 14.

47 As Ben Witherington (1998, 18) notes, gender, generation, and geography could be seen as the essential traits to the evaluation of someone's character. See Hopkins (1978/2006; 1983/2006) for an account of Roman social history.

48 See Aristotle, *Politics* 1.2.3–5; Neutel (2015, 32–33).

49 See Peters (1995, 20). See also the concept of *body double*, which implied that a slave owner could send an enslaved person to receive the punishment sentenced to the enslaver; see Wessels (2010, 159).

50 See, e.g., 2 Cor 11:23–26. Even if his letters' dates of provenance cannot be established beyond doubt, the sheer number of punishments described here makes it most probable that at least some of them had been meted out prior to Paul's arrival to Galatia; for a discussion, see Joelsson (2017, 73–75). For comments on persecution against the Christ-faithful in Galatians, see Gal 4:12–14; 6:10–18.

51 Cf. 1 Cor 1:9–13; 3:4–23, and so on.

52 Cf. Bowen (1966/2004, 147–81; 1976/2004, 337–87).

53 See Miller (2015, 32–39). For the use of ἐκκλησία as *city assembly*; see Acts 19:39. The suggestion that the early Christ ἐκκλησία included women and enslaved persons—even granting them the right to speak—seems to be contradicted by 1 Cor 14:34–35. However, Philip Payne (2017, 604–25) notes that some manuscripts mark those particular verses as a later insertion, which implies that they should not be given ruling force in the interpretation of other Pauline letters.

54 Cf. Gal 3:8, 25–29; 6:10–18. See Gal 5:5. As Yung Suk Kim (2011, 45) notes, "Paul's vision rooted in God's righteousness not only extends to all people but also emphasizes God's justice in an unjust world"; see also Stendahl (1976, esp. 78–96, 1–77).

55 See, e.g., Gal 3:25–4:7; cf. 3:15–17, 19–30, and so on. Within Paul's letter to the Galatian assemblies, the distinctions between young or old; barren or fertile, and persons included in contracts such as heritage or *not* included in such contracts can be noted. See also Berger (1991/2003); Neutel (2015).

56 See Gal 2:1–21; 5:2–10; 6:11–15.

57 "For one thing, ἀπόστολος only occur in Gal 1:1, while all the attention is focused on εὐαγγέλιον as the main topic (1:6; 1:7; (2x); 1:9; 1:11 (2x)). In the letter as a whole, ἀπόστολος and derivatives occur four times, εὐαγγέλιον and derivatives fourteen times. This is a clear indication that the main emphasis of Paul's argument lies elsewhere [than with apostolic authority]"; Lategan (2012, 274–86, esp. 279).

58 See Gal 1:8–9; cf. Gal 2:11–21.

59 The third singular (ἀνάθεμα ἔστω) leaves the text grammatically open to different interpretations, but the errand of the letter to defend the open-table fellowship excludes the interpretation that Paul curses the messenger instead of the message (cf. the narratio; Gal 2:11–21). "But, even if we ourselves or an angel from God proclaims another gospel to you than the one you received, let it be cursed"; Gal 1:8.

