

manipulation by a more influential Christian over a vulnerable one than issues about law. But these are trivial reservations. There is perhaps one surprising gap in the argument. While I agree with the author's claims about 'a different Spirit' and the issue of 'ecstasy' vs. 'control', he does not appear to consider the contrary case put forward by a number of writers, notably in C. Forbes, *Prophecy and Inspired Speech in Early Christianity and its Hellenistic Environment* (1995). This receives mention in the bibliographies of several works that the author consulted. The growing literature on prophecy is likewise part of this issue, and I should like to have known whether Hall's argument carries with it an endorsement of the (in my view valid) arguments of Hill, Müller, and Gillespie, on prophecy as pastoral preaching in Paul, although not necessarily for many in Corinth. I miss seeing a 'reply' to Forbes comparable with the author's many other incisive counter-arguments. However, this is only one possible gap in an otherwise excellent and well-argued volume. It makes a constructive contribution to our understanding of 1 and 2 Corinthians. The arguments are clear and sane, and I find the main conclusions convincing.

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The Irony of Galatians: Paul's Letter in First-Century Context. By MARK D. NANOS. Pp. xiii + 376. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2002. ISBN 0 8006 3214 1. Paper \$26/ Canada \$39.

THIS book challenges the conclusions of nearly all scholars who have written on the identity of the 'agitators' and the nature of the woes experienced in the Galatian churches before Paul wrote his most spirited letter. Nanos denies that the Galatian agitators (here dubbed 'influencers') were believers in Jesus Christ. Their message was not in any sense good news of Christ: this was simply not their concern. 'Their concerns did not arise from inter-Christian opposition to Paul or his supposed Law-free gospel, and they did not arrive suddenly from outside Galatia' (p. 317). The addressees of Paul's letter were 'Jesus sub-groups' of the larger Jewish communities at this time. They had declared themselves to be identified with the Jewish communities in a new and disputable way, as righteous ones apart from proselyte conversion. However, this declaration

was resisted. 'As soon as the social control agents of these Galatian Jewish communities became aware of the compromising implications that were emerging among these coalitions of followers of Jesus, they did not approve of the radical conclusions being drawn by these Pauline pagans in Galatia' (p. 318). The agitators insisted that without proselyte conversion the addressees of Paul's letter must understand themselves as members of the pagan world who were not entitled to the protection of the Jewish community. The agitators were probably former righteous Gentiles who had undergone proselyte conversion, including circumcision for males. Paul's reply is in the form of a letter of ironic rebuke.

This is a bold, provocative reading of Galatians. Is Nanos a voice in the wilderness with a message so unpalatable that it need not be taken seriously? By no means! The author sets out his stall with close attention to the text. He draws on his impressively wide reading in the social sciences; at times he does this to good effect, though now and again he comes perilously close to allowing social science models to fill in the gaps in our knowledge. At several points his attacks on widely held views are devastating. At several other points his arguments deserve to be taken seriously, even if they are not fully persuasive. So this monograph is an important contribution to Galatians scholarship. I think its impact would have been even greater if the author (or his copy-editor) had pruned the text considerably (with special attention to repetition), broken up numerous ponderous sentences, limited the amount of jargon drawn from the social sciences, and checked the Greek more carefully.

Nanos places firm question marks against the widely held assumption that the agitators are closely related to the 'false brothers' in Jerusalem (2:4), or 'the ones from James' or 'those of the circumcision' in Antioch (2:12). His rejection in an appendix of all the conventional rhetorical classifications of Galatians is well founded; it calls in question a mountain of recent scholarship.

I also welcome his insistence that 'pagan communal constraints', especially observance of the imperial cult, were factors which confronted both Jews and Jesus followers in Galatia. Nanos's discussion (pp. 257-71) is judicious, but there is more to be said on this topic, especially if the increasingly strong case in favour of the 'south Galatia' hypothesis is accepted and not left as an open question as in this monograph. However, there is a danger that 'imperial cult' will become 'the flavour of the

decade' in Galatians scholarship, and in New Testament scholarship more generally. We urgently need a nuanced appraisal of the archaeological and literary evidence for the social and political impact of the imperial cult in Pisidian Antioch, Iconium, Lystra, and Derbe in the middle of the first century.

