

# "Judaizers"? "Pagan" Cults? Cynics?: Reconceptualizing the Concerns of Paul's Audience from the Polemics in Philippians 3:2, 18-19

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"Beware of the dogs... the evil workers... the mutilation," Paul sharply warns the Philippians-- but whom does he have in mind with this cryptic vilification? Moreover, what does such polemic suggest about the context and concerns of his audience?

The interpretive tradition proceeds as if there is little doubt: Paul obviously has in view Jews who are missionaries, opponents of Paul,<sup>1</sup> and (usually) "Christians"<sup>2</sup> (often labeled "judaizers"<sup>3</sup>), generally understood to be intruders who have arrived from outside of Philippi. Their goal is to influence his addressees to undertake proselyte conversion and other elements of a Jewish way of life, all of which Paul opposes for Christ-followers.<sup>4</sup> This paradigm (with

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\* I am grateful to those who have responded to various elements and versions of this paper in the working group, most notably Richard Horsley and Joseph Marchal, as well as others, especially Robert Brawley.

<sup>1</sup> Although Paul's warning opposes the influence of some people or groups on those to whom he writes, the label "opponents" is avoided here unless it can be established from Paul's argument that he is being opposed.

<sup>2</sup> Although the label Christian is usually employed in discussions of Philippians, it is avoided hereafter for describing the probable historical addressees because it is anachronistic and not helpful for trying to imagine the pre-Christianity setting of Paul's audiences; "Christ-followers" is adopted instead. Nevertheless, "Christian" is retained sometimes to highlight the conceptual paradigms at work in the traditional interpretations being discussed, for which Christians and Christianity are what is indeed envisioned.

<sup>3</sup> The term Judaizers is grammatically inaccurate to refer to those who seek to influence non-Jews toward Judaism, although that is its common usage for discussions of Paul's "opponents." Instead, the term should be used (if at all) to refer to those who undertake becoming Jews, i.e., proselytes have "judaized." It is problematic ideologically, because its usage carries a negative valence that has historically been used as if there is something self-evidently wrong with Jews (or non-Jews) who might seek to persuade non-Jews to become proselytes (note: -izers, versus Christian mission-aries, not mission-izers), and it has been often used in later inter-Christian rivalries as a negative label to denounce a rival Christian group for being heretical, even when the topic at issue may not be conversion to Judaism. See Shaye J. D. Cohen, *The Beginnings of Jewishness: Boundaries, Varieties, Uncertainties* (HCS 31; Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999), 175-97.

<sup>4</sup> In addition to the commentaries, specialized studies include John J. Gunther, *St. Paul's Opponents and Their Background: A Study of Apocalyptic and Jewish Sectarian Teachings* (NovTSup 35; Leiden: Brill, 1973), 2, for a list of seventeen options that are usually discussed for identifying those Paul opposes in Phil 3. They focus on Jews or Jewish Christians, even when some other options are explored in addition (e.g., Jewish or Jewish Christian

slight variations) has limited not only the interpretive options explored for constructing Paul's thought and behavior within the context of a conflict with Judaism (i.e., Jewish ways of life based upon Torah prescribed norms), but also the context and concerns of his addressees.

To this day, the basic case has been made based on the following interpretive decisions:<sup>5</sup> Paul's warning in v. 2 to beware of "the dogs" is taken to be a reversal of supposedly stereotypical Jewish slander of non-Jews as dogs, thus Paul's denunciation of Jews and their influence is from a perspective calculated to appeal to his audiences' resentment toward Jewish ethno-religious arrogance. The warning to beware of "the evil workers" ostensibly suggests Christ-following Jewish missionaries who have arrived or are anticipated to be on their way: Paul subverts their claim to bring *good* news or uphold the place of *good* works, combinations of faith and actions that interpreters have associated with gospel-based values for "Christian" *Jewish* groups in contrast to Paul's "Christian" universalist (read: *Gentile*) value-based groups. The epithet "the mutilation" supposedly represents a negative reversal of the value of circumcision aimed at those who promote this rite, since Paul is understood to

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Gnostics, "Judaizers," libertines, pneumatics); and see variously Helmut Koester, "The Purpose of the Polemic of a Pauline Fragment," *NTS* 8 (1961-62): 317-32; A. F. J. Klijn, "Paul's Opponents in Philippians iii," *NovT* 7 (1964): 278-84; Carl R. Holladay, "Paul's Opponents in Philippians 3," *Restoration Quarterly* 12 (1969): 77-90; Robert Jewett, "Conflicting Movements in the Early Church as Reflected in Philippians," *NovT* 12 (1970): 362-90; Walther Schmithals, *Paul & the Gnostics* (trans. John E. Steely; Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1972), 65-122; E. Earle Ellis, "Paul and His Opponents: Trends in Research," in *Christianity, Judaism and Other Greco-Roman Cults: Studies for Morton Smith at Sixty* (ed. Jacob Neusner; Leiden: Brill, 1975), 264-98; Joseph B. Tyson, "Paul's Opponents at Philippi," *Perspectives in Religious Studies* 3 (1976): 82-95; David E. Garland, "The Composition and Unity of Philippians," *NovT* 27 (1985): 141-73; K. Grayston, "The Opponents in Philippians 3," *Expository Times* 97 (1986): 170-72; E. P. Sanders, "Paul on the Law, His Opponents, and the Jewish People in Philippians 3 and 2 Corinthians 11," in *Anti-Judaism in Early Christianity: Paul and the Gospels* (eds. Peter Richardson and David M. Granskou; Waterloo: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 1986), 75-90; L. Gregory Bloomquist, *The Function of Suffering in Philippians* (JSNTSS 78; Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1993), 198-201. For good summaries in commentaries, see Peter Thomas O'Brien, *The Epistle to the Philippians: A Commentary on the Greek Text* (NICC; Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1991), 26-35; John Reumann, *Philippians: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* (Anchor Yale Bible; New Haven, CT and London: Yale University Press, 2008), 460-81.

<sup>5</sup> The following details and conclusions are so widespread that there is little reason to refer the reader to any particular interpreter: they will be found, with little variation, in every commentary and discussion of the situation in Philippi.

conflate the two in v. 3 to draw a supersessionistic "Christian" contrast, "we are the circumcision...." Then Paul ostensibly denounces his (former) Jewish credentials in vv. 3-9 as meaningless, amounting to "crap" compared to his new identity in Christ. Furthermore, in vv. 18-19, his specific invectives toward those accused of being "the enemies of the cross of Christ, whose end is destruction, whose god is the belly, who even glory in their shame, who are thinking earthly [thoughts]," are usually aligned with errors attributed to Judaism, including to Jews who have become Christ-followers but continue to practice and promote Judaism, which Paul is understood to oppose. (Unlike the case in v. 2, the commentary tradition does recognize several other possible referents for the invectives in vv. 18-19.)<sup>6</sup>

These decisions are elements of a popular paradigm that often frames how the conflicts suggested by Paul's polemics have been interpreted since F. C. Baur: the Petrine/Jewish Christianity versus Pauline/Gentile Christianity trajectory. According to this construction of Christian origins, Paul's mission is understood to be experiencing a challenge from a counter-missionary program under the leadership of James and Peter, and his letters reflect this more global dynamic. Thus Paul's polemics in Philippians are expected to be expressing resistance to intruders from outside of his communities who are Jewish Christ-followers (often they are proposed to be associated with the ostensible Galatian opponents).<sup>7</sup> In addition to the influence of this historical paradigm, it has become commonplace to uphold the idea that reading Paul in opposition to fellow Christ-followers is attractive because it focuses on Paul's

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<sup>6</sup> Gerald F. Hawthorne, *Philippians* (WBC 43; Waco, Tex.: Word Books, 1983), 163. These include various kinds of antinomian Christ-followers (Lightfoot, Michael, Beare, Betz, Jones, Scott), Gnostic Christ-followers (Köster), as well as "pagans" (Weiss).

<sup>7</sup> My challenge to the basis of such identifications is discussed in detail in *The Irony of Galatians: Paul's Letter in First-Century Context* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2002), including why there is no evidence that Paul was being opposed or that the influencers have come from outside of Galatia; rather, the evidence suggest that Paul is opposing the influence of local groups and social identity norms. They appear to maintain the need for proselyte conversion apart from raising concern that it is oppositional to Paul's addressees' convictions about Christ and apart from attacking their patron, Paul. More likely, the influencers argue that these non-Jews have misunderstood their patron, but are not outright opposing Paul. If they were, then it seems probable that Paul's addressees would not be so naively, from his point of view, considering this step complimentary to rather than subversive of their standing in Christ according to Paul's gospel.

criticism of fellow "Christians," thus making it an expression of inter-Christian polemic rather than an attack on Jews or Judaism; would that it were so.<sup>8</sup>

Recent efforts to revisit the interpretation of Philippians or to pursue a people's history approach, such as those that focus on the political (i.e., Roman imperial) as well as Greco-Roman "pagan"<sup>9</sup> social context of the letter overall, retain the consensus interpretation for identifying the targets of Paul's oppositional polemic in these verses. They also perpetuate, intentionally or not, the traditional view that Paul negatively values the continuation of Jewish identity and Judaism (or Christian Judaism) in his communities as well as in his own life, and make this issue an element in their constructions of the situation in Philippi.<sup>10</sup>

These interpretive decisions have been repeated endlessly with little to no discussion of the indirect nature of the evidence on which they depend, although they have enormous impact upon how the letter is interpreted, as well as for constructions of Paul and Christian origins in general, including decisions about Paul's identity, teaching, and behavior relative to Judaism. Similarly, they impact decisions about the other Christ-following Jewish groups, including the other apostles and Paul's relationship to them. And they impact constructions of

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<sup>8</sup> Since it remains the practice of Judaism that Paul supposedly attacks, the benefits asserted seem to me neither as benign as asserted, nor the paradigm itself very convincing; see Mark D. Nanos, "How Inter-Christian Approaches to Paul's Rhetoric Can Perpetuate Negative Valuations of Jewishness – Although Proposing to Avoid that Outcome," *Biblical Interpretation* 13, no. 3 (2005): 255-69.

<sup>9</sup> Admittedly anachronistic, the term is employed herein to refer to those who are neither Jewish nor Christ-followers, with no negative judgment intended.

<sup>10</sup> E.g., Peter Oakes, *Philippians: From People to Letter* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 105, 111-12, 117-18; Richard S. Ascough, *Paul's Macedonian Associations: The Social Context of Philippians and 1 Thessalonians* (WUNT 2.161; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2003), 203-5; Erik M. Heen, "Phil 2:6-11 and Resistance to Local Timocratic Rule: *Isa theos* and the Cult of the Emperor in the East," in *Paul and the Roman Imperial Order* (ed. Richard A. Horsley; Harrisburg, Pa.: Trinity Press International, 2004), 125-53; Craig Steven de Vos, *Church and Community Conflicts: The Relationships of the Thessalonian, Corinthian, and Philippian Churches with Their Wider Civic Communities* (SBLDS 168; Atlanta, Ga.: Scholars Press, 1999), 263-75, challenges the prevailing views in a manner closest to the one proposed here. Also critical of the prevailing view in various ways and to various degrees, although often still conceptualizing Paul's opposition to be to Jewish or Jewish Christian missionaries, is Karl Olav Sandnes, *Belly and Body in the Pauline Epistles* (SNTSMS 120; Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2002). Some note that the conflict in Philippi was probably precipitated by the Christ-followers withdrawal from traditional cults, especially imperial cult.

the identity and concerns of Paul's audience, including what kinds of options they are exploring, or at least that Paul supposes them to be exploring, prompting him to write this letter.

Any people's history approach cannot help but be influenced by such conclusions for setting out the options to explore. Since Paul nowhere explicitly identifies those he denounces as Jews, missionaries, outsiders, or as Christ-followers for that matter, is it not time to revisit the evidence, both for constructions of Paul as well as of his Philippian audience?

### **Reconceptualizing the Philippian Context**

In my view, the evidence available from Paul's rhetoric should lead to re-conceptualizing hypotheses to test in several new directions for identifying "the Philippians" addressed. The concerns of the Philippians and Paul can be interpreted within a Greco-Roman cultural and politico-religious context apart from imagining it to revolve around the introduction of, and Paul's resistance to, people or matters identified with Jewishness.