60 See also Paul's discussion about the role of Hagar as targeting a *principle* rather than another group; see Eastman (2006, 309–36); Gal 4:21–5:1a.
61 Cf. Gal 3:1–4.
62 See Gal 1:10–12; cf. 2:2.
63 See Gal 1:8–9; 1:10.
64 As Frank Matera (1992/2007, 11) describes, "[i]n terms of rhetorical criticism, the letter is a sustained exercise in deliberative rhetoric; that is, Paul tries to persuade the Galatians not to accept the agitators' gospel of circumcision." See Kern (2004, 138–41) for a discussion. See also Watson (2010, 25–47, esp. 36–39).
65 See Gal 2:10; cf. 6:16.
66 See 1 Cor 9:11.; cf. Rom 15:25–27. Seneca voices this particular expectation when he writes, "homicides, tyrants, traitors there will always be; but worse than all these is the crime of ingratitude"; Seneca, *On Benefits* 1.10.4. According to Cicero, "[t]o fail to repay [a favor] is not permitted to a good man"; Cicero, *On Duties*, 1.48.
67 Not being able to return a gift would imply that the receiver was subordinate to the giver, see Jewett (2007, 130–2); Witherington (1998, 47–49). The "crime of ingratitude" was judged harshly because gratefulness was commonly perceived as the bonds that kept society from falling apart and devolving into everybody's war against everybody; see Horsley (1997, 88–95; 2011, 34); Garnsey and Saller (1987, 96–98).
68 As Richard Horsley notes, "the Romans demonstrated their *fides* (πίστις), loyalty in the sense of protection, while the friends of Rome showed their *fides*, that is, their loyalty to Rome"; Horsley (2011, 34). See also Hardin (2008) for an account of the oaths of loyalty that were sworn in the region.
69 See Gal 2:14–21; cf. 6:12–18.
70 See Gal 1:6–10; see also Joelsson (2017, 73–75).
71 See Gal 6:12, in context.
72 See Gal 3:8–14.
73 See Gal 6:17; cf. 2 Cor 11:23–26. Having been beaten with rods, lashes, and imprisoned several times, Paul's "marks of Jesus" most likely refers to lingering marks from persecution—both with regard to physical marks on his personal body and stains on his reputation within the collective group; see Joelsson (2017, 72–83).
74 See Gal 4:12–14; see also 3:1.
75 See Gal 4:12–14; cf. Gal 6:10–18; see 2 Cor 11:23–26. See also Joelsson (2017, 73–75).
76 See Gal 3:1–14.
77 As Dieter Mitternacht (2004, 193–212) notes that the liminal status of Galatians not-yet-incorporated in the Jewish collective group may have increased the level of anxiety in both systems—even if that liminal status possibly did not disturb the actual functioning in either of those systems.
78 Cf. Volf (1996/2010, 48).
79 See Gal 1:13, in context.
80 Cf. Gal 5:11. Especially in the diaspora, there may have been multiple reasons for Jews to neglect this custom. "When Jews began to appear in the exercises, their circumcized penises became a source of deep embarrassment. As a result, a provision was made that Jews would be allowed to take part in the Olympic games of Tyros only if they had their foreskins *replaced*"; Jacoby (1991/2002, 12; emphasis mine). In the Greek context, "[m]en doing athletic exercises drew the foreskin over the glans and tied it with a string"; Jacoby (1991/2002, 12). The Jewish aristocrat Philo calls circumcision "an object of ridicule among many people"; Philo, *De Specialibus Legibus* 1.2. See also Neutel and Anderson (2014, 228–44, esp. 228).