Nanos's reasons for rejecting all the various labels pinned by scholars on 'those who are confusing' the Galatians (Gal. 1:7 NRSV) deserve to be taken seriously. He has confirmed my own view that neither 'Judaizers' nor 'opponents', nor 'rivals', nor even 'Teachers' (J. L. Martyn) is appropriate. Nanos rightly insists that labels should not prejudice the issues and should not damn without further ado the views of those who called forth Paul's wrath. But I am not convinced that his own fresh suggestion, 'influencers', should be adopted. He recognizes that 'influencers' is only 'relatively neutral' (p. 195). This label seems to me too bland as a summary of the intentions of either side in the dispute. So I prefer to retain 'agitators'. This term is close to Paul's own terminology in Gal. 1:7 and in 5:10 and 12, but it is also as reversible as is 'influencers'. On receipt of Paul's letters, some of the addressees may well have dubbed Paul an 'agitator' or 'trouble-maker'!

Nanos's insistence that Galatians is a letter of ironic rebuke merits further consideration, though he wisely concedes that 'many interpretive possibilities emerge from consideration of the epistolary aspects of ironic rebuke' (p. 60). However, we also need to note that irony often makes a sharper impact when it is oral rather than written. Paul may have written with irony at some points, but did the person who read his letter aloud in the Galatian churches appreciate and effectively convey the irony? And did the recipients identify all the ironic passages? After all, most readers of Galatians have missed most of the irony identified by Nanos. In fact detection of irony is less crucial to his overall reading than the title of his monograph implies.

A sharp distinction is drawn between the 'situation-related discourse units' and the 'narrative discourses' which 'relate something else that has occurred at another time or location, for example, in the life of Abraham or in Jerusalem or Antioch' (p. 63). The former include 1:1-9; 3:1-5; 4:12-20; 5:2-18; 5:24-6:18. While it is important to emphasize that straight lines should not be drawn from the autobiographical passages in chapters 1 and 2 to the woes confronting the Galatian churches, Paul does include them as part of his letter. (Nanos promises to return in due course to the autobiographical passages; I look forward to his discussion.) The sharp distinction between

'situation-related' and 'narrative' passages begins to crumble when we note (with Nanos, p. 68) that there are transitional passages (1:10-12; 4:21; 4:31-5:1), and important rhetorical asides at 1:20; 2:5; 3:7, 13-14, 22, 25-9; 4:3-7, 28-9 which address directly the Galatian recipients of the letter. On the other hand, his insistence that special attention should be given to the 'situational material' in the opening (1:1-12) and closing (6:11-18) sections of Paul's letter is surely correct.

I turn finally to two of the central pillars in Nanos's overall argument: his claims that the agitators were not Christ believers, and that the recipients were subgroups of the local Jewish communities. I do not think that either claim can be upheld. In Gal. 1:6-7 Paul refers to the message of the agitators as 'gospel'. I concur with most exegetes who accept that the agitators themselves used the term to refer to good news about Christ, though their understanding of the term was significantly different from Paul's. Nanos thinks that Paul himself referred to the message of the influencers as *εὐαγγέλιον*, as 'news of good', i.e. without any reference to Christ. So his key chapter 10 is entitled 'Paul's "Good News of Christ" Versus the Influencers' "News of Good"'. I do not think that even if one allows the use of irony in Gal. 1:6-7, it is conceivable that Paul could have used *εὐαγγέλιον* in two such totally different ways in the same sentence. First-century linguistic usage rules this out. Paul never uses the noun *εὐαγγέλιον* to refer merely to 'news of good'. Philo does not use the noun at all in his extensive writings. Josephus uses the noun only three times, and only once in the singular in a sentence which was as baffling to scribes as it is to us (*Bell.* ii.420). In Greco-Roman writings and documents from the first two centuries before, and the three centuries after Christ, 'good news' is very nearly always found in the plural. In sharp contrast, in Christian writings up to the middle of the second century, the noun is *always* used in the singular. In their choice of the singular Christians were making a point about the unrepeatable good news concerning Christ. (For further discussion and references, see my *Jesus and Gospel* [Cambridge: CUP, 2004], pp. 13-35).