I propose that Paul's polemical response arises *from his Jewish sensibilities and his commitment to the practice of Judaism within his communities--even by those non-Jews whom he insists remain non-Jews.*<sup>11</sup> Instead of warning against the practice of Judaism, why not explore a reading

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<sup>11</sup> Cf. Mark D. Nanos, "Paul and Judaism: Why Not Paul's Judaism?" in *Paul Unbound: Other Perspectives on the Apostle*, (ed. Mark D. Given; Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 2010), 117-60. Reference herein is made to Jews and Jewish and Jewishness or Judaism, unless the geo-ethnic element of Judeanness is perceived to be specifically more salient (note: non-Jews could also be Judeans, just as today non-Jews can be Israelis). That there was a religious dimension to Judean/Jewish ethnicity properly named Judaism seems to me evident from relevant sources for discussing Paul's period; it arises in Paul's language in Gal 1:13-14; 2:14-16; and in the Maccabean literature Judeans can either leave or return to the traditional religious practices of this people, or observe them in different ways and to different degrees. It seems unlikely that those in Judea who are described in 2 Maccabees 6:1-11 as prohibited "even from confessing themselves to be *Ioudaioi*," suggests that they cannot confess to being Judeans, but Jews, those who practice Judaism (cf. 9:13-17, where Antiochus IV Epiphanes is described as willing to become a *Ioudaios*, which most likely means Jew, not Judean, for he was not giving up his role as the Seleucid king). Philo, *Spec.* 1.186, notes the range of observance among Jews. Josephus, *Ant.* 20.34-48, relates that Izates, the king of Adiabene, seeks to live a Jewish lifestyle guided by Scripture, apparently independent of participation in a Jewish community or role in ruling Judea or a Judean satellite nation. His interests and practices make more sense to classify as Judaism, even after his circumcision, although the geo-ethnic element is relevant, as witnessed by the concern about how his subjects will react. Moreover, note that the teacher advocating circumcision (Eleazar)

that assumes Paul might want his audience to be fully enculturated into Judaism (i.e., into a Jewish cultural and social way of thinking and living), and thus into assessing the groups he decries and their norms as competitors whose influence upon them should be resisted? In other words, if the idea of "Judaizers" as the opposition in Philippi is found to be questionable (in addition to being grammatically inaccurate); then, in a very different direction, Paul may seek to influence his audience to be completely "judaized," albeit within the terms developed around his Jewish subgroup's affiliation with Jesus.<sup>12</sup>

In this alternative approach to Paul's interests, and those of his audience, the issue revolves around how to live within Judaism, within Paul's new Jewish subgroups, where that identity and concomitant behavior puts them in conflict with the larger (non-Jewish) Greco-Roman population and its cultural norms. That remains the cultural context in which they live and move and find their identity and access to goods; however, these forces present challenges to Paul's Jewish ideals for how they should now think and live, including how they should suffer in this new, marginalized state. To put this another way, a Torah centered communal way of life (i.e., based on God's "Instructions" for how to live rightly) is by definition counter-cultural in terms of the dominant social values, politics, and practices of cult in Philippi. The addressees are learning an alternative way of life from Paul's teaching, from Scripture, from the Jewish subgroup members (if there are any), and from the larger Jewish community

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is described as coming from Galilee, not Judea, so he is not arguably a Judean, although described as a *Ioudaios* (43), while the other one (Ananias) is not described in terms of coming from somewhere, but yet as a *Ioudaios* merchant. See Daniel R. Schwartz, "'Judaean' or 'Jew'? How should we translate *ioudaios* in Josephus?" in *Jewish Identity in the Greco-Roman World = Jüdische Identität in der griechisch-römischen Welt* (eds. J. Frey, et al.; Ancient Judaism and early Christianity 71; Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2007), 3-27; Margaret H. Williams, "The Meaning and Function of *Ioudaios* in Graeco-Roman Inscriptions," *Zeitschrift für Papyrologie und Epigraphik* 116 (1997): 249-62; S. Cohen, *The Beginnings of Jewishness*, 69-139; David Goodblatt, *Elements of Ancient Jewish Nationalism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006); Siân Jones and Sarah Pearce, eds., *Jewish Local Patriotism and Self-Identification in the Graeco-Roman Period* (JSPSup 31; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1998); Anders Runesson, "Inventing Christian Identity: Paul, Ignatius, and Theodosius I," in *Exploring Early Christian Identity* (ed. Bengt Holmberg; WUNT 226; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2008), 59-92.

<sup>12</sup> See also Paula Fredriksen, "Judaizing the Nations: The Ritual Demands of Paul's Gospel," *New Testament Studies* 56 (2010): 232-52.

(however large or small it is in Philippi, it would represent a minority group and culture, but one in which their own groups function as subgroups).

This suggested interpretation raises the prospect of several new directions to explore to conceptualize Paul and the people in his community, as well as their concerns. There is not space to develop the alternatives in any detail or beyond a direct engagement with the language of vv. 2-3, accompanied with sideward glances at other language in the chapter, especially the polemical language in vv. 18-19.<sup>13</sup> But it is possible to show how unlikely the prevailing constructions of the situation are, and point toward new alternatives that hold promise for reconceptualizing those to whom Paul wrote. The results are obviously relevant to how the evidence from this letter is used in making many other decisions about how to interpret Paul.

My research leads me to believe that the most likely referents in each specific case, including the ideological comparisons giving rise to Paul's dissociating rhetoric, are neither Jews nor Judaism, nor Christ-followers (or from so-called Jewish Christianity), nor outsiders to Philippi on a mission to counter Paul's influence. Rather the influences he perceived the need to respond to probably arose from local Greco-Roman "idolatrous" cults or philosophical groups and their various behavioral norms, which were, from Paul's perspective, in conflict with the values of their new identification within Jewish communal subgroups, within Judaism. There are a number of suggestive candidates to explore. After discussing several of them, more attention will be given to the promising topic of the Cynics, which offers interesting new dynamics to consider for constructing the identity, circumstances, and concerns of these Philippians.

### **Philippi and Philippians**

Paul's letter was sent to a Romanized city, populated by many Romans, with special colony status, highly stratified according to Roman elites' standards (inescapable maintenance of status and distinctions), agriculturally oriented (and thus highly interdependent), and with

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<sup>13</sup> There is also not space to discuss the various partition theories for the letter or letters, but it is relevant that the various positions depend upon how they read 3:2 as a break from the concerns raised earlier in the letter.

Romanized Greek, Macedonian, Thracian and other peoples.<sup>14</sup> Many gods were worshipped, and many cults are attested from the material remains. Roman religious practice was characterized by civic ideology, which incorporated the local gods and cults.<sup>15</sup> Inscriptions indicate that Romanized foreign cults such as the Egyptian gods and Cybele were linked to the practice of imperial cult.<sup>16</sup>

This milieu warrants an investigation of Philippians based on the supposition that Paul's negative references signal a call for resistance to the influence of "non-Jewish" or "pagan" factors on the addressees. In stark contrast to the prevailing way to approach the interpretation of Paul's letters, I imagine that Paul continued to practice Judaism and establish groups practicing Judaism (albeit having a significant proportion of non-Jews), which would have presented challenges within the larger non-Jewish world, in addition to inter-Jewish group tensions. Thus I expect his letters to express Jewish sensibilities (including specifically Christ-based Jewish subgroup sensibilities) that he believed would shape his audiences' worldviews in directions new to them. Given this perspective, it seems to me that Paul is in this letter expressing a general revulsion toward the practices of some of the idolatrous cults and/or philosophical and other cultural norms that conspire to shape the thinking and behavior of his disciples in direct contrast to the (Jewish Christ-subgroup oriented) values to which he wants them to now subscribe.

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<sup>14</sup> Lukas Bormann, *Philippi: Stadt und Christengemeinde zur Zeit des Paulus* (SNT 78; Leiden, et al.: E. J. Brill, 1995), 11-84; Peter Pilhofer, *Philippi. Band 1: Die erste christliche Gemeinde Europas* (2 vols.; WUNT 87; Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr, 1995); Chaido Koukouli-Chrysantaki, "Colonia Iulia Augusta Philippensis," in *Philippi at the Time of Paul and After his Death* (eds. Charalambos Bakirtzis and Helmut Koester; Harrisburg, Pa.: Trinity Press International, 1998), 5-35; Charalambos Bakirtzis, "Paul and Philippi: The Archaeological Evidence," in *Philippi at the Time of Paul and After his Death*, eds. C. Bakirtzis and H. Koester, 37-48.; de Vos, *Community Conflicts*, 234-50; Oakes, *Philippians* 1-76; Joseph H. Hellerman, *Reconstructing Honor in Roman Philippi: Carmen Christi as Cursus Pudorum* (SNTSMS 132; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005).

<sup>15</sup> Mary Beard, et al., *Religions of Rome* (2 vols.; Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 167-363; John Scheid and Janet Lloyd, *An Introduction to Roman Religion* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2003).

<sup>16</sup> Bormann, *Philippi*, 54-60; Hawthorne, *Philippians*, xxxiv. On the Thracian, Greek, and other indigenous practices see especially Pilhofer, *Philippi. Band 1*, 1.49-113; Hellerman, *Reconstructing Honor*, 100-9.

Although there is little evidence of Jewish communities in Philippi at the time,<sup>17</sup> the absence of any Jews during Paul's period would be remarkable. The author of Acts 16:11-40 imagined that discussing a Jewish community there would be believable for his audience, even if this constitutes questionable evidence, since Paul wrote years earlier. In that report, there is communal opposition from crowds and magistrates in response to the particular kind of Jewish influence on their Romanized cult that the stranger Paul was perceived to represent.

That account does seem to reflect some of the tensions that arise in Philippians. Paul's call to suffer for the message of good in Jesus Christ in Phil 1:27-30 and 2:12-18, following discussion of his own faithful persistence in the face of suffering imprisonment by Roman authorities (1:12-26)—albeit not in Philippi but from where he writes this letter—has led commentators to recognize the threat to the addressees involves at least in part opposition to changes in their behavior that run afoul of their local "pagan" civic context. This is also supported by Paul's comments to the Thessalonians (1 Thess 2:1-2) about his previous experience in Philippi. He explains that he suffered there, being insulted with insolence (with *hubris*). He feels that he was treated shamefully for behavior considered unbecoming according to Roman customs of religious expression, which pitted Paul's confession of a Jewish figure (Christ/Messiah) against the idolatrous orientation of the Philippian cults toward many gods, including Caesar as lord and savior of humankind. These various accounts agree that Paul's proclamation of Jesus Christ as Lord is opposed because it does not conform to the city's expression of Roman cultural values.

If Paul was engaged in calling the Philippians, although non-Jews, away from compromising accommodation to their Roman social world, he would be seeking to persuade them to think and behave differently, to resist being shaped by the worldview that has fashioned their self- and group-identity since birth. That world was the one in which status and access to goods had been gained, and could still be gained. It was thus in continued competition with their new marginalized social identity as Christ-following non-Jews within this (newly emerging on the scene) Jewish coalition. If taken in this direction, the construction of those Paul opposes in Philippians 3 need not be approached as if it is so different from the

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<sup>17</sup> Ascough, *Paul's Macedonian Associations*, 191-212, traces the evidence. There are no material remains for our period, and besides the generalization in Philo, *Embassy* 281-82, making reference to Macedonia among the many provinces of Rome with Jewish populations, and no literary evidence except in Paul and Acts.

dynamics of the oppositional context suggested in chapter 1, where "pagan" elements are often recognized.

Let us consider several groups and cults that seem to be the most likely candidates for reconsidering the referents in Paul's negative epithets. But first a discussion of the epithets will help clarify the issues.

## **Paul's Polemical Warnings in v. 2**

### **"Beware<sup>18</sup> the Dogs":**

In a recent publication I explained many problems with the traditional view that Paul intended to signal Jews of any kind when referring to dogs in 3:2--I will only repeat a few salient points here.<sup>19</sup>

The common refrain that Paul is engaged in reversing toward Jews a traditional Jewish invective aimed at non-Jews cannot be substantiated: there is no literary evidence from Paul's time, or before (and virtually none afterwards),<sup>20</sup> that Jews referred to non-Jews as dogs to express ethnic prejudice. There are a number of alternative referents to consider, some offer little clarity for the specific situation in Philippi, others are very suggestive.

In a general sense, it is possible that Paul refers to dogs, often females ("bitch"), in the usual derogatory way that it was employed then and since, so that it holds no clues to the

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<sup>18</sup> It is unclear whether βλέπετε here signifies "to beware of," as in issuing a warning, meaning "watch out for," or alternatively "to behold," meaning "to consider" or "reflect upon." It is not of significance for this essay to decide; based on the negative characterizations posed in the epithets, it probably communicates that the referents are to be avoided. For opposite conclusions, see George D. Kilpatrick, "ΒΛΕΠΕΤΕ, Philippians 3.2," in *In Memoriam Paul Kahle* (eds. M. Black and G. Fohrer; Berlin: Alfred Töpelmann, 1968), 146-48; Jeffrey T. Reed, *A Discourse Analysis of Philippians: Method and Rhetoric in the Debate over Literary Integrity* (JSNTSupS 136; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1997), 244-46.

<sup>19</sup> "Paul's Reversal of Jews Calling Gentiles 'Dogs' (Philippians 3:2): 1600 Years of an Ideological Tale Wagging an Exegetical Dog?" *BibInt* 17 (2009): 448-482.

<sup>20</sup> The possible exception (I am aware of) is in *Pirke de Rabbi Eliezer* 29, where eating with the uncircumcised slave in the house of Israel is likened in theory to eating with a dog that has also not had the foreskin circumcised, although this language is not present in all editions. This edition dates to hundreds of years after Christians began calling Jews dogs and developed social policies to ensure that Jews did not defile the body of Christ, so that it is probably a response to Christian invective, however ironic that suggestion might be. Moreover, it is specifically a slave who is aligned in the comparison with a dog, if both are similarly uncircumcised.

identity of the referents. It is also possible that, for this referent as well as evil workers and mutilation, Paul is drawing on an intertextual echo from 1 Kings 18:1--22:40 in order to evoke God's action by way of the flesh, with which Paul contrasts his and his audience's behavior in v. 3. In this story, in contrast to Elijah (with whose experiences Paul in Rom 11:1-5 explicitly compares himself), "*evil working false prophets*" (18:19--19:1) "*mutilate themselves*" in order to "*persuade*" the gods (18:28, which uses a verbal form of the same word used by Paul), and the house of Ahab and Jezebel is condemned to be eaten by *dogs* (21:22-29; cf. 2 Kgs 9:33-37; 10:11, 17). One may wonder if Paul had been reflecting on this text when he composed his thoughts for this letter. If so, perhaps Paul introduces polemic here that has little to do with contemporary details about the identity of those he opposes in Philippi, his language reflecting his negative characterization of any influence or influencers who might be on the scene in terms that reflect Scriptural polemics, often against idolatry and those who seek to invoke other gods to action.

The possible specific referents that are called to mind by the epithet "dogs" are very interesting. They include several deities, magic, prostitution, and several philosophical groups, especially the Cynics. To avoid repetition, these will be considered in more detail after the other two epithets in v. 2 have been briefly discussed.