81 As Paul describes in hindsight, he was committed to the "traditions of the fathers," while he "persecuted the assembly of God and destroyed it"; Gal 1:13. On the other hand, the "late" Paul suggests that the curse of the law—as exercised against deviants and outsiders—is no part of the Gospel of Christ; Gal 3:13–14. In the words of Volf (1996/2010, 48), Paul moved away from "differentiating but internally undifferentiated" identities (i.e., the Jewish identity as different to others) to the understanding of Christ's body as "unifying but internally differentiated."
82 See Lightfoot (1874/2009, 11).
83 As Horsley notes, the *specialness* of the relationship was the fundamental aspect binding society together; Horsley (1997, 88–95, esp. 95); see Lendon (1997, 19–24). See also Moxnes (2005, 19–40) for an account of the structure of contemporary social systems, including gender.
84 The child of an enslaved person, Hagar's son Ishmael did not inherit the rights of a son even as circumcised; see Theissen (2016, 67).
85 Cf. Gal 5:6, 14.
86 In Paul's depiction, Peter abandoned the open-table fellowship—and his own convictions—in order to avoid giving the wrong impression and risking being deemed (incorrectly) a transgressor; see Gal 2:11–21. See also Paul's claim that the proponents for male circumcision "want to exclude you so that you will be committed to them"; Gal 4:17.
87 For an account of punishment and imprisonment in Roman antiquity, see Peters (1995, 3–43); Samuelsson (2013).
88 See Stendahl (1976); cf. Bowen (1976/2004, 353–87).
89 See Gal 4:28; cf. Gal 3:1–9; 4:21–5:1a. See also Hodge (2007); Eastman (2006, 309–36); Theissen (2016). In each of these settings, the term σάρξ is adopted in describing collective identity.
90 See Rom 1:3. See also Paul's depiction of own collective identity; see Rom 9:3–4; 1 Cor 11:21; Phil 3:4–5. The term σάρξ is used to describe collective identity.
91 See Gal 3:1–4.
92 See Gal 6:16. In 49 C.E., thousands of Jews were killed in the suppressed insurrection that followed upon the great famine that ravaged the country around 47 C.E.; see Josephus, *Antiquities* 20.51, 101; see Malherbe (2000/2004, 178); see also Acts 11:28. Jerusalem was destroyed—and its temple burnt to the ground—in 70 C.E.
93 Cf. Gal 2:4, in context. As Neutel (2016, 388) comments, the idea of "gentile eschatological inclusion" is present also in other contemporary texts; Tobit 14:5–7; *Sibylline Oracles* 3.757–60.
94 See Gal 6:15.
95 See Gal 3:28, in context; cf. 1 Cor 1:20–31. As Norbert Baumert (1992, 315–28) notes, the particle ἔνι would be translated not as "it is" but rather as "it is valid/of significance"; see also Walden (2009, 45–50); Tolmie (2014, 105–29, esp. 106). See also Bowen (1966/2004, 147–81; 1976/2004, 337–87). For an introduction to intersectional hermeneutics, see Kartzow (2010, 364–89). As Kartzow (2012, 15) notes, "[i]nstead of examining gender, race, class, age, and sexuality as separate categories of oppression, intersectionality explores how these categories overlap. Every person belongs to more than one category, and faced with discrimination it might be difficult to articulate which correlative system of oppression is at work." As Lopez (2007, 115–62, esp. 151) notes, "the Roman imperial ideology and power is gendered at its core […] when Paul uses the term ἔθνη there is more to this emergent picture than religious and theological 'difference' with respect to Israel and Judaism."
96 See Gal 2:1–21; 5:2–10; 6:11–15.
97 See Gal 4:21–5:1a.
98 See Gal 5:6; see also 6:9–10.

99 See, e.g., Gal 5:6; 6:15; 2:1–21.
100 See Gal 3:28, in context.
101 Although the Greek city assemblies (ἐκκλησίαι) excluded enslaved persons, not so with the assemblies of God (ἐκκλησίαι τοῦ θεοῦ); see Miller (2015, 32–39).
102 Phlm 17. Paul also describes Onesimus as his son, whom he has begotten in imprisonment; see Phlm 10. Onesimus means "useful" and was therefore a name typically given to a person who was born in enslavement; Arzt-Grabner (2010, 120).
103 See 1 Cor 7:21–24. Notably, without means for sustenance, a freed person might be worse off than an enslaved person—depending, of course, on the conditions for enslavement in that particular household. Therefore, it is relevant to ask whether manumission would be expedient to the enslaved person or not; see 1 Cor 7:21.
104 Butting (2000, 79–90); see also Tolmie (2014, 107).
105 Neutel (2015, 184–233).
106 See 1 Cor 7:25–40; see also Gal 4:1–7; Gal 3:15–17. cf. Louw and Nida (1988/1989, 2, 53); see also Rom 7:1–3; 1 Cor 7:1–16, 25–40; 6:9–20.
107 Paul seems to assume that a wife could initiate divorce just as easily as a husband—although this option must be avoided; see 1 Cor 7:10–14; cf. 7:38–40.
108 See Lategan (2012, 280). See also 2:12, in context.
109 See Gal 6:9–10.
110 See Gal 5:7–10; 4:7–20.
111 On deliberative discourse, see Matera (1992/2007, 11); Watson (2010, 25–47, esp. 36–39). On enslavement and patron-client structures, see Horsley (1997, 88–95); Lendon (1997, 19–24); Moxnes (2005, 19–40).
112 Cf. Bowen (1966/2004, 147–81; 1976/2004, 337–87).
113 Cf. Paul's description of himself as perplexed and at loss for words—which could be assessed as indicative of weakness—displays commitment to connection as well; see Gal 4:20.
114 See Chan (2002, 10).
115 See Iversen (2014).
116 See Gal 3:1–4; cf. 1:10–12.
117 See Gal 3:1–4, in context.
118 Cf. Gal 1:8.
119 See Gal 2:11–21; cf. 3:23–25.
120 See, e.g., Gal 4:21–5:1a.
121 One was circumcised for enslavement and the other for sonship and inheritance; Theissen (2016, 67). See Gen 17:12–13.
122 See Gal 5:6; 6:15. See also Gal 2:11–21.
123 See Gal 4:21–5:1a, see 5:24, in context. See also Eastman (2006, 309–336).
124 See Gal 5:25, in context.
125 See Gal 5:11.
126 See, again, Gal 5:11.
127 See Gal 2:11–21. See also Gal 4:17; 5:11; 6:12.
128 For an introduction to the concept of *narratio*, see Quintilian, *Institutio Oratoria*; see also O'Banion (1987, 325–51). The *narratio* may also indicate the structure of the forthcoming discourse (cf. *partitio* or *propositio*); see Quintilian, *Institutio* 4.5.1; see also Kern (2004, 107); Jewett (2007, 29). See also the previous chapter in this study.
129 See Gal 5:10.
130 Bowen (1976/2004, 361–70). See also Smith (2021, 131–46, esp. 145).
131 See Gal 6:13, in context. As Theissen (2016, 67, 91–101) suggests, "[c]ovenantal circumcision is not just any form of circumcision, but circumcision on the eighth day from birth." Verse 6:13 can thus be understood as claiming that those who