Were the Jesus followers in Galatia perceived by themselves or by Jews to be subgroups of the local synagogues? For three main reasons, I think this is extremely unlikely:

1. In his opening sentence Paul addresses the recipients of his letter as *ἐκκλησίαι*. Presumably the addressees were aware of this terminology before Paul wrote. Nanos claims that 'it is

not clear how the term *ἐκκλησία* functioned at this time for Paul or those to whom he wrote' (p. 75, n. 1). He notes correctly that *ἐκκλησία* is used interchangeably with *συναγωγή* in the Septuagint, but he misses the key point. We have no evidence that *ἐκκλησία* was ever applied to a first-century Jewish community in a given place. (See W. Meeks, *First Urban Christians* [New Haven: Yale University Press, 1983], p. 80.) The choice of *ἐκκλησία* was deliberate: it differentiated Pauline communities from local synagogues.

2. At Gal. 3:27 Paul reminds the Galatians that they have been baptized into Christ. So baptism into Christ was part of Paul's initial proclamation in Galatia. It was an entry rite into a form of community distinct from local synagogues, and an entry rite quite distinct from proselyte baptism if practised at that time.

3. Paul's initial preaching had focused on Jesus as a crucified Messiah (Gal. 3:1). A *crucified* Messiah was 'cursed' by the law (Gal. 3:13), so even before Paul wrote, Jesus followers can hardly have been welcomed as subgroups by local synagogues in Galatia.

Nanos's challenge to widely held views is to be welcomed, even if his own reconstruction is untenable. I suspect that his monograph may have the same effect as challenges to Marcan priority. They have not been successful, but proponents of Marcan priority now argue their case much more cautiously. Similarly, scholarly attempts to identify the Galatian agitators and their concerns will henceforth need to be more cautious and more willing to acknowledge that we do not know as much as we would like to about the reasons why Paul wrote with such passion to the Galatian churches.

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Antijudaismus im Galaterbrief? Exegetische Studien zu einem polemischen Schreiben und zur Theologie des Apostels Paulus. By MICHAEL BACHMANN. Pp. ix + 220. (Novum Testamentum et Orbis Antiquus, 40.) Universitätsverlag Freiburg Schweiz and Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1999. ISBN 3 7278 1256 7 and 3 535 53940 1. N.p.

MICHAEL BACHMANN answers the question posed in his title with a resounding 'no', though he concedes that in its later reception Galatians has often been read in this way. The six essays brought together in this book all focus fairly directly on this general theme. They tackle many of the key passages in Galatians which are often thought to undermine Bachmann's primary argument. Five of the six essays were first published between 1993 and 1998; three are unchanged, and two appear here in much expanded versions. The final essay, on Gal. 6:16, is published here for the first time.

The opening essay is a wide-ranging survey of scholarly discussion of justification and 'works of the law' in Paul, with special reference to Galatians. The 'works of the law' are the precepts or demands of the law (i.e. *halakhot*); the phrase does not refer to 'carrying out the law', which Paul in no way discredits. Bachmann draws particular attention to passages where 'law' and 'works of the law' are juxtaposed, i.e. understood as almost synonymous. This general conclusion is then supported by a closely argued study of 4QMMT and Galatians.

The third essay, 'Jüdischer Bundesnomismus und paulinisches Gesetzesverständnis, das Fussbodenmosaik von Bet Alfa und das Textsegment Gal 3, 15-29', is the most creative of the six essays. Bachmann takes as his starting point E. P. Sanders's claim that for Paul, Judaism and Christianity exhibit two sharply differing patterns of religion. Bachmann claims that the sixth-century Bet Alpha mosaic in southern Galilee points to more continuities between Judaism and Pauline Christianity than Sanders (and others) allow. In both there is a threefold pattern: Abraham, Law, believers. An interesting appended note (pp. 79-80) draws into the discussion the early fifth-century floor mosaic in Sepphoris, details of which were first published in 1996. This essay is a fascinating study of the Bet Alpha and other early Jewish mosaics, though whether it advances our appreciation of Galatians or of Paul's theology is at least arguable.