### ***"Beware the Evil Workers":***

The designation "evil workers" provides little basis from which to construct any specific identity.<sup>21</sup> There is no philological reason to understand workers to signify either travelers or missionaries, that they have arrived from outside of Philippi or are anticipated to do so, or that the referents are either Jewish or Christ-followers. Likewise, there is no signal that Paul is reversing the labeling of themselves as workers of good or proponents of the role of good works alongside of faith, as some suggest. For the most part, the identity signified by this phrase is filled out on the basis of decisions made about Paul's use of dogs and mutilation, or from other factors. There is, however, one element of information in Acts that is worth considering--regardless of how anachronistic appeal to Acts might be, which I am not seeking

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<sup>21</sup> Pace Takaaki Haraguchi, "Das Unterhaltsrecht des frühchristlichen Verkündigers: Eine Untersuchung zur Bezeichnung *ejrga*/thß im Neuen Testament," *ZNW* 84 (1993) 178-95.

to dispute--since it involves Paul interacting with one whom, from his perspective, is most certainly an *evil worker*.

Acts 16:12-40 discusses Paul's time in Philippi, and vv. 16-21 introduce a slave woman who is accused of making money for her owners by engaging in divination, prophecy, or fortune telling (μαντευομένη).<sup>22</sup> The author of Acts describes this woman having the spirit of python (πνεῦμα πύθωνα), that is, she was able to speak in an alternate voice; this is called "belly-talking."<sup>23</sup> It is possible that the woman represented the cult of Apollo (the special god for Augustus, who won the battle for him at Philippi!), or Cybele, or some other kind of "belly-talker" uttering strange voices.<sup>24</sup> Certainly her association with the belly is suggestive, since

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<sup>22</sup> It is interesting to note that the Septuagint always refers to μαντεύομαι in pejorative terms connected with the practices of non-Israelites: those who speak falsely, evil workers whose influence should be resisted by the people of God: Deut 18:10 (note, a passage cited in Acts 3:22 and 7:37); 1 Sam 28:8; 2 Kgs 17:17; Mic 3:11; Jer 34:9; Ezek 12:24; 13:6, 23; 21:21, 23, 29; 22:28; see Todd Klutz, *The Exorcism Stories in Luke-Acts: A Sociostylistic Reading* (SNTSMS 129; Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 216, 225, and his larger discussion of this incident in Acts 16 (207-64).

<sup>23</sup> David Edward Aune, *Prophecy in Early Christianity and the Ancient Mediterranean World* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1983), 40-41, 268-69.

<sup>24</sup> Plutarch, *Def. orac.* 9.414E, calls these soothsayers ventriloquists [note: *engastrimythoi* "belly-talkers"] who uttered words beyond their control. Menander, *Theophroroumenê* (Act 2, Scene 1), for similar possession by Cybele. F. F. Bruce, *The Acts of the Apostles: The Greek Text with Introduction and Commentary* (3rd revised and enlarged ed.; Grand Rapids, MI and Leicester, GB: Eerdmans and Apollos, 1990), 360-62; L. Maurizio, "Anthropology and Spirit Possession: A Reconsideration of the Pythia's Role at Delphi," *Journal of Hellenic Studies* 115 (1995): 69-86; Frederick E. Brenk, "The Exorcism at Philippi in Acts 16.11-40. Divine Possession or Diabolic Inspiration?" in *With Unperfumed Voice: Studies in Plutarch, in Greek Literature, Religion and Philosophy, and in the New Testament Background*, (ed. Frederick E. Brenk; Stuttgart: Franz Steiner, 2007), 495-513. See also Klutz, *Exorcism Stories*, 243-47, and 217 n. 37, where Klutz observes that her pronouncement of Paul and Silas as "slaves of the Most High God" "could be associated with any deity one might imagine at the top of the cosmic hierarchy." It can refer to the Jewish deity as well as various pagan ones, as can the phrase "slaves of God," which is associated with Apollo as well. See also Paul R. Trebilco, "Paul and Silas--'Servants of the Most High God' (Acts 16.16-18)," *JSNT* 36 (1989): 51-73, 51-52, 58-65; Brian Rapske, *The Book of Acts and Paul in Roman Custody* (The Book of Acts in its First Century Setting; Grand Rapids, Mich. and Carlisle: W.B. Eerdmans and Paternoster Press, 1994), 116-19; Ivoni Richter Reimer, *Women in the Acts of the Apostles: A Feminist Liberation Perspective* (trans. Linda M. Maloney; Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1995), 160-67; Irina Levinskaya, *The Book of Acts in its Diaspora Setting* (The Book of Acts in its First Century Setting; Grand Rapids, Mich. and Carlisle: W.B. Eerdmans and Paternoster Press, 1996), 83-103.

Paul will later polemicize against those whose "god is their belly" in Phil 3:19. In a similar vein, Plutarch writes of soothsayers of Cybele and Serapis whom he calls "false prophets [pseudomantesin]" who sell their prophecies (*Pyth. orac.* 407c).<sup>25</sup> In any case, Paul's contrasting claim in Phil 3:3 to "serve God by spirit" instead of "trusting in" or "persuading by flesh" could certainly signify opposition to just such alternative ways of serving or invoking gods, including by way of claims to be possessed by a spirit.

When Paul is represented to have exorcised the spirit from her, he and Silas were dragged before the magistrates in the marketplace and accused of engaging in *Jewish* activities that were unlawful according to *Roman* customs. This implies that their fortune-telling business operated within the confines of Roman policy, expressing civic cult that could be linked with honoring Caesar as lord, in contrast to the lord whom Paul promotes. The tension runs along a Jewish/non-Jewish institutional line, and the specific matter is whether this group's expression of Judaism conforms to the prevailing non-Jewish legal-cultural norms to which every Jewish group is expected to subscribe in the colony of Philippi.

The point is that independent of larger constructions of Paul's opponents, "evil workers" would not likely denote Jewish missionaries of any sort, but would probably be aimed at Greco-Roman religious or philosophical rivals who challenge the practices of Paul's addressees for not meeting community standards for Jewish practice. For Paul, it would not be hard to imagine that he would regard such activity to represent "enemies of the cross of Christ," to which he refers later in Phil 3:18; moreover, all of his language in chapter 3 could apply to such behavior from his perspective. The referents for this epithet must be decided on other evidence.

### ***"Beware the Mutilation":***

This is the warning most central to the traditional identification of Jews, and specifically, of Jews who supposedly promote proselyte conversion (circumcision). The mutilated ones," or "mutilation," is interpreted to be an allusion to a stereotypical Greek and Roman derogatory description of Jewish circumcision, often as if Paul had written "the mutilators" instead. That interpretation is in keeping with the assumption that Paul is engaged

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<sup>25</sup> Aune, *Prophecy in Early Christianity*, 42.

in opposing those promoting circumcision, combined with the idea that Paul was opposed to circumcision itself, maintaining that all such ritual or outward or simply Torah-defined identity behavior was no longer appropriate for Christ-followers. The prior decision that Paul was reversing the negative epithet dogs, supposedly used by Jews toward non-Jews, but now ostensibly reversed by Paul to describe Jews, leads interpreters to suppose that Paul is also playing the same game with mutilation, and vice versa. Having already found such claims for Paul's use of dogs without merit, one of the strengths of the traditional approach to mutilation as a continuation of that line of argument for Paul is suspect, at the very least; if it too is found to be unlikely, then this further undermines the traditional argument about the referents for dogs, since each of these two epithets has been approached as confirming the identification of Jewish identity for the other one. I suggest they instead work together to confirm the likely identification of the referents for all of the warnings as non-Jewish influencers whom Paul wants Christ-followers, non-Jews as well as Jews, to carefully resist.

The prevailing interpretation logically involves the decision that Paul actually decried the mark of circumcision, which (male) Jews carried out in obedience not only to the Mosaic Covenant with Israel but also to the Abrahamic Covenant made with him and all of his sons into perpetuity. That Paul opposed circumcision of the sons of Jews who turned to Christ in addition to non-Jews completing the rite of proselyte conversion is of enormous significance for constructions of Paul and his communities. If mutilation is the way that Paul values circumcision, then the traditional conclusion that Paul no longer practices Judaism and opposes continuation of Jewish identity and behavior for all Christ-followers gains significant support here.

Grammatically, however, this epithet does not indicate opposition to those who promote mutilation; rather, it denotes those who are mutilated, being a comment upon those in that state. Moreover, Torah refers to mutilation in very different terms than circumcision. Torah makes plain the Jewish aversion to "mutilation" as practiced by the idolatrous nations (Lev 19:28; 21:5 [LXX uses the verbal form of the same Greek word for mutilation as Paul]; 1 Kgs 18:28; Hos 7:14). Yet interpreters of Paul fail to contemplate that this negative valuation of the

practices of the non-Jewish world from the perspective of one still shaped by and practicing Judaism might be guiding Paul's view of the situation of his non-Jewish addressees.<sup>26</sup>

Interpreters maintain that "circumcision" is in view when Paul contrasts it with "mutilation" in part because of the influence of prevailing constructions that understand Paul to be against the practice of Torah, thus Paul's language in the following verses ostensibly conflates together rather than contrasts between mutilation and circumcision: "... for we are the circumcision, who serve God in/by spirit (or: who serve [enabled] by God's Spirit) and boast [revel/glory] in Christ Jesus and do not trust in [or: persuade by] flesh" (v. 3). This conflation is further supported by the way that Paul's dissociating argument about his own Jewish credentials in vv. 4-9 is interpreted to indicate that he no longer values or practices the Torah-oriented norms he details, which include his circumcision as an infant. Note, however, that in v. 3 Paul does not write of being "the *true* circumcision," "the *spiritual* circumcision, or of "the circumcision of *the heart*," although interpreters proceed as if he had done so, and often translations explicitly add these qualifiers.<sup>27</sup> At least if he had qualified the kind of

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<sup>26</sup> Heinrich August Wilhelm Meyer, *Critical and Exegetical Hand-book to the Epistles to the Philippians and Colossians, and to Philemon* (trans. J. C. Moore and William P. Dickson; H. A. W. Meyer's Commentary on the New Testament; 6th ed.; Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 1983), 122, is adamantly opposed to the idea: "A description of *idolatry* with allusion to Lev. xxi.5, 1 Kings xviii.28, *et al...* is quite foreign to the context."

<sup>27</sup> E.g., NASV: "for we are the 'true' circumcision," which is notably preceded by translating "mutilation" as "beware of the false circumcision"; J. B. Lightfoot, *St. Paul's Epistle to the Philippians: A Revised Text with Introduction, Notes and Dissertations* (J. B. Lightfoot's Commentary on the Epistles of St. Paul [4 vols.]; 12th ed.; Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 1995), 144-45, translates this as "we are the 'true' circumcision," and he understands the contrast to be between "the material and the spiritual circumcision"; Hawthorne, *Philippians*, 126: "The church of Jesus Christ, however... is the true Israel (Gal 6:16), heir of all the rights and privileges belonging to it (Rom 9:24-26; 1 Pet 2:9-10), including the right to the title, περιτομή ('circumcision'). 'We,' says Paul emphatically, 'are the circumcision,' and not they"; F. F. Bruce, *Philippians* (A Good News Commentary; San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1983), 80, "It is we, not they, says Paul, who have received the true circumcision.... Those who have received this circumcision render to God true heart devotion"; Karl P. Donfried and I. Howard Marshall, *The Theology of the Shorter Pauline Letters* (New Testament Theology; Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 152, interpret it to be "a contrasting description of the church. Basically, it is 'the [true] circumcision'"; Gordon D. Fee, *Paul's Letter to the Philippians* (NICNT; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995), 298-99, translates as "the circumcision," but discusses how "Paul first describes the true circumcision as 'we who "minister" by the Spirit of God'"; although Markus N. A. Bockmuehl, *The Epistle to the Philippians* (Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson Publishers, 1998), 191, says that it should not be "true," he nevertheless explains what Paul means in these terms: "it is those who

circumcision in the way interpreters have, it might suggest that the comparison is with others who claim to be the circumcision, while for his own group he makes a superior claim. But Paul does not seem to be troubled that trust in the flesh would be conflated with circumcision, a God commanded cut made around the flesh. He does not write that "we are not the mutilation" either. And most notably, Paul did not write, "we are the Christians," or "the Christ-followers," or even "the church"!<sup>28</sup>

The traditional interpretation, moreover, fails to answer a number of questions, including the following: Why would he identify himself and his audience as "the circumcision" without qualifying the term if he meant to degrade this specifically Jewish rite as merely "mutilation" in the preceding statement? And when Paul does qualify it in the following explanation, why does he do so in positive terms, as representative of marking those who live unto the Lord as the circumcised ones? Moreover, in v. 5, why does he choose to include his own circumcision at eight days old in his catalog of honored identity alongside of righteousness according to Torah, perpetuating the historical Jewish perspective on this particular cut as something wholly different than mutilation, but also not as if he has changed its usage to signify something spiritual or broadly applied to all Christ-followers?

Paul claims "we are the circumcision" without the qualifiers that translators and commentators find necessary to add when writing to a presumably largely, if not entirely, uncircumcised audience, which profoundly effects the interpretation of the name-calling in v. 2. Paul appears to play on the similarities of sound in Greek between "mutilation" and "circumcision" (*kata-tomén / peri-tomé*), i.e., paronomasia, similar sound for effect. Although a play on sounds can be made in order to equate two different things, which is what the

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have faith, the circumcised in heart, who are the real 'circumcision' [Note: on the same page], and "the contrast is between the true circumcision whose service is empowered by and directed towards the Spirit of God, and those whose service is narrow-mindedly focused on their 'works of the Law' as defining their service and status before God"; Stephen E. Fowl, *Philippians* (The Two Horizons New Testament Commentary; Grand Rapids, Mich.: W.B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., 2005), 147-48, states that it should not be read as true circumcision, but argues that it refers to circumcision of the heart, and "Paul's assertion seeks to locate the worship of the Christian community in Philippi already within the *true* worship of the God of Israel apart from circumcision and taking on the yoke of Torah" (emphasis added).

<sup>28</sup> Contra Reumann, *Philippians*, 472-78.

interpretive tradition requires here,<sup>29</sup> it can also emphasize just how different the two elements are.<sup>30</sup> This pun communicates to the hearer that these two items, ending in roughly similar sounds, and sharing reference in that syllable to cutting, should *not* be in any sense naively understood as *comparable*! They are as *different* as cutting *around* and cutting *into*, as *different* as making a covenant with Israel's God or with other gods, with serving by spirit or serving by flesh.