circumcise [themselves] do not keep the law *or* that those who circumcise [adult men] do not keep the law; see Theissen (2016, 93, 96). Cf. Gen 17:9–14.

132 See Gal 3:1–4; 6:12–13. The terms *bewitched* describes the situation when attitudes and perspectives that are alien to the individual are given a dominating role within the individual him- or herself; see Joelsson (2020, 159–96) for an account of the concept of unclean spirits in the perspective of social systems theory.

133 See Gal 1:8–9.

134 See Gal 3:28; cf. 6:15.

135 See Gal 4:21–5:1a; 1:8–9; 1:10–11. As Bowen (1974/2004, 279) notes, "[t]here is never a threat of too much individuality [not to be conflated with individualism, which is quite another thing]. The human need for togetherness prevents going beyond a critical point. A society with higher levels of individuality provides great growth for individuals in the group, it handles anxiety well, decisions are based on principle and are easy, and the group is attractive to new members."

136 Yorick Spiegel (1973/1978, 74) notes that when structural complexities demand significant intellectual reflection and discernment—and perhaps also transformed practices—the task may be deemed overtly taxing. "Instead of thinking in terms of the interconnectedness of all things, the world is imagined only as the interaction of individual persons […] Released aggressions are also highly personalized."

137 See Bowen (1974/2004, 276–79).

138 See Gal 4:19–20; see Bowen (1976/2004, 371).

139 As seen from the perspective of social systems theory, a system afflicted by reactive emotions is more likely to attack a subgroup or individual (cf. conflict and harassment); to demand distance (cf. separate tables); and be inclined to the application of force (cf. under- and over-functioning) rather than persuasion or the work of integration and restoration; see Bowen (1966/2004, 166–8; 1976/2004, 337–87). However, as Bowen (1976/2004, 371) notes, "[t]he instinctual forces toward differentiation is built into the organism, just as the emotional forces that oppose it."

140 Statements such as "the law says …" or "according to Scripture …" cannot be accepted as unmediated or neutral descriptions; cf. Gal 3:19–21. As Bowen (1976/2004, 368) notes, "[l]acking a solid self-conviction about the world's knowledge, they [who belong to a system in which members have a moderate level of differentiation of self] use pseudo-self statements, such as, 'the rule says …' or 'Science has proved …' taking information out of context to make their points." Bowen (1976/2004, 368) continues by saying that "[t]hey may have enough free-functioning intellect to have mastered intellectual knowledge about impersonal things; they use this knowledge in the relationship system. However, intellect about personal matters is lacking, and their personal lives are in chaos."

141 See Gal 3:19; cf. 3:17–18.

142 Scholem (1971/1995, 289).

143 Cf. Kille (2004, 8–24).

144 See Gal 2:21.

145 In the Jewish setting, the prophet Joel describes the vision that God's spirit will be poured over young and old, male and female, enslaved and free—a vision akin to Paul in Galatians. "In those days, I will pour out my Spirit on all people/everyone (πᾶσαν σάρκα; LXX 3:1), your sons and your daughters will prophesy, your old man will have dreams and your young men will see visions; in those days I will pour out my Spirit even upon your menservants and your maidservants"; Joel 2:27–29. See also Neutel (2015).