When the contrastive element is recognized, it suggests that Paul's polemic is not aimed at Jewish people or groups, Christ-boasters or not. In the balance of v. 3, he does not differentiate in strictly Christ-oriented based terms; rather, glorying in Christ is one of three elements. The other two are declarations that any Jewish group would be expected to make ("serving God in/by spirit" and "not trusting in [or: persuading by] flesh"). If we allow that other Jewish groups could also claim a messianic element if not also orientation, which the proper name "Christ" in our translations tends to obscure, then even this element need not suggest anything other than a particular Jewish group's emphasis on a specific messianic figure, Jesus. It is thus unlikely that Paul is setting out circumcision as a metonym for Christ-following identity in contrast to Jewish identity, or in contrast to other Christ-following groups (who would also claim to glory in Christ Jesus), whether Jewish or not, or even other Jewish messianic groups.<sup>31</sup> Instead, he is claiming Jewish-group based identity and ways of living combined with subgroup Jesus Christ-following based identity and ways of living in contrast to non-Jewish, non-Jesus Christ-following based identities and ways of living.

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<sup>29</sup> Köster, *TDNT* 8.110-11.

<sup>30</sup> As defined in the Poetry Glossary: "A play on words in which the same word is used in different senses or words similar in sound are used in opposition to each other for a rhetorical contrast."

<sup>31</sup> Contra N. T. Wright, "Paul's Gospel and Caesar's Empire," in *Paul and Politics: Ekklesia, Israel, Imperium, Interpretation* (ed. Richard A. Horsley; Harrisburg, Pa.: Trinity Press International, 2000), 160-83, 174-77, who interprets Paul to be here (in reference to the mutilated if not also in the first two names, which he admits could refer to pagan groups) to be communicating that Jews (Jewish groups) who do not believe in Christ participate "in a form of paganism," and are "subject to the same critique as paganism" (176), that Paul "has Judaism and paganism... simultaneously in mind, and is here using warnings against the former as a code for warnings against the latter" (174). Although I disagree with this analysis, which is based on a decision for "mutilation" which I am challenging herein, the admission of "pagan" referents for the first two epithets is to be noted.

Paul does not reject circumcision identity for himself or his audience: he claims this rite to be "ours." He also does not claim to be "the non-mutilation" or "non-circumcision" group either, which should give pause to interpreters who believe Paul is using these terms synonymously. That is not to deny the aural pun between mutilation and circumcision in Greek, but to challenge the direction in which it has been interpreted. The pun is based on contrasting--not comparing--circumcision to mutilation as its mirror opposite. Paul's language here echoes the Maccabean slogan, "we are the circumcised" (1 Macc 1:15, 48, 60-61; 2:44-46; 2 Macc 6:10). In other words, circumcision functions as a metonym for the ethno-religious identity of Judaism in contrast to all other ethno-religious identities.<sup>32</sup>

Paul's slogan is based on internalizing circumcised identity as exceptional, as identifying a group that is set apart to God in a way that is to be both celebrated as superior to the practices of other nations and that carries within itself a responsibility to uphold those superior, spiritual values in the midst of them, which Paul enumerates in the balance of v. 3, and thereafter in vv. 4-6. Paul is drawing a communal boundary around the addressees as members of the circumcised, that is, of Judaism, and thus different from the foreskinned in the ways that characterize Judaism as practiced by the subgroups of Christ-followers, whether they are circumcised (Jews) or foreskinned (non-Jews). That this metonymical identity excludes non-circumcised males in the community in literal terms is notable, but what has been apparently overlooked for interpreting its meaning here is that it is no less problematic at the literal level for excluding any women in the community, and yet interpreters do not thereby conclude from this text that there are no women in the community (the letter makes plain that there are), or that female identity and ways of life are replaced or eliminated or spiritualized by "Christianity," unlike the way that circumcision is interpreted here. Although we may find the metonymic choice of "circumcision" to signify "Judaism" insufficient due to its non-inclusiveness, Paul appears to proceed as if this metonym communicates the inclusion of the males who are not circumcised as well as the females in these groups of Christ-followers, and he uses this language to communicate that this identity obliges them to identify

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<sup>32</sup> Nina Livesey, *Circumcision as a Malleable Symbol* (WUNT 2.295; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2010), for a recent discussion of various ways of construing the meaning of circumcision by Paul and his contemporaries, although she does not come to the same conclusion I am suggesting for Paul's contrast here.

themselves with Judaism ("a Jewish way of life," albeit of a specific subgroup) in contrast to the "pagan" alternatives on offer.

The alternatives to reading the denunciation of mutilation apart from signifying circumcision but rather in terms of non-Jewish groups and behavior from the majority culture are not hard to come by. In the context of the city of Philippi, one might expect (from the point of view of a Jewish writer) that mutilation would be a term of reference to signify those castrated, such as the *galli* of the Cybele cult, or some other kind of mutilation associated with similar religious observances (cf. 1 Kgs 18:28, mentioned above).<sup>33</sup> Self-mutilation is widely associated with "pagan" groups and the way that they seek to provoke God to action (to persuade by or trust in flesh), including by those who employ magic. As will be discussed, a Jew such as Paul might also associate such behavior with Cynics.

### **Exploring Alternative Identifications for the Context of Paul's Polemics**

In this paper I can but sketch some of the alternatives to consider that make sense of the situation of Paul's audience in Philippi from the identifications implied in his oppositional rhetoric. Some of the possible referents would represent one of epithets well, as well as one or more of the values that Paul decries in vv. 18-19, but not the others; however, there is no reason to assume that Paul has in view only one kind of influence or group. Some referents can be associated with all three of the epithets in v. 2, and many if not all of the negative comments in vv. 18-19, as well as in terms of the argument of the chapter, and in the case of the Cynics in particular, of the letter overall.

### ***Cults to Gods and Goddesses***

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<sup>33</sup> Beard, et al., *Religions of Rome*, 218-19, discuss Augustine's use of Seneca, *On Superstition*, fr. 34-37 (Haase), to attack aspects of paganism incorporated into Roman cult, such as self-mutilation, which may well refer to Magna Mater or Cybele (*City of God* VI.9-10). For more on the *galli*, including discussion of their self-mutilation by laceration during traveling blood-letting rituals, see Susan M. Elliott, *Cutting too Close for Comfort: Paul's Letter to the Galatians in its Anatolian Cultic Context* (JSNTSS 248; London and New York: T & T Clark International, 2003), 158-229; esp. 189-93.

Paul could have had a specific cult or deity in view, or made a general reference to these kinds of groups and influences in general. A number of gods and goddesses were closely associated with dogs, which, from Paul's point of view, would be considered evil workers, and some can also be associated with mutilation. They also make relevant referents for the terms expressed in vv. 18-19. In addition, as already noted, the practice of cult involved an integration of local and imperial gods and goddesses with the recognition of the rulers of the empire: it may be that Paul is using veiled language to critique not only the goddess suggestively associated with dogs, but the imperial rulers and their culture. A coin struck in Philippi under Claudius appears to show Augustus on a pedestal alongside a Philippian goddess, or the *Genius* of the city, who is crowning him, with the inscription *DIVVS AVG*, an image that is suggestive of the kind of local, imperial cultural setting in which Paul's language might have suggested a very different referent than has usually been considered.<sup>34</sup>

### *Diana/Artemis/Bendis*

To this day, one can see many carved reliefs on the quarried hillside overlooking Philippi. Some of these "incisions" date to the quarrying undertaken during construction in second century CE. Some experts maintain that they were a feature of the area in Paul's period also, for the same hillside was quarried to build the city he visited. Intriguingly, the reliefs are often of Silvanus and Diana (for Greeks, Artemis; for Thracians, Bendis), who are accompanied by dogs.<sup>35</sup> Diana is associated with fertility, safe delivery of and protection for the newborn, as well as healing. Some of the rock reliefs depict her killing an animal with a spear or bow and

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<sup>34</sup> I am grateful to Robert L. Brawley, "From Reflex to Reflection? Identity in Philippians 2.6-11 and Its Context," in *Reading Paul in Context: Explorations in Identity Formation* (eds. Kathy Ehrensperger and J. Brian Tucker; London and New York: T&T Clark, 2010), 142-46 (128-46), for bringing to my attention this coin (which is pictured in Brawley's essay, p. 143) and its relevance for the exploration of the goddesses of Philippi, which Brawley finds more salient than the Cynic alternative, in reaction to my survey of these possibilities in *Paul's Reversal*. For discussion of the coin's imagery and its significance, see <http://www.forumancientcoins.com/NumisWiki/view.asp?key=Philippi> accessed April 19, 2011.

<sup>35</sup> Valerie A. Abrahamsen, *Women and Worship at Philippi: Diana/Artemis and Other Cults in the Early Christian Era* (Portland, Maine: Astarte Shell Press, 1995), 25-26; Peter F. Dorsey, *The Cult of Silvanus: A Study in Roman Folk Religion* (Columbia Studies in the Classical Tradition 20; Leiden and New York: E. J. Brill, 1992), 67, 91.

arrow, which bespeaks also of her role as one who wields death.<sup>36</sup> An interesting twist to consider regarding these inscriptions is that the word we translate "mutilation" (κατατομή) is lexically most commonly used to denote an "inscription," "carving," "incision," "notch" or "groove, including specifically the cutting of a rock face or quarry<sup>37</sup>--which is precisely where these reliefs are found. Might Paul's threefold warning seek to alert his audience to beware of cults whose evil working divinities and their companion iconic dogs were cut into the hillside?

### *Cybele*

During Claudius' reign (presumably before Philipians, if written under Nero), the Cybele cult was popularized for Romans.<sup>38</sup> A newly developed festival introduced Attis—Cybele's consort, who bled to death after castrating himself for Cybele—into the Roman cult. On the "day of blood" the *galli* flagellated themselves while engaged in frenzied, ecstatic dancing, while the initiates castrated themselves with a shard. Here we have a clear case of "mutilation" and those whom Paul would regard as "evil workers," perhaps even behaving like dogs in a general derogatory sense, if not also specifically involving dogs or dog imagery, and many of the comments he makes in vv. 18-19 fit as well.

Divine possession for the Cybele priests was made manifest during ecstatic dancing through prophetic speaking with strange voices emanating from their bellies ("belly-talker" or "belly-prophet" [*engastrimantis*], or "ventriloquist" who speaks or prophecies from a demon

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<sup>36</sup> Valerie Abrahamsen, "Evidence for a Christian Goddess: The Bendis-Zodiac Relief at Philippi," *Forum 3rd Series* 1, no. 1 (2007): 97-112 (99).

<sup>37</sup> *LSJ*, 917.

<sup>38</sup> However, it is not clear whether Romans during Paul's time could participate directly in the processions or join the ranks of the castrated priests (*galli*); see Bormann, *Philippi*, 55-60; Antonia Tripolitis, *Religions of the Hellenistic-Roman Age* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: W.B. Eerdmans, 2002), 33-34. Also, such "savage" behavior, especially involving human victims, was not generally well received by emperors and officials of our period, and was sometimes officially suppressed: Peter Garnsey and Richard Saller, *The Roman Empire: Economy, Society and Culture* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1987), 168-74, explains how, although, e.g., Cybele (Magna Mater) was officially summoned to cope with national emergency such as the invasion by Hannibal, the Senate purged the cult of some extreme features and made it illegal for Roman citizens, and that during the Principate until the early third century CE no more exotic cults became part of the official religion, being considered more of a threat to ancestral religion than a supplement.

inside of themselves [*engastrimythos*]). This is considered synonymous with "Pythones," and as discussed, the divining woman in Acts 16:16 is described as *pneuma pythôna*, and the witch of Endor in 1 Sam 28:3-25, of whom Saul enquires, is called an *engastrimythos*.<sup>39</sup> Paul's accusation that their god is the belly could be so described.

The Cybele cult provides plenty to regard as "glorying in their shame." The Cybele priests were ridiculed for shameless sexual behavior, including the exchanging of the male active role for that of the female (penetrated) passive role (cf. Rom 1:27).<sup>40</sup>

If the two clauses "whose god is the belly" and "who glory in their shame" are linked, as Hawthorne argues on grammatical grounds that they should be ("they have made their stomach *and* their glory in their shame their god"), then the various links to the Cybele cults and the other options discussed apply all the more.<sup>41</sup> Perhaps most relevant is the observation that in the Septuagint (Hos 9:10; Jer 3:24-25) "shame" is a euphemism for "idols"!

### ***Hekate***

Hecate was a ubiquitous goddess often accompanied by dogs, portrayed as a dog, and dogs (puppies) were sacrificed to her. She was a goddess especially associated with passageways and crossroads, that is, with places of liminal danger. She was also involved in conducting the dead safely to Hades, or not doing so, and the goddess of magicians.<sup>42</sup> Her cult is ancient, popular with Thracians as well as Greeks, and known as Trivia by the Romans (lit. "three ways"), for statues of her were erected where three roads met, and votive offerings were made for guidance and safety.

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<sup>39</sup> Daniel Ogden, *Magic, Witchcraft, and Ghosts in the Greek and Roman Worlds: A Sourcebook* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), 30-32; Aune, *Prophecy in Early Christianity*, 40-41; Elliott, *Cutting too Close*, 190-92, for discussion of Apuleius's account, and 205-7.

<sup>40</sup> Elliott, *Cutting too Close*, 174-82.

<sup>41</sup> Hawthorne, *Philippians*, 166, although he understands the implications very differently than I am arguing the case to be!

<sup>42</sup> Ogden, *Magic, Witchcraft*, 4-7, 91-93, 108, 254-56, 272-73; Matthew Dickie, *Magic and Magicians in the Greco-Roman World* (London and New York: Routledge, 2001), 35. The image of dogs is quite common in the world of magic, however defined, including various religious practices and so-called mystery religions. It is common to find the sacrifice of puppies in magical papyri and curse tablets, and described in various ways in incantations, erotic attraction spells, and initiations: see Ogden, *Magic, Witchcraft*, 91-93, 108, 177-78, 233-34, 254-56, 258-59.

Hekate can be associated with many of Paul's derogatory terms. In Chaldean literature, dated slightly later than Paul, Hekate is called a "workwoman," and one who bestows life from her "belly" (womb).<sup>43</sup> As a chthonic deity who communicated with those below the ground and involved in transporting the deceased, Hekate and her cult could also account for Paul's denunciation of those who "think about terrestrial things."<sup>44</sup> Puppies were sacrificed to her and prepared in cakes presented at her shrines, a practice that may be viewed as mutilation (more on this below in discussion of the Cynics).

### **Dionysus**

The cult of Dionysus was popular in Philippi, and apparently associated with Artemis/Diana. Thracian women were supposedly tattooed as punishment for killing Orpheus (Putarch, *Moralia* 557D), which could be viewed as mutilation by Paul. Dionysus's birth is connected to nearby Mount Pangaion, where Thracians celebrated an oracle belonging to Dionysus, and had an ecstatic priestess as well as priests (Herodotus, 5.7; 7.111).<sup>45</sup> In their rituals, apparently the maenads danced ecstatically, and perhaps ate raw meat along with wine in a ritual in which women reversed roles and behaved like men; i.e., glorying in their shame. In terms that might be maligned as mutilation, a phallus inside of a sacred wicker basket was carried in their processions.<sup>46</sup> There is some indication that Iamblichus, a second-century CE novelist, associated belly-talkers and other sorcerer-figures with initiation into the mysteries such as are associated with this cult.<sup>47</sup>

### **Magic, Prostitution**

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<sup>43</sup> Sarah Johnston, *Hekate Soteira: A Study of Hekate's Role in the Chaldean Oracles and Related Literature* (American Classical Studies 21; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1990), 64ff.

<sup>44</sup> Artemidorus, *The Interpretation of Dreams [Oneirocritica]* 2.34; in Hesiod, *Theogony* 411-15, she is said to "have a share of the earth and the unfruitful sea" as well as to be "honoured exceedingly by the deathless gods." Lilian Portefaix, *Sisters Rejoice: Paul's Letter to the Philippians and Luke-Acts as Seen by First-Century Philippian Women* (ConBNT 20; Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiksell International, 1988), 80-81, and n 41. See Sarah Johnston, *Hekate Soteira*, 32-33, for interesting connection of Hekate with earthly realm and daemons.

<sup>45</sup> Portefaix, *Sisters Rejoice*, 98-114.

<sup>46</sup> see V. Abrahamsen 2008 paper for this group...

<sup>47</sup> *Babyloniaka* at Photius *Bibliotheca* 75b; from Ogden, *Magic, Witchcraft*, 32.

The topic of magic and related terms like sorcery, witchcraft, and divination as well as the mystery cults provides a natural avenue to account for Paul's language. Mutilation is commonly associated with magic and divination, which were referred to as arts (ἔργατας). From Paul's point of view, these would constitute evil "works," malevolent forces against which one should be on watch. From the viewpoint of the author of Revelation 22:15, those "Outside are the dogs and sorcerers and fornicators and murderers and idolaters [ἔξω οἱ κύνες καὶ οἱ φάρμακοὶ καὶ οἱ πόρνοι καὶ οἱ φονεῖς καὶ οἱ εἰδωλολάτραι]...." Here dogs are aligned with magicians and immoral people as well as murderers and idolaters.

There is a history of punning on dogs to indicate temple prostitutes, or the penis that has been dogged, that is, suffered a flesh wound from sexual activity.<sup>48</sup> In Deut. 23:19, the "wages of a dog" that are not to be brought as offerings in the Temple apparently refers to funds derived from male prostitution.<sup>49</sup> If taken in this direction, then evil workers might be a euphemism for prostitutes, those who work in this malicious enterprise, and mutilation might connote eunuchs or some other self-mutilating group, including the *galli* of Cybele.

### ***Philosophical Groups***

A number of Paul's epithets in v. 2 and vv. 18-19 are commonly associated with denunciations of philosophical groups by their rivals. As Julian puts the case, philosophical groups would denounce the others as "sorcerers and sophists and conceited and quacks," (*Orations* 6.197; Loeb, transl. W. Wright). The satirist Timon denounced Epicurus as "the lowest *dog* among the physicists."<sup>50</sup> Although later than Paul, Lucian refers to the philosophers whom he is about to encounter as "beasts" who "act like *dogs* that bite and devour one another" (*The Fisherman* 36; cf. *Philosophies for Sale* 10; cf. Gal 5:15).<sup>51</sup> In a similar way, Philo depicts the virtues of the Therapeutae in contrast to "the banquets of others, for others, when they drink strong wine,

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<sup>48</sup> LSJ, 1015 VII, *frenum praeputii*. Cf. F. Grewel, "The Frenum Praeputii and the Defloration of the Human Male," *Folia Psychiatrica, Neurologica et Neurochirurgica Neerlandica* 61.2 (1958): 123-26 123-26. I am grateful to Daniel Stramara for bringing to my attention the option of sexual activity such as temple prostitution as a possibility for the referent.

<sup>49</sup> LEH *Lexicon*.

<sup>50</sup> Norman Wentworth DeWitt, *St. Paul and Epicurus* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1954), 24; Abraham J. Malherbe, *Paul and the Popular Philosophers* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1989), 84.

<sup>51</sup> Malherbe, *Paul and the Popular Philosophers*, 84.

as if they had been drinking not wine but some agitating and maddening kind of liquor, or even the most formidable thing which can be imagined for driving a man out of his natural reason, rage about and tear things to pieces like so many ferocious dogs, and rise up and attack one another...." (*Contemplative Life* 40). In general terms that apply to some of the language in vv. 18-19 as well, Philo states: "When it [covetous desire] affects the parts about the belly it makes men gluttonous, insatiable, intemperate, debauched, admirers of a profligate life, delighting in drunkenness, and epicurism, slaves to strong wine, and fish, and meat, pursuers of feasts and tables, wallowing like greedy dogs; owing to all which things their lives are rendered miserable and accursed, and they are reduced to an existence more grievous than any death" (*Laws* 4.91).

The epithet "dogs" especially calls to mind the Cynics. For the sake of space, we will forgo investigation of several other alternatives (Epicureans especially are interesting), as well as the general category of rival religio-philosophical groups.

### **Cynics**

#### *Cynics as Dogs*

The philosophical group known in English as Cynics is based on the Greek word for "dogs" (κύων; ὁ κυνικός).<sup>52</sup> They aspired to outdo all others in "doggish" behavior! Yet this option has been rarely noted, and not pursued even then. It is more commonly noted that the language in vv. 18-19 could express negative views of Cynics as well as Epicureans and other philosophical groups. These have probably not been developed for v. 2 because of the force of the traditional interpretation for controlling the options to explore here,<sup>53</sup> and because

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<sup>52</sup> Philo, *Planter* 151; Epictetus 3.22; Diogenes Laertius, *Lives* 6 (passim); Lucian, *Demonax* 21; Athenaeus, *Deipnosophistae* 3.96-99; Clement, *Strom.* 8.12.4-7. Abraham J. Malherbe, ed., *The Cynic Epistles* (Missoula, Mont.: Scholars Press, 1977), 99; Leif E. Vaage, "Like Dogs Barking: Cynic Parrêsia and Shameless Asceticism," *Semeia* 57 (1992), pp. 25-39; Francis Gerald Downing, *Cynics, Paul, and the Pauline Churches* (London and New York: Routledge, 1998), 35, 40.

<sup>53</sup> Downing, *Cynics, Paul*, does not understand Paul to be referring to Cynics here because he is convinced that this language is "so clearly directed against 'Judaizers'"; he understands Paul in Philippians to be moving away from earlier expressions of Cynicism, and he observes that if taken to refer to Cynics here, vv. 2 and 19 "would have afforded a still clearer sign of a break with Cynics!" (35, 40, 272 n. 5).

mutilation is not usually associated with such groups,<sup>54</sup> although certainly a case can be made for Paul seeing such philosophers as evil workers. As will be discussed, it is also possible to propose Cynics for mutilation and many of the other invectives in vv. 18-19.

During Paul's time anyone warning to beware of the dogs, if not imagined to be taken to refer literally to the animal, might be expected to first of all suppose that the referent was the Cynics. They were a common presence in towns and cities during Paul's time, including in the public squares, where they lived and carried on their lives in squalor calculated to offend, and famously harassed passersby by "barking" insults at anyone who lived according to the norms of "civilized" behavior. As a result of their lifestyle and tactics, Cynics were regularly accused of shamelessness. It was common for Cynics to be called "mad" (as in "mad dogs") because of their ascetic lifestyle (Ps.-Socrates, *Ep.* 6.1; 9.3; Dio Chrysostom, *Discourses* 34.2-4; 45.1; 66.25; 77/78.41-42; Ps.-Lucian, *Cynic Ep.* 5) and unconventional, vulgar behavior (Dio Chrysostom, *Discourses* 8.36; 9.8).<sup>55</sup> They sought to provoke the realization that civilization masks the way in which humans exploit each other under the cover of civility, in effect exemplifying the worst of behavior associated with the uncontrolled passion of dogs. By eschewing the trappings of society and behaving like dogs, the Cynics ostensibly avoid that hypocrisy, and exemplify instead the philosophical ideals that should be the central purpose of human life.

The various epithets and invectives Paul employs in 3:2 and vv. 18-19 can be aligned with his probable view of Cynics. "Evil workers" in the general sense of his estimation of their influence is not hard to imagine, although "mutilation" seems to present a challenge. We will return to the topics in v. 2 after a brief survey of the invectives arising in vv. 18-19: "the enemies of the cross of Christ, whose end is destruction, whose god is the belly, who even glory in their shame, who are thinking earthly [thoughts]."

It seems highly unlikely that Paul would refer so vaguely to those who are Christ-followers as "*enemies of the cross of Christ*," for example, as often maintained, as a denouncement of Christ-followers because they still upheld Jewish values. Be that as it may, anyone challenging Paul and his groups for allegiance to Christ could be accused of being an enemy of the cross of Christ. This invective could be a response to anyone upholding that those aligned

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<sup>54</sup> Reumann, *Philippians*, 471-72.

<sup>55</sup> Malherbe, *Paul and the Popular Philosophers*, 159-60.

with someone who was executed as a feared terrorist is an enemy of the empire.<sup>56</sup> There is no special indication of Cynics, but it is not hard to imagine that Cynics, who were also often maligned as enemies of the empire, could be in view either because they sought to declaim the Christ-followers as more threatening than themselves to the interests of the Philippians, or alternatively, that the Christ-followers were being compared to the Cynics as enemies of Rome, and Paul was seeking to dissociate them from comparisons based on such ideals and norms (they had their own Christ-based Jewish associations, not those of the Cynics).

The accusation that someone or group's "*end is destruction*" is also quite vague. In 1:28, Paul uses the same language about opponents of the addressees, or perhaps in a more general sense, of opponents of the message of Christ: "For them this is evidence of their destruction, but of your salvation. And this is God's doing." Here too, the story of Elijah and the prophets of Baal may be at work in Paul's choice of language. Nevertheless, Paul's language could easily be taken as ironic criticism of the ultimate ends of several philosophical groups. Stoics upheld that the goal (τέλος) of life was happiness, accomplished by living in accordance with nature, by practical wisdom expressed in moral purpose but not striving to control that which is not under one's control, such as health or death (Cicero, *Fin.* 3.26; Epictetus, *Diss.* 2.19.24), which compares interestingly with Phil 4:11-13, where these are attributed to divine provision. Josephus describes how the Epicureans suppose that "the world runs by its own movement without knowing a guide or another's care," a view of Providence that he considers a mistaken notion of how the world operates that would lead to it being "shattered through taking a blind course and so end in destruction (ἀπωλώλει), just as we see ships go down when they lose their helmsmen or chariots overturn when they have no drivers" (*Ant.* 10.276-81, citation from 279; Loeb. transl. of R. Marcus).

Paul may hold a similar view of the Cynics, who were regarded as actively seeking self-destructive courses of behavior as part of their mission, which Paul may well have in mind when referring to those whose "end is destruction."<sup>57</sup> Cynics could be regarded a positive example for their lack of concern for gaining honor according to the Roman cultural status norms, calling for a return to natural living before civilization's so-called civilizing norms

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<sup>56</sup> Richard A. Horsley and Neil Asher Silberman, *The Message and the Kingdom: How Jesus and Paul Ignited a Revolution and Transformed the Ancient World* (New York: Grossett/Putnam, 1997), 202, suggest vv. 18-19 refer to Nero.

<sup>57</sup> Cf. Downing, *Cynics, Paul*, 143-50.

cloaked the legitimation of moral, political, and economic exploitation of the many by the few, for which they were sometimes severely punished in the Roman period<sup>58</sup>—although employing immodest and immoral behavior by prevailing Jewish communal standards (such as the kind listed in vv. 18-19).<sup>59</sup> Paul would have found Cynic agnosticism (Lucian, *Zeus Refutatus* 15; Tertullian, *Ad Nationes* 2.2)<sup>60</sup> a sign of their ultimate end, i.e., destruction.

The polemical charge that someone or group's "*god is the belly*" is relatively common among philosophers. Among ancient moral philosophers, accusations of serving the belly for pleasure and to avoid responsibility to one's fellow citizens were often contrasted with the self-discipline required of athletes or soldiers, not unlike what we find in Paul's language in this chapter.<sup>61</sup> In general, the Cynics attacked the indulgence of human appetite as misguided. However, this critique was not one dimensional, since dogs by nature are stereotypically maligned for overeating. Diogenes speaks against indulging appetites (Diogenes Laertius, *Lives* 6.60), but Cynics cleverly expressed preference for eating during *symposia* (suggesting the vice of gluttony) in order to seek to subvert the conventional attention to word games at the meals. Cynics thus sought to attack civilized *talk about* morality instead of undertaking to *practice*

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<sup>58</sup> Dio Cassius, *Historia Romanorum* LVI, for insulting magistrates publicly, i.e., *parrêsia*; Seneca, *Ep.* 20; Robert Bracht Branham and Marie-Odile Goulet-Cazé, "Introduction," in *The Cynics: The Cynic Movement in Antiquity and its Legacy* (eds. Robert Bracht Branham and Marie-Odile Goulet-Cazé; Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996), 12-18 (1-27); Miriam Griffin, "Cynicism and the Romans: Attraction and Repulsion," in *The Cynics*, eds. Branham and Goulet-Cazé, 190-204; Navia, *Diogenes of Sinope*, 146.