146 Cf. Gal 3:1–2.

147 See Gal 5:24, in context.
148 See Gal 1:1; 5:11; cf. 1:3–5. See also Joelsson (2017, 80).
149 See Gal 5:11. To someone outside the group of Christ-loyal, talking about a crucified Christ could clearly have been offensive, since a convict sentenced to capital punishment was not to be mourned, nor was a convict to be reintegrated as lord and commemorated in honor; Hope (2009, 180); Kyle (1998, 169).
150 See Gal 6:1–9.
151 See Gal 6:12, in context. The challenge-riposte game implied that the consequence of a successful challenge was that the social position of both parties would be changed; if the Galatians assemblies consented to implement the custom of male circumcision—if conceived of as a challenge—the reputation of the proponents would be strengthened and Paul's reputation correspondingly weakened. Cf. Moxnes (2005, 19–40).
152 See Gal 2:11–21.
153 See Gal 4:17.
154 See Gal 2:11–21.
155 The Roman historian Tacitus notes that "circumcision was adopted by them [the Jews] as a mark of difference from other men. Those who go over to their ways adopt the practice, and have this lesson first instilled into them, to despise all gods, to disown their country, and set at naught parents, children, and brethren"; Tacitus, *Histories* 5.5.1–3, in Neutel (2016, 378).
156 See Gal 5:24; see also Gal 3:6–14; 4:4–7; 5:1, in contexts.
157 See Gal 5:11; cf. 5:11–24.
158 See Gal 1:13. Cf. the description of the correct attitude to a cursed person in 1 Corinthians: "you must not even eat with such a person"; 1 Cor 5:1–13, esp. 5:11.
159 See Gal 6:1–3; Bowen (1966/2004, 147–81; 1976/2004, 337–87); Spiegel (1973/1978, 74).
160 See Gal 5:11–24.
161 See Gal 5:11–24.
162 See Gal 4:1–3.
163 See Gal 3:23–25; 4:1–7.
164 Cf. 1 Cor 15:35–58.
165 See Gal 4:3; 4:27, in contexts.
166 See Gal 3:9–13; 5:19–21.
167 See Gal 5:15–18; cf. 5:19–21.
168 See Gal 5:19–21.
169 See, e.g., Clark (2010, 87–106); Smith and Davis-Gage (2010, 107–30). Gal 5:18–21; cf. 5:2–6. Children are not held accountable in the same way as adults; cf. "when we were children, we were under the rulers of this world"; Gal 4:1–3.
170 See Gal 5:11–24.
171 See Gal 6:1–9.
172 Cf. Bowen (1966/2004, 147–81; 1976/2004, 337–87).
173 See, e.g., Gal 3:1; 4:8–11.
174 See Bowen (1966/2004, 147–81; 1976/2004, 353–87). It can be noted that Bowen describes the level of differentiation as a multigenerational process; see Bowen (1976/2004, 384–5). "[E]motional illness is a deeper phenomenon than can be explained by disturbed relationships in a single generation"; Berenson (1976/2004, 390).
175 See Gal 1:1. In reception history, the specialness of Paul's calling may have been over-emphasized. Paul rather claims being called *too* and having received the Spirit *too*; see 1 Cor 3:1–23; 7:40; 2 Cor 1:21–22.
176 See Gal 1:6, in context.
177 See Gal 1:15–16. Cf. Blessing (2004a, 165–91).