<sup>59</sup> And according to the standards of some others who otherwise admire the Cynic tradition, such as Lucian in *Demon.*, *Peregr.*, and *Fug.*; Branham and Goulet-Cazé, "Introduction," in *The Cynics*, eds. Branham and Goulet-Cazé, 17.

<sup>60</sup> Marie-Odile Goulet-Cazé, "Religion and the Early Cynics," 47-80, in *The Cynics*, eds. Branham and Goulet-Cazé.

<sup>61</sup> Sandnes, *Belly and Body*, 35-60; Bloomquist, *Suffering in Philippians*, 131-33, 178-81, 197-201 (also 90), drawing on Jerome H. Neyrey, "The Form and Background of the Polemic in 2 Peter," *JBL* 99 (1980): 407-31, observes the possibility that Paul might be engaging in the kind of polemical stereotyping of those considered a threat to piety in Judaism, especially because of their rejection of providence, such as Epicureans (found in Josephus's depiction of the Sadducees as Epicureans [*War* 2.164-65], in 2 Peter, and in rabbinical texts [cf. Urbach, *Sages*, 1.29]; cf. Plutarch on Middle Platonism). In this sense, their construction here by Paul may be more of a foil than a description of real opponents per se, in order to set out Paul's own position clearly, in this case, against the this-worldly hope of those Paul opposes. Although with some equivocation, Bloomquist regards the likely real historical opponents to be Jewish Christian pneumatics; cf. 131-33, 198-201.

actual moral behavior--since those enjoying the symposia gained the wealth that made such civilized dinner entertainment possible through the immoral exploitation of the poor, at least from the perspective of Cynic guests. For this insulting behavior the Cynics were maligned as dogs whose god is the belly (*Lives* 6.61, 270c-d). This topic warrants a bit more discussion.

In a story by Athenaeus (2<sup>nd</sup>-3<sup>rd</sup> cent. CE), the Cynic Cynulcus traded barbs during a banquet with other guests over the delay of the meal for the sake of continued philosophical discourse. A rival guest insulted Cynulcus for gluttony, asking if he will gnaw to pieces even the bones, being a dog, to which Cynulcus responded in kind: "You glutton, whose god is your belly [κοιλιοδαίμων], and with no wit for anything else!" (Athenaeus, *Deipnosophistae* ["The Sophists at Dinner"], 3.96f-97). Here it seems that the accusation can be hurled at any opponent as an insult focused on elevating carnal pleasures above philosophical pursuits, although it could imply a preemptive strike by a Cynic turning on his accuser a slam he anticipates. And indeed, the rejoinder flies: "Your another!"

Ulpian not only analogizes the madness of the Cynics with that of dogs, he threatens Cynulcus that he will strike him, turning the day into a slaughter like the one in which dogs are slaughtered at Argos, if he will not stop his barking at them instead of at least behaving grateful for the meal, in contrast to the grateful response one gets from a real dog, shown by a wagging tail (3.99e-f). He also informs Cynulcus that his use of "belly-god [κοιλιοδαίμων]" derives from Eupolis having used this language to denote "flatterers [κόλακαβ] by that name in the play of that name," i.e., "Flatterers." (3.100b).<sup>62</sup> It appears to be the case that flattery was associated with dogs and their bellies in the sense that they flatter their masters, symbolized by having their bellies rubbed in mutual appreciation of each other, but a dog's real motive is self-seeking: it wants to be fed.<sup>63</sup> Ulpian, by articulating this definition of the epithet Cynulcus

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<sup>62</sup> The Loeb edition word has broken printing, but I am pretty sure it should be as I have spelled it; in Loeb, p. 430, the Greek appears as κόλαι αβ, that is, the second κ is missing.

<sup>63</sup> Interestingly, Athenaeus, *Deipnosophistae*, 6.236e, relates the story of Eupolis's play, "Flatterers," to explain that parasites were called flatterers by earlier poets. Many examples of parasitic or flattering activity (concise definition in 6.255) follow throughout book 6 (234c-262a), with stories involving banquet behavior, continually making the point that flattery is cousin to gluttony, for its purpose is to gain access to food provided by another, with several clever remarks about those who get a "bellyful" as the reward for their fawning lifestyles (e.g., 6.246a-c). It is also perhaps worth noting that Macedonians frequently serve as examples of this flattering behavior (6.255c-257c; 259f-261b).

had used with the intention of insulting Ulpian, is turning it around on Cynulcus, insulting him in stereotypical terms as the one whose behavior is recognized to be dog-like, i.e., gluttonous (belly-oriented). Cynulcus failed to live up to the conventions of the *symposia* because he sought to undermine its concern for philosophical discussion for discussion's sake by focusing attention on the food itself as the way to express his exasperation. In any case, the point is simply that Paul's language may readily call to mind the kind of invectives associated with declamations of Cynics and other philosophical groups.

When Paul writes of those "*who glory in their shame*," this language can naturally refer to any behavior that is contrary to what Paul believes honorable behavior should be. This can refer euphemistically to the Cynic's strategic public demonstration of animal-like behavior, including stereotypical provocative acts such as farting and defecating, masturbating, and the like, in order to expose that conventions of human social behavior are human constructions; the Cynic thus glories in their shame (Diogenes Laertius, *Lives* 6.69; Diogenes, *Ep.* 44). This phrase is close to that of Lucian, *Peregrinus* 17, who, when specifically writing of a Cynic who practiced erections in public, speaks euphemistically of the penis as the "shameful thing [αἰδοῖον]." Hesychius included reference to the "the shameless one" in his lexicon entry for κυών: "the male member, and the barking animal, and the shameless one, and the star, and the sea animal."<sup>64</sup> Later lexicons continue to equate Cynics and shamelessness.<sup>65</sup>

Paul's criticism of those who "*think earthily*" or "*terrestrially*" could be aimed at the Cynic philosophical stance that upholds the function of language is to identify the objects of the physical world, not to play linguistic games, as is the case in the discourse of philosophy and science. Even ordinary speech acts are misguided, and reading and writing maligned: "nothing can be either defined or explained, except by pointing to the object."<sup>66</sup> This observation can be combined with the Cynic's general disdain for religious beliefs and practices, for concern with

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<sup>64</sup> Hesychius of Alexandria, *Lexicon*, ed. Kurt Latte, vol. 2 (Copenhagen: Ejnar Munksgaard, 1953), p. 555, entry Kappa 1763.

<sup>65</sup> *Etymologicum magnum*, ed. Frederic Sylburg (Leipzig: Wiegand, 1816), col. 498: "Dog for the philosopher who does the same as dogs do." "Shameless ones" is also offered as a definition here. Cf. the *kuōn* entry of the Hellenistic *Homer Lexicon* of Apollonius Sophista (*Lexicon Homericum*, ed. J. C. Molini, vol. 2 [Paris, 1773], p. 510).

<sup>66</sup> Navia, *Diogenese of Sinope*, 94.

those things about which we cannot know.<sup>67</sup> The idea of living according to "nature" is at work here, that the processes of the physical world occur according to their nature, their essence, the logical laws that govern them, and not outside sources such as divine figures.<sup>68</sup> This does not mean a human should behave like a dog per se, but that one should live like a human being apart from invented conventions like religion and state (with its wars, slavery, unequal distribution of goods, unequal dispensation of justice), and many other social conventions by which taking advantage of other human beings is legitimated.

Cynics were not necessarily opposed to religion as much as to public expressions of religion, and different Cynics expressed different sensibilities, from opposition to the gods to belief in the gods but not in the human conventions for defining and worshipping, especially images and temples and ritual practices like sacrifices. Heraclitus defended himself against accusations of impiety and attacked the accusers in Ephesus for their idolatry and temples instead of true piety (*Ep.* 4.10-13),<sup>69</sup> and he mocked ritual castration (*Ep.* 9.15-19). Instead, he recognized the cosmos is god's temple (*Ep.* 4.17), and heavenly creations are to be enjoyed (*Ep.* 4.20-26; 5.14).<sup>70</sup> Demonax notes that if prayer must take place in temples, then this suggests that the god is deaf and cannot hear prayers said away from the temple (Lucian, *Demonax* 27).<sup>71</sup> However, Dio Chrysostom (*Or.* 12) and Maximus of Tyre (*Or.* 2) justify cult images and respect popular piety.

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<sup>67</sup> Navia, *Diogenese of Sinope*, 113-14.

<sup>68</sup> Navia, *Diogenese of Sinope*, 116.

<sup>69</sup> Harold W. Attridge, *First-century Cynicism in the Epistles of Heraclitus* (Harvard Theological Studies 29; Missoula, Mont.: Published by Scholars Press for the Harvard Theological Review, 1976).

<sup>70</sup> See Harold W. Attridge, "The Philosophical Critique of Religion under the Early Empire," in *Aufstieg und Niedergang der römischen Welt: Geschichte und Kultur Roms im Spiegel der neueren Forschung* (ed. Wolfgang Haase; Berlin and New York: Walter de Gruyter, 1978), 64-66; Goulet-Cazé, "Religion," in *The Cynics*, eds. Branham and Goulet-Cazé, 47-80; Luis E. Navia, *Classical Cynicism: A Critical Study* (Contributions in Philosophy 58; Westport, Conn. and London: Greenwood Press, 1996), 27-31, on 28, observes that while mounting an attack on traditional beliefs and practices, Cynics believed in a spiritual dimension, in a way similar to Socrates ostensible distance from politics, but being the quintessential political man (*Apology* 32b; *Gorgias* 521d; *Meno* 100a).

<sup>71</sup> See also *Demonax* 11; 32; 27, for additional criticisms of offerings, the idea of immortality, and prophecy. For a discussion of Oenomaus' criticism of oracles, see Attridge, "Philosophical Critique of Religion," 45-78, 56-60.

From the perspective of common social conventions, including Jewish ones, Cynics can easily be associated with the derisive language Paul employs in vv. 18-19, whose "god is their belly," who "glory in their shame," and who actively seek self-destructive courses of behavior as part of their mission: whose "end is destruction," as Paul might put the case.<sup>72</sup> Let us return to the other two epithets in 3:2 in view of this survey.

*Cynics as the Evil Workers:*

As already mentioned, this vague label could be used for just about anyone or group whose influence Paul opposed. There are, nevertheless, specific associations with Cynics that can be drawn. Just as the belly talking girl with the spirit of Pythos described in Philippi in Acts 16 can be associated with Apollo, so too the Cynics can be associated with Apollo, the Pythos, and the Delphic precept to "Know Thyself," which is a central theme in Julian's discussion of the Cynics (*Orations* ["To the Uneducated Cynics"] 6.183-89; cf. Diogenes Laertius, *Lives* 6.21). Epictetus notes the commissioning of Cynics by Zeus to reach humankind (*Discourses* 3.22.81-82, 95-96), and he observes that Cynics "enjoyed the privilege of 'dreams and omens, and converse with the gods.'" Dio Chrysostom (*Orations* 32.12) appeals to his work deriving not from his own choice, but by the will of the divine, who provides the appropriate and profitable words to communicate to the listener.

There are many parallels in Philippians with Cynic discourses, although only a few can be discussed here. It seems that Paul is engaged in challenging Cynics over who has the rightful claim to be upholding such ideals. In a sense, Paul may be seeking to out-Cynic the Cynics, to be claiming to have the right to be called the good worker and accuse the other of being the bad one.

Like Paul, the Cynics sought disciples,<sup>74</sup> or in their terms, like physicians, they sought to bring healing to those willing to listen by way of challenging the status quo that sickened the minds of the people, from which they needed to recover by seeing through the conventions to

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<sup>72</sup> Cf. Downing, *Cynics, Paul*, 143-50.

<sup>73</sup> Dudley, *History of Cynicism*, 170.

<sup>74</sup> Epictetus, *Discourses* 3.22.23-26; John Moles, "'Honestius Quam Ambitiosius'? An Exploration of the Cynic's Attitude to Moral Corruption in His Fellow Men," *Journal of Hellenic Studies* 103 (1983): 103-23, 112.

their true nature.<sup>75</sup> Like a surgeon, the Cynic must cut first with bold speech (παρρησία) before healing can begin (Diogenes Laertius, *Lives*, 6.69; Ps. Diogenes, *Ep.* 27–29), which parallels Paul's appeal to using bold speech (παρρησία) for the benefit of the Philippians and others whom he seeks to persuade (1:20). Epictetus describes Cynics as scouts bringing back the truth to mankind so that instead of wandering around in darkness they can return to the "true path" (*Discourses* 3.22.23–26, 69), and he analogizes them to a father who has "made all mankind his children; the men among them he has as sons, the women as daughters; in that spirit he approaches them all and cares for them all. Or do you fancy that it is in the spirit of idle impertinence he reviles those he meets? It is as a father he does it, as a brother, and as a servant of Zeus, who is Father of us all" (*Discourses* 3.22.81–82). Lucian portrays Diogenes as "a liberator of men and healer of their passions" (*Philosophies for Sale.* 8; cf. *Demonax* 7; *The Fisherman* 46, 52; *Apology* 2; *Downward Journey* 7).<sup>76</sup> Diogenes claims that his dog-like style is on behalf of others: "Other dogs bite their enemies, but I my friends, to save them."<sup>77</sup> The true Cynic even practices the art of confronting others, understanding the ridicule of themselves that results to be for the ultimate benefit of their victim/accuser as well as for their own training in endurance (*Lives* 6.64), a feature that is interesting to compare with how Paul defines his own evaluation of the negative response that his activity, and that of his addressees, elicits (Phil 1:26–29). Diogenes is the example of how to live well with nothing, including in suffering (Epictetus, *Discourses* 3.22.45–61), an important feature of Paul's own self-description in this letter (Phil 1:16–30; 4:10–14).

The parallels between Paul's approach to the Philippians are intriguing, and several more fall into this general category around what kind of worker Paul is when compared to the Cynics, especially in his approach in chapter 3. Paul's emphasis on endurance, including appeal to the athletic imagery of training to succeed to make the case (vv. 12–16), parallels the

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<sup>75</sup> Cf. Diogenes Laertius, *Lives* 6.4, 6; Dio Chrysostom, *Discourses* 8.5–7; 32.17; 33.6–8, 44; Ps.-Diogenes, *Ep.* 28; 29; Ps.-Socrates, *Ep.* 24; Epictetus, *Discourses* 3.22.72–74; and see Plutarch, *How to Tell a Flatterer from a Friend* 59C–60B, 61D–62C, 73D–74DE; *Progress in Virtue* 80B–C; Malherbe, *Paul and the Popular Philosophers*, 131–35; Luis E. Navia, *Diogenes of Sinope: The Man in the Tub* (Contributions in Philosophy; Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1998), 136, and see 141, on *typhos*.

<sup>76</sup> H. C. Baldry, *The Unity of Mankind in Greek Thought* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1965), 111.

<sup>77</sup> Stobaeus, *Eclogae* III., Wachsmuth, 462 [maybe *Anthology* 3.13.43 = 3.462,11–15 in Wachsmuth–Hense].

common Cynic topos on discipline or practice in training (ἄσκησις), often made in similar athletic terms, in order to be able to persist in the face of constant resistance and discouragement from all other sources.<sup>78</sup> Paul's emphasis on self-denial in order to succeed (vv. 7-21; 4:5-13) is similar to the concerns of the Cynics to gain self-mastery (εγκρατής εαυτοῦ), the exercise of which will fly in the face of conventional measures of success.<sup>79</sup> Paul's use of harsh, abusive, and even crass street-language throughout chapter 3 (especially the use of "crap" in v. 8), in order to express prophetic critique of the cultural alternatives and any pressure to conform therewith, is similar to the kind of startling speech characteristic of Cynics.<sup>80</sup> Finally, in sharp contrast to Paul's claim that "our citizenship is in heaven" rather than in this world (3:19-20), Cynics claim to be "citizens of the world [κοσμοπολίται]." That is, they claim not to be constrained by conformity to the conventions of the citizens of any particular city, but true only to their own self-judgment about what is virtuous in universal terms.<sup>81</sup> Cynics could be regarded a positive example for their lack of concern for gaining honor on the Roman cultural

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<sup>78</sup> Diogenes Laertius, *Lives* 6.49, 70-71; Ps.-Crates, *Ep.* 16, 20, 21, 33; Ps.-Diogenes, *Ep.* 31; Epictetus, *Discourses* 3.22.51-52; Branham and Goulet-Cazé, "Introduction," in *The Cynics*, eds. Branham and Goulet-Cazé, 26-27.

<sup>79</sup> Diogenes Laertius, *Lives* 6.27-30, 45, represent examples of the critique, e.g., of the need for one to be better trained than a Spartan warrior, to be master of one's self more than of another man, to do more to uphold the laws than do the rulers themselves; cf. *Lives* 6.23, 31-34, 59; 7.172; Ps.-Crates, *Ep.* 11, 12; Ps.-Diogenes, *Ep.* 12; 14; Epictetus, *Discourses* 3.22.51-52; Dio Chrysostom, *Or.* 6.8-9; A. A. Long, "The Socratic Tradition: Diogenes, Crates, and Hellenistic Ethics," in *The Cynics*, eds. Branham and Goulet-Cazé, 28-46. That self-mastery was also a Roman value and also espoused by the Stoics (Epictetus, *Discourses* 3.12 [about Cynics]; 3:13.2; Seneca, *Ep.* 18.5-13; 108.15-16, 23) should not be overlooked; Griffin, "Cynicism and the Romans," in *The Cynics*, eds. Branham and Goulet-Cazé, 201-2.

<sup>80</sup> Perhaps there is a parallel concern in Paul's mention of receipt of funds from the Philippians in 4:10-19, wanting to make sure that they understood it was not required, and the implicit contradiction Cynics created with their eschewing of work for pay in order to remain free (the highest value: *Lives* 6.69-71; Lucian, *Demonax* 21), yet at the same time begging. In other words, they are complicit in the non-freedom of those from which they receive support, although their philosophy claims to uphold practicing it without harming the other (i.e., that they are friends of humankind [φιλανθρωπία]: Diogenes, *Ep.* 28.3; Heraclitus, *Ep.* 7.2; Dio Chrysostom, *Orr.* 4.24; Epictetus, *Discourses* 3.22.81; 3.24.64; Lucian, *Demonax* 11, 21; Julian, *Orations* 6.201; cf. Moles, "Exploration of the Cynic's Attitude," in *The Cynics*, eds. Branham and Goulet-Cazé, 112-16).

<sup>81</sup> Diogenes Laertius, *Lives* 6.63; J. M. Rist, *Stoic Philosophy* (Cambridge, et al.: Cambridge University Press, 1969), 58-59.

status norms, although a quite negative example for immodest and immoral behavior by Jewish communal standards.

*Cynics as the Mutilation:*

The Cynic option can also be explored in terms of the epithet mutilation, as surprising as that might seem.<sup>82</sup> There are both specific and general elements that can be construed as mutilation from the point of view of rivals, especially if the rival is shaped by and communicating based upon Jewish sensibilities. The accusation of mutilation might be another way of saying what is reported negatively of a virtuous Cynic according to Julian: "with his hair unkempt and his clothes in tatters on his chest and wearing a wretched cloak in severe winter weather: 'What evil genius can have plunged him into this sad state which makes not only him pitiable.... neglecting everything and no better than a beggar!'" (*Orations* 6.198; Loeb, transl. W. Wright).

In a more graphic direction, Diogenes is reported to have endorsed cannibalism, as a "natural," ideal way of eating in some cultures (*Lives* 6.73). In his polemic against Cynics, Philodemus (1<sup>st</sup> cent. BCE) proclaims that Cynics usually "kill dying members of their family with their own hands and eat them."<sup>83</sup> In a Cynic Epistle addressed to "the so-called Greeks," the corpses of executed criminals (on the cross and on the rack) are derided for having no good use "except to eat as the flesh of sacrificial victims" (εἰ μὴ ὡσπερ ἱερείων σάρκας ἐσθίειν), a paraenetic harangue on the immorality of non-Cynics, who ignore what nature teaches.<sup>84</sup> The topos of cannibalism invoked the barbarian wildness of the Scythians, a famous Cynic icon. The relevance for defining those who might be regarded by Christ-followers as "enemies of the cross of Christ" involved in "mutilation" is intriguing.

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<sup>82</sup> Reumann, *Philippians*, 472, who is otherwise one of the few to consider Cynics the possible referent for "dogs," omits this option because he finds the other two warnings to be "specifically Jewish--one would not call wandering Cynic freeloaders 'workers,' and 'incision/circumcision.'"

<sup>83</sup> Ragnar Höistad, *Cynic Hero and Cynic King: Studies in the Cynic Conception of Man* (Uppsala: 1948), 147-48.

<sup>84</sup> Diogenes, *Ep.* 28 (Malherbe, *Cynic Epistles*, 121). This Cynic topos may inform Trimalchio's satire of cannibalism in Petronius, *Sat.* 141; see Albert Henrichs, *Die Phoinikika des Lollianos: Fragmente eines neuen griechischen Romans* (Papyrologische Texte und Abhandlungen 14; Bonn: R. Habelt, 1972), 70 n. 78.

The Cynics turned the normally negative connotations of cannibalism into a positive icon of their movement's *autarkeia* ("self-sufficiency"), *parrēsia* ("bold speech"), and freedom from cultural conventions.<sup>85</sup> Although later, Stobaeus claims that Diogenes allegorized the story of Medea to exemplify the virtues of toil because she made those who had grown flabby through luxurious living take up exercise and sweat-baths, and the legend arose that she boiled their flesh to make them into young men (*Flor.* 29.92).<sup>86</sup> Perhaps relevant, traditions circulated that Diogenes made a habit out of eating meat raw in public, which ultimately led to his end when he gnawed into raw but tainted Octopus (*Lives* 6.34, 76), and he was said to leave instructions upon his death that his body remain unburied so that it could be devoured by wild beasts (*Lives* 6.79).

In yet another direction, Diogenes was said to live in an urn in Athens within the *Metroön* (Mother's Building),<sup>87</sup> which was the location of the cult of the Mother of the Gods, Cybele, with obvious associations to mutilation arising in that cult.<sup>88</sup> Also, Cynics were accused of eating the food left at crossroads in the "Suppers of Hekate," an association that also arises in Talmudic literature, and thus, although depicting a later time, nevertheless reflects Jewish

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<sup>85</sup> John L. Moles, "Cynic Cosmopolitanism," in *The Cynics*, eds. Branham and Goulet-Cazé, 112, 117; James Romm, "Dog Heads and Noble Savages: Cynicism before the Cynics?" in *The Cynics*, eds. Branham and Goulet-Cazé, 122–23; Derek Krueger, "The Bawdy and Society: The Shamelessness of Diogenes in Roman Imperial Culture," in *The Cynics*, eds. Branham and Goulet-Cazé, 226–27; Sarah Rappe, "Father of the Dogs? Tracking the Cynics in Plato's Euthydemus," *CP* 95 (2000): 291–93; Michel Onfray, *Cynismes: Portrait du philosophe en chien* (Paris: Bernard Grassett, 1990), 99–114; Höistad, *Cynic Hero and Cynic King*, 145–46. The Cynic ideal of ἀνθρωποφαγία entered Stoic traditions about the wise; see Richard Bett, *Sextus Empiricus, Against the Ethicists (Adversus Mathematicos XI)* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1997), 32, 207–9, 265; and Paul A. Vander Waerdt, "Zeno's Republic and the Origins of Natural Law," in *The Socratic Movement* (ed. Vander Waerdt; Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1994), 300–301. Cf. F. Gerald Downing, *Cynics and Christian Origins* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1992), 50, 173–74; and the response by McGowan, *Ascetic Eucharists*, 73–75.

<sup>86</sup> Donald Reynolds Dudley, *A History of Cynicism. From Diogenes to the 6th Century A.D* (Hildesheim: Georg Olms Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1967), 33.

<sup>87</sup> Diogenes Laertius, *Lives*, 6.23; Diogenes, *Ep.* 16.

<sup>88</sup> On the other hand, the Cynic Heraclitus of Ephesus criticized the castration of priests in the cult of the Mother Goddess, likening it to men enslaving men and impious behavior toward nature, wherein dogs do not castrate other dogs (Attridge, *Heraclitus*, 85).

stereotypical notions about and polemic concerning Cynics. This brings up a specific "Jewish" context to consider in more detail.

M. Luz argues that third-century rabbis discuss Cynics when defining madmen in the Talmud, where they are called *kynukos*, versus the madman, who is called *kurdyakos*.<sup>89</sup> The *kynukos*, i.e., the Dog/Cynic, is one who is characterized by four things: he "sleeps in the graveyard, burns incense to the demons, rends his clothing and destroys what people give him."<sup>90</sup> Here is the case that Luz lays out:<sup>91</sup>

1) Lucian mocks a Cynic for living in "a tomb,"<sup>92</sup> and it is in sepulchers also where the Gospel's report that mad demoniacs live,<sup>93</sup> in the area of Gadara/Gerasa, from where several prominent Cynics came, near Tiberias, and thus within the orbit of the rabbis.<sup>94</sup>

2) Lucian also mocks Menippus, the Cynic from Gedara,<sup>95</sup> for eating Hecate's suppers at the crossroads with the poor, as well as eggs discarded there after purification rites.<sup>96</sup> If the Cynics were seen eating the offerings to Hecate, including some people cooking the largely uncooked meat left for her at these altars and crossroad posts, or toasting the cheese cakes (flame-cakes; an option for the smoke apparently unrealized by Luz), this activity might well be misconstrued (or misrepresented) by the rabbis to be the burning of incense to demons.

3) That the mad suffering demon possession mutilated their clothes and their bodies is referred to commonly, including in the Gospel accounts (Matt 5:1ff; Lk 8:27), and could easily be dismissively applied to the tattered *tribon* (cloak) worn by the Cynic with great pride.<sup>97</sup>

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<sup>89</sup> *y.Gittin* 7.1; *y.Terumoth* 1.1; and *b.Hagigah* 3b-4a; M. Luz, "A Description of the Greek Cynic in the Jerusalem Talmud," *Journal for the Study of Judaism* 20.1 (1989): 49-60: 49-60.

<sup>90</sup> *y.Tittin* 7.1; Luz transl.

<sup>91</sup> The following comparison draws from Luz, "Description of the Greek Cynic," 55-60.

<sup>92</sup> *Philosophies for Sale* 9.

<sup>93</sup> Matt 8:28; Mark 5:1; Luke 8:26.

<sup>94</sup> Strabo 25.759.29. Luz argues that the rabbis involved had witnessed the behavior of Cynics in Gadara, near Tiberias. Gadara was the birthplace of the Cynics Menippus (3<sup>rd</sup> cent. BCE), Meleager (1<sup>st</sup> cent. BCE?), and Oenomaos (2<sup>nd</sup> or 3<sup>rd</sup> cent. CE?) (Strabo 25.759.29); Navia, *Classical Cynicism*, 166-74.

<sup>95</sup> Diogenes Laertius, *Lives* 6.99; Dudley, *History of Cynicism*, 69-74, for discussion of the life of Menippus.