178 See Gal 3:23–25. Cf. Gal 4:19–20.
179 Cf. Gal 3:5.
180 Cf. Gal 2:5.
181 See Gal 3:1–7.
182 See Neutel (2016, 373–96).
183 See Gal 4:9, 19, in contexts.
184 See Gal 3:8–9; 4:1–9.
185 See Gal 1:6.
186 See Gal 3:24–4:7.
187 See Gal 1:6, in context. Cf. Gal 2:21.
188 See Gal 3:24–4:9. Cf. Bowen (1966/2004, 147–81; 1976/2004, 337–87).
189 See Pilch (2014, 1–8). For a discussion of stereotypes from enslavement/master, gendered, and racist discourse, see Kahl (2010); Lopez (2007, 115–62; 2008, 26–55).
190 See Gal 5:19–21. The term σάρξ refers to persons incorporated into a *collective group*.
191 See Gal 2:14–20.
192 See Gal 2:14–20.
193 As Paul notes, God's promises have primary relevance, but the law as rules, customs, and tradition are secondary—given "four hundred and thirty years later"; Gal 3:16–18.
194 See Gal 3: 3:19–29.
195 See Gal 3:16–18; cf. 3:19–29.
196 Cf. Gal 2:12, in context. See also Gal 6:12.
197 Cf. Gal 5:14–18.
198 See Gal 5:1–4.
199 See Gal 6:1–9.
200 Cf. Bowen (1966/2004, 147–81; 1976/2004, 337–87).
201 Cf. Joh 11:48, in context.
202 See Samuelsson (2013); Elliott (1997, 167–83); Sampley (2003, 1–16). See also Joelsson (2017, 158). An executed convict was not allowed to be mourned, much less to be honored as Lord; Hope (2009, 180).
203 As Bowen (1974/2004, 278) notes, "[t]he endpoint of too much togetherness comes when viable members leave to join other groups, and the others huddle in impotent fear, so close they live in 'piles' and so alienated they still clamor for togetherness which further increases the alienation, or they become violent and start destroying each other." Cf. Walker and Salt (2006).
204 See Gal 5:15.
205 See Gal 5:12–13. In the term ταράσσω, Louw and Nida (1988/1989, 2, 241) identify the semantic components (a) *stir up*, (b) *cause great distress*, and (c) *cause a riot*, in the term.
206 See Gal 1:8–9.
207 See 6:13. As Theissen (2016, 67, 91–101) notes, "not keeping the law" may refer to the law of *circumcision* (i.e., as including the temporal aspect of the eighth day after birth). Moreover, in Paul's view, the curse of the law is removed; see Gal 3:13–14; cf. Gen 17:9–14.
208 See 2 Cor 11:24–25.
209 See Gal 6:1–2.
210 As Bowen (1976/2004, 368) notes, "[t]he rebel is lacking a self of his own. His pseudo-self posture is merely the exact opposite of the majority viewpoint."
211 See Gal 2:11–21.
212 See Gal 6:1–9.
213 See Gal 6:1–2, in context. See also 6:10.
214 See Gal 4:12.

215 Conflict and harassment can emerge both as a response to an attempt to increase the level of differentiation in the social system and as response to emotional stress more generally; see Bowen (1966/2004, 147–81; 1976/2004, 337–87).
216 Cf. Bowen (1976/2004, 368).
217 See Gal 2:18–21; cf. 3:24–29.
218 See Gal 6:1–2.
219 See Gal 2:11–21.
220 See Bowen (1976/2004, 357–87).
221 See Gal 5:26–6:10.
222 See Elliott (1997, 167–83).
223 See Samuelsson (2013); Elliott (1997, 167–183); Sampley (2003, 1–16). See also Joelsson (2017, 158). As part of the punishment, customary mourning practices were forbidden. The body was normally left to rot or thrown into the city dump; Kyle (1998, 169).
224 See Gal 3:27; see also Rom 13:14. For a description of clothes as signalling specific social status and social position, see Berger (1991/2003, 40–43); see also Morgan (2018a).
225 Cf. Gal 5:11.
226 As most punishments in Antiquity, crucifixion was intended not only to inflict pain in the convict but also to have a demeaning impact on the convict's social position; Samuelsson (2013, 16–17). To further effect emotional distance to the convict, a crucified person was not to be mourned and customary burial practices were removed; see Hope (2009, 180); Kyle (1998, 169).
227 The concept of Christianity as a "third race" recurs among the church fathers. As Kwame Bediako (1999/2011, 39) notes, the notion was not only familiar to Tertullian, but he was also skeptic. In Galatians 6:15, the term καινὴ κτίσις can be rendered as "renewed creation" (transformation) rather than "new creation" (replacement); see Burke (2008, 259–288, esp. 282); Horrell, Hunt, and Southgate (2010, 117). See also Gal 2:15–18; 3:24–29; 2 Cor 5:16–19.
228 See Gal 4:28, in context. See also Gal 3:24–29.
229 See Gal 2:11–21.
230 See Gal 6:16. See also Eastman (2006); Theissen (2016).
231 See Gal 5:19–21.
232 See Gal 5:26–6:10. Conceit appears as a description of distance insofar as it assumes that one's own group or person would be different (superior) from others; envy is the perception that others have more or better than oneself; challenge is an attempt to make the other lose face (cf. the challenge-riposte game); see Moxnes (2005, 19–40).
233 This aspect in relationships can also be described by the term *transference* or *projection*; see Bowen (1966/2004, 147–181; 1976/2004, 353–387, esp. 358, 366–371).
234 See Gal 6:1. In a setting of exhortation, the one who admonishes risks overfunctioning, harassment, and distance; Paul notes that conceit, slander, and envy are obstacles to spiritual life; see Gal 5:25–26.
235 See Gal 6:1.
236 See. Gal 6:1–2.
237 As in any case of bullying, the goal can be to make someone lose his or her face by acting shamefully; cf. Pilch (2014, 1–8). See also Bowen (1976/2004, 337–387); Walker and Salt (2006, 74–95).
238 See Gal 5:11.
239 See Gal 4:17–18; 5:11–14.
240 See Gal 6:9–10; cf. 5:24–26. This teaching seems to stand in continuity with Jesus' teaching, for example, that everyone will know that they belong him if they love one another; see John 13:35. For an account of later concerns for

correct belief about Jesus' resurrection, see Lehtipuu (2015). For Paul Jesus' resurrection is an argument in favor of *inclusion*—not exclusion; 1 Cor 15:1–58.

241 See Gal 5:19–21.
242 See Gal 2:16. See also 3:24–29; 5:6; 6:15.
243 See Gal 3:24–29.
244 Kahl (2014, 257–269, esp. 260).
245 See Gal 2:16; see also 3:9.
246 As Teresa Morgan (2018b, 23–45, esp. 41) notes, "[w]e should not be surprised to find individual Christians identifying with multiple labels, accreting identities, code-switching, or even celebrating their hybridity See also Kartzow (2012; 2010, 364–89).
247 See Theissen (2016); Eastman (2006, 309–36).
248 See Gal 5:24–26. As Bowen (1974/2004, 277) notes, "[r]egression occurs when the family, or society, begins to make important decisions to allay the anxiety of the moment." Moreover, "[s]ocietal pressure is directed first at those who are most unsure of self and vulnerable to pressure. Then it extend to others"; Bowen (1974/2004, 276).
249 Cf. Gal 3:1–4.
250 See Bowen (1976/2004, 358, 366–71); see also Bowen (1971/2004, 183–240, esp. 200–3).
251 Bowen (1976/2004, 366) comments that "the level of solid self is lower, and of the pseudo-self is much higher in all of us than most are aware." See Blessing (2004b, 196–7); Nyengele (2004, 120–5); Majerus (2010, 288–99, esp. 295).
252 Cf. Gal 5:24.
253 As Paul emphasizes, Christ has liberated them for liberty; Gal 5:1.
254 See Bowen (1976/2004, 337–87, esp. 362–3).
255 See Frankl (1959/2014). Hasenjürgen (ed.) (2015). See also Keshgegian (2000).
256 According to James South, "Thiselton has demonstrated convincingly that whenever the two terms [σάρξ and πνεῦμα] stand in contrast to one another, the meaning is seldom (if ever) that of body/spirit"; South (1993, 539–61, esp. 552); see also Thiselton (2000, 390). Thiselton (2000, 289) noted that "[*f*]*lesh, fleshly*, cannot avoid nuances of sensuality in the late twentieth century." For a study specifically on the translation of σάρξ to the term *flesh*, see Joelsson (2018, 132–54).
257 Louw and Nida (1988/1989, 2, 220).
258 As James Hoke (2019, 91) notes, Roman slander of other people typically included unseemly sexual behavior; see also Ciampa and Rosner (2008, 205–18).
259 See Gal 5:6, 13, in contexts.
260 See Gal 5:7.
261 See Gal 3:1–4.
262 See Gal 5:11–24, esp. 5:16–18.
263 See Gal 5:10–12.
264 See Gal 5:16.
265 See Gal 1:8–2:10; see also Rom 9–11, esp. 9:1–5.
266 See 2 Cor 11:24, in context. As Sanders (1983, 192, emphasis removed) notes, "[p]unishment implies inclusion". "Forty lashes minus one" was a distinctively Jewish punishment, while being "beaten with rods" was a Roman form of punishment; see Hubbard (2010, 164). See also Gal 2:11–21, esp. 2:20; cf. 5:1; 4:1–7.
267 See Gal 5:11–24.
268 See Gal 6:14–15; cf. 6:12–13.
269 See Gal 6:10–18, esp. 6:12–13.
270 See Gal 5:14.
271 For further discussion on the neighbor, see Kartzow (ed.) (2022).