<sup>96</sup> Lucian, *Philosophies for Sale* 8; *Downward Journey*, 7; *Dialogues of the Dead*, 1.331; 2.425.

<sup>97</sup> Diogenes Laertius, *Lives* 6.22; 7.87; Lucian, *Dialogues of the Dead* 1.332; Ps.-Lucian, *Cynic Ep.* 1.

4) Especially telling for the comparison by the rabbis of the *kynukos* and *kurdyakos* was the destroying of what one receives, which applies well to the Cynics, who celebrated the dispossession of their property: stereotypically, their famed defacing of the currency.<sup>98</sup> I would add that this could also be categorized as mutilation, for which the defacing of the currency by chisel stands for the mutilation of prevailing social convention by their development of frank speech and provocative lifestyle (*Orations* 7.211), as well as being a play on what "incision" of the coin signifies, namely, "mutilation."

Luz demonstrates that the rabbis were describing Cynics in general terms that included exaggerated misunderstandings of certain traits; these can be summarized as follows: the Cynic "wears torn clothes, destroys/throws away his property, sleeps in the graveyard and handles offerings left to netherworld demons."<sup>99</sup> The case can be considered all the stronger if we take into consideration Hekate's association with dogs, in her persona and as her companions, depicted in iconography, as well as in the puppy meat of which offerings to her consisted. Then the rabbis were involved in punning on *kynukos* all the more so, involving double entendre, as was Lucian when speaking of Cynics eating of the suppers of Hekate, i.e., the Dogs eating dog food. For our purpose, these associations might also help explain why Paul includes evil workers and the mutilated along with reference to the dogs: Paul's polemic builds upon stereotypical associations one might expect from the perspective of his Jewish sensibilities where such "pagan" groups are concerned.

### **Cynics as the Target of Paul's Invectives?**

It is not clear that Paul had in view Cynics in chapter 3 in every case, or even in any case, but it is a tantalizing idea to pursue. There are a number of parallels that I have not undertaken to discuss in this paper, but the value of exploring this identification is further heightened when we take into account 1 Thess 2:1-2, where Paul indicates that he had suffered shameful treatment in Philippi before his arrival in Thessalonica.

Paul's language in 1 Thess 2:1-8 has been compared by Abraham Malherbe to Dio Chrysostom's polemical descriptions of Cynics who do not represent the Cynic ideals to which

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<sup>98</sup> Diogenes Laertius, *Lives* 6.37, 87; Lucian, *Philosophies for Sale* 9.

<sup>99</sup> Luz, "Description of the Greek Cynic," 59.

Dio subscribed.<sup>100</sup> Malherbe notes Paul's description of his willingness to suffer for speaking boldly in spite of the negative reaction of the crowd exemplifies Dio's portrait of the true Cynic philosopher's bold struggle against social pressure (vv. 1-2).<sup>101</sup> Paul claims to preach unlike the charlatans who deceive and lead their hearers into error (v. 3).<sup>102</sup> This might suggest that the Thessalonians know Paul to have been mistaken for a Cynic in Philippi (perhaps also by those who responded positively to his message?), or to express himself in contrast to certain stereotypical Cynic qualities that could be easily polemicized, or even to be exemplifying popular philosophical ideals to which he believes his audience subscribes.<sup>103</sup>

What might an identification of Cynics suggest about the identity of the audience in Philippi and their concerns? Several options readily come to mind.

1. Paul's addressees might be maligned as Cynics or Cynic-like for failing to uphold the norms of social life to which they had formerly subscribed--including family and civic cult as well as the pursuit of honor and success on Roman society's prevailing terms. This would be perhaps a natural way for their families and neighbors to classify their newly adopted counter-cultural lifestyles,<sup>104</sup> albeit in terms that Paul regards to be inappropriate comparisons for them to internalize for themselves.

2. Cynics might be attacking his addressees. They may be perceived to be Cynic-like in many ways, yet the Philippians' commitment to Christ and the norms of the Jewish groups to which they have become members could bring criticism upon them from Cynics, or from those who appreciate Cynic values, for having failed to exemplify Cynicism because of these conventions and beliefs.

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<sup>100</sup> Malherbe, *Paul and the Popular Philosophers*, 35-48. It should also be noted that Ignatius, in his *Letter to the Ephesians* 7.1-2, refers to "mad dogs, biting in secret," who are to be avoided, which may refer to docetic teachers or Cynics: see William R. Schoedel and Helmut Koester, eds., *Ignatius of Antioch: A Commentary on the Letters of Ignatius of Antioch* (Hermeneia; Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1985), 59-60.

<sup>101</sup> Malherbe, *Paul and the Popular Philosophers*, 47.

<sup>102</sup> *Ibid.*, 47.

<sup>103</sup> Cf. Gerd Theissen, *The Social Setting of Pauline Christianity: Essays on Corinth* (trans. John H. Schütz; Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1982), 39.

<sup>104</sup> This is a central idea for how Paul would have been perceived among non-Jews for Downing, *Cynics, Paul*, however, interestingly, not with respect to Philippians.

3. It is within the scope of either of these options that his non-Jewish Christ-followers may be looking to Cynics as role-models in view of the alienation they were suffering since becoming followers of this Jewish subgroup loyal to Christ. They might even be considering themselves Cynics, or on their way to becoming Cynics ideally (a kind of loose affiliation rather than formal one with initiation rites, and Cynic was a rather loosely used term, along the lines of defining a "Hippy" in more recent years; it was not unusual for Cynics to consider others claiming this identity or adopting certain behavior to be imposters by their own standards).

It is intriguing to wonder whether this was indeed the option that his addressees were exploring if not also adopting in order to make sense of the implications of the message of Christ as they interpreted it after Paul departed. The one to whom they claimed loyalty was executed by the Romans as a threat to society, not unlike the Cynics considered themselves, and were considered by many to be, which may have suggested a positive affiliation to pursue. His message led them into a marginalized identity and threatened their access to honor and goods: how were they to negotiate living "in the present age," although claiming to be living according to the proposition that "the end of the ages had dawned" and was to be exemplified in their communal and personal lives? Had they become aware of their group as a subgroup of Jewish communal ways of living that was itself counter-cultural, not only in terms of the Roman city in which they lived and into which they had been enculturated, but also in terms of the larger Jewish community and its other, various (rival?) subgroups. In such a place, without Paul to guide them into his own particular Jewish Christ-based subgroup's way of interpreting the options for how they should now live, did they suppose that the Cynic culture offered them the best alternative to explore to make sense of their new identity, for how to be non-Jews in a new, unconventional Jewish subgroup?

If so, then Paul's presentation of his message to them in very Cynic-like terms may have been constructed with the expectation they would recognize that, for all of its similarities to Cynic values and the marginalization they suffered, their new identity was also very different from that of the Cynics, or should be. Paul may be, as it were, seeking to out-Cynic the Cynics, as well to demonstrate the failure of any criticism of his addressees based upon comparisons to Cynics. For Paul argues that they are to value identity and life-style norms in Christ above the status and access to goods that might be available to them through compliance with the majority cultural values, including the Jewish majority cultural values,

but also with any counter-cultural groups and values that may seem to be available options. Although Cynics may vie for the right to be the *top dog* among themselves; Paul denies that this should be so for himself (even if his argumentative strategy betrays that claim) or anyone else who shares his loyalty to Christ.

If Cynics were in view, Paul would presumably want to clarify the differences between themselves as members of the Jewish community ("we are the circumcision") and Cynics or other similar representatives of "non-Jewish" cultural values (the "dogs," "evil workers," "mutilation," etc., of vv. 2, 18-19). If so, then Paul dissociates them from Cynics in polemical style, making plain the ethos of Christ-followers within this Jewish subgroup (they are those who worship God by spirit, boast in Jesus Christ, and do not seek honor-ranking in normal social terms [or perhaps, who do not seek to persuade by *παρρησία* according to the flesh]; vv. 3ff.). All such ranking, however desirable, as birth and fidelity obviously remain for Paul himself to make his point--a valuation that he apparently believes his audience shares with him to expect it to carry the rhetorical weight his argument depends upon--is mere "crap" if it would threaten to come between him and his standing in Christ *above all other honors*. Paul calls his audience to share this comparative point of view toward any "pagan" rank and privilege that might lead to discrimination among themselves.

## Conclusion

Although recent interpreters of Philippians observe that a tension between honoring Christ versus honoring Caesar appears to be a major concern of this letter--e.g., in 1:27-30 (that their suffering is like Paul's, who is in prison for anti-imperial activity); 2:5-15 (the elevation of Jesus to lord of all rather than Caesar's claim to that role); and 3:20 (their citizenship in the colony of heaven rather than Philippi)--they have not focused on a clash of values with "pagan" culture in 3:2-19, because they continue to draw on the traditional interpretation of these verses, wherein Paul's opposition is supposedly from Jewish or Jewish Christian missionaries.<sup>105</sup> In

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<sup>105</sup> There is a growing consensus on the imperial context of Paul's rhetoric in certain texts: see e.g., R. R. Brewer, "The Meaning of *πολιτεύεσθε* in Phil 1:27," *JBL* 73 (1954): 76-83; E. C. Miller, "*πολιτεύεσθε* in Phil. 1.27: Some Philological and Thematic Observations," *JSNT* 15 (1982): 86-96; David Seeley, "The Background of the Philippians Hymn (2:6-11)," *Journal of Higher Criticism* 1 (1994): 49-72; Gordon D. Fee, *Philippians* (IVP New Testament

view of the many options discussed, however, it is unlikely that Paul's argument and the specific phrases he employed in Philippians 3 suggest that he was opposing Jews or problems arising from rivalry with Jews (Christ-following ones, or not) or Jewish ways of life (Judaism). Rather, Paul appears to oppose local "pagan" influences and influencers. In the face of competing non-Jewish "pagan" communal alternatives on offer in Philippi with which his (primarily if not exclusively) non-Jewish addressees are tempted to identify (seek status and goods), Paul seeks to persuade them to instead identify with Paul's Jewish norms because they are followers of Christ.

I suggest that Paul's appeal to his own Jewish identity and behavioral credentials was not presented to oppose alternative Jewish groups or individuals appealing to their superior Jewish identity and behavioral credentials, but to qualify his authority to instruct them to adopt a path that will not resolve their marginalization on any other community's, subgroup community's, or even counter-cultural community's terms. He did not want to give the impression that they were to compete for honor or rank on Jewish or non-Jewish terms, or that he did so either, thus he qualified the advantages of his own ranking--although, it must be noted, at the same time implicitly (i.e., rhetorically) appealing to his advantaged identity in order to make his point.<sup>106</sup> In other words, interpreters miss the rhetorical force of his point when suggesting that Paul here denounces his "past" identity as a Jew who practiced Judaism: his argument is predicated upon his audience knowing him to be a Jew who "still" practices Judaism in exemplary fashion. Thus he wants to communicate that he does not let the social advantage that normally accompanies that Jewish identity come before his shared identity with them "in Christ"; neither should they seek social advantage among themselves by the various "pagan" communal terms available to them. The qualification is based on a

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Commentary Series 11; Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 1999), 29-33; Bockmuehl, *Philippians*, 234-35; Oakes, *Philippians*, 129-74; Wright, "Paul's Gospel," esp. 173-81; de Vos, *Community Conflicts*, 263-75.

<sup>106</sup> Joseph A. Marchal, *The Politics of Heaven: Women, Gender, and Empire in the Study of Paul* (Paul in Critical Contexts; Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2008), discusses many factors to consider for undertaking a people's history approach to Philippians, including a sustained analysis of Paul's re-inscription of various cultural values he ostensibly opposes in the actions of others, a dynamic that interpreters often fail to recognize in their advancement of Paul as role model.

comparative identity he shares with them, that of knowing, or seeking to know and be known by God in Christ--"everything" else pales *in comparison*.

For Paul's addressees, the "pagan" identity and behavioral alternatives were not brand new. They had guided their self and group identity until they became followers of Christ, and they still appear to offer desirable advantages. It is not easy for them to abandon the status and access to goods that affiliation with these "pagan" groups can offer, especially when they cannot claim access to status and goods as if they had become Jews, since unlike Paul, they have been and remain non-Jews. But Paul has brought them into Judaism, with the result that they are confused and seeking relief from the consequences that have developed from their ambiguous new identity in Christ-following Jewish (sub)groups. Even though Paul could easily seek honor in Jewish community terms, as the addressees are tempted to seek to be able to do in "pagan" community terms, he calls them to resist that temptation (even if we witness him doing just that to make this point). Together they must suffer communal disapproval for their identification with the marginalized community of believers in Jesus Christ, whom they believe to be the true "lord" of all.

Paul's call to suffering for faithfulness to the example of Christ (and of Paul himself) echoes Elijah's pointed language, which, as noted earlier, seems to be a salient passage for Paul when he composed Philippians, especially chapter 3. Paul's approach bespeaks a conflict between the Christ-following Judaism into which these non-Jews have now been, or should be, enculturated, and the alternatives outside of this Judaism to which they may be attracted, or by which they may be threatened: "How long will you keep hopping between two opinions? If the Lord is God, follow Him; and if Baal, follow him!" (1 Kgs 18:21; *JPS*).

If chapter 3 is interpreted around a conflict of Jewish and "pagan" values and groups, perhaps Cynics, or various cults and other possibilities in some combination, then this language can be integrated into the overall focus of the letter. That appears to revolve around the choice that Paul calls his audience in Philippi to make between the "pagan" cultural alternatives that remain attractive or otherwise constrain the options available to themselves if they wish to avoid suffering, and the Jewish cultural values that their commitment to Christ should compel them, from Paul's point of view, to undertake instead.

This alternative at least raises the prospect of considering new ways to understand how these conflicting cultural norms might be shaping the lives of the audience and the choices they are making before the arrival of Paul's letter, as well as how they might react to it. I hope that sufficient questions have been raised to encourage interpreters to reconsider perpetuating the prevailing paradigm when sketching out the options to consider for the identity and concerns of Paul's audience, as well as of Paul and his communication goals.