272 See Joelsson (2018, 132–54).
273 See Bowen (1976/2004, 337–87).
274 See Gal 6:14.
275 See, e.g., Gal 4:7; 5:1, in contexts.
276 See Gal 5:1; see also 5:13, in contexts.
277 See Gal 5:16, in context; cf. Gal 6:16–17.
278 See Gal 3:7–9; see 6:16. See also Hodge (2007).
279 Against Walter Russell (1997, 2–4, 184–85), who thinks that Paul targets the Jewish collective identity specifically.
280 See Gal 6:17.
281 For an account of rhetorical cases as divided into different rhetorical categories, see Eriksson (1998, 69).
282 See Gal 4:17; cf. Gal 2:3–5, 11–21.
283 See Gal 4:16.
284 See Gal 2:12.
285 See Gal 1:10.
286 See Gal 1:11–12; see also 1:13–2:21; 3:1–29, and so on.
287 See Gal 5:11–18.
288 See Bowen (1966/2004, 160–62).
289 See 1 Cor 12:24–25.
290 Cf. 1 Cor 15:38 and 15:50, in contexts. See also Rom 1:3; 9:3; 11:14.
291 As two partially overlapping terms, σῶμα is commonly adopted with reference to the body's collective functioning (cf. 1 Cor 12:11–26), while σάρξ is adopted as referring to the collective body in its distinction; see, e.g., 1 Cor 15:39; Rom 1:3; 9:3; 11:14.
292 The term *Holocaust* has connotations to a sacrificial offering, while *Shoah* simply means catastrophe; see Ehrensperger (2004, 16–19, 34); see also Ehrensperger (2019, 3–5).
293 See Gal 4:19; cf. 5:14.
294 See Gal 4:12.
295 See, e.g., Gal 5:6; 6:15.
296 "You did nothing wrong/unjust to me" or, simply, "you did not wrong me"; see Gal 4:12. The meaning of the term ἀδικέω includes the semantic components to (1) hurt, (2) act unjustly, and (3) mistreat; see Louw and Nida (1988/1989, 4).
297 See Gal 4:8–10.
298 See Gal 4:8–9. As noted above, it is unlikely that the term στοιχεῖα here refers to other gods or spiritual powers, since Paul describes himself as having been under the στοιχεῖα of the world; cf. Gal 4:3. See also Paul's wish of peace upon all who "walk in this rule [of Christ]" (τῷ κανόνι τούτῳ στοιχήσουσιν); Gal 6:16. In other words, they must choose which rule they follow; Russell (1997, 129).
299 See Gal 1:6–7; 2:3–5, 14, in context. See also 4:16; 5:6–7.
300 See Gal 1:3–4; 2:41–3:14; see also 6:10–18.
301 See Gal 5:14.
302 Cf. "In those days, I will pour out my Spirit on all people/everyone (πᾶσαν σάρκα; LXX 3:1), your sons and your daughters will prophesy, your old man will have dreams and your young men will see visions; in those days I will pour out my Spirit even upon your menservants and your maidservants," Joel 2:27–29. See also Gal 3:24–29.
303 See Gal 1:8–9; see also 4:21–5:1a.
304 See Gal 4:21–5:1a, see 5:24, in context. Paul suggests a symbolic account of the story of Hagar and Ishmael: ἅτινά ἐστιν ἀλληγορούμενα; see Gal 4:24.
305 See Gal 3:1–14; cf. 5:24.
306 See Gal 3:24–29.
307 Cf. Rom 1:16–17, in context. See also Gal 3:24–29.

308 See Gal 2:18, in context.
309 See Gal 5:26–6:10.

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